

Christianity and Nationalism in the UK

A briefing note summarising the different types of nationalism in the UK and the role of Christianity in society

Purpose

To provide a clear, theologically grounded and pastorally wise overview of the current discussions around Christianity and nationalism in the UK, clarifying the Evangelical Alliance's perspective and supporting faithful witness in public life.

Executive summary

The term Christian nationalism is being used with increasing frequency in the UK, raising deep questions about identity, belonging, power, and Christian witness in public life. While love of country and gratitude for the UK's Christian heritage can be healthy and appropriate, the blending of Christian faith with exclusionary or coercive forms of nationalism risks distorting the gospel and undermining Christian mission.

This moment presents both a missional opportunity and a discipleship challenge. Christians are called to engage confidently in public life, while ensuring that Christ rather than nation, party, or ideology, remains the focus of ultimate allegiance.

“Our citizenship is in Heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 3:20

Background

Christian nationalism broadly refers to ideas that closely fuse Christian identity with national identity, asserting that a nation's culture, laws, and leadership should explicitly reflect Christianity and that Christianity should enjoy a privileged position in society.

Although the phenomenon is most visible in the United States, related ideas are increasingly shaping UK conversations around faith, identity, immigration, Islam, and public life. Political movements and activists, particularly on the right and far right, have increasingly used Christian language, symbols, and appeals directed at “preserving” the UK's Christian heritage to advance nationalist agendas.

The Evangelical Alliance has consistently affirmed gratitude for the UK's Christian heritage and the legitimacy of Christian engagement in the public square, while resisting any ideology that compromises Christ-like witness, democratic norms, or the equal dignity of all people.

The UK context

Christianity in the UK

- Around 46% of the population identifies as Christian.
- Approximately 7.5% are practising Christians; around 3% are estimated to be evangelical.
- Christianity has profoundly shaped British values such as the rule of law, human dignity, compassion, and democratic accountability, even as secularisation and pluralism continue to reshape the moral landscape.

Nationalism(s) in the UK

- Nationalism in the UK takes multiple forms, including Scottish and Welsh independence movements, English identity, British patriotism, and the particular complexities of Northern Ireland.
- Nationalism is not inherently right- or left-wing (e.g. SNP, Plaid Cymru, Reform, DUP).
- Nationalism can express either healthy civic pride and democratic participation, or exclusionary, populist, and authoritarian tendencies.

Biblical framework

CREATION

God created humanity as one shared image-bearing race, placed in families, peoples, and nations, each with a place within His purposes. Scripture affirms love of neighbour, responsibility for communities, and the proper role of governing authorities in promoting justice and order. Christians are called to seek the welfare of the places where they live and may rightly love their country, while remembering that every nation ultimately belongs to God. (Genesis 1,10,11; Jeremiah 29:7; Acts 17:26; Romans 13:1–7)

FALL

Human sin distorts both political power and national identity. Nations become proud, oppressive, and idolatrous, demanding the loyalty that belongs to God alone. Scripture repeatedly warns against trusting in military strength, political rulers, or national greatness rather than the Lord. Patriotism becomes nationalism when love of country displaces love of God and neighbour or excludes those made in God's image. (Genesis 11:1–9; Psalm 20:7; Isaiah 31:1; Daniel 4)

REDEMPTION

Through Christ, God is creating one people drawn from every tribe, language, people, and nation. Christians remain citizens of earthly nations but belong first to the kingdom of God. Jesus refused political messianism, proclaimed a kingdom "not of this world," and taught His followers to love enemies as well as neighbours. The church's unity transcends national, ethnic, and political identities. (John 18:36; Matthew 5:43–48; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:11–22; Philippians 3:20; Revelation 7:9)

RESTORATION

The Bible ends not with one nation reigning over others but with all nations gathered under Christ's rule. The nations are healed, bring their glory into the New Jerusalem, and worship the Lamb together. Christian hope therefore rests not in the renewal of any single nation but in the coming kingdom of God, where every earthly authority is subject to Christ. (Isaiah 2:2–4; Revelation 21:24–26; Revelation 22:2)

SUMMARY

God created nations as part of His providential ordering of human society, and Christians may rightly love and serve their country. But no nation occupies the place of God's kingdom. The church is a people drawn from every nation whose primary allegiance is to Christ, and all political loyalties must remain subject to His Lordship. (Acts 17:26; Jeremiah 29:7; Philippians 3:20; Revelation 7:9)

What Is Christian Nationalism?

The term is contested and embraced by some while being rejected by others. At its broadest, Christian nationalism can be defined as an ideology that seeks to fuse national identity with a specific form of Christianity. It typically argues that a nation's laws, culture and institutions should reflect Christian values, often claiming that the nation was historically founded on Christianity and must return to that heritage.

Luke Bretherton, Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford, has argued against using the term at all, because he argues it lacks analytical depth and academic adequacy and is heavily shaped by the North American context. He also makes the case it reduces complex political phenomena to a single issue, while paying too little attention to class, political economy and material conditions.¹

Four orientations of Christian Nationalism²

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Cultural Christian nationalism

A nostalgic desire to reclaim lost Christian heritage. "Christian" describes heritage more than belief. They value Britain's Christian traditions and identity, but faith is largely cultural rather than personally transformative.

Cn

Confessional Christian nationalism

Committed Christians who also hold nationalist political views. Patriotism flows from this, shaped by a belief that loyalty to the nation should reflect loyalty to God's justice and truth.

CN

Classic Christian nationalism

An explicit theological vision linking Christian doctrine to national authority. Faith and nation are equally central. Britain is seen as a Christian nation with a divine calling, and national identity and Christian mission are closely intertwined.

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Co-opted Christian nationalism

Nationalism comes first, with Christianity used to reinforce national identity or political aims. Christian symbols and language function more as cultural or political tools than expressions of faith.

These categories show that “Christian nationalism” in the UK is not a single movement but a spectrum – from heartfelt discipleship that shapes patriotism, to faith-as-heritage nostalgia, to outright political branding.

Three theological streams

While Christian nationalism takes different forms, three theological streams have been particularly influential in shaping its ideas.³ They differ in emphasis and tradition, but each argues in different ways that Christian faith should play a central role in shaping public life and the nation.

Charismatic dominionism

Often linked to ideas such as the Seven Mountain Mandate, this approach encourages Christians to influence key areas of society – including government, education, media, business, and the arts. It sees politics as part of a wider spiritual battle to reclaim the nation for God, emphasising revival, spiritual warfare, prophetic leadership, and active engagement in public life. It is important to note that not all charismatic Christians are dominionists, and not all dominionists are Christian nationalists. It is usually populist in tone, highly activist, and centred on revival, spiritual warfare, and prophetic leadership.

Reformed reconstructionism

Rooted in conservative reformed theology and associated with thinkers such as R J Rushdoony, this tradition argues that society should be governed according to biblical moral principles. It places strong emphasis on biblical law, covenant theology, and long-term cultural change. Although relatively small, it has influenced parts of the American Christian Right, particularly through Christian education, homeschooling, and advocacy for a distinctly Christian public order.

Catholic integralism

Catholic integralism argues that political authority should ultimately serve humanity's spiritual good as understood by the Catholic Church. Rather than separating religion and politics, it maintains that the state should recognise and support Christianity – specifically Catholicism – in public life. Contemporary integralists are often critical of secularism, individualism, and aspects of liberal democracy, favouring a political order centred on the common good and objective moral truth. While generally more academic and institutional than populist forms of Christian nationalism, it shares the conviction that the state should privilege a particular Christian vision of society.

Key themes in the current debate

Identity: Christian and national

- Blending faith and national identity can express gratitude for heritage.
- When Christianity becomes a political tool, it risks idolatry and marginalising others.
- Healthy Christian patriotism is marked by humility, service, and gratitude; Christian nationalism often seeks dominance, power, or exclusion.

Immigration and justice

- Public concern persists around immigration levels and fairness in the asylum system.
- Christian ethics call for both compassion and justice: welcoming the stranger while recognising borders and the rule of law.
- Simplistic or fear-driven narratives should be resisted.

Islam and Freedom of Religion

- Some express anxiety about the growth of Islam and community integration.
- Christians should robustly affirm freedom of religion and belief – including the freedom to critique ideas – while rejecting fear, hostility, or collective blame.

Christian Nationalism – opportunities and challenges

Evangelical Alliance research (November 2025, c.900 UK evangelicals⁴) found that:

94% believe Christians should influence all areas of society	77% believe Christianity shaped UK political culture	61% believe the UK is Christian and laws should reflect this	~20% strongly support Christian preferential position
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The Christian nationalism conversation reflects the reality that Christianity is back in public conversation. Our polling highlights a clear distinction between **Christian influence** and **Christian privilege**.

Key opportunities include:

- **Modelling healthy Christian patriotism:** Give thanks for our heritage and freedoms, avoid idolising the nation and model speaking prophetically to power while resisting both dominion theology and the marginalisation of faith to the private sphere.
- **Understanding the appeal:** Dismissing concerns pushes people further away. The church must listen before it speaks, and address the roots – alienation, deprivation, and loss of meaning – through community, justice, and investment in young people.
- **Young men and faith:** Growing numbers of young men are encountering Christianity through online influencers rather than churches, often bringing strong political assumptions that require careful discipleship.
- **Acknowledging our complicity:** The church was too often silent on key culture issues around identity, immigration, masculinity, marriage, family and patriotism allowing other voices to fill the void.
- **Engage seriously:** This is not a fringe issue. It demands serious theological reflection, honest discipleship, and courageous public witness. Churches should host honest, gracious conversations about identity, immigration, and belonging.

Key challenges include:

- **Enforcement over persuasion:** Christian influence depends on consent; Christian nationalism tends towards structural enforcement that restricts freedom of religion and belief.
- **Threats to democracy and pluralism:** Privileging Christianity can undermine equal citizenship and confident pluralism.
- **Racism and exclusion:** Ethno-cultural definitions of nationhood risk creating hierarchies of human worth incompatible with the gospel.
- **Damage to Christian witness:** When Christ's name is associated with grievance, fear, or authoritarian politics, the reconciling power of the gospel is obscured.
- **Misuse of scripture:** Biblical texts are sometimes employed to legitimise exclusionary policies without regard to context or the wider biblical narrative.
- **One-sided critique:** Some churches are quick to critique Christian progressivism but slower to challenge Christian nationalism and vice versa. Both risk binding the gospel too closely to political ideology.

Practical responses

01

Pray

For those who feel unsafe, for those drawn to nationalist movements to encounter Jesus, and for wisdom for the church.

02

Be kind

Speak humbly, acknowledge failures, reject violence and stereotypes, and model Christlike gentleness.

03

Be brave

Speak truthfully and graciously on difficult issues, holding biblical conviction with compassion.

04

Beware of blind spots

Listen well, practise self-examination, and remain open to correction.

05

Tackle the roots

Address alienation, deprivation, and loss of meaning through community, justice, and investment in young people. Strong discipleship and youth work reduce both radicalisation and secular drift.

Evangelical Alliance's position

EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE POSITION

The Evangelical Alliance affirms the positive role Christianity has played in shaping British society and supports confident Christian engagement in public life. However, we reject forms of Christian nationalism that privilege Christianity through coercion, undermine democracy, or exclude others on ethnic or religious grounds. Christian faith should shape society through persuasion, service, and love of neighbour, not through fear or political power.

Key takeaways

- Christian influence is not the same as Christian privilege.
- The gospel is distorted when it is tied to exclusionary or authoritarian politics.
- Love of country can be healthy, but a Christian's ultimate allegiance is to Jesus Christ.
- Christian faith flourishes best where freedom of religion and belief is protected for everyone.
- Using Christian language to fuel fear or grievance damages Christian witness.

References

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³Nick Spencer (March 2026), *Christian nationalism: explainer* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/comment/2026/03/17/christian-nationalism-an-explainer> (Accessed 22 July 2026)

⁴Evangelical Alliance (2025), *Confident Faith, Contested Culture* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.eauk.org/assets/files/downloads/Confident-faith-contested-culture.pdf> (Accessed 22 July 2026)