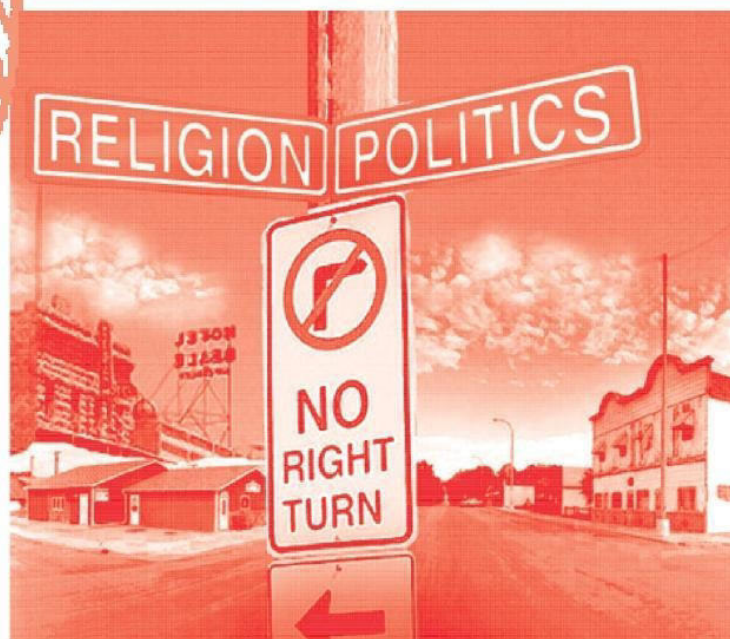


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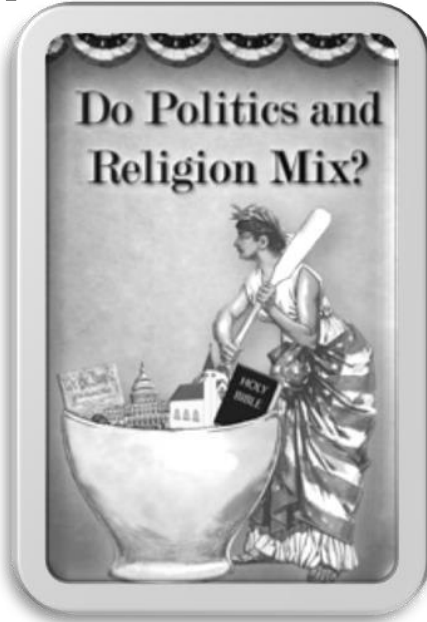
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"We now have a better understanding of what the Incarnation means, [...] Jesus really took on human flesh and made himself one with his brothers and sisters in suffering, in tears and laments [...] I am speaking of an incarnation that is preferential and partial: incarnation in the world of the poor. From that perspective the Church will become a Church for everybody. It will offer a service to the powerful, too, through the apostolate of conversion".
(Archbishop Romero, at the University of Louvain, 2 February 1980)

This issue of the SEDOS Bulletin addresses the subject of politics in various countries in response to the Question: "Can the Church be political?"



Pope Francis states that there are two fundamental issues: "first, the inclusion of the poor in society; second, peace and social dialogue" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 185).

Fr Alex JEBADU, SVD, an Indonesian priest, reflects on the Latin American model of Liberation Theology in his article entitled: "Political Dimension of the Church's Liberative Mission of the Poor and Creation". He posits that the Church cannot be a-political because it stands in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, and has to raise its voice in situations of injustice. "The Church believes that there is a need to inspire the world order with the divine law" by imbuing politics with the values of the Gospel, in line with many Popes and theologians.

Professor Joseph B.O. OKELLO, discussed the role of members of the Clergy who enter politics in Kenya in his article entitled: "The Pastors, Politics and People of Kenya".

Unfortunately, in Kenya's multiparty system, there is no clear distinction between the preacher's pulpit and the politician's platform. Canvassing is undisciplined; funds are unaccounted for, and fidelity to the Gospel becomes a challenge as the race for office is unbridled.

Timothy M. NJOYA also addressed the situation in Kenya with a critical analysis of Government policies. He highlighted "the State's expectation was that the Church should complement it rather than play its God-given role", and pointed out the "lack of clarity between spirituality and politics". He attacked the Lancaster Constitution and the One-party State" and demanded "a new and legitimate Constitution". He said, "the divine criteria for governance are the same for the State as for the Church: namely, fidelity to God's Covenant of love for the Creator and care for everything that God created.... Any Church that ignores the inherent ideological variance between the State's mandate to enforce the law, and its own divine mandate ... loses its very purpose".

Sr. Bozena STENCEL, FMM, a young Polish Sister, has studied the concept of the "Teologia Politica"/Political Theology of the Church. She compares the views of several authors and theologians. For example, Metz and Moltmann use this term to define a new way of understanding Theology, presupposing that a-political theology is impossible. They call for a de-privatization of the faith and a re-formulation of the Christian message because it is of great importance in the socio-political field. Peterson totally rejects an incorrect use of the Christian message to justify political situations and structures, and Antonio M. Baggio holds that the Trinitarian revelation must also orientate the political dimension of people's lives. Sister Stencil concludes that our faith impels us, as religious, to discover ever anew God's saving love which penetrates history, to bring about the Kingdom of God in the world.

Ms. Philippa Wooldridge
SEDOS Proof-Reader

Political Dimension of the Church's Liberative Mission of the Poor and Creation

Abstract: Pastoral agents of the Catholic Church as well as of other churches, beginning with the Pope, bishops, priests, pastors and nuns whose ministry inevitably involves them in the socio-economic and political affairs of a given Nation/State or the world in general are often accused of meddling in the affairs of Governments who demand that they get out of the way. This article argues that this is a false accusation. For instance, the Church's ministry to stand in solidarity with the poor, the oppressed and to safeguard Creation requires that the Church – which means here all Christians – requires that the Church get involved in the world's socio-political affairs. Thus, the Church is and must be political in a broad and noble sense. The prophetic liberative mission of the Church includes promoting love, justice, solidarity and fraternity among the entire human family, defending the dignity of the human person in its fullness and safeguarding the integrity of Creation in cooperation with all people of good will. The Church will be in a position to review the world's socio-economic and political affairs, but will stand up to condemn unjust practices in any form that do not respect the dignity of the human person, destroy the livelihood of the poor or do not safeguard Creation as the common heritage of all mankind. And the Church does this without taking over the unjust socio-economic and political structures that are being condemned and without violating the principle of the separation of Church and State. The rest of this article will demonstrate how the Church fulfills the political dimension of its prophetic liberative missionary commitment in the world.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, the prophetic liberative mission of the Catholic Church to stand in solidarity with the oppressed poor, the weak and marginalized and to condemn the causes of their poverty and oppression which are often embedded in unjust socio-economic structures, is as old as the Church itself. It has its foundation in God's own liberative mission in the Old Testament and in the liberative ministry of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament. Yet this missionary commitment, systematically formulated as Social Doctrine, was begun only in 1891 with the publication of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (On Capital and Labour). The Encyclical, considered as the first ever on social issues, was written as the Church's prophetic response to the social and economic problems caused by the tempestuous Industrial Revolution of the time. During the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Catholic Church became increasingly aware of its commitment, concern and solidarity with all humanity especially the poor and those suffering from various forms of social injustice.

In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Council Fathers of the Second Vatican Council view the Church as a constitutive part of the world community which cannot simply stand by idly in the face of critical world affairs. With this in mind, the Church says: "The joy and the hope, the grief and the anguish of the men of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, these are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well".² Still during the Second Vatican Council, while being aware that the Church of Christ is not supposed to run the political, social and economic order, the Church believes that there is a need to inspire the world order with the divine law:

"Christ, did not bequeath to the Church a mission in the political, economic or social order; the purpose He assigned to her was a religious one. But this religious mission can be the source of commitment, direction and vigour to establish and consolidate the human community according to the law of God. In fact, the Church is able, indeed is obliged, if times and circumstances require it, to initiate action for the benefit of all men, especially of those in need, like works of mercy and similar undertakings".³

The Church, newly aware of the pastoral urgency of confronting the immensity of social injustice in the world, during the Second Vatican Council, strongly recommended the establishment of a pontifical body to work for justice and peace:



"Taking into account the immensity of the hardships which still afflict a large section of humanity, and with a view to fostering everywhere the justice and love of Christ for the poor, the Council suggests that it would be most opportune to create some organization of the universal Church whose task it would be to arouse the Catholic Community to promote the progress of areas which are in want and foster social justice between nations".⁴

As the follow-up to this call, in 1967 – two years after the Second Vatican Council – Paul VI, established the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace. In a speech given to the members and consultants of this group on 20 April 1967, Paul VI stated that he viewed the commission as a rooster that perches on top of the Church Body calling for vigilance for the entire programme of the liberative mission of the Church, especially with regard to justice and peace in every aspect of human life:

You [Justice and Peace Commission] represent the realization of the last vote of the Council (cf. GS, n. 9). Today, as in the past, once the construction of a Church or bell tower is finished, a rooster is placed on top as a symbol of vigilance, for the faith and for the entire program of Christian life. In similar fashion, this Committee has been placed on top of the spiritual building of the Council, and its mission is none other than that of keeping the eyes of the Church open, its heart sensitive and its hand prepared for the work of charity which it is called upon to realize in the world, so as to promote the progress of poorer peoples, and promote social justice among nations.⁵

After a ten-year experimental period, Paul VI gave the Commission its definitive status with the *Motu Proprio, Justitiam et Pacem* on the 10th of December 1976. On the 28th of June 1988, John Paul II changed the title of this ecclesial body from Commission for Justice and Peace to Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. As for the objectives and mandate of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* of 1988 defines them as follows:

The goal of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace is to promote justice and peace in the world in accordance with the Gospel and the Social Teaching of the Church. 1) The Council makes a thorough study of the Social Teaching of the Church and ensures that this teaching is widely spread and put into practice among people/s and communities, especially regarding the relations between workers and management, relations that must come to be more and more imbued with the spirit of the Gospel. 2) It collects information and research on justice and peace, about human development and violations of human rights; it ponders all this, and, when appropriate, shares its conclusions with the groupings of bishops. It cultivates relationships with international Catholic organizations and other institutions, even ones outside the Catholic Church, which sincerely strive to achieve peace and justice in the world. 3) It works to form among peoples a mentality which fosters peace, especially on the occasion of World Peace Day.⁶

Following the foundation of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in 1967, Justice and Peace Commissions were slowly set up at national, regional and diocesan levels and in every religious congregation within the Catholic Church throughout the world. During the Second CELAM Meeting in Medellín 1968, the Latin American Bishops were quickly aware of the need to establish Justice and Peace Commissions across Latin America: "The Justice and Peace Commission should be promoted in all countries [throughout Latin America], at least nationally".⁷ This led to the birth of Liberation Theology on the continent. While at the Pontifical level the commission is still called Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, within Religious Orders and Congregations as well as at the diocesan level the Justice and Peace Commissions in the 1990s, and following in the footsteps of the World Council of Churches, were renamed the Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). The name itself indicates the link between justice and environment, between the option for the poor and the option for the earth. Within religious congregations, the mission mandate of the JPIC is patterned on that of the Pontifical Council.

In short, in the last fifty years since the Second Vatican Council, the liberative missionary commitment of the worldwide Catholic Church and other mainline Churches as well has revolved around and is coordinated by the Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). In order to opt to liberate the oppressed poor, safeguard the integrity of Creation and denounce the world's various socio-economic injustices, inevitably the Church, in cooperation with followers of other religions and with all people of good will, must confront the world's social, economic and political affairs by being political yet without necessarily taking over the socio-economic and political structures themselves.

1. PROBLEM: CAN THE CHURCH BE POLITICAL?

Yet a question that is often hotly raised by many is this: Can the Church be political? Why should the Church get involved in the world's social, economic and political affairs? There is no doubt that many in the world society of today, whether Christian, religious or lay Catholics themselves, would



be very quick to answer “no”. The reason is that the Church in their understanding cannot be political and, needless to say, cannot get involved in the social, economic and political matters of the world. They argue, there is a separation of religion and State or of Church and politics. The Church is only to manage spiritual matters, while the economy and politics are secular matters that pertain to State Governments. Instances of this point of view abound everywhere worldwide.

For instance, the Local Catholic Church on Flores Island, Indonesia, has prophetically stood in solidarity with the rural farming communities of the island in their fight for land rights against the invasion of transnational mining corporations

(TMNCs) driven by the global neoliberal economic system. In an unholy alliance with corrupt Indonesian Governments, the TMNCs have mercilessly destroyed their farms and rainforest permanently, polluting the rivers and seas and drying up the source of drinking water. The local Catholic Church that has advocated the rural farming communities has unfortunately been accused of meddling in the affairs of the Indonesian Government and was required to get out of the way. The successive Local Indonesian Governments of the island, who are mostly Catholic, hold that social, economic and political matters belong to the State. On this basis, they called upon the Church to stop interfering in the public policies of the State especially in regard to the mining industry, despite the fact that it operates by permanently destroying the farms of the villagers, as well as being fraught with fraud and dishonesty. They insisted that the Church, particularly its hierarchy – bishops, priests and nuns – should only manage its own business in spiritual matters, that is, helping people go to heaven by teaching them to pray and ministering to them the holy sacraments.

Of course, such an accusation is not uniquely levelled at the Church of Flores, Indonesia. It is a common challenge the Church faces anywhere in the world because of its prophetic liberative mission to stand with the oppressed poor and to safeguard the integrity of Creation. To mention another example, at the birth of Liberation Theology in Latin America the Church was also confronted with the same difficulty as narrated by Leonardo Boff in his *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*:

When one speaks of social injustice and liberation, one has already placed oneself in the heart of a situation of political domination. But there is no more ambiguous word than “politics”. Reactionary forces within the Church and society take advantage of this ambiguity to free themselves from the struggle for justice. We read headlines such as “The Church must not be involved in politics”, “Pope prohibits priests and bishops from involvement in politics”, “No politics in the Mass”, [or] “No politics in the churches”. What exactly is meant by “politics”? [all emphases are original from the author].⁸

2. FUNDAMENTAL REASONS FOR THE CHURCH BEING POLITICAL

Contrary to what is claimed by many, Leonardo Boff, as hinted in the above quotation, argues that the Church is political. Faced with any given reality of social injustice, the Church must be political and cannot be apolitical. In line with Leonardo Boff, Antonio Egiguren, OFM, in an article published by SEDOS in November 2012, says: “What makes the Church a non-credible Institution is its involvement in politics and its siding with power... [But the truth is that] the whole Church needs to be political, siding with the poor in order to make a better society”.⁹ But how is this political dimension of the Church to be understood in the frame of Christian faith? In other words why is the Church, or why does it need to be, political? The late Archbishop Oscar Romero, the martyr of the poor of El Salvador, gives one answer drawn from his experience.

In incarnating the Church in the world of the poor and firmly committing it to the defense of the oppressed poor, repressed by economic and political structures in El Salvador, up till the 1980s, Archbishop Romero said: that faith conviction and the transcendence of the Gospel are the forces that guide the Church to stand up and engage in social and political situations. He put forward three fundamental aspects of Christian faith enriched by its incarnation in the socio-political world, namely: a new awareness of sin, a continuation of God’s salvific incarnation through Jesus, and a deeper faith in God.

a) A New Awareness of the Impact of Social Sin

According to Archbishop Romero, in the Christian Tradition sin is conventionally understood as offending God and such a sin means death for every human who commits it. In a traditional reflection on mortal sin, the Church had a tendency to stress attention to the permanent consequence of sin for the sinner in the form of losing eternal happiness with God in the afterlife. That is, the sinner would suffer forever because he/she would never see God. Yet the roots of sin, especially sins that are institutionalized in socio-economic and political systems and their deadly consequences on the lives of others, often did not receive adequate attention in the Church's traditional reflection. Contrary to this inadequacy, Romero said that the Church must also give proportional attention to the lethal, material effects of mortal sin on the lives of other human beings and prophetically confront its causes which are embedded in the structures of the socio-economic and political system. In doing so, the Church has no other choice but to become involved in politics and be political. With this in mind, Archbishop Oscar Romero said that sin is mortal not only in the sense of the interior death of the sinner but because of the negative impact it produces *hic et nunc* on the lives of others. Witnessing the effects of such a mortal sin the Church cannot stand by idly but must engage the socio-economic and political structures that cause it at the root. He wrote:

Such a sin really is mortal, not only in the sense of the interior death of the person who commits the sin, but also because the real, objective death the sin produces.... A fundamental datum of our Christian faith [is that]: sin killed the Son of God, and sin is what goes on killing the children of God.... It is impossible to offend God without offending one's brother or sister.... It is not a matter of sheer routine that I insist once again on the existence in our country of structures of sin. They [socio-economic and political structures] are sinful because they produce the fruits of sin: the death of Salvadorans.... That is why we have denounced what in our country has become idolatry of wealth, of the absolute right, within the Capitalist system of private property, of political power in the National Security regimes, in the name of which personal security is itself institutionalized. No matter how tragic it may appear, the Church through its entrance into the real socio-political world has learned how to recognize, and how to deepen its understanding of the essence of sin. The fundamental essence of sin, in our world, is revealed in the death of Salvadorans.¹⁰

b) The Continuation of God's Salvific Incarnation

The Church's second fundamental reason for being political is its missionary nature by which it must continue the mystery of God's salvific incarnation in Jesus Christ. Like Jesus, who was God's incarnation by becoming man and living among men, engaging in and confronting all things, including all human socio-economic and political structures but sin, the Church also, by its nature, is called to continue God's incarnation in Jesus Christ in the world by engaging, and getting involved, in the affairs of the world. The Church exists in the world and lives in the midst of its socio-economic and political affairs. While the Church supports anything good in the human socio-economic and political system, it cannot stand by idly when this system becomes exploitative and oppressive toward man, but must stand up for man, especially for the poor and Creation. Needless to say, in the process of doing so, the Church becomes politically involved. Bearing all this in mind, the late Archbishop Oscar Romero spoke of the need for the Church to incarnate itself by siding with the poor. He wrote:

We now have a better understanding of what the Incarnation means, what it means to say that Jesus really took on human flesh and made himself one with his brothers and sisters in suffering, in tears and laments... I am not speaking of a universal incarnation. This is impossible. I am speaking of an incarnation that is preferential and partial: incarnation in the world of the poor. From that perspective the Church will become a Church for everybody. It will offer a service to the powerful, too, through the apostolate of conversion – but not the other way round, as has so often been the case in the past. The world of the poor, with its very concrete social and political characteristics, teaches us where the Church can incarnate itself in such a way that it will avoid the false universalism that inclines the Church to associate itself with the powerful. The world of the poor teaches us what the nature of Christian love is – [it is] a love that certainly seeks peace but also unmasks false pacifism – pacifism of resignation and inactivity.¹¹

c) A Deeper and True Faith in God and Christ

The third and last fundamental reason for the Church to be political: is its faith in the living God. Jesus came to bring the fullness of life to all men and women and wants them to truly live. This truth of faith, Archbishop Romero noted, becomes really true and truly radical when the Church enters into the heart of the life and death of its people. In such a situation, the Church is confronted by two choices: either to be in favour of life or in favour of the death of the exploited poor. For the Church of Christ, being neutral here is certainly impossible.¹² In other words, there is no choice for the Church but to side with the oppressed poor and by doing so it is inevitably

political by engaging in and confronting the causes of poverty – unjust socio-economic and political systems. Archbishop Romero further wrote:

When the Church inserts itself into the socio-political world it does so in order to work with it so that from such cooperation life may be given to the poor. In doing so, therefore, it is not distancing itself from its mission, nor is it doing something of secondary importance or something incidental to its mission. It is giving testimony to its faith in God; it is being the instrument of the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life.... As Church, we are not [political] experts [in politics], nor do we want to manipulate politics through its own internal mechanism. But entrance into the socio-political world, into the world where the life and death of the great mass of the population are decided upon, is necessary and urgent if we are to preserve, not only by word and deed, faith in a God of Life and follow the lead of Jesus.¹³

3. THE MEANING OF THE CHURCH BEING POLITICAL

In public parlance, especially in our secular world, politics is often associated with something dirty or dishonest. It deals in lies or propaganda that involve corruption, manipulation and the fight for the interests of certain groups. Yet, as noted by Leonardo Boff, this is politics that has been corrupted or become pathological. Politics in its original meaning and purpose is very noble with a highly positive concept as defined by Aristotle: that human beings are by their nature political animals.¹⁴ For Aristotle, politics is the organization of the necessities of social life of the human being. Thus, for him politics is simply the very nature of the human being whose life has a social dimension.¹⁵ When the Church speaks of itself as being political, it speaks of politics in a positive sense as taught by Aristotle and prophetically denounces its pathologies.



a) Being Political as a Response to the Demands of the Socio-political World

In a positive sense, politics is very fundamental for the Christian faith. Indeed, it is in this sense that politics is demanded by the Gospel of Love, yet without engaging in politics of competition with other political institutions. As explained by Archbishop Oscar Romero, politics for the Church, or the political dimension of the Christian faith, is none other than the Church's response to the demands made upon the Church by the *de facto* socio-economic and political world in which the Church exists.¹⁶ Romero further explained:

This demand [of being political] is a fundamental one for the faith, and that the Church cannot ignore. That is not to say that the Church should regard itself as a political institution entering into competition with other political institutions, or that it has its own political processes. Nor is it to say that our Church seeks political leadership. I am talking of something more profound, something more in keeping with the Gospel. I am talking about an authentic option for the poor, of becoming incarnate in their world, of proclaiming the Good News to them, of giving them hope, of encouraging them to engage in a liberating praxis, of defending their cause and of sharing their fate. The Church's option for the poor explains the political dimension of the faith in its fundamental, basic outline. Because the Church has opted for the truly poor... oppressed and repressed, the Church lives in the political world and it fulfils itself as Church also through politics.¹⁷

In other words, for the Church, to be political or involved in politics simply means prophetically standing in solidarity with the oppressed poor, helping them liberate themselves from the bondage of any oppression and denouncing its causes. In this sense, being political is a noble call and becomes a constitutive part of its prophetic missionary commitment.

b) Being Political in the Defense and Service of Justice

For the Church, its being political is born of and for the defense and service of justice for all – human dignity and Creation – as planned by God who is fully revealed in and through the person of Jesus Christ. As a continuation of God's liberative mission (*missio Dei*), one *raison d'être* of the Church is to uphold justice and to free the human race from any oppression, as resoundingly affirmed by the Synod of Bishops treating *Justice in the World*:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the

redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.... *The Church has received from Christ the mission of preaching the Gospel message, which contains a call to people to turn away from sin to the love of the Father, universal kinship and a consequent demand for justice in the world. This is the reason why the Church has the right, indeed the duty, to proclaim justice on the social, national and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of people and their very salvation demand it* [Italics are mine].¹⁸

Commenting on the Bishops' document quoted above, Leonardo Boff says that the bishops here do not view justice as an integral or a central theme but rather as a *constitutive* element of preaching the Gospel of Christ to free the human race from every oppressive situation. Therefore, there would be no Gospel of Jesus Christ without the preaching of justice. However, Leonardo continues, this is not to politicize the Church but it is simply to be faithful. If we are not faithful, we mutilate the heart of Jesus' message and we pervert the very mission of the Church.¹⁹

c) Being Political Flows from the Core of Christian Faith

While politicians in the secular world often associate politics with something dirty, lies or manipulation, the politics which the Church wishes to get involved in is noble. At Puebla the Catholic Bishops even claimed that the political presence of the Church in the world flows from the very core of the Christian faith: "Indeed, the need for the presence of the Church in politics comes from the depths of the Christian faith: the Lordship of Christ extends eternally. Christ seals the ultimate brotherhood of mankind, every man is as good as another: 'You are all one in Christ Jesus'" (Gal 3:28).²⁰ Commenting on Puebla Document, n. 516, Leonardo Boff says that the Church finally confirms the inclusion of the Lordship of Jesus over politics. Jesus is Lord of everything including: Lord of socio-economics and politics. Moreover, politics can even be traced to the heart of the Church's missionary commitment of serving the Kingdom of God. As politics in this sense, Leonardo Boff explains it this way:

[In the Puebla Document, n. 615] politics is understood [by the Church – the Catholic Bishops of Latin America under the leadership of the Pope] in the context of the lordship of Jesus Christ. He is not only the Lord of small places like the [human] heart, the soul, the Church; He is the cosmic Lord, [and the Lord] of large places like that of politics. Politics has to do with the Kingdom of God because *it* [politics] *has to do with justice, a messianic good* [italics are mine]. Primitive Christians professing "Jesus is Lord" were [in fact] making a political statement.²¹

Leonardo Boff says further, as anchored in the Church's Teaching in *Lumen Gentium*, n. 34, and *Octogesima Adveniens*, n. 46,²² that the Church's interest in politics is a way of worshiping God and that, in doing so the Church sanctifies the world to God at the same time. For the Church, to engage in politics is to struggle for the justice of all, and to struggle for and achieve justice is to give glory to God. Thus, the Church's political commitment expresses true Christian love that has found its social dimension in solidarity with other human beings.²³ In order to avoid confusion regarding the notion of politics meant by the Church and politics that is practiced by State Governments, the Catholic Bishops at Puebla made a clear distinction between politics in a noble and broad sense on the one hand, and politics as party politics on the other. Leonardo Boff gives them each a proper name: Politics with a capital letter P and politics with a small letter p.²⁴

Politics with a Capital Letter P

First, Politics in the broadest sense with a capital letter P is politics that aims to:

1) search for and pursue the common good, promote justice and human rights, denounce corruption and violence to humanity and Creation, either regionally, nationally or internationally. This politics, in a broad noble sense, 2) clarifies or spells out the fundamental values of the entire community of people such as internal harmony and external security. It also, 3) reconciles equality with freedom, public authority with legitimate autonomy and the participation of all members and groups of the community. This politics in the broad sense also has the task of defining the means and ethics of social relations. The Catholic Bishops at Puebla resoundingly affirmed that politics in this wider sense is exactly what is of interest to the Church, its pastors and ministers of unity and, quoting *Lumen Gentium*, n. 34, such politics is a way to worship the one true God and consecrate the world to Him.²⁵

In this broad concept of Politics, the Church tries to help promote the values that should guide politics (with a small letter p) and interpret in every nation the aspirations of their people, especially the desires of those whose society tends to marginalize them. It is carried out through the Church's testimonies, Teaching and various forms of Pastoral Ministry.²⁶ It can be concluded that the whole set of the Social Teaching of the Church and the Gospel itself are Politics in a very broad and noble sense. In regard to this Leonardo Boff makes a strong comment:

The Church has its own vision of the world, of the person, of social life, of the distribution of goods and so on. By proclaiming the Gospel it [the Church] proclaims the Politics of the Gospel; the Church has an interest in Politics and always has had such an interest. The Church cannot cease to be involved in Politics; it cannot be indifferent to the justice or injustice of a cause nor can it be silent in the face of the obvious exploitation of any people. There is no neutrality in Politics; one is either for change in the direction of greater social participation or one is in favour of the *status quo*, which in many countries marginalizes a vast majority of the people.²⁷

What Leonardo Boff convincingly states is not an exaggeration. In the same Document of Puebla, an attitude of being apolitical, that is, an attitude of not having at heart the common good and social justice of Christians, whether by priests, religious sisters, religious brothers or laity, is strongly criticized:

Christianity must evangelize the whole of human existence including its political dimension. The Church, therefore, must criticize Christians who tend to restrict the scope of their faith to personal or family life, excluding it from the professional, economic, social and political order, as if there, sin, love, prayer and forgiveness had no relevance.²⁸

The ideologies and political parties, in proposing an absolute vision of man to which everything is submitted even including human thought itself, try to use the Church or claim their rightful independence. This manipulation [of the Church], which is always a risk in political life, can come from Christians themselves and even from priests and religious, when they proclaim a Gospel devoid of economic, social, cultural and political issues. In practice, this mutilation amounts to some kind of collusion with the established [unjust and corrupt] order, even though it can happen unconsciously.²⁹

From the viewpoint of Politics in the sense of proclaiming the truth of the message of the Gospel, therefore, there is no ground for neutrality. Neutrality becomes impossible. Commenting on Puebla, No. 515 and No. 558 above, Leonardo Boff says that being apolitical in Politics with a capital letter P amounts to manipulating and mutilating the Gospel of Jesus. Every true Christian needs to become more conscious of the political dimension of the Gospel and of the Christian faith. Politics, meaning proclaiming the Gospel of love, of fraternity, of solidarity, of social and economic justice has its proper place in the pulpit and in the Mass.³⁰ Leonardo Boff further says: "If our homilies do not touch upon justice, fraternity and participation, if they [homilies] do not denounce violence, they [homilies] are mutilating the Gospel and emasculating the message of the prophets and, above all, the Good News of Jesus Christ".³¹

Politics with a Small Letter p

The second type of politics, politics identified with a small letter p by Leonardo Boff, means all political activities that correspond to the administration of society through the exercise of power by a democratic State. In regard to this, the Bishops at Puebla affirmed:

The realization of the fundamental political task is usually done by groups of citizens who wish to obtain and exercise political power to solve economic, political and social issues on their own terms or ideologies. In this sense one can speak of "political parties". Now even though ideologies developed by these groups may be inspired by Christian Social Teaching, they may come to different conclusions. Therefore, no matter how deeply inspired by the Church's Doctrine, no political party can claim the right to represent all the faithful because its concrete programme can never have absolute value for all.³²

Politics with a small letter p, exercised through political parties and the running of the public offices of the State, does not involve the whole Church but only the laity. In the Catholic Church, political practice in the form of getting involved in party politics and running the public offices of the State is the proper place of lay Catholic Christians. Exercising political commitment in the sphere of politics with a small letter p is the duty of the laity. The Catholic Bishops at Puebla affirmed: "Partisan politics is the realm of the laity (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 43). Corresponding to their lay status, they may establish and organize political parties, ideology and appropriate strategy to achieve their legitimate aims".³³

As part of the hierarchy of the Church and a prophetic liberative institution, it is particularly here in the field of partisan politics or political parties that bishops, priests or deacons, men and women religious, either as a group or as individuals, are not to get involved. They are to remain ministers of unity who offer moral guidance to all. The Catholic Bishops at Puebla put it this way:

Priests also minister to unity, and deacons must submit to the same sort of personal renunciation. If they are active in party politics, they will run the risk of absolutizing and radicalizing such activity, for their vocation is to be "men of the Absolute". [Puebla quotes Medellín Document 1968, n. 19, on Priests]: "But in the economic and social order and especially in the political order, where several specific options are offered, the priest as such should not directly concern himself with decisions, or leadership nor the structuring of solutions". [Puebla quotes Bishops' Synod of 1971 in Part II, n. 2]: "Leadership or active militancy on behalf of any political party is to be avoided by every priest unless, in

concrete and exceptional circumstances, it is truly required for the good of the community and obtains the consent of the Bishop after consultation with the Priests' Council and, if circumstances call for it, with the Episcopal Conference". Indeed, the current trend of the Church is not going in this direction.³⁴ By virtue of the way in which they follow Christ ... men and women religious also cooperate in the evangelization of the political order. Living in a society that is far from fraternal ... they too will have to resist the temptation of getting involved in party politics, in order not to create confusion between the values of the Gospel and some specific ideology [of the political parties].³⁵

4. AUTHENTIC POLITICS AND EDUCATION IN POLITICS

It is far from new that politics with a small letter p is often full of tricks, dishonesty, fraudulence and cheating. The Politics of proclaiming the message of the Gospel for justice must be distinct from such questionable practices. As recommended by the Bishops at Puebla, Leonardo Boff suggests that the Church, and any Christian in his/her political involvement in society, utilize two primary instruments, namely analytical tools and practical tools:

[First:] *analytical tools*. One must study the mechanisms that generate poverty and violence against human rights [and Creation]; the problem is generally not personal but structural. One must read very



technical literature to discover how our society functions, what each person has, how prices and salaries are set and distributed, the importance of multinational corporations, and the nature of existing labour or union legislation. [Second:] *practical tools* [italics are mine]. No desire is effective without organization. Thus, it is important to organize centres and offices such as those for legal defense, human rights, justice and peace and so forth. Christians must join in the work of these centres as well as participate in the struggle for justice.³⁶

No success and progress can be attained without education. Education is necessary both for successful participation in the Politics of proclaiming the Gospel message for justice and for the politics that is particularly the arena of the laity in the secular world.³⁷ For this purpose Paul VI in *Octogesima Adveniens*, under the subheading: "Political Society", speaks about the importance of education for the good of society: "Christians have the duty to take part in this search [of a democratic type of society] and in the organization and life of political society.... [And] this [search] indicates the importance of education for life in society".³⁸ The Catholic Bishops at Puebla spoke of the importance of Christian education in every sphere of human life, including education in civic life and politics in the broad sense. This was inspired by the Church's Social Teaching which aims to free the human person, either individually or collectively in a so-called human society, from any oppression and exploitation.³⁹ As commented by Leonardo Boff, this Christian education can be considered as politicization, yet in a positive sense. This education educates people to struggle for justice, to defend their social and economic rights, and free themselves from any oppression and exploitation.⁴⁰

I would further argue that the Church, its ministers and all Christians, in the process of liberative education have nothing to fear, including any fear of the protagonists of unjust social structures. In the politics of proclaiming the message of the Gospel, the Church, which means all Catholic Christians, in cooperation with other Christian churches, all followers of other religions and all people of good will,⁴¹ have nothing to hide but together invite all as one single human family to build a truly human community. That is, one whose economy, civilization and future are based on the universal values of love, justice and solidarity.

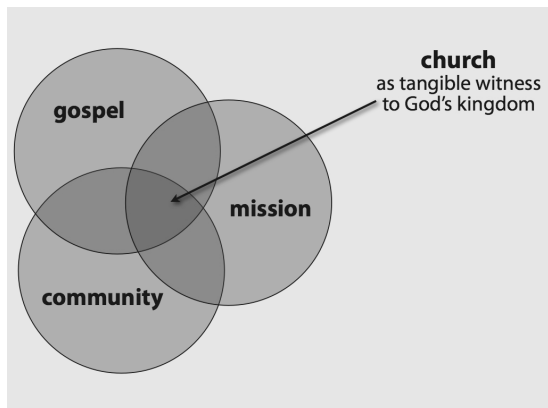
5. RESPONSIBILITY IN POLITICS BETWEEN HIERARCHY AND LAITY

Concretely, how does the Church carry out the prophetic liberative mission of the politics of the Gospel? The one Catholic Church, whose members extend beyond the borders of a Nation State, of ethnicity and of race, is basically organized into three large groups: the laity, the religious and the hierarchy. Leonardo Boff explains the internal organization of the Catholic Church this way: "The hierarchy [is] from the Pope [bishops, priests] to the deacon; the laity [are those] who are baptized but do not share in the leadership of the Christian community [especially in administering the seven Sacraments except for the Sacrament of Baptism when any lay person

can administer it in an exceptional circumstance]; and the religious [are those] who are somewhere between the hierarchy and the laity, with elements of both [hierarchy and laity]. When it comes to responsibility, religious are considered to be among the hierarchy".⁴²

a) Responsibility of the Hierarchy in Gospel Politics

It must be noted that the Church does not dislike nor have a contrary attitude toward politics with a small letter p carried out within the temporal order of any State. Rather, the Church views State politics positively as long as it aims to serve the common good of society and assures that the dignity of every human person is respected as pointed out by the Bishops at Puebla:



The political dimension is a constitutive dimension of the human being and a relevant aspect of human societal life. It has an all-embracing aspect because its aim is the common welfare of society. But that does not mean that it exhausts the entire scale of social relationships. Far from despising political activity, the Christian faith values it and holds it in high esteem [The italics are mine].⁴³

The Church will, however, stand up and exercise its Gospel Politics when the common good of a society and the dignity of the human person are under threat. The institutional Church has a responsibility to officially

announce anything that is of importance for the world society, for the poor or the marginalized. It has a prophetic liberative duty to denounce anything against humanity such as socio-economic injustice, oppression of the poor, excessive exploitation of the earth and an abusive application of science and technology at the expense of the human being and to the detriment of Creation. It has a prophetic liberative duty to promote and to defend human dignity, its social, economic, cultural and political rights as well as the rights of Creation not to be abused or unwisely used by people. In addition, the Church's hierarchy has a prophetic responsibility to read the signs of the time and interpret them in the light of the values of the Gospel of Love. It has a prophetic duty to be in solidarity with the lay people, encourage them in their work and inspire all people of any nation especially those whose nation and society tend to marginalize or oppress them.⁴⁴

The entire Social Teaching of the Church, — in various Encyclicals, Documents of the Council, Apostolic Letters, Apostolic Exhortations of the Pope or documents produced by the Catholic Bishops, therefore, such as those concerned with the prophetic liberation of the poor, care for Creation and those concerned with human development, — is an authentic expression of the Gospel politics of the Church. Needless to say, such a responsibility is a constitutive part of the prophetic liberative missionary commitment of the Church with a crystal clear agenda: to promote love, justice, equality, fraternity and solidarity among the human family that goes beyond the boundaries of any Nation/State, religion, ethnicity or race.

Gospel Politics Is Not Nostalgia for Lost Power

The Church's involvement in world affairs is not a kind of nostalgia for lost power as claimed without a basis by many today.⁴⁵ Instead, it is genuinely born from a great concern for the human family that is severely tormented by ever increasing socio-economic injustices and great concern over its common home – planet earth – that is in peril. Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* clearly rejects any notion of the Church being closed in on itself and the call of many that the Church should restrict itself from getting involved in world affairs and limit its missionary work to administer religious affairs *per se*, such as, to the holy sacraments and preparing the souls of the faithful to go to heaven. In response to this false notion of the Church, the Pope in crystal clear words writes: "It is no longer possible to claim that religion should be restricted to the private sphere and that it exists only to prepare souls for heaven".⁴⁶ He further says:

"No one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society.... An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.... If indeed 'the just ordering of society and of the State is a central responsibility of politics', the Church 'cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice' [original from the Pope quoting Benedict XVI's *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 28, a)]. All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world".⁴⁷

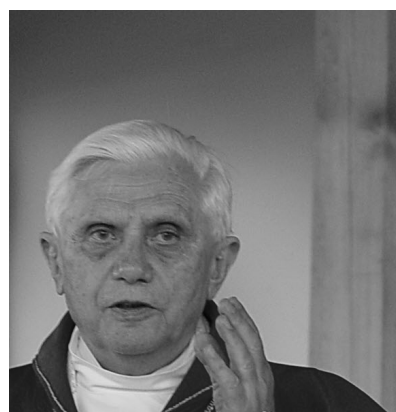
Gospel Politics Does Not Offer Practicalities but Moral and Ethical Guidance

In executing this noble Politics of the Gospel in world society, however, the Church's hierarchy does not have a technical responsibility.⁴⁸ The Pope, the bishops, priests, men and women religious through their prophetic voices, guided by the entire Social Teaching of the Church, do not and cannot offer practicalities of what to do. Nor do they have any intention to run or take over the world's socio-economic and political structures. With this in mind, while denouncing today's dehumanizing underdevelopment of the developing countries and overdevelopment of the developed countries with an economic model which widens the gap between those who benefit from it and those who are left on the margins of progress, John Paul II says that the Church cannot offer concrete solutions and that it is not the task of the Church to do so. In *Redemptoris Missio* – on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate – (1990) he says, for instance, in this regard: "It is not the Church's mission to work directly on the economic, technical or political levels, or to contribute materially to development. Rather, her mission consists essentially in offering people an opportunity not to 'have more' but to 'be more' [Pope's original emphasis] by awakening their consciences through the Gospel".⁴⁹ Or in *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), he also writes:

"In seeking to bring about this change, 'the Church does not have technical solutions to offer' for the problem of underdevelopment as such, but 'offers her first contribution to the solution of the urgent problem of development when she proclaims the truth about Christ, about herself and about man, applying this truth to a concrete situation' [Pope quotes from Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 41]. After all, human development is never merely a technical or economic question; it is fundamentally a human and moral question".⁵⁰

Pope Benedict XVI in *Deus Caritas Est* and Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* also take a very clear stand on this matter. Both Popes argue that it is not the immediate responsibility of the Church to find and offer concrete solutions to the world's socio-economic problems but that of the State and the entire world's society. The main task of the Church, as a prophetic institution in the midst and as part of world society, is to offer a moral conscience and ethical guidance for the world's socio-economic and political structures. This is the Church's particular contribution and it is its prophetic liberative duty. In regard to this stand each of the Popes writes:

- a) "The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics. As Augustine once said, a State which is not governed according to justice would be just a bunch of thieves: "*Remota itaque iustitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia*" [Pope quoted from *De Civitate Dei*, IV, 4: CCL 47, 102.]... Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics. The State must inevitably face the question of how justice can be achieved here and now.... This is where the Catholic Social Doctrine has its place: it has no intention of giving the Church power over the State. Even less is it an attempt to impose on those who do not share the faith ways of thinking and modes of conduct proper to faith. Its aim is simply to help purify reason and to contribute, here and now, to the acknowledgment and attainment of what is just... it is not the Church's responsibility to make this teaching prevail in political life. Rather, the Church wishes to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly, even when this might involve conflict with situations of personal interest. Building a just social and civil order, wherein each person receives what is his or her due, is an essential task which every generation must take up anew. As a political task, this cannot be the Church's immediate responsibility. Yet, since it is also a most important human responsibility, the Church is duty-bound to offer, through the purification of reason and through ethical formation, her own specific contribution towards understanding the requirements of justice and achieving them politically. The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply".⁵¹



"Neither the Pope nor the Church has a monopoly on the interpretation of social realities or the proposal of solutions to contemporary problems. Here I can repeat the insightful observation of Pope Paul VI: 'In the face of such widely varying situations, it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. This is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country'" [Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, 14 May 1971, n. 4].⁵²

By now it should be clear what the Gospel Politics of the Church is all about. It is a prophetic liberative mission of the Church, for the entire human community and its common home, the planet earth, to offer a moral conscience and ethical guidance for its socio-economic and political structures.⁵³ Like the prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament, the Church's hierarchy has an ethical responsibility. In the social sphere, as in those of the economy, human development and progress, it may prophetically say if something is right or wrong, just or unjust, in the light of the values of the Gospel such as love, justice, peace, fraternity or solidarity that should reign in the life of the entire human family. In regard to this Karl Peschke clearly says:

The Church "also has the right to pass moral judgments, even on matters touching the political order, whenever basic personal rights or the salvation of souls make such judgments necessary" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 76, Abbott). She has the right and duty to manifest her grave concern over evils in the social order, and she may not be accused of meddling in politics if she denounces violations of the moral law on the political scene. Recognition of this function of the Church by the State is in no way [the State's] subjection to the Church but a recognition of the subordination of both, Church and State, to God.⁵⁴

The Gospel Politics of the Church – being political without running politics and the social order – takes its model from the liberative mission of the prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament Bible. Both prophets and Jesus launched their prophetic moral liberative criticism and condemnation of unjust socio-economic structures of their time without taking over the social order nor establishing any code of socio-economic and political norms for society. One may ask: What was the reason? There are a number of possible answers.

According to John Fullenbach, both prophets and Jesus were not explicitly interested in a structural reforming of society because they were convinced that the human intelligence and heart can find and create societal structures that are capable of meeting the challenge of the day in the sense that they would take particular care of the weak and the poor in society. This view is consistent with the general insight of the Old Testament that God is not the only one who rules the universe and human history. God also gave human beings a co-responsibility which they must exercise.⁵⁵ Fullenbach adds that, particularly for Jesus, what he did was to relativize all authority and put it under the judgment of the in-breaking Kingdom of God that he proclaimed. Jesus did propose what is called meta-politics, that is, a system of values and view of reality by which any socio-political context may be judged.⁵⁶

In addition to the insight provided by John Fullenbach, also Kenneth R. Himes, in his recently published work *Christianity and the Political Order: Conflict, Cooptation and Cooperation*, says that Jesus was political and at the same time he was not anti-State politics of his time. The political dimension of Jesus' ministry was, however, much larger than State politics. Based on a careful reading of Mark 12:13-17 (RSV) regarding the story "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's", Himes draws a conclusion that Jesus was neither against nor supportive of the politics of the temporal power of the State. He says that the first part of Jesus's answer – "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" – indicates that in the view of Jesus the rule of the State's temporal order is legitimate as long as it is dedicated to the common good of the society and exercised in a just manner. While the second part of his answer – "Render to God the things that are God's" – underscores the teaching of Jesus that God's sovereignty over human beings and Creation is higher than that of the State's temporal power. Thus, Kenneth R. Himes continues, the story of Mark 12:13-17 is not about the separation of religion and State nor of Church and politics.⁵⁷ He further writes:



It is a mistake to read into Jesus's statement the separation of religion and politics or anything like our modern notion of the separation of Church and State. Throughout the ancient world, whether in Rome or in ancient Israel, religion and nation were understood to be a necessary unity. For Jesus or any pious Jew, God is the Creator and Lord of all of life. Those who rule the State have certain rights, but these rights are circumscribed by the all-encompassing claims of God. All that Jesus preached about the sovereignty of the Reign of God would make it impossible for him to treat the realm of politics as sealed off from a person's higher loyalty to God. Nor is this saying a biblical

warrant for separation of the institutions of Church and State; that reading [Mark 12:13-17] places contemporary ideas into a very different culture that closely allied religious and political institutions.⁵⁸

In other words, Jesus in his public ministry was political, yet his Politics was politics in a broad sense that goes beyond the scope of State politics. His was the Politics with a capital letter P that stands for love and justice with God the Lord of Creation and history as the absolute sovereignty that all human beings and all Creation must be subjected to, not to the human temporal politics of State. This was the very reason Jesus did not directly get involved either in the practicalities of the politics of the temporal power of the State or in establishing any code of socio-economic and political norms for society.

Gospel Politics and the Separation of Church and State

The Gospel Politics or the political dimension of the Christian faith should not be confused with the tenet regarding separation of religion and politics or of Church and State. The Church in its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, in Chapter 4, under the subheading "The Life of the Political Community", does affirm the separation of the two entities. It says: "In their proper spheres, the political community and the Church are mutually independent and self-governing" [State politics or the temporal order].⁵⁹ Just a line before this quotation, the Church also clearly says that due to its particular mission the Church cannot be identified with any partisan politics nor be bound by any political system: "The role and competence of the Church being what it is, she must in no way be confused with the political community, nor bound to any political system. For She [the Church] is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendence of the human person".⁶⁰

On carefully reading the second part of *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 76, just quoted, one should have no difficulty in understanding what the Church means by the principle tenet concerning the separation of Church and State. That is, due to the nature of its Gospel Politics, rooted in the model of the sociopolitical engagement of the prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament Bible, the institutional Church, represented by its hierarchy such as the Pope, bishops, priests, pastors, deacons and men and women religious, does not and cannot directly get involved in partisan politics or in politics with a small letter p.⁶¹

The Church cannot directly evangelize the temporal order by running its affairs. The Pope, bishops, priests or deacons cannot exercise public offices such as president, prime minister, department minister, governor, regent, mayor, legislator, senator or member of a judicial system. Instead, the Church and its hierarchy are to remain a sign of unity, engaging in the sociopolitical affairs of the temporal order by providing a moral conscience and ethical guidance based on the Gospel values: love, equity, solidarity and justice for all and for every human person, and at the same time the Church has a prophetic duty to stand up and denounce any model of socio-economic and political affairs of the temporal order that violates human dignity and endangers Creation.

b) Responsibility of the Laity in Gospel Politics

According to the Catholic Church's Social Teaching, getting directly involved in partisan politics is the proper vocation of the laity. It is their prophetic missionary commitment to exercise their faith, and the motive for their commitment in partisan politics is not primarily ecclesial but it must be to serve the common good⁶² of the Nation/State to which they belong and beyond. The Second Vatican Council, in *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 75, gives some pointers to right Christian attitudes toward the political order and the State they belong to as summarized by Rodger Charles and Drostan Maclaren:

Firstly, Christians should be patriotic yet, at the same time, aware of the unity of the whole human race; *secondly*, in politics, they should be devoted to the general welfare; *thirdly*, they should respect those who differ from them on political matters and *fourthly* and finally, they must remember that party politics, while acceptable, must never come before the common good [italics are mine].⁶³

The Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 33, acknowledges the important role of the laity. "The lay apostolate is a participation in the saving mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation, all (laity) are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself ... they ... work for the sanctification of the world from within".⁶⁴ Because of this direct commission from the Lord, "the activity of the laity is not an extension of the hierarchy. Lay people have their own place in the Church and they must act within this sphere. The lay person is not a secular person. He or she is a member of the Church in the secular world and has a direct mandate from Jesus Christ".⁶⁵

According to the Bishops at Puebla, the place of lay activity is in the world.⁶⁶ Their political activity in temporal matters deserves a special emphasis because they participate in a wide range

of political processes such as holding leadership roles in political parties and public offices.⁶⁷ Through their involvement in politics, the laity, in the world marked by acute problems of injustice, cannot be excused from a serious commitment to the promotion of justice and the common good, guided by the values of the Gospel and the Social Teaching of the Church. All Christians should not only denounce injustices, but also be true witnesses and agents of justice.⁶⁸ Finally, in carrying out this political duty, there is no need for the laity to obtain some direct support or blessing from their bishops or priests to make it characteristically Christian. Their political duty by its nature has a Christian character because all lay Christians are true members of the Church with the appropriate mission in the world commissioned by the Lord himself.⁶⁹ In other words, in order to be true politicians or civil servants and good citizens called to build a just society, Catholic Christians do not need to obtain a blessing or command from the institutional Church's hierarchy – Pope, bishops or priests – since they all have received this mission from God Himself in the Sacrament of Baptism.

Bearing all this in mind, the fact that many Christians have failed to become the light and salt of Christ in the world through their very state of life as laity, and some Christian politicians have even become protagonists of the oppression of the poor by means of unjust structures, is shocking. Recently Pope Francis said: "Even if many [laity] are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors".⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

It has become clear that Politics in its original, broad and noble sense is the organization and management of human necessities as social beings. Its position of supporting this kind of politics and condemning its pathologies is the very reason why the Church is political. The Church does not oppose the world's socio-economic and political systems when they are just and human, respect the dignity of the human person and promote the social common good. It is in the interests of the missionary commitment of the Church to promote love, justice, equality, fraternity and solidarity among the entire human family which goes beyond the boundaries of any Nation/State, religion, ethnicity, race and culture but the Church will stand up against these systems when they run contrary.

The entire Social Teaching of the Church contained in various Encyclicals, documents of the Council, Apostolic Letters, Apostolic Exhortations of the Pope or documents produced by the Catholic Bishops such as those concerned with the prophetic liberation of the poor, the safeguard of Creation and the proposal for a more human ecologically friendly development, is an authentic expression of the Gospel Politics of the Church. It is a prophetic mission of the Church for the entire human community and its common home, the planet earth, to offer a moral conscience and ethical guidance for the socio-economic and political structures. Like the prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament, the Church, particularly its hierarchy, has an ethical responsibility. In the social, economic sphere of human development and progress, it may prophetically declare if something is right or wrong, just or unjust in the light of the values of the Gospel of love, justice, peace, fraternity or solidarity that should reign in the life of the entire human family.

Whereas direct involvement in partisan politics is the proper duty of the laity. Through their involvement in political activities, the laity cannot be excused from a serious commitment to the promotion of justice and the common good, guided by the values of the Gospel and the Social Teaching of the Church. All Christians, therefore, should not only denounce injustices but also witness to the Gospel Politics of love, justice, solidarity and fraternity in the world.⁷¹

End Notes

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² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (Rome, 7 December 1965), n. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, n. 42, [Austin Flannery, O.P.].

⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 90, [Austin Flannery, O.P.].

⁵ *Discours du Pape Paul VI aux Membres et Consultants de "Iustitiae et Pax"*, 20 April 1967. Original text is in French, the English translation is mine.

- ⁶ John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* of 1988 (Rome, 28 June 1988), nn. 142-143, [Faculty of Canon Law, Saint Paul University, Ottawa, 1999].
- ⁷ CELAM II, *Human Promotion: Justice* (Medellín, 6 September 1968), n. 21.
- ⁸ Boff Leonardo, *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1985), p. 26.
- ⁹ Egiguren, Antonio, OFM, "Vatican II and Mission: Some Comments from the Periphery", in *SEDOS Bulletin* September-October 2012, Volume 44, No. 9/10, pp. 290-291.
- ¹⁰ Romero, Archbishop Oscar, "The Political Dimension of the Faith from the Perspective of the Option for the Poor" – delivered as a speech at the University of Louvain, 2 February 1980), in Henelly, Alfred T. (ed.), *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, New York: 1990), pp. 298-299.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 299.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 300.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 301.
- ¹⁴ Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*, p. 26.
- ¹⁵ Medina Gonzalo Villagrán, "Manchase Las Manos en El Escenario Político", in *Saltaaræ: Revista de Teología Pastoral* (Santander, España, n. 1.180, Julio-Agosto 2013), p. 620
- ¹⁶ Romero, Archbishop Oscar, *ibid.*, p. 298.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ World Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justice in the World* (Rome, 6 November 1971), nn. 6, 36.
- ¹⁹ Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*, p. 23.
- ²⁰ Puebla Document, *Evangelization at the Present Time and in the Future of Latin America* (Puebla Mexico, January – February 1979), n. 516. Original text is Spanish, the English translation is mine.
- ²¹ Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*, p. 26.
- ²² *Lumen Gentium*, n. 34, speaks of the role of the Catholic laity in the secular world. Through their life as laity and through their various activities in the world, including in politics, the laity have a missionary duty to consecrate the world to God: "And so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God". For further information, see Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (Rome, 21 November 1964), n. 34. *Octogesima Adveniens*, n. 46, speaks of the Christian meaning of political activity. For the Church, particularly the laity, Paul VI in the Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* says: "Politics are a demanding manner – if not the only way – of living the Christian commitment at the service of others". For further information, see Paul VI Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (Vatican, 14 May 1971), n. 46.
- ²³ Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- ²⁵ Puebla Document, *ibid.*, n. 521. Here I paraphrase the document and the numeration system is mine.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 522.
- ²⁷ Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*
- ²⁸ Puebla Document, *ibid.*, n. 515. Original text is in Spanish, the English translation is mine.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 558.
- ³⁰ Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*, pp. 27-28.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ³² Puebla Document, *ibid.*, n. 523. Original text is in Spanish, the English translation is mine.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, cf. n. 524.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 527.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 528.
- ³⁶ Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- ³⁸ Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, *ibid.*, n. 24.
- ³⁹ Paraphrased from Puebla Document, *ibid.*, nn. 512-513.
- ⁴⁰ Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*, p. 29.
- ⁴¹ In regard to this, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* says: "This document [the overview of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church] is proposed also to the brethren of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, to the followers of other religions, as well as to all people of good will who are committed to serving the common good.... In fact it is a sign of hope that religions and cultures today show openness to dialogue and sense the urgent need to join forces in promoting justice, fraternity, peace and the growth of the human person" [original italics in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*]. For further information, see Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), n. 12.
- ⁴² Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*
- ⁴³ Puebla Document, *ibid.*, nn. 513-514. Original text is in Spanish, the English translation is mine.
- ⁴⁴ Cf. Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ Gaglianone Renato, a professor on the Faculty of Missiology at the Pontifical Urbanian University in Rome, narrates that in the last few decades, especially since the Second Vatican Council up to this day, many have wondered why the Catholic Church today is so intensely interested in the problems of the world's economy, social justice, bioethics and politics and has not limited its missionary commitment only to religious matters such as ministering to its people – the Catholics. Particularly in Italy, Renato further says, many lay Catholics have often expressed their astonishment and indignation at the frequent intrusion of the Church's Magisterium in what they call "profane" matters. Many of them even interpret the prophetic liberative missionary commitment of the Church in the world's various problems as a sort of nostalgia for lost power, as a desire for domination and the wish to regain power, which is far from being true. For further information, see Renato Gaglianone, "Evangelizzazione, promozione umana e sviluppo: impegno per la liberazione, la giustizia e la pace" (*manuscripts*) (Roma: Pontificia Università Urbaniana, 2011), p. 1.
- ⁴⁶ Holy Father Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (Rome, 24 November 2013), n. 182.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 183; *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 28, a) "A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church".
- ⁴⁸ Cf. Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (Rome, 7 December 1999), n. 58.
- ⁵⁰ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (Given in New Delhi, India, 6 November 1999), n. 32.
- ⁵¹ Benedict VI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (Rome, 25 December 2005), n. 28.

⁵² Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, *ibid.*, n. 184.

⁵³ The Gospel Politics or the political dimension of Christian faith is the theme of the so-called political theology defined as a particular theology that seeks to rethink the relationship between religion and society, between the Church and State power, eschatological faith and social practice in a dialectical encounter. It is a reality of encounter in which neither of the two partners can mutually identify itself with the other, nor separates itself from the other, but both interpenetrate the same reality of the human being who lives in the world. Political theology was already developed by St. Augustine († 430) in his *City of God*. Pope Gregory the Great, Charles the Great, Pope Gregory VII, Pope Innocent III and St Thomas Aquinas were all great figures who affirmed that the Gospel has a direct impact on politics and that politics must be inspired by the values of the Gospel: love, justice, solidarity and brotherhood among the entire human family. Based on their conviction of the noble values of the Gospel for human society, they all underscored the Church's right to be political in this sense. A similar thought was later advocated by Erasmus, Martin Luther and Calvin during the era of the Reformation. Pope Leo XIII (in *Immortale Dei* 1885), Pope Benedict XV (in *Ad Beatissimi* 1914) and Pope Pius XII all suggested that socio-economic and political State affairs are to be inspired by the values of the Gospel. For further information, see Spallacci Luigi, "Teologia Politica", in Rossi Leandro and Valsecchi Ambrogio (eds.), *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Teologia Morale* (Roma: Edizioni Paoline, 1973), pp. 731-732. After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), a number of great theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, such as Metz, J.B. in his *Theology of the World* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969) and Moltmann Jürgen in his *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper Row, 1967) also developed a political theology. To provide an overview of their political theology here is beyond the scope of this short article.

⁵⁴ Peschke, Karl H., *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, Vol. II: *Special Moral Theology* (Birmingham: John F. Neale, 2000) p. 625.

⁵⁵ Fuellenbach, John, SVD, *Theology of Liberation: Philosophical – Theological Background and Main Thrust* (Indore, India: Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, 1992), p. 99. The notion of the co-responsibility of human beings is the origin and the theological foundation of the Church's Social Teaching on the so-called Principle of Subsidiarity. As to what the Principle of Subsidiarity is all about, I will come back to this subject later in this chapter.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁵⁷ Himes, Kenneth R., *Christianity and the Political Order: Conflict, Cooptation and Cooperation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2013), pp. 45-46.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (Rome, 7 December 1965), n. 76. Henry Peschke mentions a number of legal consequences of this tenet: "(I) The Church has the right to work and to govern herself in full freedom from State intervention.... (II) The Church does not possess any political power over the temporal order. This means that she has no jurisdiction over the political realm, even though she possesses the authority to teach in matters concerning respect for human rights and the moral order in public life.... (III) [On the contrary] the State does not possess any authority over the spiritual, religious order. The State is not entitled to subject the work of the Church to a control founded on State interests. It is true [that] "Government, therefore, ought indeed to take account of the religious life of the people and show it favour, since the function of government is to make provision for the common welfare" (*Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 3, Abbott). (IV) The Church possesses a plenary teaching office which also extends to moral laws governing political life. She has the right and duty to manifest her grave concern over evils in the social order...". For further information, see Peschke Henry, *Christian Ethics*, (*ibid.*, pp. 623-625). Apart from the benefits of the principle of separation of religion and State enjoyed both by the Catholic Church and by any given State temporal order today, I would say that this tenet was originally made to end the direct political involvement of the Roman Pontiff in Italy and Europe since the Roman Empire collapsed in the 5th century. Both Roger Charles and Drostan Maclaren in their work *The Social Teachings of Vatican II: Its Origin and Development* and Kenneth R. Himes in his *Christianity and the Political Order: Conflict, Cooptation and Cooperation* argue that the Church, that is the Roman Pontiff, began to assume State political power in the fifth century after the collapse of the Roman Empire. At that time the Church was the only social organization that was capable and trusted enough to reorganize society and its political order, which later, after centuries of experience, partly incited by the Reformation started by Martin Luther in the 16th century, the Church slowly gave up: gave up its temporal political power with the small letter p. For further information, see Charles Rodger, SJ, and Maclaren Drostan, OP, *The Social Teaching of Vatican II: Its Origin and Development* (Oxford: Plater Publications/San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), especially in chapter 4: "The Ethics of Political Life", pp. 173-260 or Himes, Kenneth, OFM, *Christianity and the Political Order*, (*ibid.*, pp. 82-191). Regarding the willingness of the Church to give up its temporal power, *Gaudium et Spes* clearly says: "The Church ... still does not lodge her hope in privileges conferred by civil authority. Indeed, she stands ready to renounce the exercise of certain legitimately acquired rights, if it becomes clear that their use raises doubts about the sincerity of her witness [italics are mine] or that new conditions of life demand some other arrangement. But it is always and everywhere legitimate for her to preach the faith with true freedom, to teach her Social Doctrine, and to discharge her duty among men without hindrance. She also has the right to pass moral judgments, even on matters touching the political order, whenever basic personal rights or the salvation of souls make such judgments necessary". For further information, see Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, *ibid.*, n. 76, (Abbott).

⁶⁰ Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church, *ibid.*

⁶¹ But it should also be noted that as an Indonesian Catholic priest I cannot directly get involved in political praxis, or in politics with a small letter p to borrow a political category coined by Leonardo Boff. This is due to my obedience to the ecclesial legal tenets set by the supreme leader, the Roman Pontiff, and not due to any regulations set by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia. As an Indonesian Catholic priest I still have 100% political rights to get directly involved in the socio-economic and political affairs of Indonesia, including running for public office, such as mayor, governor or regent, and no Indonesian State Law hampers me from doing so. Yet, for the sake of the Gospel politics of the Church, that go beyond the partisan politics of my Nation/State of Indonesia, I am also free not to exercise my right as a 100% Indonesian citizen to get involved in Indonesian partisan politics. Needless to say, my option to stand in solidarity with the poor and care for Creation and at the same time to denounce unjust socio-economic and political structures in Indonesia is to exercise the political dimension of my Christian faith called Gospel Politics as well as to exercise my civil political rights as a 100% Indonesian citizen. This applies to any citizen of any Nation/State.

⁶² Charles, Rodger, SJ, and Maclaren Drostan, OP, *ibid.*, pp. 224.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁶⁴ Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, *ibid.*, n. 33, (Abbott).

⁶⁵ Boff Leonardo, *Church: Charism*, *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶⁶ Puebla Document, *ibid.*, No. 789.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 791.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 793.

⁶⁹ Boff Leonardo, *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Holy Father Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, *ibid.*, n. 102.

⁷¹ *Cf.*, *ibid.*, nn. 20, 114.

Ref.: Text given by the author the *SEDOS Bulletin* publication.



Joseph B.O. Okello*
The Pastors, Politics and People of Kenya

Anyone interested in Kenya's recent politics will have noticed an unprecedented influx of members of the clergy into the political arena. In 2007, while some pastors chose to abandon the ministry altogether to run for political office, a select group ran, quite successfully for political office, while remaining in ministry. Needless to say, this sudden interest in politics on the part of the clergy continues to raise relevant questions, both biblical and ethical, among members of their congregations. Even more significant is the fact that the boundary between politics and the prophetic voice gets increasingly blurred, at least for the masses who depend on their pastors for spiritual leadership. The confused member of a congregation fails to know whether the pastor-turned-politician speaks as a politician in his or her sermons, or as a pastor in his or her political rallies. As I will suggest later in this paper, this ambiguity seems to hold at least one hidden and indirect danger that Kenya witnessed in its 2007 and 2008 presidential elections. Let me outline this notion below.



Failure to make a clear distinction between the preacher's pulpit and the politician's platform cost Kenya's Evangelical Christianity its prophetic voice — a voice it has not yet fully recovered. Sections of the disgruntled electorate continue to interpret this loss not only as a compromised and diluted core of the Gospel message, but also as an unfortunate admixture, by the evangelical prelates, of the sacred with the secular. These practices, previously considered anathema by the evangelical church leaders, continue to find their way into various houses of worship. I propose the aforementioned thesis as one of the reasons why arsonists demonstrated little respect for some churches in Kenya in 2007, setting them ablaze without restraint and consequently burning beyond recognition those individuals who had sought refuge in them while fleeing ethnic animosity stemming from the disputed results of the electoral process.

I do not argue, however, that there is a direct link between political violence overall and the admixture of Church and Politics. Indeed, Kenya's political violence seems to be rooted in a deeper spiritual problem, which, following anthropologists, we might call ethno-centrism, a form of egocentrism. Neither am I contending that devout Christians should not participate in Kenya's political process. I think they should do so for the sake of restoring political sanity to Kenya. My contention has a narrower focus: the potential danger presented by the amalgamation of the evangelical preacher's prophetic role with political ambitions. This amalgamation seems to obscure the purpose of the Church as a moral and spiritual guide of the society it tries to oversee. In other words, given the rot in Kenya's political process, a pastor claiming to have a divine call from God, to that very office of a pastor, should stick within the boundaries of that call, resisting any temptation to step outside those boundaries.

By Kenyan Evangelical Christianity, I refer to the sort of Christianity in Kenya committed to the authority of Scripture, or for that matter, the Judeo-Christian Bible, as overseeing, instructing and directing all matters of faith and conduct for the Christian believer. The prophetic voice, which I will use interchangeably with the prophetic role, refers to the sort of voice the electorate rely upon to give it spiritual guidance in matters of faith and conduct. I note, also, that Scripture seems to distinguish between two kinds of prophecy: foretelling and forth-telling. Roughly speaking, foretelling suggests a predictive element in which the prophet is understood as making utterances descriptive of events God intends to bring about in the future. Forth-telling suggests a prescriptive element in which the prophet, under God's direction, makes utterances intended for the spiritual and moral direction of the community in their immediate context. Proclaiming the Gospel provides a good example of forth-telling.

From a Christian perspective, the prophetic voice, whether foretelling or forth-telling, is needed in any society, and the loss of that voice could have significant implications for the moral direction of a given society. Seemingly, Rev. David Cho assumes this role for the South Korean Church. The South Africans seem to have Bishop Desmond Tutu as their prophetic voice. The United States has relied for decades on Billy Graham as the national pastor of that country.

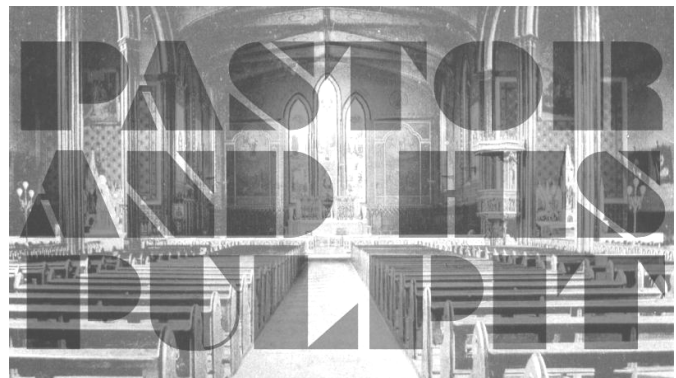
However, in Kenya, no prophetic voice seems available. Potential candidates have died, or become irrelevant in some way either through retirement or compromise. Death, of course, is unavoidable. Irrelevance due to retirement from active prophetic ministry is, perhaps, unjustifiable without passing on the mantle to an effective protégé in line with the Mosaic/Joshua model of the Old Testament, or the Paul/Timothy model in the New Testament. Irrelevance due to compromise is neither justifiable nor acceptable. The consequence of this sort of irrelevance is what I wish to address throughout this paper.

Let me restate the thesis I intend to defend more fully as follows: the failure of Kenya's Evangelical Christianity to draw a line of demarcation between the sacred and the secular reflects a move on the part of the Church to open the door to the secularization of the Church. How did Kenya's Evangelical community come to make this move, and how does this secularization affect the life of the Christian community?

The Pastor, The Pulpit and The People

The process began when several members of the clergy decided to run for political office in Kenya's 2007 General Election. Some candidates were lucky enough to win parliamentary seats. Others were not so lucky. Of course, running for political office on the part of the Christian minister, in and of itself, is not an unbiblical move, and no Kenyan citizen, including the Christian minister, is debarred from running for political positions provided the candidate follows both legal and moral channels. Humanly speaking any member of the clergy could run for just this kind of office without breaking any legal rule.

However, by making the decision to stand for a given parliamentary seat, the aspiring member of the clergy profoundly confuses significant sections of the electorate who feel strongly that the pulpit is sacred ground and must, of necessity, be distinguished from the political podium which, by any Kenyan standard, strikes that very section of the electorate as corrupt. In other words, even if the clergy-turned-politician might not be flouting any biblical rule by running for political office, that very decision becomes a stumbling block to the believer who wishes to see those two roles separate from each other.



Moreover, this confusion afflicted the secular masses perhaps just as profoundly. Even before the arrival of Christianity in pre-Independent Kenya, society demonstrated significant respect for any form of spirituality. For example, society showed deep reverence for, possibly fear of sacred sites, whether those sites were shrines or temples, for those sites marked, in the opinion of society, specific locations where the spiritual world and the physical world coalesced. Those sites were considered holy and ceremonially clean, and the adherents of Traditional Religion were cautioned against desecrating them. The religious leaders, whether chiefs, *laibons* [a ritual leader or diviner in East Africa], or local medicine-folk, took the lead in exercising this caution.

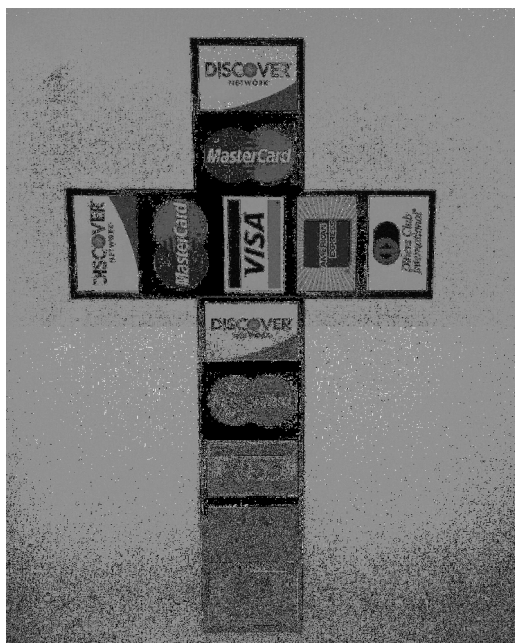
The arrival of Christianity seemed, by default, to contextualize this very sentiment by regarding the pulpit as sacred. This deep, reverence for sacred sites remained undiluted, for the most part, throughout post-Colonial Kenya, until 2007, when Kenya found itself imploding with ethnic strife, with the result that some Christian churches were set alight by disgruntled arsonists.

Of course we still wonder why such lack of respect for the holy places and, presumably, holy people, expressed itself so violently. This lack of respect seems to come from the masses who are confused by the actions of the leaders of those sacred places, namely, the clergy. How did this confusion arise? Seemingly, the clergy had used the holy sites as political platforms. If the masses had been led to believe that the place of worship was holy or *sacred* and was to be kept separate from *the secular*, they then saw that their religious leaders had ignored this. This quite likely suggested to the masses that their religious leaders thought that the ground they proclaimed as

sacred had either lost its sanctity or had never had it in the first place. Consequently, the sanctuaries lost their privileged position as sanctified ground, and the leaders lost their moral authority as spiritual guides. Thus, any secular activity could quite easily find a home within the walls of the sanctuaries, including burning alive people seeking refuge from their violent assailants.

The Pastor, Political Power and Materialism

I noted earlier that the majority of Kenya's politicians no longer enjoy a respectable reputation as the custodians of the country's policies. Much to the chagrin of the Kenyan citizen, Kenya's members of parliament have, with regrettable success, awarded themselves exorbitant sums of money as the remuneration for their political duties. Since no one, except the lawmakers themselves, decides the level of a politician's earnings, their salaries are extremely high compared not only to those of the electorate, but also to their counterparts in other regions of the world. Moreover, the lawmakers keep reviewing their salary, basing their action on what they contend accounts for the insufficiency of their previous perks. These revisions immediately follow their reluctance to pay their fair share of Income Tax expected of them by the Government.



Within this context, if any member of the clergy decides to enter the political scene, the electorate cannot be blamed for seeing this move as driven by some form of greed for power and materialism. Unless a member of the clergy is a leader of some famous mega-church, thereby earning more than the average Kenyan, not many of the clergy are well paid for their ministry. Until the last decade of the 1900s and the first decade of this century, members of the clergy did not have a reputation for earning the sort of solid income one might expect in other fields. The arrival in Kenya of televangelists seems to have changed that notion quite remarkably, considering that some of them proclaim what evangelicals call "The Prosperity Gospel".

However, whether one commands a large income or not, members of the clergy running for political office seem unintentionally to give the suspicious masses an impression similar to that presented by the rest of Kenya's political population, an insatiable desire for power and materialistic gain, with little attention paid to the plight of the impoverished Kenyan. Political power often gives a sense of egocentrism characteristic of a superhero. Clergy running for political office must, for these reasons, constantly wrestle with the double temptation to manipulate the masses to do their bidding on the one hand, and on the other, to appear immune to the materialistic tendencies of the political image. This temptation constitutes a major issue that a person committed to the biblical call to humility and simplicity must overcome.

To be sure, a politically ambitious member of the clergy may be able to remain quite unadulterated by the super-heroic pride and materialism bedeviling Kenya's political scene. In addition, running for office in Kenya inevitably requires raising funds to pay for the political campaign, even for candidates who are members of the clergy. We see this *scenario* played out quite often on the American political scene, though some aspects of the United States' political climate have their fair share of questionable manoeuvres. Candidates for political office in the U.S., some of whom are devout Evangelical Christians, raise millions of dollars to fund their political campaigns, while also living through the political process without intentionally flouting fundamental biblical principles.

Such a state of affairs, I admit, seems *possible* in Kenya. I doubt, however, that that state of affairs is *likely*, for a variety of reasons. First, the use of funds for political campaigns on the American scene appears quite different from the use of funds in Kenya for political campaigns. On the American scene, for example, candidates use the money to travel from state to state to sell their ideas. They also advertise their political ideas through the mass media in an attempt to reach their audience in the most effective way. The Kenyan scene is quite different. To be sure, some funds are allocated for political commercials in the media. The majority of funds, however, seem

dedicated to vote buying.ⁱ The candidate's intention by this action is to present himself or herself, in most cases falsely, as a generous financial donor who will sustain that generosity long after gaining an electoral victory. The candidate is really bribing the electorate to secure their votes.

The regrettable reality is that this practice is found throughout Kenya's secular arena. Each politician wishes to outdo his or her opponent. Hence, if politician *A* buys votes from the electorate, politician *B* will try to out-manoeuvre *A*'s vote-buying practice by giving more money to roughly the same pool of beneficiaries that received money from *A*. The immoral nature of this manoeuvre seems obvious.

This reality leads me to the second reason why it is unlikely that religious leaders can campaign as Christians do in the U.S. On the American scene, each political candidate must give a detailed account of how he or she has spent the funds received during the campaigning period. On the Kenyan scene, funds used for vote-buying remain unaccounted for, hence the political candidate has the freedom to use his funds as he wishes. As noted already, the ethical nature of vote-buying and failure to account for campaign expenditures seems highly questionable. Moreover, the fact that very few individuals in Kenya bother to question the ethical nature of such practices, or call politicians to account for the use of their campaign funds, encourages the perpetuation of those very practices.

Notice, however, that given this background, the chances that a member of the clergy can preserve his or her reputation throughout the political process seems greatly diminished. Members of the public will very likely assume that members of the clergy have compromised their message of integrity. For one thing, if the clergy-turned-politician aims to win, he or she might have to play, not by the rules of the game (if they exist), but by succumbing to the pressure of the political climate, namely: Candidate *A* gave money to members of constituency *X* in order to win that parliamentary seat. If you wish to win that seat, you must, of necessity, give more money to members of *X* than the amount contributed by *A*. The contra-positive of that claim follows, namely: If you fail to give more money to members of *X* than the amount contributed by *A*, you will lose the parliamentary seat for constituency *X*. This state of affairs defines at least one ethical conflict that any member of the clergy aspiring to run for political office could very likely face.

Of course, we could logically envision a possible state of affairs in which the clergy-turned-politician wins a parliamentary seat without stooping to the practice of vote- buying. To be sure, this vision is not only possible, but also desirable, as successfully demonstrated in the life of William Wilberforce, the abolitionist. Kenya desperately needs the actualization of such a *scenario* into some form of tangible reality.

Such a *scenario*, however, seems a very distant and unlikely possibility, given the nature of political campaigns in Kenya. The more-than-likely possibility amounts to vote-buying. Hence, if the aspiring pastor-*cum*-politician donates the funds demanded by the electorate, the act in question amounts to vote-buying, a form of bribery and one expressly forbidden by Scripture. If he or she fails to buy the votes, members of the constituency in question might quite likely reject the aspiring member of the clergy, and vote for the opposing candidate who very likely may have parted with more money. Assume that the aspiring member of the clergy, in fact, loses his or her bid for the seat in question. This loss will signify a rejection of the religious leader by the electorate, and this rejection could haunt the religious leader in the ecclesiastical arena as well.

I personally know a certain clergyman who confessed to a panel interviewing him for reinstatement into the ministry that his decision to enter politics remains the most regrettable decision he ever made in his life as a minister, owing to the conflict of loyalties such a decision presented to him and to the compromises that followed. Even after confessing his regret, I noticed that some members of the interviewing panel harbored suspicions about this minister's intentions. When the panel finally reinstated him, a considerable section of the congregation vehemently expressed their disapproval, and demonstrated a lack of confidence in the leadership of the church for reinstating him as a religious leader. This disapproval may or may not have been justified, but it was there nevertheless.

The Pastor, Multiple Parties and Ethnicity

A third reason for the defense of my thesis is that Kenya subscribes to a multiparty system of politics and strong ethnic loyalties. Inevitably many congregations in Kenya, especially those in

cities, will have members of different parties worshiping under one roof. Kenya's multiparty system of politics seems divided along ethnic and tribal lines, and although each political party subscribes to a manifesto that shuns tribalism, the members of those parties struggle to transcend ethnic and tribal biases. Suppose the pastor of a given congregation chooses to run for political office. He or she will have to run under the umbrella of some particular party. Upon announcing his or her intentions, members of rival parties who are also members of his congregation will find themselves at political odds with their own pastor. The oddity could easily trickle down to create ethnic animosity and hatred. Needless to say, congregational unity may be deeply, compromised, and the question of confusion among the congregants will inevitably arise.

Political rivalries among the electorate run deep in Kenya for one major reason — most political parties find their identity along ethnic lines. Hence, political rivalries run almost as deep as, if not exactly as deep as, ethnic rivalries. Many ordinary Kenyan citizens still struggle to rise above their ethnic biases. Any pastor declaring his or her intention to run for political office will be forced to demonstrate extreme caution in order to avoid appearing to members of his congregation as an ethno-centric individual. This goal, though possible, still remains extremely difficult to attain on a national level. Moreover, the pastor would find it just as difficult to attain unity within the political microcosm of his or her multiethnic congregation, once the decision to run for political office is made. To maintain the unity of the pastor's congregation, a unity quite fundamental for the effectiveness of prayer and worship, reason seems to demand that the pastor be a neutral voice among the rival political views that come to the house of worship for moral and political guidance, of which he or she, as the pastor, is the leader.

The Pastor and the Ideal Political Atmosphere

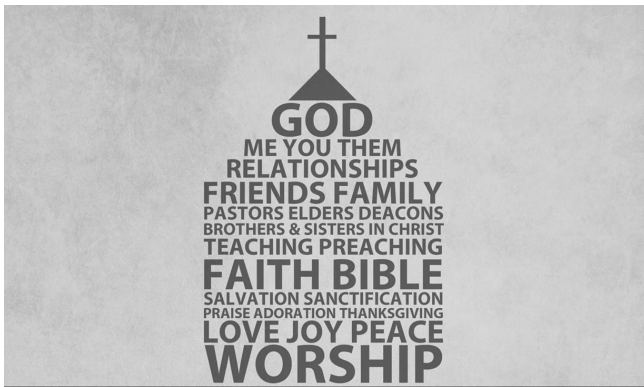
Quite possibly the best of all ecclesiastical, moral, and political worlds would be that a member of the clergy were able to run for political office without losing his or her prophetic voice as a minister. In such a *scenario*, the entire electorate (including the parishioners) would demonstrate the sort of spiritual, moral and political maturity that places confidence in the religious leader's ability to lead people with remarkable success. In such a world, the electorate would understand that politics need not be conducted in an immoral and illegitimate manner, and that the pastor may still play a political role while retaining his pastoral integrity. In such a world the politicians would see themselves as servants of the people in which the needs of the country would be selflessly prioritized over the selfish wants of the politician in a manner significantly distanced from all forms of corruption; and the politicians would also express their concern for the moral, spiritual and social wellbeing of their constituents in a manner consistent with a pastor's concern. The electorate would therefore express little to no hesitation in allowing the pastor to be its moral guide, on the one hand, and political servant on the other.

The biblical example of King David comes to mind, wherein we find some stages of David's life spiritually in tune with God and also in touch with the needs of his people. At those times, David's people seemed to have little or no qualms about seeing David as their spiritual example as well as their political leader, though the prophetic voice remained confined to the individuals specifically designated for the task. David could just as easily walk to the house of worship and lead the nation of Israel in prayer, as he could sit on his kingly throne and exercise his kingly responsibilities. In spite of David's apparent success, he still failed in certain respects, such as by his adultery with Bathsheba. Just the same, David's leadership came fairly close to the ideal I am trying to adumbrate here.

Unfortunately, the political landscape in Kenya lags far and woefully behind this ideal, assuming that the Davidic model is an ideal. I doubt that any country this side of heaven demonstrates the ideal in question. On the contrary, the majority of Kenya's politicians view each other with considerable degrees of suspicion, as evidenced by the many instances of mud-slinging, vitriolic language and invective coming from their colleagues. Moreover, we find the electorate as guilty as the politicians on this very issue of suspicion. Even more sadly, various sections of Kenya's clergy participated in the ethnic hatred that turned into ethnic cleansing in that dark period of Kenya's history. This sort of participation invited deadly violence into the Church. Indeed, as already noted, certain sections of the electorate were not afraid to burn their political opponents alive inside a house of worship.

Conclusion

The upshot of this discussion is that the pulpit should be kept separate from the political platform. Moreover, in order to avoid confusing members of the congregation about the pastoral call, the



pastor would do his members a very big favour by refusing to jump onto any political bandwagon, and by staying focused on, and remaining committed to, the ministerial call he received from God. A regular service of worship should not be turned into a political meeting, and a pastor would be well advised to abstain from running for political office. Dragging political bias into worship shifts the focus from God to human personalities. Running after political office in the Kenyan political environment dilutes the purity of the pastor's prophetic call.

This does not imply that the pastor ought not to applaud wise political moves or criticize immoral political decisions. The pastor seems divinely mandated to exercise the responsibilities of his call in this regard. Political leaders that seem bent on bringing down a nation and its people must be boldly confronted and cautioned with love, gentleness, respect and humility. In other words, the pastor should provide constructive criticism of the political process without employing the political gimmicks characteristic of the Kenyan situation. In this way, he or she will not only represent a neutral position as far as the politics of Kenya is concerned, but also a position that rises above the political situation, one that reclaims the lost prophetic voice of the nation.

End Notes

ⁱ Of course one could plausibly argue that the practice of vote-buying presents itself just as realistically: in the American scene as in the Kenyan, though in a more sophisticated format.

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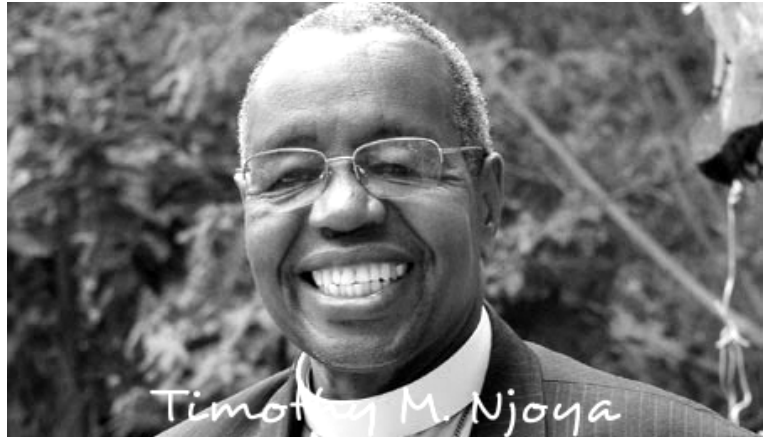
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Timothy M. Njoya
Church and Politics:
With Aspects Relating to Governance,
Public Policy and Ethnicity¹

Introduction

Let me first define the Church as an assembly of believers dependent upon the help of the Holy Spirit, and where the Gospel is duly proclaimed, (Acts 9:31). Christianity adopted the term "church" from the pagan and Jewish worlds where the word meant temple (Acts 19:37-39) or assembly of citizens gathered for a common purpose. A political meeting was also called "a church". The need then arose to distinguish the Christian Church gatherings in Christ's name, where the resurrected Christ is exalted, from any other kind of assembly.

Therefore, the Church defined itself as the Church of God, which he purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28, I Corinthians 1:2 and 12:27).



Today's meaning of the word Church is no longer biblical. It is social, just like business corporations and political States. The only difference is that the Church practices religion and its main actors have appellations such as: reverend, bishop, apostle, pastor, evangelist and other titles. In Kenya, the religious values of the Church and the political values of the State are those of the market: material blessings and power relationships at the expense of the poor and powerless.

Covenant

The biblical course of events that determined the development and differentiation of the Church and State are recorded in the Book of Samuel. Prior to Samuel, the Church (House of Israel) was governed by certain values codified in God's Covenant with Abraham and the Ten Commandments. Since the time of Moses, the Church has been a nation led by civil society without the State. It was the People of Israel, the Church itself, that agitated for Samuel, the main civil society actor, to appoint a king for them. Instead of continuing to be governed by the system of beliefs and values called the Holy Covenant, the Israelites also wanted to be ruled by means of law and order like the other nations around them. God succumbed to their pressure and allowed Samuel to appoint Saul as their first Head of the Government. Quite reluctantly, Samuel presided over Israel's transition from a civil society to a society split into civil society and the monarchy (I Sam 1-12). The failure of Saul and the successive kings to adhere to the ideology of God's Covenant with Israel (I Sam 15:1-31) led to the conflict between the kings and prophets.

Thus dichotomy and conflict started to emerge between the Church whose authority was based on belief and values, and the State, whose authority was based on law and order. While the Church did not relinquish its moral authority to the State of enforcing observance of the Covenant, it obeyed the king's commands if they were consistent with the word of God.

Samuel also did not relinquish his religious role of ensuring that the monarchy observed the Holy Covenant between God and Israel. Moses had divided the Covenant into two parts: the first defined the relationship between God and Israel, and the second part, containing the last six Commandments, defined the moral obligations of the Israelites to one another. This latter part required Israel to relate with each other in the same degree of fidelity and care as they related with God. Thus, after their liberation, God required the Israelites to treat each other better than they had been treated by their Egyptian masters. The people of Israel were given

the Promised Land as tenants at God's will and on condition that they obeyed the Covenant as their national Constitution. Jesus recognized Moses' contribution by summing up the first four Commandments as kinship with God and the other six as kinship with each other.

The first part of the Constitution obliged God to accept worship and service from the Israelites, while in the second part, God was to bless the Israelites if they worshiped him sincerely by obeying all the Commandments. God's blessings included great posterity and great prosperity in terms of milk and honey as well as peace within their borders. Sometimes the Israelites found it easier to worship and serve God as an excuse not to serve one another. God got so tired of this dichotomy between worship and concern for one another that he said, "Do you think I want all these sacrifices you keep offering to me? I have more than enough of the sheep you burn as sacrifice and of the fat of your fine animals (Is 1:11).... When you lift your hands up in prayer, I will not look at you. No matter how much you pray, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with blood. Stop all this evil that I see you doing (1:15) and learn to do right. See that justice is done — help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights and defend the widows" (1:17). The Israelite leaders hoped that by bribing God with worship and sacrifices, God would bless them with more riches. And those riches would eventually reach the widows, orphans and the oppressed through the trickle-down effect, by ethnic osmosis or by proxy. The Church and the State had thus converged and had lost their essential distinctions. The Church had become a function of the State.



Regardless of how one evaluates the religious-political history of Israel from Samuel through the 7th to 6th centuries B.C. to the beginning of the Christian era, it is evident that the alliance of religious and political leadership failed to meet the standard of God's Covenant, which is the ultimate law of divine-human governance.

After the end of the Israel northern monarchy in 721 B.C. and Jewish monarchy in 586 B.C., God's Covenant with Israel did not die. Instead it became universal. Instead of reading the failure of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah as the failure of God's reign on earth, the prophets expanded the lists of God's servants to the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and the Ptolemy of Egypt. Indeed, the prophetic tradition welcomed Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Emperor, as God's instrument for punishing the errant dictators and considered King Cyrus of Persia as God's instrument for the liberation of the Jews. Cyrus appointed Nehemiah to revive the Jewish religious institutions that were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar but not the political establishment.

The forcible support of Hellenism by Antiochus IV, 175-164 B.C., and the conquest by Rome in 63 B.C. did not end the political influence of the priestly hierarchy centred at the Temple in Jerusalem and the development of synagogues throughout the Hellenistic Empire. The Jewish ethnic and political need for survival during the Greek and Roman Empires continued in the time of Jesus. The Sanhedrin acted as the political bridge between Roman power and the Jewish community. The Romans appointed such leaders as Herod and Pilate to rule the Jews through a system of Dual Mandate within which the Sanhedrin imposed the Jewish Mosaic law (Torah) and had its own temple currency. Jesus considered this dual currency as a flawed and corrupt practice and played a prophetic role by whipping the money-changers.

The Audacity to Hope

But the Church is likely to meet obstacles from the State if it dares to proclaim people's God-bestowed humanity, sovereignty, freedom and dignity. Both the Church and the State opposed me when I pegged my theology on the Books of Habakkuk and Isaiah and preached for the transformation of Kenyans from property into humans and their nation from market into humane entity. My prophecy had arisen as a spiritual revolt within the rank and file of the Kenyan ruling class which constitutes 10% of the population. In the name of academic merit and elections, this class consumes 90% of Kenya's wealth. My point was not that educated

Kenyans should not eat and mate more than their fellow Kenyans, but that the Kenyan *élite* consumed more than it produced.

I also pointed out that Kenyan education produces consumers rather than producers resulting in parasites who make up the religious and political leadership. The majority of Kenyan youth who pass their exams with less than Grade C- toil picking flowers, tea and coffee and milking cows. They collect sand and quarry stones, shine shoes, cook and clean toilets for those who passed their exams with As, Bs and C+s but who produce virtually nothing.

The immediate result of this education system, that rewarded passing examinations rather than rewarding production, was a top *élite* characterized by excessive consumption of fashionable clothes, cars, cosmetics, houses and posh private schools, coupled with high hospital bills for obesity, stress and related lifestyle diseases. However, Prof. Ng'eno, the then-Minister for Education, avoided addressing this critique of the Kenyan success narratives and instead defended the quota system by attacking me as one who "is not trained in matters of education and should stop using the pulpit to pontificate to this country on what should be done" (*The Standard*, 18 January 1987). Prof. Ng'eno missed my point that the Church and State should stop processing children like robotic products for sale into the job market. Children have rights to realize their God-given potential as good citizens regardless of their intellectual capacity.

When I called for the Lancaster Constitution and the One-party State to be dismantled, the Minister of Livestock Development, Mr. Elijah Mwangale, said that Church leaders who attack the Government for no reason should not be tolerated, and called for my arrest and subsequent detention. He warned: "Let me remind Njoya that the late Honorable Jean Marie Seroney and Martin Shikuku were both plucked out of inside Parliament in the 70's and taken to detention when the Government felt that that could be the best way to safeguard the country's security and interests" (*Daily Nation*, 8 January 1990).

Clearly the State's expectation was that the Church should complement it rather than play its God-given role, in response to my sermon of 7 July 1984, Parliament was told that "the right to worship cannot be exercised in isolation and must be complimentary to the Government policies and aspirations in the interests of law and order". My preaching was characterized as having gone "beyond the limits and interfered with certain Government action", and as "not in keeping with the spirit of peace, love and Unity" (*Daily Nation*, 20 July 1984, p. 1).

Some Kenyans attended my rallies because they wanted to defy the threats issued by the State, others to hear the message of liberation, others simply to be godly, while others came to identify themselves with someone different from a Tribe, State or Party. This spiritual phenomenon of leading people away from traditional loyalty to the State, to loyalty to ideas affected even Moi himself. While Moi declared that it was not his duty to dictate what should be preached (*The Standard*, 26 July 1984), he wanted preaching to be done within certain parameters. He therefore said, "Christians who are claiming they are praying for others should go to their rooms and pray".

The Imperial Church of the Market

Christianity of the market began in East Africa in 1498 when Vasco Da Gama arrived in Malindi accompanied by Roman Catholic Missionaries.² In 1567 the Portuguese Viceroy in India ordered the Gospel to be preached around Mombasa. An Augustinian monastery was built on the East African Coast of the Indian Ocean. By 1597, there were 600 African Christian slaves, Swahili and Bantu. The Church became part and parcel of the ideology that pacified slaves with prayers and songs during the time of the Atlantic Slave Trade triangle. John Newton (1725-1807), one of the most prosperous English slave traffickers from Africa across the Atlantic, composed such songs as *Amazing Grace*, *Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken*, and *How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds* to console himself and the slaves as he buried a third of his human cargo in the sea because the vessel could not make it to America due to heat strokes, suffocation, hunger and contagious diseases.



The Industrial Revolution also transformed every religious institution in Europe into an organ of the market. The values of the market, its stability, continuity and profitability overrode every other human value. Humanity was no longer defined by God's image but by consumption. The more knowledge, material goods and services a person consumed, the more human one became. Similarly, the less knowledge, material goods and services one consumed the less human one became.

It was at the peak of the Industrial Revolution that Africa was incorporated as part of the European overseas market with its ideology of the survival of the fittest. This incorporation did not end with Independence; instead, Kenya remained entrenched in Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and Herbert Spencer's theory of the survival of the fittest. Both concepts derive from the animal kingdom where the big fish eat the little fish. Julius Nyerere used a similar animal metaphor in his assessment of Kenya, referring to our country as a "man eat man society". Despite their different perspectives, Darwin, Spencer and Nyerere were united in using the animal kingdom as a metaphor for describing a capitalist society. However, they were too generous: African totalitarianism is less natural than the animal kingdom. In the case of animals, the big fish are intelligent enough to eat the little fish without interfering with their breeding cycle in case they deplete future supplies. By contrast, the ruling classes assassinated their most intelligent, industrious and creative thinkers and in so doing destroyed their fitness to survive in the Western market environment.

It was this suicidal class that I was trying to save from itself when, in 1986, I called on Kenyans to dismantle the Lancaster Constitution and the One-party State. I joined prophets Elijah, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Micah and Hosea in exposing religion and politics as Kenyan *élite* self-reward systems. As mentioned above, I spoke out against the injustice of the fact that 10% of the population consumed 90% of Kenya's wealth while the less educated served them. The perspectives of Isaiah and Jesus had inspired me to criticize the compromise of the Church with the State in oppressing Kenyans.

Similarly, the Harambee Ideology in Kenya is the ideology of the ruling class to deceive the masses that they need not eat and mate because their tribal representatives would eat and mate on their behalf. This logic is commonly expressed by the argument that if the tribal leaders become rich, their followers become rich by proxy and osmosis. The religion of Israel had also carried out the same deception of the poor, proposing that a few Royal Israelites becoming rich meant that all Israelites became rich.

But the Kenyan ecclesiastical leadership joined forces with the Government to resist my call to dismantle the One-party totalitarianism because it was part and parcel of the same market. With reckless self-abandon, Church leaders defended the unholy unity of the Church-State identities which I questioned. For instance, at an Annual General Meeting of the Full Gospel Churches of Kenya (FGCK), leaders reaffirmed "their total support and confidence in President Daniel arap Moi's leadership, the Government and the ruling party, KANU" and declared that "since its foundation in 1949, the Full Gospel Churches in Kenya had remained faithful and loyal to the Government and would continue to be so" (*Kenya Times*, 25 August 2006).

The FGCK was trying to have its cake and eat it; that is, believe in God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, and at the same believe in President Daniel arap Moi's leadership, the Government and the ruling party, Kanu; or in the Trinitarian philosophy of Nyayo — Peace, Love and Unity "as expounded by the president". Yet the KANU trinities and the Holy Trinity were mutually exclusive and diametrically incompatible, just as light and darkness or Jesus and Satan. This unholy trinity revealed African Christianity as more pagan and heathen than Christian. Because the Christianity the missionaries propagated, during the Slave Trade and colonialism, was not self-critical it was incapable of preventing Church leaders like Rev. Simon Kariuki from straying from the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to the self-revealed One-party manufactured trinities of Moi's leadership, the Government and KANU, and of the trinity of Peace, Love and Unity.

Instead of attacking the Church or replying to the FGCK, I had to attack the very foundations of African Christianity; namely the market, as codified by the Lancaster Constitution and the One-party State. The Church and the One-party State lived together in a *come-we-stay* marriage. Church leaders capitalized on this un-divinely recognized marriage to sell their followers as voters to politicians or to make them their own voters. The Starehe MP,

Margaret Wanjiru, is a typical case in point that believers can be traded for votes to gain wealth and power.

Africa was also plagued by a lack of clarity between spirituality and politics. Archbishop Raphael S. Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki defined both Church and State as groups organized for a common cause — the Church to serve the spiritual needs and State the material needs. Ndingi said, "Here in Kenya we stand in a very good position as far as the Church-State relationship and cooperation are concerned. This cooperation is in accordance with the African traditional motto *Harambee* (Let us pull together)". Ndingi believed that the Government "guaranteed freedom of worship and religion in our constitution".³

While Ndingi believed in the legitimacy of the Lancaster Constitution and called it "our" and "ours" I wanted Kenya to have a new constitution that recognized the freedom of worship as something inherent in the human being and which existed before the existence of governments. I could not accept that any Kenyan owed his feet to walk, mouth to talk, hands to greet and **freedom to worship** from the Government. As I have already mentioned, the government was created by the market rather than by the people, and therefore it lacked valid authority to grant freedom to Kenyans. This is why I led the people to the streets to demand a new and legitimate Constitution.

By contrast, the prevailing assumption of the Kenyan Church that Ndingi articulated was that sovereignty belonged to the State and the people were subjects. Yet in the New Testament, the State is God-given for the limited purpose of keeping order. The State is a tool of governance and management of public resources. It is not the source of order, peace and resource. These come from God. Ndingi also said, "A further proof of this Church-State relationship is the fact that today in our freely and democratically elected Parliament there is one Member who is also a church minister, something that is rare indeed, even in developed countries".⁴ The MP that Ndingi referred to was Bishop Lawi Imathiu, the Methodist Church Minister, who is now the Chairman of the GEMA, an ethnic outfit.

The Un-Christian Nature of the State Under the Lancaster Constitution

Since 1888 when Queen Victoria signed the Charter that Kenya was part of her British



overseas market, Kenya had never become a nation, nor been governed as a nation. Therefore, instead of being governed, Kenya had always been dominated and abused. Kenyans do not have any experience of the rule of law but only the rule of force.

Rather than revoke the idea that the Kenyan people were overseas property, the Lancaster Constitution reaffirmed people as: property, labourers, taxpayers

and voters for the good of the market. The abolition of slavery and colonialism changed the collective and legalized ownership of local people by foreign people into the individual ownership of local people by local people (*sisi kwa sisi*). While during the period of slavery people were free labour, during colonialism they were both cheap labour and taxes, while after Independence they became cheap labour, taxes and votes.

Even as Britain wrote the Lancaster Constitution, it did not respect the African Delegates whom it had invited to the Lancaster Constitutional Conferences, it did not ask the Delegates to test the legitimacy of the document through a referendum. Instead, Britain superimposed Independence upon Kenyans in utter contempt of the universal doctrine of self-determination enshrined in the Treaty of Versailles.

This sabotage made African Independence a blatant violation of the God-given freedom, sovereignty and dignity of African people. Had Kenyans won their Independence in a transformative way as the Americans had won their Independence, that is, on the battlefield, Kenyans would have had an opportunity to express themselves as the human beings that God created in his own image. Kenya is still lacking an informed spiritual analysis of what it means to be human or property and for what reasons they can do with God and without a State. A country like Somalia decided to do with God and without the State.

Lest I be accused of being an anarchist, I refer to my going to a constitutional court (Njoya & Others — versus — Attorney-General, case No. 2004/1/ LR, 261) to argue that the State is a creature of the people, and as their creature, is subject to the authority of the people to unmake it and make another one if they so wish. The constitutional court ruled that WE THE PEOPLE of Kenya have inherent and inalienable God-given sovereignty, which we have the authority to exercise as follows:

1. The power and the right of overhauling the Constitution belongs to or is of the Kenyans and they are the ones who should say, through a referendum, what basic changes are to be effected in the current Constitution.
2. The Parliament has, under the current Constitution, only the power to make amendments to it without altering its basic structure.
3. The National Conference that drafted the Bomas Document was fundamentally flawed and lacked the mandate.

The Court's decision affirmed the biblical theology that Kenyans are superior to and come before the State. I left the issue of whether believers are more important than their Churches to be decided by the believers themselves, but developed a theory of transformation as my contribution to the development of our philosophy of Kenyan jurisprudence. Without a new philosophy of jurisprudence, Kenyans would not have had a Constitution that recognized God and the humanity of Kenyans. The greatest achievement of my Christian faith and theology is not that Kenyans have made a new Constitution, but the fact that I convinced the Court that God made each and every Kenyan *human, sovereign and equal*.

This landmark ruling confirmed that my theology has helped Kenya to have one of the most advanced constitutions on the planet. Kenya will however need another or other revolutionary theologians to conceptualize the level of the continuing transformation of Kenyans from property into humans, and Kenya from a market into a nation.

The State as God's Steward (Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 2:15)

A transformed Kenya would look like a necklace with so many intricate varieties, sizes and colours of beads, with medium sized indigo beads like *Digo* and *Pokot*, with petite gold beads like *Indians* and *Ogiek*, with large crystal beads like *Luhya* and *Somali*, and with delicate oversized beads like *Kikuyu*, *Kalenjin* and *Luo*. To crown it all, as a necklace Kenya would have some expressive beads like *Christians*, spices like *Hindus* and others levelheaded like *Muslims*. The Lancaster Constitution could not withstand the weight of all these kinds of beads, and so it snapped and spilled the beads onto the ground where the lighter beads got trampled upon and were crushed by the heavier ones. That is how I came up with the idea of a new Constitution to thread Kenyans together unbreakably based on values than on identities. I preached that the universe is God's word and body. When I enter politics it is in God's body that I am partaking. It is in God's governance and public policy that I am participating.

When you introduce ethnicity into this body of God you are introducing a dichotomy for filtering and selecting who should enter and participate in God's body and who should not. The moment you introduce subjects like ethnicity, gender, race and class, you create conditions for some to be satisfied and others to be dissidents, malcontents and oppositionists. You erect biased criteria for some to eat and mate while others do not. Yet God told Peter not to "condemn what God made clean" (Acts 10:11-15).

God is the One who made tribes, and therefore while it is clean to be Kikuyu or Kalenjin, it would be unclean for a Christian to join GEMA or KAMATUSA, because these associations are exclusive, manmade ethnic associations. These cloths of *negative ethnicity* (politics of physical appearance) were cut and sold by the media to any *élite* that appealed to physical appearances for political support, following the proliferation of the media after KANU was forced to open a democratic space for radio and TV. This development gave the impression that the differences in wealth and poverty amongst the various tribal *élites* were caused by differences in their tribal complexion. The media did not make different size dresses for *negative ethnicity*, short for the poor and long for the rich. The experts of *negative ethnicity* did not even venture to invent a vaccine for preventing tribes from developing the chromosomes of *negative ethnicity*. Unfortunately, Makau Mutua and Koigi Wa Wamwere's newspaper articles did not improve matters much; whether mischievously or innocently, they provided politicians with material for thinking that their abuse of ethnic identity for political

gain had some scientific foundation. The myth of *negative ethnicity*, or tribalism, reflects a kind of pathological and intellectual decay that informs Kenya's political parties on how to form alliances and coalitions without whose misadventure Kenya would not have invited the International Criminal Court. Even during the Trial of the Genocide in Rwanda, not a single perpetrator called a physiologist to show DNA evidence of *negative ethnicity* in his body.

Therefore, God did not make any positive or negative ethnicity in Kenya. He made tribes as natural entities, just as he made trees and animals without making them negative and positive. The term negative ethnicity obscures the sin of unequal and broken material relationships. *Negative ethnicity* cannot be found in the DNA of any ethnic community. Only in the brains of greedy politicians can you find *negative ethnicity* as the DNA of power and wealth. On 25 August 1985 I preached a broadcast sermon entitled: *What God Has Cleansed You Must Not Call Unclean*, based on Acts 11:1-18. My sermon of 14 April 1995 repeated that,

Nobody in the world should feel guilty because he happens to belong to one race, sex or tribe, but we must distinguish between race and racism, tribe and tribalism and sex and sexism. However, there is a tribalism that comes under the name of élitism, which is the disease of *élites* competing with one another for power and business.

Conclusion

The marked significant turning point in Kenya's history was not prompted by politics, but by having good quality Church theology. If the Church wants to make a divine contribution to the governance of this world, it must be informed by the word of God but not by the imperatives of the market. It is possible that since the human character is a product of the market environment, and is as much a social construct as is religion, tyranny, fascism, dictatorship and totalitarianism, children must be educated to grow into God-fearing citizens in order to have a better Church.

The divine criteria for governance are the same for the State as for the Church; namely, fidelity to God's Covenant of love for the Creator and care for everything that God created. All religious beliefs, values and practices, as well as all aspects relating to State governance, public policy and ethnicity, should be judged on their faithfulness or lack of faithfulness to the divine Covenant God revealed to Moses and proven through God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. But as the prophetic Tradition indicates, there shall always be a necessary ideological conflict between Church and State, given that the State has inbuilt tendencies to own and control the people and act on the basis of self-preservation, while ideally the Church is called by God to act selflessly for the good of all. From the very beginning the Church acknowledged this ideological divergence by inserting in the Apostles' Creed that Jesus was "Crucified under Pontius Pilate". Any Church that ignores the inherent ideological variance between the State's mandate to enforce the law, and its own divine mandate: "To bring good news to the poor... to proclaim liberty to captives ... to free the oppressed and announce the Lord's year of mercy" (*cf.* Lk 4:18,19), loses its very purpose. Amen.

End Notes

¹ Presented at the 2012 Conference of the Africa Society of Evangelical Theology on 28 April 2012.

² David B. Barrett, *Kenya Churches Handbook: The Development of Kenyan Christianity, 1498-1973*; Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1973, p. 29.

³ Barrett, *Kenya Churches Handbook*, pp. 44, 45.

⁴ Barrett, *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 45.

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Bozena Stencel, FMM Teologia politica: la storia e l'attualità di un concetto

Suor Bozena Stencel, francescana missionaria di Maria, polacca, missionaria in Brasile, dove insegna teologia nell'Istituto Teologico a Manaus. Ha approfondito la Teologia Politica come il tema della tesi di licenza in Teologia Dogmatica nella Pontificia Università Gregoriana a Roma.



Il presente articolo si propone di presentare alcuni elementi della storia del concetto *teologia politica* e i significati attuali collegati al termine. Lo scopo è quindi teorico, ma in realtà il processo della chiarificazione del concetto può suscitare anche qualche spunto e criterio per la pratica dei cristiani nel campo socio-politico, particolarmente nell'ambito personale.

Il concetto della teologia politica non è nuovo. La sua origine risale all'antichità greca, nel corso della storia prende diversi significati, alla fine nel secolo XX acquista anche una notorietà scientifica. In un interessante studio Carlos Corral Salvador analizza come questo concetto, anche se non formulato o non utilizzato esplicitamente, in diverse epoche, però, ha funzionato come un modo specifico di capire la realtà socio-politica concreta e di conseguenza, di porsi di fronte alle strutture di potere vigenti o addirittura di organizzare queste strutture in un determinato contesto.¹ Infatti, nella storia del Cristianesimo le posture riguardo all'ordinazione politica hanno variato molto, dalla contestazione o opposizione critica, ad esempio dei primi cristiani verso la divinizzazione dell'Imperatore, o nel secolo XX verso i sistemi totalitaristi, fino alla legittimazione o una collaborazione abusiva, come in alcune forme degli Imperi e delle Monarchie Cristiane o anche durante le dittature recenti.

Oggi la teologia politica è un termine polivalente dal punto di vista semantico: per alcuni significa una riflessione sulla politica alla luce della Rivelazione, per altri il fondamento speculativo di una necessaria responsabilità dei Cristiani per la dimensione politica della realtà in cui vivono, e finalmente qualche volta è capita anche come un'indebita confusione teorica e un esagerato coinvolgimento pratico della religione negli affari politici. E come spesso succede con il linguaggio, anche in questo caso non è una questione puramente teorica, ma la polivalenza del termine evoca anche delle convinzioni e degli atteggiamenti molto diversi quando si pensa ai legami fra la fede e la sfera socio-politica, fra la religione e la cittadinanza, fra la Chiesa e lo Stato.

Vediamo allora le tappe più indicative della storia del concetto *teologia politica*. Siccome non è possibile trattare il tema qui in un modo esaustivo, il testo si concentrerà attorno agli autori del secolo XX.

1. Impostazione scientifica della teologia politica in Carl Schmitt ed Erik Peterson

Carl Schmitt, un giurista e filosofo politico tedesco, scrisse negli anni '20 del secolo scorso un'opera intitolata appunto *Teologia politica*. Secondo lui "tutti i concetti più pregnanti della moderna dottrina dello Stato sono concetti teologici secolarizzati".² E ancora "Il quadro metafisico che una determinata epoca si costruisce del mondo ha la stessa struttura di ciò che si presenta a prima vista come la forma della organizzazione politica".³ Così Schmitt riconosce un'analogia fra l'universo della fede da un lato e i sistemi e le strutture politiche dall'altro e usa quest'analogia come uno



Carl Schmitt

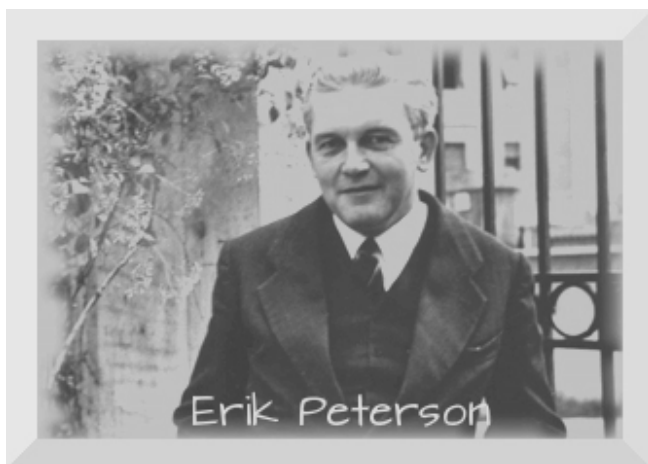
¹ C. Corral Salvador, *Teología política. Una perspectiva histórica y sistemática*.

² C. Schmitt, *Teologia politica*, 61.

³ C. Schmitt, *Teologia politica*, 69.

strumento scientifico di analisi. L'opera però suscitò più tardi una polemica, si potrebbe dire che per due motivi collegati fra di loro. Uno è la stessa struttura letteraria del libro di Schmitt. Infatti, anche se il titolo suggerisce una problematica teologica, il tema principale dell'opera è la sovranità, particolarmente riguardo al diritto di stabilire lo stato di eccezione. L'opera quindi nel suo insieme: lo stile, gli esempi citati, la speculazione sviluppata sembra suggerire, che l'autore si ponga in favore della dittatura. L'altro è tutto il contesto politico tedesco di quel tempo, dovuto alla progressiva ascesa al potere di Hitler e quindi di nazionalsocialismo; una tale situazione certamente non favorisce un dibattito o una speculazione neutrale sulla politica. Fino ad oggi gli studiosi della storia, delle scienze politiche e altri discutono la posizione teorica e la postura concreta di Schmitt; se per gli uni la sua teologia politica è principalmente un modo di studiare la filosofia politica nel decorso dei secoli, per gli altri significa invece un forte sopporto teorico al nazismo. Ed è proprio questa comprensione che suscita la risposta di Erik Peterson. In ogni modo per Schmitt la teologia politica appartiene al campo delle scienze socio-politiche e giuridiche, ed è in questo campo che la sua analogia è diventata un noto e abbastanza utilizzato strumento scientifico. Schmitt non esplora il suo valore propriamente teologico, nonostante i riferimenti frequenti alla rivelazione Cristiana.

E interessante notare che pian piano anche la teologia comincia a fare l'uso dell'analogia schmittiana, come si può constatare ad esempio nelle opere di Moltmann e Boff sulla Teologia Trinitaria e le questioni socio-politiche, per citare soltanto alcuni esempi.



Ritorniamo a Erik Peterson. Questo esegeta e storico della religione pubblicò in 1935 il libro *Il monoteismo come problema politico*, in cui studia il coinvolgimento della fede in un Dio unico con i sistemi politici, dall'antichità fino all'epoca Costantiniana. Secondo lui, se il monoteismo serve spesso come la giustificazione o l'appoggio delle strutture del potere, persino ingiuste o despotiche, la comprensione corretta della Teologia Trinitaria invece non permette questo. Per Peterson Eusebio di Cesarea elabora ancora una pubblicità politica in favore di Costantino il Grande usando gli elementi della dottrina Cristiana, ma la consolidazione della riflessione

trinitaria dopo Gregorio Nazianzeno e Agostino costituisce una rottura con questa pratica.

In tal modo non soltanto è finito teologicamente il monoteismo come problema politico e la fede Cristiana è stata liberata dal suo legame con l'Impero Romano, ma si è anche realizzata la rottura con ogni 'teologia politica' che abusa dell'annuncio Cristiano per giustificare una certa situazione politica. Soltanto sul terreno del giudaismo o del paganesimo può esistere qualcosa come una 'teologia politica'.⁴

Il pensiero di Peterson così formulato è suscettibile alle interpretazioni diverse. Per alcuni autori significa l'impossibilità di qualche riflessione teologica sulla politica, conosciuta nella letteratura affine come la liquidazione di ogni teologia politica. Lo stesso Schmitt, anche se definisce questa liquidazione come una leggenda scientifica, si sente spinto a rispondere criticamente a questa tesi che, come dice lui "è citata con valore definitivo ed efficacia giuridica".⁵

Ma quello che Peterson qui assolutamente rifiuta è l'uso abusivo, incorretto del Messaggio Cristiano per legittimare le situazioni e le strutture politiche. Concretamente, secondo lui, la fede in Dio Uno e Trino non può servire come sostegno dei sistemi di potere e, anche se non lo dice chiaramente, lui ha in mente il sistema dittatoriale in cui la Germania viveva in quel tempo. Dal punto di vista storico la sua tesi non è del tutto corretta, perché vi sono gli esempi della strumentalizzazione politica del Dogma Trinitario.⁶ Bisogna comunque capire e valutare il coraggio di Peterson che vuole preservare il messaggio Cristiano dalla manipolazione politica, esprimendo così anche la sua denuncia e la resistenza di fronte al nazismo.

Il nostro autore svolgerà più tardi una riflessione sul valore del martirio Cristiano come testimonianza in determinati contesti politici. Infatti, nei drammatici avvenimenti della Seconda

⁴ E. PETERSON, *Il monoteismo come problema politico*, 72.

⁵ C. SCHMITT, *Teologia politica II*, 11.

⁶ Cf. G. RUGGIERI, *La necessità dell'inutile*, 14.

Guerra Mondiale vissuti anche da Peterson, per moltissime persone il martirio fu il modo radicale di testimoniare fedelmente e integralmente la propria fede.

Grazie ad ambedue gli autori: Schmitt e Peterson la teologia politica diventa un termine discusso nel campo scientifico fino ad oggi. Giuseppe Zarone riprende l'analogia di Schmitt in un'analisi del concetto di teologia politica dal punto di vista filosofico. Condivide l'opinione che Schmitt non è interessato nel significato teologico della sua analogia, intuisce, però un problema teologico da questa evocato e lo formula così: "A quali condizioni una verità teologico — religiosa, ancorata alla trascendenza, — può esplicarsi storicamente, mediarsi, e prestarsi alla giustificazione (positiva o negativa) degli ordini e dei poteri del mondo?".⁷ Qui la questione si concentra attorno alle condizioni dell'uso corretto dell'analogia nel senso discendente: dal piano religioso a quello politico. Antonio M. Baggio invece non soltanto sviluppa una ricerca teologico-politica, ma lo fa in senso positivo: riflette sul significato della frase di Peterson secondo la quale non esista nessun riscontro fra la realtà trinitaria e la realtà umana. Lui ritiene che questo riscontro esista, che la rivelazione trinitaria deve orientare la vita umana anche nella dimensione politica: "Dal momento in cui Dio si rivela come Trinità, anche le azioni umane — e, in esse, le azioni politiche — devono avere un'impronta trinitaria".⁸ Dalla questione formulata da Peterson in modo negativo, nasce quindi un'altra, aperta ad approfondire il significato positivo del Dogma Trinitario di fronte alle questioni socio-politiche. È proprio questa potenzialità politica positiva della teologia cristiana che sarà rilevata dagli autori più recenti.

2. Una nuova teologia politica: Metz e Moltmann

Negli anni 1960 alcuni teologi tedeschi riprendono il termine teologia politica, ma gli danno un significato diverso da quello fin qui conosciuto. Vediamo particolarmente due fra loro: Metz e Moltmann.

Johann Baptist Metz è un teologo cattolico, forse il più importante per il nostro tema. Lui stesso scrive così:

«prego i lettori di voler intendere il discorso sulla teologia politica unicamente nell'uso che io ne farò e nel senso che tenterò di chiarire. Io intendo la 'teologia politica' in primo luogo come correzione critica di una tendenza estrema della teologia attuale alla privatizzazione. Nello stesso tempo, la intendo positivamente come il tentativo di formulare il messaggio escatologico alla luce delle condizioni richieste dalla nostra società attuale'.⁹

La privatizzazione della teologia attuale ha per il nostro autore motivi storici: la perdita della connessione fra religione e società e poi la critica illuminista e marxista della religione come ideologia. Le teologie trascendentali, personalistiche e esistenziali, pur dando la risposta a questa nuova situazione, la concentrano troppo sul piano individuale e intimista, misconoscendo la dimensione sociale del messaggio evangelico.

La tendenza alla privatizzazione Metz la vede pure nell'interpretazione della Bibbia mediante la storia delle forme, usata nella chiave esistenzialista e personalista. Per questo "la comprensione dell'annuncio cristiano venne privatizzata e, in una certa misura, intimizzata in senso esistenziale".¹⁰ La parola di Dio allora diventa una sua autorivelazione personale, ma è dimenticata la promessa che questa parola porta al mondo.

Il primo compito della teologia politica, negativo, è quindi la deprivatizzazione del messaggio Cristiano teologicamente sistematizzato. Ma c'è anche un compito positivo, quello di definire in modo critico il rapporto fra religione e società, fra la prospettiva escatologica della fede e la prassi sociale dei Cristiani. Questo compito poggia sui motivi filosofici: la ragione modernamente intesa è sempre anche una ragione pratica, ordinata alle esigenze critiche del soggetto. Così pure nell'ambito teologico il problema classico del rapporto fede e ragione ora si rende concreto nel nesso fra la sistematizzazione teorica e la prassi, specie la prassi sociale. Metz indica inoltre il fondamento biblico della sua convinzione: la salvezza proclamata da Gesù non è limitata alla sfera personale e nemmeno soltanto religiosa, ma al contrario, l'ha messo in



⁷ G. ZARONE, "Redenzione ed eticità. Per la critica del concetto di teologia politica", 4-5.

⁸ A.M. BAGGIO, "Trinità e politica. Riflessione su alcune categorie politiche alla luce della rivelazione trinitaria", 732.

⁹ J.B. METZ, *Sulla teologia del mondo*, 107.

¹⁰ J.B. METZ, *Sulla teologia del mondo*, 109.

conflitto con i poteri pubblici del suo tempo. La ragione della Passione e morte di Gesù è politica, ma anche il suo significato soteriologico ha la dimensione politica. La salvezza ha una relazione costante con il mondo, le promesse divine: libertà, pace, giustizia hanno la dimensione comunitaria e spingono allo stesso tempo a un impegno sociale dei cristiani. La realizzazione piena di questi valori non può essere identificata con nessun ordine sociopolitico concreto, ma sarà compiuta soltanto nell'orizzonte escatologico. Ma la provvisorietà delle situazioni storiche non equivale all'indifferenza al suo riguardo.

Qui sorge il concetto Metziano di *riserva escatologica* la quale ci porta infatti non già ad un rapporto negatore, bensì ad un rapporto critico e dialettico nei confronti del presente storico. Le promesse a cui esso si riferisce non sono un orizzonte vuoto di religiosa attesa, non sono un'idea puramente regolatrice, ma imperativo critico e liberante per il nostro presente, pungolo e compito a rendere operanti queste promesse e perciò ad "avverarle", nelle condizioni storiche presenti; la loro verità infatti deve essere "fatta".¹¹

Metz precisa ancora quale sia il ruolo della Chiesa nell'orizzonte di una così intesa teologia politica: essere l'istituzione critica della società. La Chiesa vive anche nella riserva escatologica, perché non esiste per se stessa, ma per il regno di Dio. Di fronte alle obiezioni storiche che si potrebbero formulare contro questa idea, il nostro autore confessa semplicemente la fiducia nella possibilità di cambiare la pratica ecclesiale. La funzione critica della Chiesa consiste nella difesa del singolo, particolarmente del povero ed oppresso contro un progresso tecnologico disordinato e contro le ideologie politiche, e anche nell'attualizzazione dell'amore, compreso come la promozione di giustizia, pace e libertà per gli altri. In uno scritto posteriore il nostro autore precisa che la teologia politica ha anche una funzione critica nella propria chiesa, giacché sfida «strutture e costituzioni della Tradizione ecclesiale stessa». ¹² Diventa chiaro perciò che il ruolo che la Chiesa dovrebbe sviluppare nella società è relazionato con la necessità dei cambiamenti nella sua stessa struttura interna.

Per Metz la teologia politica non è una nuova disciplina teologica o una delle teologie del genitivo, ma piuttosto, come dice Michele Nicoletti «un nuovo modo di essere, o meglio di dover essere, della teologia stessa nel mondo contemporaneo». ¹³

Metz ha dedicato al tema qui analizzato diversi libri, saggi e articoli elaborati lungo le decadi, non è possibile quindi fare qui un riassunto di tutto, ma le idee fin qui presentate ci fanno capire perché il nostro autore è chiamato il padre della teologia politica.

Un altro personaggio importante per il nostro tema è Jürgen Moltmann, un teologo riformato, la teologia politica è stata uno dei molti temi del suo interesse, come ad esempio la teologia della speranza o della Croce. In un breve testo intitolato «'Teologia politica' della speranza» Moltmann si dice consapevole che questa è stata un motivo di panico per quelli che cercano nella religione la pace interiore e la quiete, è invece necessaria per i cristiani che per motivo della fede si preoccupano delle situazioni della società. Lui descrive la teologia politica così:

'essa non vuol trasformare le questioni politiche in temi centrali della teologia, né offrire un appoggio religioso a ordinamenti o correnti politiche. Il termine 'teologia politica' indica piuttosto il campo, l'ambiente, lo spazio, l'elemento nel quale la teologia cristiana deve oggi consapevolmente articolarsi. C'è una teologia coscientemente politica ed una ingenuamente politica, ma non esiste nessuna teologia apolitica'. ¹⁴

In seguito, facendo un percorso storico dall'antichità fino ai tempi moderni il nostro autore studia il concetto della religione politica, come giustificazione teologica delle strutture politiche, e identifica i suoi indizi anche nelle società più moderne e democratiche. Se il cristianesimo non fosse stato libero di avviarsi per questa via, dall'altro lato Moltmann ricorda gli esempi della contestazione cristiana riguardo ai sistemi politici concreti. Rievoca pure la tesi di Peterson e s'identifica con questa: «la critica della religione politica del potere terreno costituisce ancor oggi, a mio avviso, la funzione politica della dottrina della Trinità». ¹⁵ Non sviluppa però questa idea, ma

¹¹ J.B. METZ, *Sulla teologia del mondo*, 113-114.

¹² J.B. METZ, «La "teologia politica" in discussione», 245.

¹³ M. NICOLETTI, «Il problema della "teologia politica" nel Novecento», 52.

¹⁴ J. MOLTSMANN, «'Teologia politica' della speranza», 209-210.

¹⁵ J. MOLTSMANN, "'Teologia politica' della speranza", 215.

segnala alcuni elementi della teologia politica della Croce tali come la stessa crocifissione come un evento politico, il rovesciamento dell'importanza sociale dai governanti verso i poveri e oppressi, la necessità della democratizzazione delle relazioni di potere. Queste idee saranno approfondite nei suoi testi posteriori.

In un altro testo: «Critica teologica della religione politica», come indica lo stesso titolo, Moltmann riprende e incrementa l'analisi del termine religione politica, concentrandosi di più sulle sue forme attuali, anche nelle società molto laicizzate. In questo contesto situa il ruolo politico della Chiesa: non identificarsi soltanto con il consolidamento sociale di un gruppo o un popolo, ma essere solidale con gli altri: poveri, oppressi, emarginati. Se la teologia politica «è una parola pungente [...], che dà ai nervi»,¹⁶ è proprio perché vuole rinsaldare la responsabilità politico-sociale della chiesa. Va rafforzata la tesi che non è possibile una teologia apolitica, ma al contrario, se vuol essere responsabile, la teologia ha bisogno di ripensare le conseguenze dei suoi contenuti, o con le parole dell'autore: «la teologia si deve chiedere se sta offrendo al popolo l'oppio religioso o un reale fermento di libertà».¹⁷

Nei due testi sopracitati diventa chiara la convinzione di Moltmann su una necessaria rilevanza socio-politica della teologia, applicata non soltanto alla pratica personale dei cristiani, ma alla Chiesa. È interessante vedere come lui rende concreta la sua tesi nell'opera *Il Dio crocifisso*. Proprio la ultima parte del libro è tutta dedicata a presentare le conseguenze economiche, sociali e politiche del vangelo del Crocifisso. Moltmann enumera due modelli contemporanei del rapporto fra la fede e la società. Il primo è disimpegno che postula una netta separazione, mentre il secondo, della corrispondenza, pretende raccogliere le analogie e riflessi fra i due ambiti. Ma il nostro teologo vede la necessità di superare la dinamica delle differenze e corrispondenze, e riflettere sulla presenza di Dio nella storia, il cui criterio è l'identificazione di Dio con il Crocifisso e l'orizzonte è il suo regno. La morte e la Risurrezione di Cristo hanno anche una dimensione politica, dalla quale Moltmann ricava la teologia politica della Croce. I suoi elementi principali sono: la signoria divina nella storia identificata non più con i sovrani e potenti, ma con i miserabili e oppressi, la critica all'idolatria e all'alienazione politica, la democratizzazione come il potere giustificato dal basso. Lui applica anche a Dio una caratteristica politica: "Il Dio crocifisso è, di fatto, un Dio senza stato e senza classi. Non per questo è un Dio apolitico: è il Dio dei poveri, degli oppressi e degli umiliati".¹⁸ Finalmente, per indicare le piste della prassi, il testo ci presenta i quattro circoli diabolici: della povertà, del potere, dell'estraneazione razzista e culturale, della distruzione industriale della natura. La risposta cristiana dovrebbe essere allora l'impegno per la liberazione economica, politica, culturale, ecologica e, per ultimo, per il senso della vita.

L'indagine fin qui realizzata fa vedere che Moltmann è convinto della necessità di una teologia politica intesa come ermeneutica, e aiuta a chiarificare il suo significato, differenziandola dalla religione politica. I due punti classici della critica cristiana alla regione politica, indicati da Peterson: la Trinità e l'escatologia, li condensa nella Croce. Juan N. Bosch formula una valutazione generale assai positiva del suo significato teologico: "Pochi teologi come Moltmann riescono con tanta forza a coinvolgere le grandi questioni della umanità e della civilizzazione in un oggetto teologico, senza convertire la teologia in sociologia o in un saggio ideologico".¹⁹

La nuova teologia politica ha suscitato un acceso dibattito in cui sono stati coinvolti sia i suoi cultori sia i critici. La critica forse più nota è di Hans Maier, un professore di scienze politiche a Monaco, che dopo aver formulato delle obiezioni sul proprio concetto e sul suo contenuto, rievoca la tesi di Peterson nel senso dell'impossibilità di qualsiasi teologia politica, motivata da una separazione delle due realtà, la spirituale e la mondana. La proposta di Metz sarebbe soltanto una variante dialettica e secolarizzata dell'antica teologizzazione illegittima della politica e dall'altro lato una politicizzazione della Chiesa. Di conseguenza, nel nome proprio e dei laici Cattolici Maier la rifiuta categoricamente. Inoltre critica l'ingenuità nel parlare dell'impegno politico della Chiesa senza capire tutta la sua complessità e i suoi conflitti d'interessi. Anche la diagnosi della situazione sociopolitica attuale segnalata da Metz sarebbe astratta, indeterminata e carica di risentimento.²⁰

Secondo Andries Hoogerwerf, pure lui un professore di scienze politiche, nel programma di Metz il fine politico e i mezzi sono presentati in modo parziale e indeterminato. Poi la seconda

¹⁶ J. MOLTSMANN, "Critica teologica della religione politica", 9.

¹⁷ J. MOLTSMANN, "Critica teologica della religione politica", 16.

¹⁸ J. MOLTSMANN, *Il Dio crocifisso*, 375.

¹⁹ J. BOSCH, *Diccionario de teólogos/as contemporáneos*, 683, (trad. prop.).

²⁰ H. MAIER, "Teologia politica? Obiezioni di un laico", 27-60.

obiezione è, che non sia chiaro in che cosa consiste l'elemento specificamente teologico ed ecclesiastico. Ma Hoogerwerf ci offre pure qualche contributo positivo. Pur ammettendo che il concetto della politica non sia per niente univoco, indica che "alla sua essenza appartiene la costruzione deliberata della società futura mediante l'esercizio di potere"²¹ e la politicizzazione sarebbe il rafforzamento di questa tendenza alla partecipazione attiva nel plasmare il futuro della società. La politicizzazione della teologia e della Chiesa per lui non è un processo negativo, anzi confessa che una Chiesa per non essere parziale ha bisogno tanto della politica come della mistica. La teologia deve rendere servizio alla politica riflettendo sulla relazione con Dio e le relazioni tra gli uomini. Il problema centrale dell'aggancio necessario fra i due ambiti è per lui il modo in cui si congiungono l'elemento politico e quello mistico. In tutto questo è imprescindibile che sia la Chiesa sia la teologia preservino la loro identità propria.²²

Ambedue gli autori coincidono nell'indicare una debolezza nell'aspetto politico della teologia politica, ma le loro conclusioni finali sono del tutto diverse. Dietro dei concetti ripresi e riformulati adesso come la vecchia e la nuova teologia politica,²³ ritorna sempre la stessa questione: **la fede deve o non deve essere legata con la politica?** Il postulato giusto sarebbe la separazione netta fra queste due realtà, o piuttosto la politicizzazione della chiesa e della teologia? Rispondendo Metz afferma che tanto la Chiesa quanto la teologia, per se stesse, prima ancora di prendere qualche posizione concreta, hanno già la loro importanza politica nella società. Un'apoliticità quindi è impossibile, anzi, potrebbe essere usata o identificata ideologicamente. Il riferimento sociale della teologia politica vuole preservare tutti e due da questi pericoli.²⁴

Secondo Rosino Gibellini un motivo delle critiche è proprio il rapporto fra l'identità e la rilevanza della teologia politica.²⁵ Mentre i cosiddetti conservatori si preoccupano dell'identità della teologia e i progressisti ne vogliono rinsaldare la rilevanza, Metz e Moltmann postulano la necessità di superare le polarizzazioni e di coniugare ambedue gli aspetti verso una sintesi. La tensione, però sembra essere una sfida permanente con cui la teologia ha bisogno di confrontarsi. Un esempio di questo lo troviamo nella Teologia della Liberazione Latinoamericana (TdL).

3. Gli elementi specifici della TdL come una teologia politica

La Teologia della Liberazione (TdL) è spesso caratterizzata come una teologia politica. Vi sono gli studi specializzati sulle somiglianze e differenze fra questa e la teologia politica tedesca. Qui vogliamo porre l'accento soltanto su due aspetti: la realtà socio-culturale in cui nasce e si sviluppa e l'uso degli strumenti necessari per l'analisi di questa realtà. Secondo Gustavo Gutiérrez è proprio il contesto vissuto nel continente latino-americano che orienta e modella l'originalità della TdL:

'Sembra che una buona parte della teologia contemporanea sia partita dalla sfida lanciata dal *non credente*. Il non credente mette in questione il nostro *mondo religioso*, esigendo da esso una purificazione e un rinnovamento profondi. [...] Ma in un continente come l'America Latina la sfida non viene principalmente dal non credente bensì dal *non-uomo*, cioè da chi non è riconosciuto come uomo da parte dell'ordine sociale imperante: il povero, lo sfruttato, colui che è sistematicamente e legalmente spogliato del suo essere uomo, colui che a malapena sa che cosa sia un uomo. [...] Pertanto, la domanda non verterà sul come parlare di Dio in un mondo adulto, ma piuttosto sul come annunciarlo Padre in un mondo non umano, sulle implicazioni che comporta il dire al non-uomo che lui è figlio di Dio'.²⁶

Leonardo Boff da parte sua dice che la TdL nasce dal confronto della fede con la scandalosa povertà, non soltanto di un continente, ma del mondo. La compassione di fronte a questa realtà genera un'azione che, superandole strategie dell'assistenzialismo e del riformismo, pretende trasformare le relazioni sociali, vuole essere liberatrice.²⁷ Tuttavia se la TdL vuole ascoltare, conoscere profondamente la realtà, sorge allora la necessità di definire gli strumenti metodologici utili per questa sfida. L. Boff parla di una prima mediazione socio-analitica, prima perché poi vengono altre due: ermeneutica, fondata sulla rivelazione, e pratica, orientata all'azione. La prima allora cerca la risposta alla domanda come capire il fenomeno della povertà e dell'oppressione. Mentre le due solite risposte sono la povertà come vizio o come ritardo, la TdL, attraverso gli strumenti dialettici vede la povertà come un fenomeno storico e sistemico,

²¹ A. HOOGERWERF, "Politicizzazione di Chiesa e teologia", 104-105.

²² A. HOOGERWERF, "Politicizzazione di Chiesa e teologia", 103-121.

²³ Cf. J.B. METZ, *Sul concetto della nuova teologia politica 1967-1997*.

²⁴ J.B. METZ, "La 'teologia politica' in discussione", 244-245.

²⁵ R. GIBELLINI, *La teologia del XX secolo*, 328-336.

²⁶ G. GUTIÉRREZ, «Prassi di liberazione, teologia e annuncio», 87-88.

²⁷ L. BOFF, *Como hacer teología de la liberación*, 9-32.

frutto dell'organizzazione economica ingiusta, intrecciata con i fattori politici e socio-culturali. Come risposta richiede una trasformazione della base del sistema socio-politico ed economico, consapevole che questo processo comporta il rischio dei conflitti.

Ma è proprio l'uso degli strumenti socio-analitici dell'origine marxista che provocherà le principali critiche. Generalmente sono note le due Istruzioni della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede: la *Libertatis Nuntius* dell'1984 e la *Libertatis Conscientia* dell'1986. La prima, in un tono severo chiama l'attenzione ad alcuni aspetti della TdL, che rappresentano le deviazioni reali o potenziali nocivi per la fede, particolarmente l'uso non sufficientemente critico dei concetti provenienti del marxismo. Di conseguenza, la lettura della Bibbia e tutto il messaggio Cristiano vengono capiti soltanto nel senso economico-politico, l'evangelizzazione si riduce alla liberazione e alla promozione umana, l'idea di lotta di classe suscita violenza anche nell'ambito intra-ecclesiale. L'Istruzione rileva però che queste obiezioni non devono servire come pretesto per un atteggiamento di neutralità o indifferenza di fronte alla tragica realtà di miseria e ingiustizia. Pondera inoltre che non vuole condannare tutta la TdL, ma parla "soltanto di espressioni di questa corrente di pensiero che, sotto il nome di 'teologia della liberazione', propongono un'interpretazione innovatrice del contenuto della fede e di esistenza cristiana che si discosta gravemente dalla fede della Chiesa, anzi, ne costituisce la negazione pratica".²⁸ La seconda Istruzione, in connessione con la prima, espone sistematicamente i principali elementi teorici e pratici della Dottrina Cristiana sulla libertà e liberazione e poi un'altra volta incoraggia i Cristiani ad assumere il compito di un'autentica liberazione.²⁹

È comprensibile che l'uso degli strumenti concettuali marxisti sia diventato un problema grave, di più ancora in pieno decorso della Guerra Fredda. Già nell'inizio degli anni '80 del secolo scorso, il Superiore Generale dei Gesuiti, Pedro Arrupe, in una carta sull'analisi marxista evidenziava la difficoltà di separare gli elementi metodologici di analisi dall'insieme della filosofia, ideologia e politica fondata sul marxismo e raccomandava discernimento e cautela nella pratica. Faceva notare tuttavia che anche le analisi sociali liberali presentando una visione individualista e materialista, opposta ai valori Cristiani. Avvertiva infine che le riserve riguardo al marxismo non devono scoraggiare l'impegno per la giustizia e per la causa dei poveri. "Non abbiamo, forse, notato con frequenza forme di anticomunismo che altro non sono se non paraventi per coprire la ingiustizia?".³⁰ Vediamo allora che la questione dell'uso strumentale del marxismo non era un problema soltanto della TdL, ma dei gruppi diversi nella Chiesa che cercavano di comprendere meglio la realtà. Quest'osservazione non giustifica la TdL, ma relativizza lo stigma che ancora oggi pesa su di essa. Dall'altra parte proprio oggi, grazie alla distanza del tempo, è possibile un'opinione come quella di Gerhard L. Müller:

«Perlomeno per quel che riguarda i paesi del sistema economico Nordamericano ed Europeo non esiste tuttavia una teoria alternativa capace di spiegare meglio i fenomeni e fatti relativi allo sfruttamento, alla povertà e all'oppressione, una teoria che possa porre in atto una strategia di reale cambiamento. Naturalmente i socialismi reali sono storicamente fuori gioco. Ma non per questo perdono il loro valore alcune singole acquisizioni marxiane di tipo economico e sociologico relative al sistema delle moderne società industriali».³¹

E davvero importante fare notare questa pubblicazione. *Dalla parte dei poveri* è un libro scritto a quattro mani da Gustavo Gutiérrez e Gerhard L. Müller, ora Prefetto della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede. Il libro vuole "superare la classica contrapposizione tra 'noi in Europa' e 'gli altri' in America Latina, e questo nella prospettiva universale di 'noi come Chiesa universale' 'al servizio del mondo'".³² D'accordo con il sottotitolo, la TdL è indicata come La Teologia della Chiesa. Non c'è dubbio che la povertà strutturale oggi non è un problema soltanto dell'America Latina, ma dei due terzi dell'umanità. La Teologia della Liberazione offre il suo contributo specifico come un impulso per ravvivare la giustizia e la solidarietà universale della Chiesa, particolarmente tra i poveri.

4. Conclusione

Nel decorso del presente testo abbiamo analizzato i diversi significati del termine teologia politica. Schmitt la capisce e la usa come uno strumento dell'analisi dei rapporti fra le credenze

²⁸ CONGREGAZIONE PER LA DOTTRINA DELLA FEDE, *Istruzione Libertatis Nuntius*, n. VI.9.

²⁹ CONGREGAZIONE PER LA DOTTRINA DELLA FEDE, *Istruzione Libertatis Conscientia*, n. 99.

³⁰ P. ARRUPE, "Lettera sull'analisi marxista", 20.

³¹ G. GUTIÉRREZ – G.L. MÜLLER, *Dalla parte dei poveri. Teologia della Liberazione. La Teologia della Chiesa*, 103.

³² G. GUTIÉRREZ – G. L. MÜLLER, *Dalla parte dei poveri. Teologia della liberazione, teologia della chiesa*, Padova 2013, 21.

religiose e le configurazioni politiche. Peterson, concentrandosi sul monoteismo finalmente si oppone alla teologia politica compresa nel senso di usare abusivamente i concetti teologici per legittimare o appoggiare le strutture politiche ingiuste. Metz e Moltmann con questo termine definiscono una nuova maniera di comprendere la teologia, sul presupposto che **è impossibile una teologia apolitica**. Postulano dunque non soltanto la deprivatizzazione della fede, ma anche la riformulazione teologica del messaggio Cristiano, tenendo in conto la sua rilevanza sul campo socio-politico. La Teologia della Liberazione, anche se non usa esplicitamente il termine, vuole approfondire e sistemare la riflessione sulla fede a partire dalla realtà di povertà strutturale e al servizio di una liberazione integrale. Si deve affermare che tutti i significati menzionati della teologia politica sono attuali e pertinenti.

Come religiosi e religiose al servizio del Regno di Dio viviamo nei ambiti molto diversi dal punto di vista anche delle configurazioni socio-politiche. I mezzi di comunicazione ci rendono possibile la conoscenza dei problemi mondiali su questo piano. Condividiamo con le nostre società i sogni e gli sforzi, i momenti speciali e la quotidianità, ma anche le tentazioni all'indifferenza o all'alienazione di fronte a una realtà così complessa e screditata. La nostra fede però ci anima a scoprire sempre di nuovo l'amore di Dio che penetra la storia e salva il mondo. È la fede che ci spinge a offrire ogni giorno la nostra collaborazione perché il Regno di Dio venga, per ogni uomo e ogni donna, ed in ogni dimensione della vita. Possa questo testo essere un'illuminazione e uno stimolo per vivere la dimensione socio-politica della nostra fede.

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