



God & Country

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Beyoncé's new Cowboy Carter album has sparked [controversy](#) over whether it should be considered a "country" album, or, as "Queen Bey" herself claims, simply a "Beyoncé album." Either way, this genre-transcending work reminds us there is more than one way to be a country artist, or even an American. We know there are many ways to be an American, a Christian, and person of faith. Yet, those in this country who ascribe to a Christian nationalist ideology still believe in a one-size-fits-all definition, and exclude and denigrate those who don't fit within the narrow confines of their doctrine.

The documentary [God & Country](#) offers a dark warning of the dangers of Christian Nationalism—a twisted interplay of politics, power, theology, and white supremacist ideology that has permeated our nation's history. This distortion of Christian faith and civic values propels a political agenda of exclusion, isolationism, racism, patriarchy, and often hate—all under the veneer of Christian and American values. As scholar Reza Aslan notes in the film, Christian Nationalism is "... not a movement of Christian values, this is a movement of *Christian power*."

Christian nationalism is neither Christian, nor patriotic. Often it takes the form of White Christian Nationalism, permeated by white supremacist ideology. This ideology does not reflect the biblical values of grace and love, nor does it embrace the values that make America great, including hospitality, diversity, and pluralism as reflected in our nation's motto, "E pluribus unum" (Out of many, one). While militant or extremist manifestations of Christian Nationalism have garnered national attention following the "Unite the Right Rally" in 2017, and January 6, 2021 insurrection, there is a more ominous effort happening in churches and revivals where

clergy are giving theological cover for such hate. What underlies this plot is a blurring of Christianity and nationalism that undermines the “wall of separation” between the Church and State enshrined in our Constitution.

Christian nationalism perpetuates American exceptionalism and colonial ideologies that puts Christianity over other faiths, and America over other nations. As the church, we must confess this sin of Christian Nationalism and educate our churches using God & Country and other resources. We can support efforts like [Christians Against Christian Nationalism](#) and [Americans United](#). We can live out our values to “[Be the Church](#)” in expansive, extravagant ways and share a message that “[Love is Louder](#)” than hate. We can “[Join the Movement](#)” for racial justice, support [Climate Hope](#), and protect our democracy and voting rights through the UCC’s [Our Faith Our Vote](#) campaign. Together, we can build a [Just World for All](#).

In her song “American Requiem,” Beyoncé asks, “Can we stand for something? Now is the time to face the wind . . . Now is the time to let love in. Together can we stand?”

I believe we can. As Beyonce might say, it’s time to “saddle up.”

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