



The Bible and Politics



The Bible and Equality *The Case for Principled Pluralism*

Introduction: “A Christian nation” vs “Principled pluralism”

Biblical foundations

Old Testament

New Testament

The church is the “covenant nation” - 1 Peter 1:1, 2:9

The state deals with broad issues of “good”

Acts 18:14-15

Romans 13:1-7

Historical support

Some implications:

Free speech

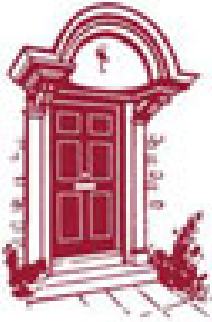
Gay rights

Islam

Questions for Homegroups

1. Read Romans 13:1-7. What specific errors do you think the Apostle Paul was addressing? Compare this with Matthew 22:15-22, Acts 4:19, 18:14-15, 1 Peter 2:13-17, Revelation 13. From these passages what do you think are the legitimate roles of government? What are some of the specific ways in which a government may exceed its biblical mandate?
2. The sermon advocated “principled pluralism” as an important concept for understanding the role of government. Can you explain this concept? What alternative Christian visions for government are there? What are the good and bad points about each?
3. Consider one or more of the following issues in the light of what you have discussed so far:
 - Blasphemy law and free speech
 - Gay rights
 - Allowing a Muslim call to prayer in East Oxford
 - Legalising and regulating prostitution
 - Bishops in the House of Lords
4. Our fundamental calling is to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 22:39, Romans 13:9) and even to love our enemies (Luke 6:27, Matthew 5:44). It is fundamental to our Christian identity that we may deny ourselves certain privileges in the name of love (Philippians 2:1-11). What might that mean in practice for us as private individuals, and citizens?

Resources to Understand Principled Pluralism



The Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics (KLICE)

klice.co.uk

This organisation is a Christian ethical think tank. It produces much good material.

Its director, Dr Jonathan Chaplin is a leading advocate of “principled pluralism” in the UK. There is much good material on the website including an article, *The Bible, the State and Religious Diversity: Theological Foundations for Principled Pluralism*. (klice.co.uk/uploads/EST08JC.pdf).



An Evangelical Manifesto

www.anevangelicalmanifesto.com

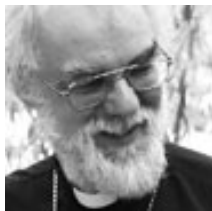
In 2008 a group of leading evangelicals in America produced a manifesto which repudiated extreme withdrawal from public life, but also the claim that America (and by extension any nation) should call itself a “Christian nation.” They sought to steer between extremes of giving up on a culture and trying to take it over. They appealed for a “civil public square” in which all faiths and none are treated with equal dignity, and in which Christians work for the common good. (see pp. 14-20 of the Manifesto) Although the Manifesto is focused on America the principles espoused are very relevant for the UK.

Evangelical
MANIFESTO

The Archbishop of Canterbury’s speech on Sharia Law

<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/1581>

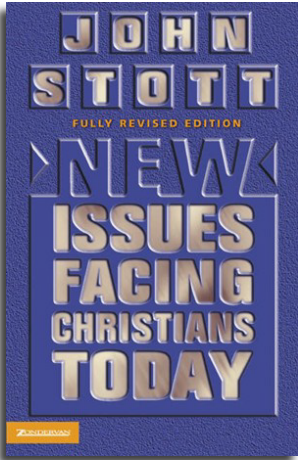
The explanation of the archbishop of Canterbury’s notorious speech in 2008, on the role of sharia law in the UK, is worth examining.



Rowan Williams uses the Muslim minority in the UK as a test case for how religious minorities may have limited freedoms to self-determination according to their own convictions within an overall unitary and secular legal system.

Despite the alarmist response to his lecture this seems to me to be a useful contribution to the discussion.

Recommended Books



New Issues Facing Christians Today **John Stott (IVP)**

Although John Stott does not explicitly take a principled pluralist position in this classic book, he nevertheless argues that persuasion is the central way in which Christians can influence society.

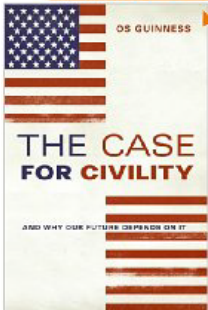
THIS BOOK IS AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE ON THE CHURCH WEBSITE AT A SPECIAL PRICE OF £10.00.

Free Church, Free State **Nigel G. Wright (Paternoster)**

Nigel Wright sets out the basic contours of a Baptist vision for church and state. His book serves as a useful introduction.



The Case for Civility **Os Guinness (Harper Collins)**



Although, as the cover makes plain, this book focuses on America, nevertheless Os Guinness is a clear and persuasive Christian voice. His arguments are very applicable to the UK.