

# The Unholy War of 'Christian Nationalism'

by [Jeff Plude](#) (November 2022)



*End of Olsons*, Andrew Wyeth, 1969

**Man the political animal** can be ferocious any time, but he's especially dangerous to cross paths with during election season. And with Donald Trump looming larger than ever,

inflation raging, and Roe v. Wade face down in the constitutional dust, this year's midterms seem charged with even more dread. So nearly everywhere I turn I see "Christian nationalism," which is now being stalked by the Left as public enemy number one. But even that is just a stand-in for their real opponent.

The tactic is right out of *Rules for Radicals*, the guerilla war manual for the Left's fifth column and commandos. The 1971 book's author, Saul Alinsky, spits out his thirteenth commandment like he's throwing punches or squeezing a trigger: *Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.*

The way it works out in the field is that the propagandists brand the "target," which is the most efficient way to freeze it and personalize it, and then ridicule it, which is the most effective way to polarize it. So they chant "Christian nationalism" over and over and over.

Now this has been in play in the mainstream news media off and on since the breaching of the Capitol on January 6, 2020. But an all-out offensive against CHRINAT (my term) was launched on September 7 with an Associated Press-PBS "Frontline" "[investigation](#)," which is more plainly described as a series of hit pieces. The flashpoint and leader of the opposition is an actual retired Army general, Michael Flynn, who was Trump's national security adviser for all of three weeks until he resigned in disgrace. Now Flynn and his political troops may speak Christianese, don Christian symbols, or "identify" as Christians, but in my view they are far from true believers. Members of the infamous Proud Boys were apparently at the rallies and events portrayed in the articles and were prominently featured. But as one source pointed out in a rare instance of objectivity, most of these "Christian nationalists" don't belong to or attend a church.

Just as troubling is that a few firebrand Republicans have even proudly adopted the epithet, like Rep. Marjorie Taylor

Greene. But her steady stream of rash words disqualify her, in my book, as a bona fide Christian.

It's also worth pointing out that the AP, like many so-called news organizations, is closer to an association of propogandists these days than journalists. There are many, many instances in the series (which would be enlightening to go into but is beyond the scope of this essay) that show this, like flinging the word "denialists" around without attribution. The term "white grievance" was also brandished unchallenged, because that group is on the wrong side of the investigators' clearly biased overall premise. Unfortunately this is now standard journalistic practice for the AP, which maintained with a straight face that the George Floyd riots were peaceful.

Nevertheless it's mission accomplished—"Christians nationalists" are evil, and by extension all Christians. They want to "Make America Christian Again." And they're all antidemocratic like the January Sixers, which to the Left means opposed to Democrats in general. That many evangelicals have supported Trump is really not surprising. While not a Christian himself, Trump is generally sympathetic to evangelical causes and concerns, unlike President Biden. Besides, "Liberal Christian" is an oxymoron.

*Nationalism*, of course, has become a loaded word, a big bad monster responsible for all the recent and much of the past nightmares. What does it evoke to the twenty-first century psyche? *Nazism* and *fascism*, of course! along with extremism, white supremacism, and other pejoratives. So it's a very useful word. All a combatant needs to do is insert the name of whatever group he or she wants to demonize before *nationalism* and just like that—with a click of verbal alchemy—they are transformed into Nazis and fascists. And it has the added advantage that the attackers don't have to deal with charges of antisemitism because they didn't actually say the verboten N word.

Reasonable people know that there's nothing inherently wrong with nationalism. In its pure form it simply means to attach importance to the idea of a country or a nation and its sovereignty, or to its culture, language, and traditions. For instance would anyone, especially Italians, really want Italy to be a bunch of city states like it was before the unification revolutions that swept over Europe in the mid-nineteenth century? That was nothing more than nationalism.

So what exactly is "Christian nationalism"? It's supposed to be Christians who want to bring about a social, political, and moral revolution in America through political means, that is, by electing politicians who align with their worldview. They oppose and want to stop abortion, same-sex marriage, and transgenderism—each of which the Bible condemns as sins—and some other things that are predominantly secular issues, such as illegal immigration and gun control.

"Christian nationalists" want to create a theocracy, in effect. A sort of heaven on earth. And they are raising money and organizing to do it. All of which is antithetical to true Christianity. In a general sense this is nothing new. There are fringe sects like Dominionism and Kingdom Now theology (which often consist of Pentecostals who falsely believe they speak in tongues and that kind of thing) and more popular movements like Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority in the eighties. In my view, these are far from orthodox Christians.

First of all there is nothing in scripture that prevents a Christian from participating in politics, whether as a voter or even as a politician. In fact Christians are supposed to act as model citizens in any polis and submit willingly to governmental authority, according to the Bible—so long as that polis doesn't require them to sin or disobey God's commands. In a Christian context this would be the commands Jesus taught his disciples and followers.

But in obeying those commands, true believers are not so much

political as moral and faithful. Hence no true Christian can support abortion, which he or she regards as the killing of an actual human being though that person is in utero. And I think that unwavering commitment to Christ's precepts has contributed, in part, to the overturn of Roe v. Wade after a half century. Which was miraculous, given the times are now so decadent they would make an ancient Roman libertine blush.

Jesus himself showed the right relation Christians are to have toward whatever government they find themselves living under. Of course there's his well-known answer regarding the Roman poll tax, to "render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Which on the face of it appears to be calling for a separation of church and state.

I think a more apt scenario in respect to "Christian nationalism" is when Jesus is on trial before Pilate. The Roman governor of Judea asks him if he is indeed, as his accusers claim, king of the Jews? Then Jesus sets his earthly judge straight about the cosmic order of things: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

Of course Jesus means that his kingdom is in heaven.

Whose kingdom is this world's, then? The Bible says that Satan is the ruler of this world, which is the ultimate result of the Fall. But God, since he's omnipotent, is ultimately in control of this world, though he has given Satan temporary power over earth that is great but limited. You can see the dynamics of this at work in microcosm in the book of Job. Satan appears before God and wants to test Job, and God tells him he can do what he likes with him except to kill him. Though Job suffers greatly he survives, and in the end he not only passes the test of faith but even grows in the faith, and his property is restored and he starts a new family.

In other words people who call themselves Christians and want to bring heaven down to earth, who are impatient for the utopia of Christ's Second Coming and try to force God's hand, are at best misguided and at worst deluded. We are all citizens of one government or another on earth, but believers above all else are, as the apostle Paul writes, citizens of heaven. That is a true Christian's focus, not "Reawakening America," as the Flynn sideshow is called.

Now I am talking about evangelicals and not Catholics, which Joe Biden and many other Democrats and liberals, including our current governor in New York and her disgraced predecessor, say they are. I'm a former Catholic myself. When you ask a Catholic what religion he or she follows, they generally don't say they're Christian (as an evangelical will) but Catholic. Which is truly said on their part, I think. When the AP asked Flynn what his religious affiliation is, the first words out of his mouth were "Irish Catholic." Many Catholics are moral chameleons and pragmatists like their true leader, the pope, whose words they regard more than God's. True believers don't compromise when it comes to God's Word, which is why they have been persecuted and martyred for two millennia.

Up until the past mid-century America was culturally Christian, which is to in its ethical beliefs and customs generally coincided with the church, though they weren't believers. School prayer wasn't outlawed until 1962 (instigated by "Mad" Madalyn Murray O'Hair, whom I once had the displeasure of interviewing in the early nineties). Every morning across the country schoolkids intoned "one nation, under God, indivisible." This all stems from the Mayflower Compact four centuries ago, which invoked the name of God and Christianity in its new government in the New World. And the Pilgrims and Massachusetts Bay Colony waxed strong under a kind of theocracy.

Two and half centuries later the founders of the United States were not true Christians. Most were deists, who respected

Christ's moral teaching but rejected his deity. Still they constructed the Constitution with the blueprint of the Roman republic and the marble of the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments. The Judeo-Christian worldview is embedded in America's civic DNA, passing on concepts such as all men are created equal under the law and protection of private property. But it was in no way a state religion. This was explicit too—that no law be made establishing religion or preventing the exercise of it—in the first clause in the first sentence of the Bill of Rights.

America's political gene map can be traced all the way back to Christianity's inception. As Edward Gibbon put it in his imperial style in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

A candid but rational inquiry into the progress and establishment of Christianity may be considered as a very essential part of the history of the Roman empire. While that great body was invaded by open violence, or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigor from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the Cross on the ruins of the Capitol. Nor was the influence of Christianity confined to the period or to the limits of the Roman empire. After a revolution of thirteen or fourteen centuries, that religion is still professed by the nations of Europe, the most distinguished portion of human kind in arts and learning as well as in arms. By the industry and zeal of the Europeans it has been widely diffused to the most distant shores of Asia and Africa; and by the means of their colonies has been firmly established from Canada to Chili, in a world unknown to the ancients.

This passage seems all the more remarkable considering that Gibbon was an avowed atheist. But he was also, for the most part, a diligent and conscientious investigator. Coincidentally the first of his six-volume history, which is where this excerpt appears, was published the same year the

Declaration of Independence was published and the United States of America was born.

Gibbon goes on to describe the early Christians as being devoid of interest in participating in business or government. Yet this new religion that was considered no more than a Jewish sect by the emperors ended up surviving the empire, which stretched beyond the entire length of the Mediterranean to the Middle East and Britain, and contributing to its downfall. Not bad for an unworldly pious group of mostly commoners who were not so concerned with this life as with the next.

Note that Gibbon unwittingly employed a few triggers for twenty-first century liberals, especially youthful ones. First he calls Europeans "the most distinguished portion of human kind" in culture and strength. Then he mentions "colonies" as if it were a good thing, which in America it was for many, including all of its current citizens and those who legally immigrated here for what's now commonly known as "quality of life." Admittedly it didn't work out as well for the American Indians, as it didn't for the Romans. But what is often lost sight of or dismissed out of hand is that the American Indians weren't exactly pacifists, and initially made friends with the Pilgrims so that one tribe could subdue the other, since they were constantly at each other's throats. I'm not saying the ends justify the means, but that both winners and losers play the same game in the end with similar tactics and objectives. As for the Romans, they were not only overrun by the barbarians, or the pre-Europeans who became Christians, but "were undermined with slow decay."

That brings us back to America, which also seems to be rotting from the inside out. The chief political operators on the Left, likely having at least a general understanding of the history of the Roman empire and the early church as I've outlined it, know that true Christianity is a formidable and inflexible force to reckon with. Thus the target—"Christian



nationalism," or more properly Christianity itself—is frozen and personalized. I think this also accounts for Biden's unprecedented and incendiary speech only a week or so before the "investigation" of "Christian nationalism," in which he personally attacked and even threatened those "MAGA Republicans."

Let me say that I don't condone the January 6 breaching of the Capitol, though I understand the sentiments behind it. The people who participated were frustrated that widespread election fraud may have been committed, which the media brands as "election denialism" (you know, like Holocaust denialism by neo-Nazis). Even though Democrats also cried foul when Trump won in 2016. Whatever the truth may be, those who were involved in that harrowing event were certainly wrong from a Christian point of view to take matters into their own hands.

And what about liberals and their shock troops like Black Lives Matter and the antifa brigade? Are they atheistic or secular nationalists? Look at the case of Jack Phillips. He spent years building a successful cake baking business in Colorado only to have a homosexual couple try to smush it because he refused to deny a biblical tenet of his faith. But he endured the inferno of the U.S. legal system and won in the Supreme Court. But now he is being maliciously sued again on the same grounds, this time by a transgender militant. Aren't these coordinated assaults by well-funded and politically organized groups? Where's the wider journalistic "investigation" on that?

But true believers know that the real battle isn't nationalistic, or even physical. It's between God and Satan. So it's fitting that Alinsky would give him a place of honor among a trinity of epigraphs in his Machiavellian screed for malcontents:

To the very first radical: from all our legends, mythology, and history (and who is to know where mythology leaves off and

history begins—or which is which), the first radical known to man who rebelled against the establishment and did it so effectively that he at least won his own kingdom.—Lucifer

The name Lucifer appears in the Bible only in Isaiah. The passage that contains it is explicitly about the fallen king of Babylon, but it's implicitly, given the description and context, about the power behind him—Satan. It's the same source behind Alinsky and his acolytes. “Christian nationalism” is just the latest campaign to mobilize dupes on both sides of the political divide to demonize and derail the real target—the King of Kings—whose true followers hear his voice and follow no one in the end but Him.

## [Table of Contents](#)

**Jeff Plude** is a Contributing Editor to *New English Review*. He was a daily newspaper reporter and editor for the better part of a decade before he became a freelance writer. He has an MA in English literature from the University of Virginia. An evangelical Christian, he also writes fiction and is a freelance editor of novels and nonfiction books.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)