



CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN A SECULAR WORLD

Does 'political' involvement distract from the gospel?



WAYNE GRUDEM + THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE

Welcome from Colin Hart

We're delighted to share with you this opportunity to look at questions that many Christians are asking about involvement in 'political' issues:

- Does faith require involvement in at least some public issues?
- To what extent can Christians agree on Bible-based responses to issues?
- What are the limits on religion in politics?
- What practical actions can we take?

We want to present a view on political involvement that has scriptural underpinning. We also want to draw your attention to our practical resources which are aimed at busy people.

We hope that this booklet will become a lasting reference for you as you 'love your neighbour' through wise, thoughtful, and persuasive Christian influence. There is space at the back to write your own notes.



Colin Hart
Director of The Christian Institute



Wayne Grudem:

Q&A on the Bible and politics

Q: Do you think 'political' issues are a distraction from the gospel?

Wayne: I think that loving our neighbours as ourselves means seeking their good in every aspect of society. This includes good government and good laws. It's important for Christians to exert significant influence on government, according to God's moral standards and God's purposes for government as revealed in the Bible (when rightly understood).

Q: What do you mean by 'significant influence'?

Wayne: 'Significant influence' means winsome, kind, thoughtful, loving, persuasive influence that is suitable to each circumstance, and that always protects the other person's right to disagree. At the same time it's uncompromising about the truthfulness and moral goodness of the teachings of God's Word.

It certainly does not mean angry, belligerent, intolerant, judgemental, red-faced, hate-filled influence.



Q: Which Biblical figures demonstrated involvement in 'political' issues?

Wayne: Daniel is an Old Testament example of a believer exercising significant influence on a civil government. Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, "Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practising righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity" (Daniel 4:27).

Daniel's approach is bold and clear. It is the opposite of a modern multi-cultural approach that might say something like this: "O King Nebuchadnezzar, I am a Jewish prophet, but I would not presume to impose my Jewish moral standards on your Babylonian kingdom! Follow your own heart! It would not be my place to speak to you about right and wrong."

Q: What about a New Testament example?

Wayne: John the Baptist is an excellent example of a believer who had significant influence on the policies of a government. He reproved Herod Antipas for "all the evil things that Herod had done" (Luke 3:19) and boldly spoke to officials of the Roman Empire about the moral right and wrong of their governmental policies.



Influencing government for good on the basis of the wisdom found in God's own words is a theme that runs through the entire Bible.



Q: To what extent do you think that churches today should speak about 'political' issues?

Wayne: I believe that pastors have a responsibility to preach and teach from God's Word on at least some issues affecting laws and government and politics. After all, these topics are part of the teaching of God's Word!

Q: Can't this start to be controversial?

Wayne: The mere fact that something is 'controversial' does not excuse pastors from the responsibility to preach about it and the responsibility of a church to take a stand about it.

The apostle Paul did not think it enough to preach on only some of the teaching of God's Word. Rather, he thought he was accountable before God to preach on everything that the Bible taught.

When Paul met with the elders of the church in Ephesus and summarised his three-year ministry among them he said, "I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of

you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27).

Paul did not shrink back from teaching on any topic simply because it was unpopular. And the word "for" in Paul's statement to those elders indicates that his blameless standing before God regarding what he taught depended on not shrinking back from unpopular topics.

If the teachings of the Bible about civil government and about God's moral standards are part of "the whole counsel of God", then it seems clear that pastors have a responsibility to teach their churches about these things.



Q: How far should Christians get into the more controversial topics?

Wayne: I realise that some topics are more controversial than others. And I want to emphasise that pastors will need much wisdom to distinguish between political topics where they can say, "There is a clear biblical position this issue" (for example, protecting the lives of unborn children) and other topics where they should wisely say, "I realise that Christians may legitimately have differences of viewpoint on this issue."

There will also be some topics where a pastor says, “We should all agree on the goal (for example, helping the poor) but we have freedom to differ on the best means to reach that goal.”

On still other issues, the pastor may say, “People disagree on this issue not because they disagree about the result we should seek but because they disagree over the relevant facts.”

Q: How should Christians start to speak out?

Wayne: Pastors should regularly pray for God’s guidance and seek counsel from their elders (or deacons). I don’t suggest that they simply surprise a congregation on a political issue, or rush into an ill-considered and unwise sermon.

The people at The Christian Institute can also help time-pressed Christians get information about public issues, think biblically about them, and take action. Their website is www.christian.org.uk



Equipped for action

Visit christian.org.uk – the gateway for all these resources:

Get more information in less time

- **News** – get to the heart of breaking news about religious liberty, marriage and family, public morality, and medical ethics.
- **Friday email** – keep up-to-date with our concise round-up of the week's news, targeted at busy people.
- **MPs' votes** – see at a glance how your MP has voted on ethical issues.

Get Bible-based views on 'political' issues

- **Apologetics** – read overviews of facts and arguments defending Christian positions on ethical issues.
- **Publications** – get to grips with the detail of particular issues through our well-researched booklets and briefings.
- **Podcast** – listen to over 150 talks and lectures on today's issues and wider areas of theology and Christian biography.

Get equipped

- **Practical guides** – for example on the law on street evangelism, tract distribution, and religious liberty in the workplace.
- **Tips on letter writing** – we alert supporters to important issues, helping you to take action.
- **Training and support** – look out for our events and roadshows.

Getting involved

Jonathan and Cath Harris talk about how The Christian Institute helps them get involved.



“There are lots of changes in Parliament and the courts that could affect us and, if not us, then our children. We have to stand up for Christian rights and freedoms. If we don’t use them then we could lose them. We want to do our part and show MPs and the wider community that we’re on the case.

“By being on the Institute’s mailing list and by regularly checking their website at www.christian.org.uk/news we are kept up-to-date with essential issues and can write letters when needed. It sounds like we’re very organised, but really we’re just supporting the work that’s being done elsewhere.

“We’ve all got ministries and we see the work of The Christian Institute as a ministry. They’re making it easier for us to be better informed, that way we can more effectively stand up and speak out on the issues of the day.

“No-one can use the excuse, ‘we’re too small to do anything’. We can and should work together; doing nothing is just a cop out.”

How to keep informed

Join our mailing list and you will receive:

- **The Friday summary** of news on religious liberty, marriage and family, sanctity of life, and public morality (sent by email).
- **Printed mailings** about strategic ethical issues, including ideas for writing letters.
- **Invitations to events** run by The Christian Institute.
- Opportunities to order and download **free publications**.

There is no cost to join our mailing list.

We will not pass on your details to any other organisation.

Please fill in a postcard on the page opposite, tear it off and return it to us.

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The Christian Institute

Questions and Answers

When and why was The Christian Institute set up?

It was set up in 1990 to work for Christian influence in a secular world and to equip Christians for action. The founders, who were church ministers and Christian professionals, were concerned about the lack of a Christian voice on moral issues.

What is our approach to 'political' issues?

We focus on issues where we believe the Bible's teaching is plain and where we can speak with knowledge and insight. Our beliefs include: religious freedom must be preserved; marriage is sacred; parents have a God-given authority over their children; life is sacred from conception; drug taking and gambling are wrong; our national life needs Christian underpinning.

Why do we limit ourselves to certain issues?

On some issues there are already organisations with great expertise, for example on the issue of Sunday trading. On some other issues, for example taxation policy, we recognise that Christians seeking to apply biblical principles can legitimately come to different conclusions.

Is there duplication among Christian organisations working on 'political' issues?

The reality is that there are very few Christians able to work full time in the area of public policy. There are many opportunities

and challenges which are currently not being tackled.

What type of work are we involved in?

We are active in helping Christians to be salt and light in our society. Although we are involved in many areas we are well-known for our work in Parliament as we continuously monitor proposals and brief MPs and Peers. Campaigns have included speaking out on human rights and equality legislation. Outside Parliament we work to equip Christians to influence the political process, for the good of our “neighbours” and fellow-citizens.

How does the work of the Institute tie in with the work of the local church?

We provide information and events for pastors, local churches and individual Christians, equipping them to take a stand for biblical truth and speak out more effectively on strategic issues.

What is our basis of faith?

The Christian Institute holds to historic biblical Christianity. We are non-denominational and a registered charity. We have a mainstream evangelical basis of faith, which you can read on the inside back cover.

How are we funded?

We do not receive any Government funding. We survive solely on generous gifts from individuals and churches.

Could you support our work?

Most of all, we value your prayers for Christian influence in a secular world.

If you would also like to make a donation, you can do so by debit or credit card. Please visit www.christian.org.uk/support and follow the links. Alternatively you can call us on **0191 281 5664** during usual office hours.

If you would like to make a donation by cheque (payable to 'The Christian Institute') please send it to:

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If you are a UK taxpayer please ask us about **Gift Aid**, which can make your gift worth almost a third more.

Thank you.



Seeing a difference

Lady O’Cathain (member of the House of Lords) talks about the importance of support on moral issues.



“Christians can’t lock themselves away in little cells. They have got to be aware of what goes on. Some of it is not very nice, but to have a body like The Christian Institute supporting you is actually very good.

“I come from a research background myself and I’m rather critical of a great amount of research that comes across my desk. But I’ve never been critical of The Christian Institute’s

research. Not just because it’s Christian, but because it is very professionally done and every statement that is made is annotated. You know exactly you can go back to the root document. And it gives me complete confidence in it so that when I actually quote from it on the floor of the House I know I can justify everything I’ve said. And that’s a great comfort.

“It would take me months to do the sort of research that I get from The Christian Institute. Their in-depth analysis of particular issues is first class. And I just wouldn’t be able to do anything like the amount of work that I do in Parliament without it.”

Basis of faith

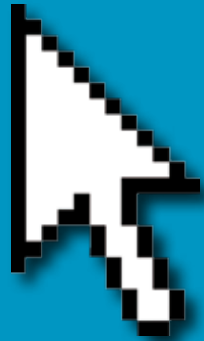
The Christian Institute is committed to the truths of historic, biblical Christianity including:

- A The existence of the one, eternal God, Creator and Lord of the universe, who in the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, both governs all things according to his will and is accomplishing his purposes in the world and in the church.
- B The inspiration of the Holy Scripture in its entirety by God's Spirit through the human authors, and its revelation of God's truth to humanity. The Bible is without error not only when it speaks of salvation, its own origins, values, and religious matters, but it is also without error when it speaks of history and the cosmos. Christians must, therefore, submit to its supreme authority, both individually and corporately, in every matter of belief and conduct.
- C The inherent value of all human beings, in consequence of their creation by God in his own image, and their sinfulness and guilt since the Fall. This has rendered them subject to God's wrath and condemnation, and has resulted in their alienation from his life, suppression of his truth, and hostility to his law.
- D Salvation from the guilt, penalty and all other consequences of sin solely through the work of Jesus Christ - his perfect obedience, substitutionary death, bodily resurrection and exaltation as Lord. He alone is truly God and truly man, the only mediator between God and man. There is salvation through no other person, creed, process or power. Each sinner is justified before God and reconciled to him only by his grace appropriated through faith alone.
- E The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit for the individual's new birth and growth to maturity, and for the Church's constant renewal in truth, wisdom, faith, holiness, love, power and mission.
- F The one, holy, universal and apostolic Church, which is the body of Christ, and to which all true believers belong. The Church's calling is to worship and serve God in the world, to proclaim and defend his truth, to exhibit his character and to demonstrate the reality of his new order.
- G The personal and visible return in glory of the Lord Jesus Christ to raise the dead and bring salvation and judgment to final completion. Evildoers will suffer eternal punishment. God will fully establish his kingdom when he creates a new heaven and a new earth from which evil, suffering and death will be excluded, and in which he will be glorified for ever.



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Politics - According to the Bible

Wayne Grudem's forthcoming book 'Politics - According to the Bible' is due to be released in the UK later in 2010.

It can be pre-ordered on Amazon.co.uk for £23.39.

