

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY – TUESDAY, 13TH OCTOBER, 2026
PROFESSOR TINA BEATTIE – writer and Catholic theologian

Good morning.

The Christian think tank Theos recently [published the results of a poll](#) on attitudes towards the relationship between Christianity and Britishness. It's part of a wider research project exploring the rise of Christian nationalism in Europe. The results showed a wide range of what people understand by Christianity, from those who have no strong sense of national identity or religious affiliation, to those who believe that Christianity is essential to being British, though these tended to see this primarily in terms of culture and heritage, rather than faith or church-going.

The relationship between religion and nationalism is a neuralgic political issue, but this is nothing new. The earliest Christians were often martyred because they refused to worship the Roman gods. The Roman authorities had no objection to them worshipping the God of Jesus Christ alongside these other deities, but the protection of the Roman Empire was believed to depend upon worshipping its gods.

Christianity has often been seduced by the idea of a God who favours one particular race or nation. The rise of the European empires went hand in hand with a worldview that privileged white European Christians and sought the promotion of Christianity through the suppression of indigenous cultures and beliefs. While missionaries were often complicit in this, many protected local populations from the cruelties of the colonising powers and learned their languages and customs. Throughout its history, Christianity has taken root and flourished in many different cultures and contexts, attesting to a universality and adaptability that elude the control of any particular race, nation or ideology.

The belief that God became incarnate in Jesus Christ means that Christianity is not an otherworldly faith. Rather, it calls for respect for the dignity and vulnerability of bodily human life. To be human is to be particular in our loves and loyalties, including love of our communities and countries. But this sometimes involves a struggle between the allegiances and duties of citizenship, and the fundamental teachings of the Gospels. Jesus makes clear that his followers will be recognised not by their noisy religious rhetoric nor by their standing in society, but by their attentiveness to the poor and the homeless, their hospitality to strangers, and their care for the sick and those in prison.

As Saint Paul reminded the early Church, Christians are citizens of heaven and sojourners on earth. To forget this is to fall into the ever-present lure of idolatry and the worship of false gods.