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# Church and Politics

David Gitari

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IN Kenya I was not merely an observer of but an active participant in the unfolding drama of church-state relationship. The experience of faithful Christians in Kenya in their struggle to be true witnesses of the gospel could also be a help to Christians in other parts of Africa who are being confronted with similar challenges.

For many years Kenya had been a British Colony but we fought for and gained our independence in 1963. Ever since, Kenya has been known over many years as one of the very few African countries which has enjoyed true freedom and democracy. Kenya has also often been quoted among the few African countries which are not under military rule. It is true that except for a short lived air-force *coup d'état* on 1st Aug 1982, Kenya has not experienced a violent military

takeover. Seen from that perspective Kenya has been exemplary in terms of political and economic growth. At the same time Kenya might be one of the few countries outside Southern Africa where church leaders have boldly taken issues with those in authority and as a result Kenya may provide a very fertile ground in the study of church-state relations.

## The Great Debate Never Debated

Key church leaders in Kenya have been longing for an opportunity to meet the Kenyan politicians to debate recurrent issues pertaining to the welfare of our nation. The debate mainly revolves around this question, 'Should the church be involved in politics?'. Every time a church leader makes a statement that appears political, politicians rush at him, warning him to stick to the pulpit and leave politics to politicians.

The Sunday sermons of some

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church leaders receive good coverage in the Monday secular newspapers. One can always be certain that the following day the daily papers will carry statements by politicians rebuking the church leaders for daring to comment on current political issues from the pulpit. Many times church leaders have been challenged to resign their positions and stand for political party elections if they want to involve themselves in politics instead of hiding behind the pulpit and turning it into a political platform in the guise of preaching.

These threats have led some church leaders to develop a kind of fear that leads them to turn against their fellow church leaders whom they condemn and accuse of abandoning the mission of the church 'to save souls from sin'. With the same breath of condemnation, they feel duty bound to praise the state for giving the church 'freedom of worship'. The church leaders who adopt this position are by far the majority but their impact on society is negligible. This stand is faulty and is based on a misunderstanding of the mission of the church as well as on a misunderstanding of what political involvement really means. To condemn anyone for political involvement is by its very nature political involvement; likewise to praise politicians for whatever reason is also political involvement.

To give politicians credit for giving 'freedom of worship' to the church, is to give them credit where credit is not in the least deserved. It is God our creator who has given us freedom to worship him and no one else can take that freedom from us. Politicians tried to deny Daniel freedom to worship his God by casting him in the lions' den.

But in that den Daniel continued to exercise his freedom of worship (Daniel 6). The least that those in authority can do is not to give freedom of worship but rather to guarantee the same.

Church leaders who have adopted the attitude that politics and religion cannot be mixed may have come to the conclusion that there is nothing to be debated as the line of demarcation between church and politics is very clear. It may be more correct to say that such church leaders have joined the debate on the side of politicians and have themselves taken a political stand without realizing that that is the case.

On the other hand, there are a few church leaders whom the Kenyan Press prefer to call 'controversial' because they have refused to be intimidated. They have consistently continued to proclaim the holistic gospel, applying the same to contemporary situations. I happen to be one of those few and for that reason I may be allowed to speak using the first person plural.

We often pleaded with politicians, including party leaders and parliamentarians, to agree that we hold a conference to discuss church/state relationships. But our request was always turned down. As a result the great debate continues from the pulpit or political platform but without a chance for personal encounter between the protagonists. In that case it is no wonder the press has been extravagantly used as a meeting point between the 'controversial church leaders' and politicians. Yet one might pause and ask whether this press encounter helps to heal the growing rift in any way. However, we believe that in the

final analysis the truth will be triumphant. Given the opportunity to meet the politicians whose opinions on church-state relationship verge on political fanaticism, we would present our case from our biblical and theological convictions.

## The Doctrines of Creation and Humanity

The story of creation recorded in the book of Genesis chapter one portrays God as the one who 'lets be'. And God said, 'let there be light, and there was light' (Gen. 1:3). God is the one who says, 'let there be' and whatever he wishes to be comes into being. God the creator can therefore be called, 'He who lets be'. In this 'letting be' God confers 'being' on what he creates. This 'letting be' is both his creativity and his love. God did not create the universe and then abandon it. He continues to sustain his creation by letting be. The creatures which God has made are in turn called upon to participate in God's creativity. As John Macquarrie has put it,

Thus the fullest imitation of our participation in God comes about when the creature in turn 'lets be' ... living beings which reproduce themselves participate in letting be more than do the inanimate things; but on a far higher level is man who, with his capacity — however limited — for creativity and love brings the 'imitation' of God on to an altogether new level, that of free co-operation in 'letting be'.<sup>1</sup>

The climax of God's creation was the creation of human beings. Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth' (Gen. 1:26). In this passage we have the doctrine of *Imago Dei* being closely connected with the Doctrine of Dominion. The doctrine of *Imago Dei* shows that humanity is created in the image of God and the doctrine of humanity is supposed to be — to have dominion over all creation. 'When the image is obscured, then dominion is impaired, when the image is restored, the dominion is fulfilled.'<sup>2</sup> Humankind was created in God's image so that they could co-operate with God not only in 'letting be' but also in caring for what God has created.

It should be noted that God did not say the dominion over all creation was reserved only to certain sections of humanity. It was not the 'male' who was told to have dominion over the earth — it was both the male and the female. It was not 'politicians' alone who were given dominion over creation; this dominion belongs to all human beings. Politicians left on their own have sometimes made decisions which have devastated creation and their actions have demonstrated the reality of the doctrine of the fall.

Politicians and those who rule must be reminded that though humanity is the Lord's creation and ruler of nature, this must not be taken as a personal

1 John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1967), p. 208.

2 Alan Richardson, *Genesis 1-11* (London, SCM, 1953), p. 56.

right. Rather he should see himself as God's vicegerent, responsible to God for his stewardship. Otherwise, as Alan Richardson says, 'his science and industry will bring not a blessing but a curse, they will make the earth not a paradise but a dust-bowl or a Hiroshima'.<sup>3</sup> Human history is full of sad spectacles of humanity's age-long effort to subdue the earth to its own end and not to God's glory. The *Imago Dei* though not completely obliterated is indeed defaced.

With this understanding, church leaders have every right to remind decision makers that the earth belongs to God (Ps. 24:1). God has appointed human beings (not just politicians) to be the stewards of creation and to exercise proper accountability of their stewardship. After all, it is not to fallen humanity that the promise contained in Genesis 1:27-28 will be fulfilled; it will be to the redeemed humanity of the last Adam, the church of Christ: 'whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son' (Rom. 8:29).

The creation story clearly shows that God's purpose in creating man was not to leave him as a lonely creature, but to make him a social being. Thus God says, 'I will make him a helper fit for him' (Gen. 2:18) — this is because God himself is social and the decision to create man in Genesis 1:26 is introduced with the plural words, 'let us make man in our image, in our likeness'. As Christopher Wright puts it,

The first fact about this 'image of

God' is sexuality, that complementary duality in unity, from which flows the rest of man's social nature: marriage, parenthood, family, kinship, and outward in widening circles ... God himself, therefore, in the mystery of Trinity, subsists in the harmonious relationship of equal Persons, each of whom possesses his proper function and authority. Man, his image, was created to live in the harmony of personal equality but with social organisation that required functional structures of authority. The ordering of social relationships and structures, locally, nationally and globally, is of direct concern to our creator God, then. But that is precisely the stuff of politics. Hence, while the Bible makes no unnatural separation between 'politics' and 'religion', it does not portray them as identical. Both are essential dimensions of what it is to be human. Man the worshipper is also man the political animal, for God made him so.<sup>4</sup>

To 'let be' may also be understood as 'enabling'. Human beings have a duty before God to assist each individual or community to make full use of their potential. God did not make Eve for Adam so that Adam could exploit her and hinder her from being a fulfilled creature. She was made to be a helper with full potential to explore and create. Cain and Abel were both born with full potential to let be. Abel

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3 Richardson, *Genesis 1-11*, p. 55.

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4 C. J. H. Wright, *Living as the People of God* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983), pp. 104-105.

had the talents of a shepherd and Cain the talents of a farmer. As a result of jealousy, Cain the older and stronger brother killed Abel the younger and the weaker brother. In other words, Cain will not let his brother be. He will not permit him to continue looking after the sheep and making his economic contribution.

To this day those stronger brothers who have found their way to positions of power and authority will keep an eye on their weaker brothers and will not allow them to exercise their full potential as God's chosen stewards of creation. Cain would rather have his brother dead than see him rising as a political leader to become the Minister for Livestock Development.

The doctrine of Creation and the doctrine of Humanity convince us that the affairs of this world cannot be left to politicians alone. The welfare of human beings is so important an issue that it cannot be left to a few politicians alone.

### The Doctrine of Incarnation

Our understanding of the doctrine of incarnation gives us further mandate to be deeply involved in the social, economic and political affairs of our country. The prologue to the gospel according to St John declares that: '... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father' (John 1: 14).

The Logos which had existed before the world was created and which participated with God the Father in the creation of all things now becomes flesh without losing the qualities of Logos in any way. The Word does not

only become flesh but also dwells among human beings. The clause 'and dwelt among us' emphasizes that the Logos really shared our human lot by taking residence in our midst.

As Ezekiel had prophesied to the exiles who had been deprived of the temple which symbolized God's presence among his people, 'my tabernacle shall be with them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people' (Ezek. 37:27). John in his prologue now suggests this prophecy is fulfilled, not in a restored temple but in the incarnate logos who is the true temple. The Gospel of John presents the Word which became flesh as Jesus, a truly human being who mingled with people, and felt such human emotions as hunger, sorrow, anger, pity etc. John's prologue suggests that this incarnate Logos revealed his divinity not so much in mighty acts, though these were important, but in his revelation of divine glory through loving and humble service, 'It is moral attributes which matter, grace and faith come through Jesus Christ.'<sup>5</sup>

The way the early church may have formulated its faith in the incarnate Christ is recorded by Paul in Philippians 2:5-8.

Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking a form of a servant, being born in the likeness

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<sup>5</sup> Howard Marshall, 'Incarnational Christology in the New Testament' in H. H. Rowdon, ed., *Christ the Lord* (Leicester: Intervarsity, 1982), p. 4.

of man and being formed in the human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross.

The key phrase in this *Kenosis* passage is that (he) '*emptied himself*'. Unlike Adam who was tempted by the devil to be like God, the second Adam did not commit this 'robbery' and therefore remained faithful to divine destiny to be the image of God. Therefore he emptied himself; that is, 'that he determined himself to become a man, to enter into the humanity which had lost the likeness of God'.<sup>6</sup> In order to become like a man he had to empty himself—had to abandon 'the glorious and Lordly prerogatives which go along with equality with God in order to take on the humble form of a servant and to die'.<sup>7</sup> Salvation history clearly shows that God wanted to redeem fallen humanity and to reconcile it to himself. To do this, God had to become a human being and to dwell in our midst with all the risks which this self-emptying implies — even death on the cross.

Billy Graham told a crusade rally in Nairobi that he once stepped on an ant-hill by mistake and it crumbled. Then he noticed how busy the ants were trying to rebuild their city. Being a man of God he very much wanted to assist in the rebuilding of the hill. Then he realized that to be able to assist the ants in this task he had to become an ant himself, otherwise he could offer no help. Similarly, for God to be able to redeem humanity, he had to empty himself,

take the form of a servant and be born in the likeness of man. The writer of Hebrews begins his letter by introducing his own form of incarnational theology:

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power (Heb. 1:1-3).

In days gone by, God spoke to people in many and various ways, through the prophets, using different modes such as visions, angelic revelations, prophetic words and events. The prophets were men raised by God to challenge the injustices and other evils of their time. Their mandate to prophesy was their unshakeable conviction that they spoke from God. Their ability to say, 'God says', gave their words a unique authority. Though ill treated they persisted with their message. As Donald Guthrie says, 'Their stories make heroic reading, but what they said was incomplete. The writer knows that it needed a better method of communication, and he recognises that this has come in Jesus Christ'.<sup>8</sup> The essence of Christian revelation is that God himself has now spoken in his Son because Jesus Christ perfectly shows all that is knowable about the father.

In days gone by God was speaking

<sup>6</sup> Oscar Cullman, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1959), p. 178.

<sup>7</sup> Howard Marshall, *Christ the Lord*, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Tyndale Commentary Series) (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1983), p. 62.

by the mouth of agents. But in these last days God has spoken in a much more superior way- by his own Son. To see the Son and to hear him is to see God and to hear God: '... he who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9). By the coming of Jesus into this world, God himself has come on the stage of human history, not to be a spectator but to be deeply involved in the affairs of men and women. Jesus has come on the stage of human history to confront men and women with the very message of God himself with a challenge to accept or reject it.

### Involvement

When politicians call upon church leaders to confine themselves to spiritual matters one cannot help feeling that they would prefer the Logos to remain where he was from the beginning; that the heavenly Christ should not empty himself; and God should not send his son to speak from the platform of human history. To tell us not to be involved in the welfare of our country is virtually to tell us not to follow the example of Jesus Christ. Jesus assumed human form and took up residence in this world, prepared to take part as a perfect human being in every sphere of life with the hope of bringing salvation to the world. In his earthly life Jesus did not live in an ivory tower of meditative asceticism like the Qumran Community or the early Christian monks. He went out into every city and every village as Matthew tells us: 'And Jesus went about all cities and villages, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity' (Mt. 9:35).

By going where people were, he was able to see with his own eyes the plight of the people and to make statements which the politicians of the day would have considered highly political and provocative. 'When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd' (Mt. 9:36).

The crowds he saw were harassed politically as they were under Roman Colonialists, harassed economically as the rich were making themselves richer at the expense of the poor, and harassed religiously as the Pharisees were putting unbearable burdens on the people: '...They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them by their finger' (Mt. 23:4).

The incarnate Lord seeing all this harassment could not help being moved by compassionate pity — the kind of pity that touches the core of one's inner being. He could not be moved by such compassion and remain the same. He had to take the necessary action to help the helpless — to feed the hungry, heal the sick, cast out demons and challenge the status quo.

Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cummin and have neglected weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done without neglecting the others, you blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! (Mt. 23:23-24).

The Pharisees and Sadducees of the day had been so concerned 'to apply the tithing law in respect of every garden herb that justice, mercy and faith



have been ignored'.<sup>9</sup>

The doctrine of incarnation expresses the perception that Jesus 'emptied himself' and chose to 'become flesh' and to live among us, thus identifying himself with humanity. This demands our Christian presence in the world so that we may be able not only to evangelize but also to be involved in every aspect of human life. The incarnational model invites us to proclaim the gospel not from a distance but rather by penetrating communities and cultures, cities and villages so that we can see for ourselves the harassment and helplessness of God's people and then stand in solidarity with them even if that means taking a political stand which brings hope to humanity.

### The Doctrine of the Kingdom of God

The doctrine of the kingdom of God demonstrates how the Incarnate Son of God got deeply involved in the affairs of the world be they economic, political, social or spiritual.

The Synoptic Gospels are all agreed that the main theme of the preaching of Jesus was the kingdom of God. The Gospel according to St. Mark tells us that after the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus went into Galilee preaching the gospel of God and saying, 'The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel' (Mark 1:15). Jesus was convinced that he had an obligation to preach the kingdom of God because it was for that pur-

pose that he came to this world (see Luke 4:43). Scholars have vigorously debated on whether Jesus thought the kingdom he was preaching was entirely future or entirely present. As Ron Sider has put it:

... there is a growing consensus that, in striking contrast to contemporary Jewish thought, Jesus viewed the Kingdom as both present and future. Jewish eschatology looked forward to a supernatural convulsion when the Messiah would come to destroy Israel's natural enemies in bloody battle and initiate a new age of Messianic peace. In Jewish expectation there was a radical, almost total break, between the old age and the new Messianic age. Jesus on the other hand, taught that the Messianic age had actually broken into the old age. Its powers were already at work in this old age in his person and work, even though the Kingdom would come in its fullness at the end of history.<sup>10</sup>

Rene Padilla goes further to emphasize that the central theme of the preaching of Jesus

is not hope of the coming of the Kingdom at some predictable date in the future, but the fact that in his own person and work the Kingdom is already present among men and women in great power, ... the Kingdom of God's dynamic power

9 Richard France, *Matthew* (Tyndale Commentary Series) (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), p. 328.

10 Ronald Sider, 'Christian Ethics and the Good News of the Kingdom' in *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way*, edited by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (Oxford: Regnum, 1989), pp. 127-128.

made visible through concrete signs pointing to him as Messiah: 'the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured and the good news is preached to the poor' (Luke 7:22). In other words, God in Christ is showing his passionate concern for the poor. A new eschatological reality is present in human history affecting human life not only morally and spiritually but also physically and psychologically, materially and socially .... The completion of God's purpose still lies in the future but the foretaste of the eschaton is already possible.<sup>11</sup>

### East African Revival

Our Evangelical tradition in East Africa has put more emphasis on preaching the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus who will come to take the saved ones to heaven and punish the sinners. The East African Revival Movement which began in the early 1930s in Rwanda and spread to Burundi, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania has for six decades challenged sinners to accept Christ Jesus as their personal saviour in preparation for his coming again. A person who accepts Christ is received in the fellowship of the brethren where he or she has to walk in the 'light' by confessing any sins he/she might have committed since the last meeting of the fellowship. In the fellowship meeting one will often hear,

'since our last meeting, I fell into a sin of jealousy and if Jesus came, I would have been left behind. But now I have repented and am ready to go with Jesus to heaven.' The repentant brother or sister is restored back to the fellowship by the whole group singing 'Tukutendereza' (Glory) song.

The Revival movement has had a great impact on the life of the church in East Africa. For example, during the persecution in the time of the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya and in Idi Amin's reign of terror in Uganda, it was those who belonged to the revival movement who were prepared to stand up and be counted as followers of Jesus Christ even if it meant death. However, the Revival movement has been more of an inward looking spiritual movement, concerned more about the kingdom to come rather than participating in the kingdom which Jesus came to inaugurate here on earth. The brethren are so concerned about their own individual souls that they show little concern for the corrupt and sinful world around them except to invite sinners to come out of the 'sinking ship' and join the 'life boat' of the brethren. At the time of the struggle for independence, the brethren kept aloof from the politics of the day.

After independence, the brethren took little interest in joining political parties and in involvement in active politics. If a 'brother in the Lord' stood for elections he was seen like a brother who had become spiritually lukewarm or who had backslidden. The advent of Idi Amin as the ruler of Uganda did not worry the brethren at first. But when he killed Archbishop Luwum, many Ugandan brethren who ran away to neighbouring countries were com-

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<sup>11</sup> Rene Padilla, 'The Politics of the Kingdom of God and the Political Mission of the Church' in *Proclaiming Christ in Christ's Way*, pp. 185-186.

pelled to revise their theology of the kingdom from a perspective of refugees and exiles. Uganda, which is 75% Christian, had given a murderous Muslim dictator a chance to rule the country. The regime affected even the 'brethren' in the safety of their revival ivory towers.

### Conversion

When Kenyan politicians tell us to leave politics to politicians and to confine ourselves to the pulpit, they seem to take for granted that the purpose of religion is to prepare people for the future, not the present; theirs is a concept of a passive religion that tells citizens to accept decisions without question; to obey those in authority for the sake of the peace of the nation; to prepare souls for the life to come. But such a concept of religion contradicts the very teaching of Jesus Christ as far as the kingdom of God is concerned. But it may be politicians see what they assume is true religion in the lives of those who are 'converted' or born again Christians and who understand 'conversion' to mean aloofness; they are not of this world. Politicians have an easy time with such religion because it poses no threat. Yet as Jim Wallis puts it,

Conversion in the Bible is always firmly grounded in history, it is always addressed to the actual situation in which people find themselves. People are never called to conversion in an historical vacuum. They turn to God in the midst of concrete historical events, dilemmas and choices. That turning is always deeply personal, but it is

never private. It is never an abstract or theoretical concern; conversion is always a practical issue. Any idea of conversion that is removed from the social and political realities of the day is simply not biblical.<sup>12</sup>

Conversion in the New Testament makes sense only from the perspective of the kingdom of God. To be converted to Christ means to give one's allegiance to the kingdom, to enter into God's purpose for the world expressed in the language of the kingdom. Thus when the disciples responded to Jesus' invitation, they joined him, followed him, transferred their allegiance to him, and as a result they became a Community of the New Order. Again Jim Wallis puts it thus:

Our conversion then cannot be an end in itself; it is the first step of entry into the Kingdom. Conversion marks the birth of the movement out of the merely private existence into a public consciousness. Conversion is the beginning of a true solidarity with the purpose of the Kingdom of God in the world. No longer pre-occupied with our private lives, we are engaged in a vocation for the world .... Turning from ourselves to Jesus identifies us with him in the world. Conversion therefore is to public responsibility —as defined by the Kingdom of God, not by the state. Our own salvation, which began with a personal decision about Jesus Christ, becomes intimately

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<sup>12</sup> Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion* (Tring: Lion Publishing, 1981), p. 5.

linked with the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God.<sup>13</sup>

Our politicians will wonder what exactly we mean by the kingdom of God. Our Lord gave us a definition of the kingdom when he taught disciples how to pray. The Lord's Prayer includes the petition, 'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Mt. 6:10-11).

### Your Kingdom Come

In other words, the kingdom of God 'is the society upon earth where God's will is as perfectly done as it is in Heaven'.<sup>14</sup> As Soritua Nababan told the CWME Conference on the theme 'Your Kingdom Come', held in Melbourne, Australia in May 1980,

to pray 'Your Kingdom Come', is to pray for the impossible from a human point of view, both in our personal as well as public life. In our personal sphere, to pray 'Your Kingdom Come' means to ask and therefore work out the end of the reign of one's own will, riches, power, welfare, honour... It is to give up inherited cultural identity for a totally new, transformed identity which is neither western nor eastern, neither Asian nor African nor Latin American, but in fact—a Christ-like identity... In public life to pray, 'Your Kingdom Come' is to ask for the full revelation of what Christ did: 'He disarmed principalities and powers and made a public

example of them, triumphing over them in him' (Col. 2:15). It is to ask therefore to work for the end of the powers which are the ordered structures of society and the spiritual powers which lie behind them and undergird religious structures, intellectual structures, moral structures, political structures etc.<sup>15</sup>

In Matthew chapter 25, Jesus said that at the end of the time those who will possess the kingdom of God are those who on this earth feed the hungry, give a drink to the thirsty, give hospitality to strangers, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit those in prison (Mt. 25:42f). When God's will is done in response to the needs of the poor, then they themselves have a taste of the kingdom and those who respond to their needs qualify to be received in the kingdom to come. But note the cries of the present day poor:

I was hungry and you appointed a commission to enquire into my hunger;

I was thirsty and you made Coca Cola to exploit my thirst;

I was a stranger and you put a sign 'Mbwa Kali' (Beware fierce dog) at the entrance to your home;

I was naked and you smuggled second hand clothes from a neighbouring country and sold them to me at an exorbitant price;

I was sick with 'AIDS' and you said you cannot visit a sinner;

I was in detention without trial

<sup>13</sup> Wallis, *Conversion*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* Vol 1 (Edinburgh: St Andrew's Press, 1975), p. 212.

<sup>15</sup> *Your Kingdom Come, Report of the Melbourne Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, 1980* (Geneva: WCC, 1980), p. 3.

and you feared to visit me in case you lose your political position.

Because of your failure to respond to the needy around you, the Lord will say to you, 'Away from me, you that are under God's curse! Away to the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels! I was hungry but you would not feed me, thirsty but you would not give me a drink, I was a stranger but you would not welcome me in your home, naked but you would not clothe me, I was sick and in prison but you would not take care of me' (Matt. 25:41-43).

### Church and Political Life

The church has a vital role to play in the politics of a nation. To this end I

have tried as much as possible to be actively involved in the politics of my country. Although I have often been warned by politicians to 'leave politics to politicians' I have never personally called a political rally in order to give a political address. Rather, I have always confined myself to the Word of God, expounding it faithfully and systematically and applying the same to the prevailing political situation. As is commonly said, 'truth hurts' — indeed it should because the Word of God is like a double edged sword. For this reason, in spite of the hard times I and my diocese have undergone, we have not stopped declaring God's will for our nation. The struggle to uphold and to work for justice and peace must continue.

## **Faith, Health and Prosperity: A Report on 'Word of Faith' and 'Positive Confession' Theologies**

Editor: Andrew Perriman

This Evangelical Alliance Report examines the movement that goes under various names: 'Word of Faith', 'Positive Confession', the 'message of the Prevailing Word', the 'prosperity gospel', the 'health and wealth gospel', or in a more derogatory fashion, the 'name it and claim it' or 'blab it and grab it' gospel. Offering a detailed history of this movement, the contributors then examine the relationship between faith and wealth in the Old Testament, New Testament and New Testament church, in search of an evangelical viewpoint on faith, health and prosperity.

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