



Introduction to This Issue

Declaring Independence from Christian Nationalism

The Barmen Declaration of 1934 is the most famous and formidable confession made in resistance to authoritarianism during the Third Reich. The first article reads:

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation.

This bold confession of Jesus Christ alone as the foundation of the church gets to the heart of why we need to “declare independence” from Christian nationalism due to its distortions and confusion about Christian teaching and the truth of Gospel.

In Germany, justification for authoritarianism was widely propagated by theologians and pastors through “Christian” literature. The ambitious goal was to eliminate Judaism from German Christianity, including from the New Testament. Dozens of theology professors wrote publications, hundreds of pastors attended conferences, and thousands of church members were influenced

The US is haunted by the history of white supremacy. ... Now in the US, we face a new expression of white supremacy: mass deportations of immigrants and refugees....

Christian nationalism valorizes the confederacy and supports restrictions on democratic processes in its allegiance to authoritarian leaders and policies. The articles in this issue articulate why Christians as a matter of faith in Jesus Christ need to declare independence from Christian nationalism.

by religious literature, including materials for congregational use: a dejudaized New Testament, hymnal, and catechism. Luther was portrayed as a heroic figure in the antisemitic propaganda of the Nazis. *Kristallnacht* was seen as the fulfillment of Luther's Refor-

mation. Anti-Jewish views were shared broadly among Christians, even in the Confessing Church.

What does this have to do with Christian nationalism? While the contemporary historical context is different than Germany in the 1930s, religious support for authoritarianism through the influence of Christian nationalism has striking similarities. In both cases, the joining of political power and religious ideology has exerted inordinate impact. Both are characterized by commitments to white supremacy, antisemitism, xenophobia, scapegoating foreigners, and intense nationalism—blood and soil Aryanism in Germany and exclusivist civil religion in the United States. The deJudaized Aryan Bible of the German Christians has its counterpoint in the “God Bless the USA Bible” that includes the US Constitution, Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, and Pledge of Allegiance as authoritative documents.

The US is haunted by the history of white supremacy. The sites of the Equal Justice Initiative founded by Bryan Stevenson at Montgomery, Alabama, unmask white supremacy and memorialize the struggle of African American people against white authoritarianism manifested in a history of enslavement, terror, segregation, and mass incarceration. Now in the US, we face a new expression of white supremacy: mass deportations of immigrants and refugees, especially “brown people” from Central and South America. Christian nationalism valorizes the confederacy and supports restrictions on democratic processes in its allegiance to authoritarian leaders and policies. The articles in this issue articulate why Christians as a matter of faith in Jesus Christ need to declare independence from Christian nationalism. [Craig L. Nesson]

What an “interesting” time to edit a theological journal issue devoted to understanding and resisting the rise of Christian nationalism. I use the word “interesting” here advisedly, in the great Upper Midwestern taciturn tradition of understatement. Here “interesting” can mean, “troubling,” “critical,” “devastating,” “important,” “terrifying,” and so forth.

The rise of official government rhetoric and statements that attempt to depict Jesus’ religion of peace, nonviolence, and compassion as one of violent warfare, power, and even capitalist grift can cause faithful people to want to tune out entirely, to shut our eyes to the ways in which American Christianity is morphing into authoritarian idolatry. But, like the resisters of authoritarianism in the past, this is no time to cover our ears or turn away to quietism.

Indeed, we have a wealth of theological and spiritual resources to combat the rise of Christian nationalism and its attendant idolatries and dangers. Our hope with this issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission* is that you will hear these voices of resistance, wisdom, knowledge, and faithfulness, and you will finish your reading feeling inspired, empowered, and emboldened to speak out in favor of truth and justice!

When Craig Nesson first invited me to co-edit this issue with him, I was honored but also uncertain. While I have been

The rise of official government rhetoric and statements that attempt to depict Jesus’ religion of peace, nonviolence, and compassion as one of violent warfare, power, and even capitalist grift can cause faithful people to want to tune out entirely, to shut our eyes to the ways in which American Christianity is morphing into authoritarian idolatry. But, like the resisters of authoritarianism in the past, this is no time to cover our ears or turn away to quietism.

researching and writing against Christian nationalism for almost a decade now, and published two books on the topic, I do not have a PhD or a ThD; my experience is in mainstream journalism and trade publishing rather than academic writing. However, he reassured me that together we could pull together a vital issue for this moment, coinciding not only with the semi quinqucentennial of America but also in anticipation of the November 2026 midterm elections.

One of my goals for this issue was to match the relevance of traditional Lutheran theology, especially Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s understanding of Luther’s theology of the cross, in resistance to Christian nationalism. As a Lutheran of German heritage myself, I feel that I have a special responsibility to speak out against the rise of authoritarianism and white supremacy in America, insofar as elements of Christian nationalism in America mirror the rise of the German Christians (and widespread clergy acceptance of Nazism) in 1930s Germany. A key emphasis of Lutheran theology is humility, and our own need for grace first: our inability to save ourselves. Knowing this, we turn to the first use of the law as a powerful bulwark against a religious and political movement that claims to be salvific in and of itself.

My other goal for this issue was to lift up voices outside the Lutheran tradition, specifically voices from the Black Church and from Black American Christian traditions, understanding the role of race and white supremacy in the rise of Christian nationalism, and the historic role of the Black Church in making faithful witness to the Gospel of Jesus in America.

I am most grateful in this sense for the articles by Eric McDaniel and Starlette Thomas. McDaniel’s article leads this

issue, and documents Christian nationalism as a new iteration of America's slaveholding religion, explaining how the biblical interpretations that sanctioned slavery and sacralized racial hierarchies are being repurposed in the current movements of MAGA and Trumpism, especially as seen in the recent Supreme Court decision that attempts to roll back voting protections for black Americans won by the Civil Rights movement as led by black Christians and black Christian ministers. In her article, Thomas provides academic interpretation of black Christian traditions that attempt to find equality through military service and patriotism, and documents a family history that showed her the perils of trying to equate faithfulness to Jesus with love of country. She powerfully articulates the pain of Christian nationalism for black and brown communities and argues why it must be forcefully rejected by white American Christians. [Angela Denker]

In this issue, **Eric L. McDaniel** argues that white Christian nationalism is not a new theological movement but the latest expression of Slaveholding Christianity—a coherent religio-political tradition that fuses white supremacy, divine order, and the demand for sovereign freedom. This lineage demonstrates the same theological grammar undergirding today's Christian nationalist movement. Backlash to Barack Obama's election triggered its open re-emergence; Donald Trump's elections brought it to the center of American political power. The article examines how the black religious tradition has consistently articulated a counter-Christianity—and considers the threats to that tradition from both external attack and internal infiltration.

Starlette Thomas examines the “twoness” of American patriotism and Christianity, offering a personal narrative and an African American cultural history of military service—not so much as an intergenerational virtue of Christian discipleship but as a chance at upward mobility. Fighting *to be seen as human* versus fighting *to reign supreme over humans*, white Christian nationalism undermines equal citizenship and belonging as it seeks to align national identity with a specific, exclusive intersection of race (white) and religion (conservative Protestant Christianity). The analysis explores the American commitment to whiteness (with its power dynamics) to the detriment of its citizenry, concluding that the church in the US should remove itself from such political calculations.

Angela Denker provides an excerpt from the book, *Disciples of White Jesus: The Radicalization of American Boyhood*, to describe the difficult wrestling of a pastor who witnessed firsthand how radicalization and white supremacy can infiltrate and fester in churches where one might not expect. The article challenges the reader to reckon with removing the log in one's own eye first, before addressing the cancer of white Christian nationalism in 2026 America.

Marvin E. Wickware Jr. contends that Christian nationalism presents a crisis because of its material impact on society and the broader creation. This impact is a consequence of Christian nationalism's coordination of political power and the utility of its

theological imagination in that power building work. Christians who seek to respond effectively to Christian nationalism must confront Christian nationalism in both modes. First, they must build power by organizing people and money toward political action. Second, this political action needs to be grounded in an authentic proclamation of the gospel and oriented toward participation in broad-based movements for peace and justice.

Melvin L. Otey demonstrates how Elijah, in 1 Kings 18:17–46, confronts Israel's syncretic blending of YHWH and Baal worship and indicts the people for “limping between two different opinions” (18:21). The narrative presents drought, famine, and political blame as covenant crisis, then stages a public verdict where Baal's silence and YHWH's decisive fire elicit Israel's confession, “The LORD, he is God” (18:39). Reading this pericope as a diagnostic prism, the article concludes that Christian nationalism functions as modern syncretism when national identity becomes determinative for Christian moral imagination and communal loyalties.

Noah Dodd explores the ways in which Christian nationalism has drawn upon and co-opted certain articulations of the doctrine of election. Though not synonymous with Calvin, Christian nationalism has wielded and co-opted one Calvinist approach to election as a tool to advance political aspirations. The article critiques this theology and explores a trinitarian alternative, detailing its theological and political implications.

Fritz Lampe draws on the social sciences to frame Christian nationalism. Just as in other socio-religious movements, proponents use symbols, stories of origin, rites, and traditions, Christian nationalist movements (there are several) are about more than religion. As one cultural element among many, religion interacts with other cultural components, such that the reading of Christian nationalism as purely political, ideological, or religious misses their complexities. After introducing an anthropological approach, this article reflects on Christian nationalism as a cultural phenomenon, the context in which it has emerged, current manifestations, and some thoughts about engagement.

Duane Larson ruminates on the rhetorical apocalyptic fury and implied eschatology of Christian nationalism and the contrast to properly Christian eschatology, which can be better understood viz the theology of the cross. Christian nationalist politics are fed by and feed into a narrow and shallow construal of Christian eschatology. Since eschatology implies ethics, and ethics mean a polity, Christian nationalists provoke “their” apocalypse by confusing religion and government.

Craig L. Nesson introduces central features of the Christian nationalism movement. Among five historical antecedents is the robust civil religion of the US. The Christian Reconstructionism (or Dominionism) of R. J. Rushdoony and the New Apostolic Reformation of C. Peter Wagner give shape to its biblical, theological, and ecclesiological commitments, especially among independent charismatic churches. The Seven Mountains Mandate guides its religious and political agenda. The article concludes with suggestions for responding to Christian nationalism and provides an

annotated bibliography of titles for further reading and research.

Two **Currents Focus** features add global perspective to the theme of Christian nationalism. The first publishes a Declaration about contemporary challenges to democracy from a biblical and theological perspective, and the second focuses on the suffering caused by the military dictatorship in Burma. **Conrad A. Braaten, Martin Hoffmann,** and **Paul Wee** are editors of the declaration, “Democracy at Risk: Responding to Today’s Threats to Our Democracy” (2025). Organized as a commentary on biblical texts, the text expresses urgent concern for the rise of authoritarianism. The document substantiates this concern with commentary on key biblical passages: Genesis 1:26, Galatians 3:28, Genesis 12:1, Galatians 5:14, 1 Peter 4:17, 2 Corinthians 4:7, and concluding with Joshua 24:15. Each Scripture passage is accompanied by four sets of statements: affirmation, confession, gratitude, and commitment.

Pum Za Mang describes how, as natives to the highlands of modern-day Burma, most Burmese Christians belong to peripheral races, such as the ethnic Chin, Kachin, Karen, Lahu, and Wa. The embrace of Christianity by these nonliterate and illiterate races for their religion and culture was, and always has been, key in revitalizing and buttressing their distinct ethnic identities against the stormy forces of Burman military dictatorship in postcolonial Burma. Their new religion has given them, on the one hand, an enduring source of power to cherish what makes them distinct, but, on the other hand, they face exclusion and violence under generations of Burman military rulers, because of their religion and ethnicity. Since the 2021 coup, they have suffered the hell of historically unprecedented violence, displacement, and turmoil.

We are grateful for the creativity of the authors of **Preaching Helps**, who under the stewardship of **Barbara K. Lundblad** provide exegetical and insightful reflections on the next season of lectionary readings. We conclude the issue with Book Reviews on recent volumes for the interest of our readers.

We hope the attention given to Christian nationalism in this issue will be a timely contribution for reflecting on the meaning of true patriotism and Christian political responsibility for our suffering neighbors and an endangered creation.

Angela Denker, Issue Co-Editor
Craig L. Nesson, Issue Co-Editor

2026 Ad Pricing and Specifications

The journal, *Currents in Theology and Mission*, is provided to readers as an online resource at <http://www.currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents>.

Individual articles are provided to readers as a PDF download. We offer advertising opportunities in any of our articles, with premium rates for sections with high readership, including the issue’s Introduction article, the Book Review section and the Preaching Helps section.

As advertisements are viewed online, they are visible to the reader in full color and allow live web-links. However, if a reader elects to print out the PDF, we do not have control over whether it is printed in color or black only.

Publication Dates and Deadlines

The journal, *Currents in Theology and Mission*, is published four times per year: January, April, July, and October. Ad deadlines for each issue are one month prior to publication (December 1, March 1, June 1, September 1). Late submissions may be published in the next issue. Issue-specific themes are available from the co-editors: [Craig Nesson](#) and [Kadi Billman](#).

Print Advertising Specifications

Please provide ads as an email attachment to our designer at kathryn@brewer-com.com.

- 300 dpi JPEG or PDF at full size.
- Color ads should be converted to CMYK.
- Embed all fonts when creating a PDF.

Size and Placement Options

Full page ads are placed at the end of articles. Fractional page ads are placed within articles. (We do not offer a bleed option.) You may specify an author, the Introduction article, or any of our sections: Book Reviews, Preaching Helps, Currents Focus. For specific article or section content per issue, please contact the co-editors: [Craig Nesson](#) and [Kadi Billman](#).

Premium placements are: at the end of the Introduction article, within Book Reviews, within Preaching Helps. These are our most popular sections.

FORMAT	SIZE	PREMIUM PLACEMENT	REGULAR PLACEMENT
• Full Page:	7.125” wide x 10” high	\$ 450	\$ 380
• One Column (vertical):	3.5” wide x 10” high	\$ 250	\$ 200
• Half Column:	3.5” wide x 4.75” high	\$ 135	\$ 115
• Half Page (horizontal):	7.125” wide x 4.75” high	\$ 250	\$ 200

25% discount for 4 consecutive placements from the same advertiser (content may change).

Website Advertising

We do not offer site advertising.

Billing

New advertisers must include payment with order. Checks should be made out to “Currents in Theology and Mission” and sent to: Currents in Theology and Mission, 5416 S. Cornell Avenue, 4th Floor, Chicago, IL 60615. For questions or to pay by credit card, call the editorial offices at 773-256-0705.

Returning Advertisers: Bills are sent after publication.