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One of our clergy was recently visiting the United States and sent me a transcript of an address by Englishman Chris Wright, of Langham Partnerships, to an American audience. In the light of the upheavals caused by Brexit and the Trump presidency, Wright considers a Biblical perspective on politics. Sometimes Christians separate their faith from public life. However, commitment to Jesus Christ should permeate all of life.

Chris Wright, who is an Old Testament scholar, analyses contemporary politics according to the standards God expected of the nation of Israel. He isolates several national virtues: modesty not ostentation; integrity, not lying or 'alternative facts'; justice not exploitation. Wright defines three specific idols of Old Testament Israel which are still current in today's world, namely prosperity, nationalism and self-exaltation.

His article makes the point that Israel is representative of more general patterns of human life, stating that the processes of Brexit and the US election are 'symptomatic of long-term idolatry and short term folly,' marked by 'cavalier disregard for truth' and 'massive expenditure and arrogance'. One biting sentence sums up his view: 'The idols have come to rule.'

Regardless of our particular political leanings or sympathies regarding these overseas events, we need to apply Christian thinking to our own politics. I find Chris Wright's article stimulating in forcing us to do this.

There is a particular challenge for Christians in some questions that Wright humbly addresses to his American audience, many of whom felt Trump was the better of two bad choices notwithstanding his questionable morality, obvious narcissism and material greed. Wright maintains:

When did following Jesus ever depend on religious freedoms guaranteed by the state? Certainly not in the New Testament itself ... For the vast majority of Christian believers throughout most of history ... following Jesus is a costly decision, under adverse political and legal circumstances ... Following Jesus is not something we can only do when the state allows us, or protects us ...

He then properly asks:

Did American Christians think about it in these terms: '[Was] the choice between a leader whom so many ... consider so unsuited to the dignity ... and enormous responsibilities of ... President of the USA, on the one hand, and the challenge of going on bearing witness to the Lord Jesus Christ as his followers, even if it becomes more costly as the state likely becomes less friendly and accommodating, on the other hand?

Likewise we Australian Christians should ask whether it is the idols of self-protection, prosperity and personal or national pride which guide our political decisions, or whether it is taking up our cross and following Jesus no matter what the social or political environment.



The second half of Wright's article unpacks the significance of Christian standards. I commend it to you. The full text is available at: <http://www.anglicanleadershipinstitute.com/following-jesus-political-change>.

By Bishop Trevor Edwards