

How does the Bible inform Christian opposition to Christian nationalism?

God created humanity as diverse and equal. Christian nationalism rejects this complexity and diversity, asserting instead that a certain group should have a privileged status.

No identity is more or less in God's image, and no identity has the right to claim superiority; all people are created in God's image, regardless of religion, race, nationality, gender, sexuality or other form of identity.

- **Genesis 1:27** – “So God created humans in his image.”
- **Psalms 139:14** – “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

God affirms the diversity of humanity. Together, Babel (**Genesis 11:1–9**) and Pentecost (**Acts 2:1–12**) show how God created diversity and continues to be encountered in diversity.

- At the Tower of Babel (**Genesis 11:1–9**), God confused the peoples' languages, so they no longer understood each other. At first, this story appears to be a punishment, but reading it alongside **Acts 2:1–12**, the arrival of the Holy Spirit affirms the diversity that was created at Babel.
- At Pentecost, “Every nation under heaven” (**Acts 1:5**) was represented, and they spoke many languages. They hear the message in their own tongues. A diverse group gathered, and no one was excluded or assimilated to one language or ruler.*

Diversity and equality are affirmed again in **Revelation 5:12**: “Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them.” Every creature was present; no identity was excluded, and no identity had a privileged place around the throne.

The Bible exposes nationalism as idolatrous. Christian nationalism attempts to box God in and rob God of God's power. It seeks to control and understand God only through a particular national and religious identity, thus God serves the injustice of the status quo.

In **Daniel 4**, Nebuchadnezzar's religious nationalism is exposed as idolatry. Nebuchadnezzar built himself up as a god and commanded his people to worship him, conflating his authority with God's authority. In **Daniel 4:30**, He boasts, “Is this not magnificent Babylon, which I have built as a royal capital ... for my glorious majesty?” Immediately, he lost his kingdom and was driven into the wilderness. Nebuchadnezzar's condemnation was a direct result of his idolatrous religious nationalism.

Additionally, prophets throughout the Hebrew scriptures call out the injustices of rulers – rulers who believed they were not accountable to God. In this prophetic tradition, truth rises from below; when truth comes from above, it is distorted by power. For example:

- The prophet Nathan confronted King David for his murder of Uriah the Hittite. “Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight?” (**2 Samuel 12:7–9**).
- The prophet Amos criticized wealthy Israelites who did not care for the poor. “Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches ... but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!” (**Amos 6:4–7**).

Throughout the Bible, truth is carried by prophets – not kings. The prophets operate politically and economically from below. They call out the injustice and exploitation practiced by the powerful. Prophets imagine a different world: a world that is inclusive and diverse, providing justice for the poor, the marginalized and the outcasts.

Jesus is truth from below. In his life and teaching, he is a counter-witness to the claims of imperial and religious power. Christian nationalism idolizes a Christian government that would oppress many religions in favor of one. Christian nationalism seeks to privatize Jesus's message, thus robbing the message of its subversive power.

Jesus overcomes cultural boundaries and prejudices when he speaks with the woman at the well (**John 4:1-26**). At a time when Jews did not associate with Samaritans and men did not associate with women, Jesus broke both customs. Christian nationalism seeks to create boundaries of who is in and who is out, rejecting the inclusive ministry of Jesus.

Jesus acknowledges two different kingdoms: "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." (**Mt. 22:21**). To conflate these two different kingdoms as one and the same – to say God's power is synonymous with any earthly power – is idolatrous. God commands, "You shall have no other God before me" (**Exodus 20:3**).

Jesus first preached his views of justice for the poor, imprisoned and outcasts to his home community (**Luke 4**). Though they rejected his message, Jesus continued to preach it. The Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5-7**) teaches a non-violent, non-authoritarian participation in the world. Jesus also resisted top-down power when he confronted and rejected the exploitative practices within the Temple (**Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18**).

Eventually, Jesus was executed by the Roman Empire for his radical, subversive message of justice. Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection are a public message and a counter-witness to the empire. Though the crucifixion looks like the peak of political power and domination, the resurrection asserts that God's power supersedes the empire's. The resurrection means that every nation has its limits and cannot defeat God's intention for an alternative way of the world.

Jesus commands us to love our neighbor. Christian nationalism asserts that white, US Christians with a certain set of political and theological views have exclusive access to God's love. This assertion can lead people to deny their neighbors the right to fully participate in our nation and can even be the motivation for acts of violence against neighbors. Such actions ignore that God's love is for the whole world.

God's love encompasses all of the world and all of humanity.* "God so loved the world" (**John 3:16**); God's love is global. We are commanded to love like God loves.

- **1 John 4:8** says, "Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."
- Jesus commands: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (**Matthew 5:44**). Similarly, in **Luke 6:27**, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you Do to others as you would have them do to you." Jesus also commands: "You shall love the Lord your God You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (**Matthew 22:37-39**).
- And who is our neighbor? Jesus answers that question with the story of the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10:21-37**), who is a person of a different religion, ethnicity, and nationality; *this* person is the example of showing neighborly love. "Neighbor" is not restricted only to white people, Americans or Christians. Neighbor means *everyone*.*

Sources:

All Biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version

BJC Podcast Series: The Dangers of Christian Nationalism

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