

ABOUT THE BOOK

After independence, Africa has experienced a variety of at least five leadership styles or traditions: (1) the *paternalistic* elder tradition, (2) the *sage* tradition of the leader as the ultimate teacher, (3) the *warrior* tradition of liberation fighters and military rulers, (4) the *charismatic* style of the leader as inspiring personality, (5) a *monarchical* tendency which results in a personality cult (the leader viewed as redeemer) as well as the glorification and even the sacralization of authority. The writer of this booklet is of the opinion that none of these offer a solution for the African crisis, which is basically a leadership crisis.

This book argues that leaders cannot be real leaders without a vision, a clear Christian vision about the following: (1) what office, authority, power and responsibility entail; (2) how society at large should be structured and (3), if necessary, be changed; (4) what, in the case of the state, the responsibilities of government and citizens should be.

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LEADERS WITH A VISION



*How Christian leadership
can tackle the African crisis*

B.J. van der Walt

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the African crisis

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1. INTRODUCTION

Not only the critics from outside but also the inhabitants of our continent agree that Africa at the moment finds itself in a deep crisis. We use the word *crisis* because, in the first place, we do not only experience a single but a multitude of problems. Secondly, there is no agreement about the causes of these problems or their possible solutions.

1.1 Leadership as a key issue

I am not going to try to make a list of all our problems, their possible causes and suggested solutions. In this paper (as an introduction to the workshop) I want to concentrate on only one issue: leadership, failed leadership. Failed leadership at all levels: educational, social, political, economical, religious, in family life, etc.

What the famous Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe wrote more than a decade ago about Nigeria applies to the whole continent. In *The trouble with Nigeria* (1983:1) he wrote: "The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership."

He concluded the chapter by saying: "We have lost the twentieth century; are we bent on seeing that our children also lose the twenty-first? God forbid!" (p. 3).

A well-known politician from Kenya, Oginga Odinga (1992:30) wrote the following: "... we wasted thirty years (of independence). We concentrated on power, wealth, personalities and tribes. We forgot virtue ..." He is of the opinion that the power of leaders should not be treated as an end in itself, but merely as a means: "Power is power to do something. Power is never power to be enjoyed as an end. A leader, a genuine leader must always have the goals he wishes to achieve with power. Only if he has goals other than power itself, is power meaningful both to him and to his followers" (p. 48). According to

Odinga what Kenya needs (and I want to add: what Africa as a whole needs) is responsibility, accountability, proper use of power and respect for the freedom of the people (p. 97).

Our leaders did not fulfill their beautiful promises for a better life than the one during colonial times. More than thirty years after independence, we today have:

- * poverty instead of prosperity
- * sickness instead of health
- * imprisonment instead of freedom
- * indignity instead of dignity
- * hatred instead of unity, respect, love
- * war instead of peace
- * refugees instead of citizens
- * technological retardation instead of development
- * moral degeneration instead of morality
- * corruption, bribery, nepotism instead of honesty
- * self-seeking instead of service to the community
- * hell instead of the utopia promised, etc. etc.

We, living on the continent, are familiar with all these ills. To outsiders the booklet by Achebe will be quite revealing.

This attitude of rulers who do not want to act as shepherds, servants and stewards of God to his people is not something new. More than 2 500 years ago Ezekiel (34:1-10) was instructed by the Lord: "denounce the rulers of Israel. Prophesy to them, and tell them what I, the sovereign LORD, say to them: You are doomed, you shepherds of Israel! You take care of yourselves, but never tend the sheep. You drink the milk, wear clothes made from the wool, and kill and eat the finest sheep. But you never tend the sheep. You have not taken care of the weak ones, healed those that are sick, bandaged those that are hurt, brought back those that wandered off, or looked for those that were lost. Instead, you treated them cruelly. Because the sheep had no shepherd, they were scattered, and wild animals killed and ate them. So my sheep wandered over the high hills and the mountains. They were scattered over the face of the earth, and no one looked for them or tried to find them.

"Now, you shepherds, listen to what I, the LORD, am telling you. As surely as I am the living God, you had better listen to me. My sheep have been attacked by wild animals that killed and ate them because there was no shepherd. My shepherds did not try to find the sheep. They were taking care of themselves and not the sheep. So listen to me, you shepherds. I, the Sovereign LORD, declare that I am your enemy. I will take my sheep away from you and never again let you be their shepherds; never again will I let you take care only of yourselves. I will rescue my sheep from you and not let you eat them."

We should be careful, however, not to put all the blame only on the shoulders of our past and present political, educational and economic leaders. Good leaders can achieve very little if the citizens of a country are uncooperative, not willing to work hard and be responsible.

Our task at this second Pan African *Leadership* Assembly, however, is to concentrate on the *leaders* of Africa: what went wrong with our leaders and how can we improve the situation? The organizers of this meeting want us to identify the profiles, gifts, competences, temperaments, skills, roles and functions of real leaders, new leaders to face the African crisis in all its dimensions. They realized that without the development of good leaders no other development will be possible. We could summarize the aims of PACLA II in one sentence: to shape new leaders for the African context.

1.2 Warnings

Before we start with our investigation, I have to warn against a few dangers.

* The first is that simply to add the word "Christian" in front of the word "leadership" will not automatically solve our problems. Of course it is of the greatest importance to have Christian leaders with high standards of morality and integrity. But Christians are also sinners. (We know how corrupt many Christian leaders in Africa have been.) Christians could also be fallible in their insights, don't know what office, authority and power really entails. One example is the following. However important it may be to have, according to the Bible, *servant-leaders*, it is not enough. *Servant-leadership* is only a small facet of real Christian leadership.

dangerous to the establishment. It was strictly *status quo* - and missions bought into it. This was no way to produce a generation of revolutionaries who would advocate radical changes in social relationships."

About the religious reasons for the passive acceptance of all kinds of oppression - also from their own people - he writes: "They are taught over and over again that the role of the Christian is to be obedient to those in authority - and those who regard themselves to be over them are legion! They are taught to pray for them, to honour them, to assist them and to pay their taxes to them regardless of what happens to these taxes or how that authority is exercised. Furthermore, they are taught to be patient. After all, their reward lies in heaven; certainly not on earth. Least of all would they expect their God to be interested in such affairs. Is He not interested primarily in spiritual and church affairs? So, let us be good religious boys and girls and put our hope in Him. Let us concentrate on religious things, for only they will bring peace. One day, upon Christ's return, we will be delivered. And so the attention of many Christian peasants is directed to their future peace and reward without any hope for change in their present condition and without any thought about improving them here and now. Such attitudes led Karl Marx to refer to religion as the opium of the people: it puts them to sleep, thus giving their exploiters a free hand."

1.4 The elements of a vision

The following four are the most important elements of the needed vision that I have in mind:

- * A leader is elected in an office, exercises authority and has certain powers. What would a Christian perspective on these issues look like?
- * A leader is involved in society. How does he view society at large? How would he as a Christian want it to be structured? We need a Christian perspective on society!
- * A real leader wants to change, to improve, direct societal life or a specific part of society. How should this be done? We need a Christian perspective on social change! We need to think critically about the

distinction many Christians still make between evangelization and social involvement.

* Finally, every leader - not only political leaders - has some connection with or experience of the powerful societal relationship of the state. What is our Christian perspective on the state which played such a decisive - often detrimental - role in Africa? What are the responsibilities of both government and citizens?

Therefore the four facets of our vision, which will be discussed in detail in the following four sections are:

- * A Christian perspective on office, authority, power and responsibility.
- * A Christian perspective on the structuring of society.
- * A Christian perspective on societal involvement and change.
- * A Christian perspective on the state (government and citizens).

2. A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON OFFICE, AUTHORITY, POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY

If one does not know what office, authority, power and responsibility means, one cannot be a real leader. Perhaps I should say that without this insight you will be a very dangerous leader, because there are many "leaders" in Africa who lack the insight.

We will first have a brief look at traditional, incorrect viewpoints and then have a look at the correct, Biblical perspectives on these very important concepts.

2.1 Traditional viewpoints

The traditional African's - and to some extent also the modern African's - view of office and authority could be summarised in the following key words: (1) hierarchical, (2) centralised, (3) according to seniority and status. The structure of authority is constituted from the top down: ancestors, chief (today: political leader), father, eldest brother, etc. It is also not as specialised and differentiated as in the West, but mostly centralised in one group, political party or person. Seniority plays a very important role in everything, and paternalism rules supreme, because the authority of the father figure may not be doubted or contradicted, as he is the authority in practically every field.

Many Christians too still hold a hierarchical view of authority which functions vertically from the top down. In accordance with this God is the highest authority and all the lower authorities also emanate from Him. He delegates his authority to the highest human figures of authority for example, a king, a state president, a chief director or principal, who in turn then delegates his authority to other lower holders of office. All authority is therefore *derived* from a higher authority and *delegated* to a lower one.

The duty of responsibility is the opposite: from the bottom up. Lower office-bearers or carriers of authority have to account to the authority above them. This process often ends with somebody who is "infallible" and not accountable to a higher authority. Even among Christians there is sometimes little substance to the thought that, because "all authority derives from God" the highest office-bearer should be accountable

directly to Him. The higher the office, therefore, the greater the authority downwards and - in practice - the more limited the accountability upwards!

2.2 Making human authority divine

The basic error in this hierarchical view on authority is that no distinction is made between human and divine authority. According to it man does not merely have *human* authority, but it has been derived from God, and is therefore *divine* authority. The result is that human authority is idolised. Control of authority is practically excluded because criticism or opposition - even in the case of the abuse of authority - can be seen as rebellion against God Himself. In this way many Christians interpret Romans 13:2 as meaning that rebellion against government means rebellion against God, and is for this reason not permissible. If we do not do careful exegesis, it is very easy to come to such a conclusion.

What is meant by "for there is no power but of God"? (Romans 13:1). Does this not prove the theory of authority or power deputed by God or deduced from God? No, this simply means that God determined that in each societal relation - the state too - there will be office-bearers with authority. If we do not explain it thus we would have to accept as logical the conclusion that wrong and wilfully sinful exercise of power should also be written on God's account!

And what should our answer be to the clear statement in Romans 13 verse 2: "Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God"? Here it is stated explicitly, that resistance against government means resistance to God, is it not? The correct exegesis, however, is that Paul here prohibits rebellion against the state as *ordination* or *institution* of God. If one rejects the state as *such* (for example, by advocating anarchy), one resists God Himself, who ordained it. (The state is not simply a contract among individuals invented by people.) Scripture, however, does not prohibit resistance against a government that is corrupt and which no longer gives expression to its God-given injunction. Stated differently, the *fact* that governments exist, has been willed by God, but not *how* they fulfil their duties, in other words, their *de facto* power.

2.3 A Biblical look at authority

The correct vision is that each person in accordance with his calling has a mandate from God to authority. His authority has not been *derived* from higher authority or *delegated* to him from the position of a higher authority.

Authority is therefore, like all things human, imperfect and fallible. Man can only lay claim to authority to the extent to which he has *insight into* and *shows obedience towards* the divine norms which hold for the relevant situation or societal relationship in which he finds himself.

In a family a believing child can often have more sensitivity for the norms which are valid for family life and point them out to his parents. A student might have a more accurate awareness of the true calling of a university and point this out to a lecturer, who might have forgotten this, or does not have such a clear vision. And a citizen has the duty, as a subject, to reprimand the government if it should forget the central calling of the state, which is justice for all.

2.4 Authority and office are not the same

According to this more Biblical view of authority the automatic or straight connection between authority and office as the only institution of authority is therefore denied. Somebody who holds a certain office, for example, in government or management does not really have authority unless he complies with the cardinal requirement of authority, which is insight into divine norms. Those of you who have done military service will know how often it is said jokingly that some commanders have their authority by virtue of their rank (the pips on their shoulders) rather than by virtue of their insight (their brains).

Many such office-bearers without authority can of course have power. Power as such is not bad or wrong, for no societal relationship can function properly without the necessary power. The state even receives the power of the sword from God.

Correct use of power, however, presupposes the *responsible* use of authority, that is, with the correct insight into and obedience to the norms of the relevant societal relationship.

Abused power leads to violence. Violence is the unnecessary, illegal, excessive and even damaging abuse of power.

This does not mean, however, that violence in all cases is the same as the abuse of power. When a policeman, for example, has to arrest a robber or a murderer using violence, one could talk of *constructive* violence, as opposed to *destructive* violence where the policeman might kick open the front door of an innocent man or even shoot him. When a country is attacked, the government is also justified in defending itself against the aggressor using violence (war).

2.5 The task of the office-bearers

According to their insight into the norm for the relevant societal relationship, office-bearers have to see to it that the members of the relevant societal relationship is in a position of fulfilling their calling in that specific societal relationship and that their calling is protected and promoted. If members of a church want to turn their church into a political party or a social club, or if the top management of a university runs it purely like an industry, or the students try to turn it into a sports club, they have to be reminded anew of the aim of the specific institution. As a result of man's sinfulness office-bearers have to use the authority imparted to them to oppose evil and they have to maintain the necessary order with a view to allowing the members of the relevant societal relationship to fulfil their calling. Romans 13 explicitly states that government is there to punish evil.

The quality of life which is enjoyed within each societal relationship is directly dependent upon the extent of the response to the norm for each relationship. If the awareness of this normativity becomes dulled and blunted, the quality of life will also deteriorate. Marriage is then threatened by divorce; industry does not offer job satisfaction any longer; government declares war on its own citizens and citizens rebel against their own government.

2.6 Limits of authority

As a result of the sinfulness of man one of the greatest problems that office-bearers often have is that they do not know any longer what the *task* and the *calling* is of the relationship within which they hold authority. Thus they also do not know the *limits* of their authority. Or they simply ignore all these things. Spouses see marriage simply as a way to satisfy sexual needs, industry is aimed simply at profit and not service, and the environment is polluted. And government interferes in a totalitarian manner in other societal relationships.

Because of the fact that no office-bearer and therefore also no government is perfect, it is the duty of each government (for both its own sake and for that of its citizens) to keep open channels of communication. A government is not elected by the citizens so that it can simply carry on without consulting the electorate. A government (and this is true of all the societal relationships) which obstructs these channels is looking for rebellion. (Think what might happen if there were not the necessary openness and communication between parents and their children.) Freedom of expression of opinion in interviews with representatives of government should be encouraged and not suppressed. Whoever makes change impossible makes rebellion inevitable!

2.7 Office is service to our fellow-men

Offices are therefore not simply there for the sake of the office-bearer's own interests, but for the sake of those entrusted to him. Office is synonymous with service. The Bible is full of instances to prove that leadership is not about status, position and domination, for it is heathen leaders who dominate, while Christian leaders are called to serve their fellow-men: "An argument broke out among the disciples as to which one of them should be thought of as the greatest. Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the pagans have power over their people, and the rulers claim the title 'Friends of the People'. But this is not the way it is with you; rather, the greatest one among you must be like the youngest, and the leader must be like the servant. Who is greater, the one who sits down to eat or the one who serves him? The one who sits down, of course. But I am among you as one who serves'" (Luke 22:24-27; cf. also Mark 10:42-45).

Romans 13:4 and 6 therefore say that government is a *servant* of God for the *best interests of the citizens*. Servant is not the same as substitute. Government may never assume for itself the place of God. Office, authority and power which are not borne by the service motif become a monster - but in the end a self-devouring monster. The irony is that a state which becomes too proud of its power (economic, military, technological, etc.) is on the threshold of powerlessness and destruction.

2.8 Office is subject to control

Any office is therefore subject to control. This control can be exercised by another societal relationship or by members within the same relationship.

If an industry, for example, is careless with scarce resources or pollutes the environment, the state may intervene. The state does not then transgress into the sphere of industry, but has to remind industry anew of the norm which is applicable to it: careful stewardship over the resources of God's creation.

An example of control exercised by members within a relationship is the following. Office-bearers often rule for the sake of their *own personal position* (big salary, other benefits) or for the sake of their *own group*. Should a government consistently act out of self-preservation and for the sake of a group of people, and the justice towards others be trampled underfoot, the will of God is being opposed. Such a government has then in fact become a revolutionary one, for it commits revolution (rebellion) against God. A Christian citizen in such a case cannot any longer accept the exercise of power and authority from such a government. It would be a glorification of power - power for the sake of power - while we are only called to glorify God. Citizens who oppose such a government cannot simply be called revolutionaries, because they are in fact anti-revolutionary, they work against the revolution of which the government is guilty. And their positive intention is to call the government back to its real calling.

2.9 Authority, responsibility and service

To recapitulate, office consists of the following elements: (1) authority and power; (2) responsibility, and (3) service.

* *Authority* presupposes two things: (a) In the first place, *insight* into the will of God for a specific situation (one cannot be a leader if one does not know what is right for the situation within which it has to be exercised), and (b) in the second place *action* in accordance with the will of God for the specific case or sphere. Somebody with authority is therefore somebody who *knows* and *wants* to fulfil God's will. This can never happen without the Holy Spirit, who gives us insight into the Word of God and strength to act in accordance with it.

Authority gives a person the necessary *power* to be able to execute his authority. Just as authority is never to be seen outside the perspective of insight and correct action, so power can never be separated from authority. If it is not accompanied by true authority, it is illegitimate power which oppresses the members of the societal relationship instead of helping them to realise their Godly calling. Such exercise of power - which might even become demonic - should not be obeyed, but should be opposed in the correct way.

Stuart Fowler recently (1994) wrote the following noteworthy words about power in a Biblical perspective: "In the world around us power is regarded as a prize to be grasped and held onto. Struggles over power are the root of much of the conflict that tears our world apart and the fear of loss of power is an important root of oppression. People do not always prize power for selfish reasons. They may want it so that they can do good in the world. A person may want political power, for example, in order to gain personal advantage. But a person may also want political power in order to right the wrongs of society.

"Whatever the motive, however, the view of power as a prize to be seized and held onto contradicts the Gospel. God's Son instituted his kingdom on earth by renouncing his power to become a powerless slave:

" Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as

something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross.

"Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Philippians 2:5-11).

"He told his disciples, in no uncertain terms, that this is also the way they must go if they wish their lives to have any importance in his kingdom. '... but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Matthew 20:26b-28).

"Power is not a prize to be sought after, even when the motives for wanting it are good. The desire to have and to hold onto power, whatever the underlying motivation, is always destructive of human relationships (see Acts 8:18-24).

"Yet the Gospel does not present powerlessness as a desirable human condition. On the contrary, it guarantees us more than enough power to achieve the fulness of human life (Act 1:8; Romans 1:16; I Corinthians 1:18; II Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 1:17-19; II Timothy 1:7). But this righteous power, the power that builds up human life for good, is the gift of God's grace to be received as a solemn responsibility. It is not a prize to be held onto but a solemn trust to be discharged with joy.

"It is the power of the servant, not that of the master. It is a power to empower others. We do not serve by doing things *for* others but by *empowering others to act* for themselves. When we exercise power as a servant we do not guard our power jealously, fearful lest others gain a power to rival our own. On the contrary, we rejoice when, through the exercise of our own power, others become more powerful."

Authority and power are therefore never unlimited or uncontrolled. Because man's insights are limited and concrete obedience is imperfect,

we should always say: *to the extent* to which somebody has insight, *to the extent* that he acts in accordance with that, *to the extent* that he has authority, he is entitled to power.

In practice this has the following implications:

- Before Christians elect somebody to an office, they have to make certain that the person knows God's will for the specific sphere of life, and they should also know whether he is willing to obey it. (Friendship, politics or other considerations may never determine who is elected.) If we do not do this, we will be co-responsible later on for illegal exercise of power.

- The person who is elected should ensure that he complies with the requirements set for an office-bearer.

- Those who are already in office should see to it that they grow in insight and obedience on a daily basis. Otherwise they will be unworthy office-bearers without true authority and power. (For a more extensive outline of this Biblical concept of authority, see the valuable book by P.A. Schouls (1972). He offers many interesting examples from the Bible.)

* *Responsibility* is always oriented, normative and structured responsibility.

- In the *first place* responsibility presupposes an *orientation point*, an address. For the Christian this is God. Because we know that man is no real holder of power except through the grace of God, we know that man is no substitute for God but only a servant of God and his fellow men, no master, but only a steward of God over his creation.

God is the *Caller*. His *calling* goes out to us, the *called*. We have to be responsible, answering to his calling in every area of life. In the light of rampantly irresponsible conduct all over our continent in every sphere of life, I am of the opinion that we need to put special emphasis on personal responsibility in the presence of God.

Simultaneously officers are also responsible to the members of the societal relationship who appointed them in the specific office.

- In the *second place* responsibility is always *normative*, subjected to norms and principles. God's norms are his "directions for use" according to which we have to fulfil our responsibility. They are his beacons which will enable us to set sail safely and not get stranded on the rocks. They are the tracks which will keep the train running safely.

- In the *third place* responsibility is always *structured*. It has its own character in each societal relationship. In a pluralist societal vision this means that responsibility is spread. Even *within* each separate societal relationship responsibilities have to be spread and shared in accordance with the involvement and talents of each individual.

Responsibility may therefore not be fragmented as in liberalism where all the emphasis is simply on *self-responsibility* of the individual. On the other hand it may also not be collectivised, as in the case of communalism which over-emphasises *community* responsibility and under-emphasises or denigrates individual responsibility.

* Finally, office also means *service*: authoritative and responsible service! The well-known Christian leader and writer, Gottfried Osei-Mensah, recently re-emphasised servanthood as the basic Biblical principle of leadership in a challenging booklet with the title: *Wanted: servant leaders* (1990). With reference to many Biblical figures and texts, he illustrates the necessity that leadership in Africa - in all areas of life - should be transformed in order to be motivated again by humble service to God and our fellow human beings. The same was done by Tokunboh Adeyemo in his latest book *The making of a servant of God* (1993) in which he showed in detail how one figure from the Bible, Daniel, was a real servant of God and the people.

2.10. A Summary in thirteen theses

Let me summarise the preceding ideas in the following theses:

1. Office-bearers are never elected for the sake of their own interest (or that of the group represented) but for the sake of all those entrusted to their authority. In the light of Scripture position or office is synonymous with service to God and one's fellow men. The Bible is full of proof that office does not mean status, position and dominance.

2. The elitist concept of office, restricted to certain people in, for example, state and church with a combined, hierarchical concept of authority is not Biblically founded. Offices are not the exclusive right of some, limited to some positions of leadership together with status and power, as the Biblical idea is that *each* individual is the holder of an office which implies, among other things, service of God, protection of fellow men, and stewardship over creation. We therefore believe in a *universal* vocation for office, and thus for service.

3. Apart from this *general* divine calling to man to execute his office, there are also *specific* calls and therefore a *variety* of offices. Everybody is called to service, but not everybody to the same service, in the same way or in the same field. God's call to office-bearers comes within the context of a specific societal relationship. The universal calling to office is specified in a specific societal sphere or relationship.

4. Office-bearers have the following tasks: (a) to see to it that the fulfilment of the calling of the members of the relevant societal relationship is directed normatively at the specific aim of the relationship; (b) to protect and promote their calling; (c) to struggle against evil because all men are sinners, and (d) to maintain the necessary order with a view to fulfilment of the specific calling in a particular societal relationship e.g. family, school, church, state, business, etc.

5. Office and authority are not the same thing, as someone can fill an office unlawfully, without the necessary authority.

6. Authority is located in office in terms of God's creational ordination. It is a gift and a duty from God to man. Man, however, only has human (creaturely) authority. God does not transfer his (divine) authority to anybody. The idea that authority is *transferred* by God or *derived* from God is wrong. Whoever reasons in this way will easily fall into the trap of idolising human authority. Then control over authority falls away, because criticism of or resistance against even abused power could easily be seen as rebellion against God Himself.

7. To exercise an office one also needs power. Power is the *ability* to do something. Power as such is therefore not wrong - if it is not

abused. It is wrong if it is obtained through physical power or through some or other form of violence.

8. To exercise an office man therefore needs both power (the *ability* to serve) and authority (the *right* to render service in a specific relationship). Both power and authority aim at empowering people living in a specific societal relationship to fulfil their divine callings. Should they be prevented from doing so, then authority and power are being abused. Abuse of power leads to violence. Only one societal relationship, viz. the state, has the divine right to use violence, but then it has to be constructive and not destructive violence.

9. Power and authority in each societal relationship are unique. Government has the power of the sword, which is not permissible within any other societal relationship. In a family context one does not have the same kind of power and authority as, for example, the state has, and it is also exerted in a different way. The power and authority of a church (council) are again totally different from that of the family, because the former is of a religious nature. Thus the power and authority within a university are also different, being academic in nature.

10. We should also distinguish between *personal* and *communal* authority. Personal authority (the personal right to serve) includes as already mentioned, among other things, the following: (a) *insight* into the normative calling and task of the relevant societal relationship, (b) willingness to *obey* the relevant social norm, (c) the necessary *ability/skills* to do this, and also (d) the willingness to *grow*, daily, in insight and obedience. (In our sinful world not many people in authority will be able to pass this acid test of the Bible!) Communal authority is the authority which the community (members of the societal relationship) "allocates" to the office, so that it can be effectively executed.

The personal conviction of somebody that he can be of service therefore needs the confirmation of the community within which he lives. *Confirmation*, however, does not mean the *transfer* of authority. The members of the community do not each individually transfer their authority to the office-bearer, to enable him to exert authority over them on their behalf. This concept of authority is rooted in an

individualist and not in the reformational or pluralist philosophy of society. Nevertheless confirmation or appointment in an office by a community is preceded by their *recognition* of the abilities of the office-bearer.

The above-mentioned two facets of authority unfortunately do not always go hand in hand. On the one hand somebody might well have the personal capacities, but the community might not recognise and acknowledge them. On the other hand a person might not have the abilities, but might because of popularity and supposed competence, a presupposed "right" thereto (long service, seniority, or a position on the hierarchical list of promotion) be endowed with communal authority. This then will be a case of office without ability or insight.

11. The power with which an office-bearer is endowed should not be *too slight*, because then the office cannot be effectively exercised, and also not *too great*, as this can easily lead to an abuse of power.

12. Office bearers are responsible towards God and the members of the societal relationship who appointed them for the way in which they execute their authority and power: No authority or responsibility without accountability!

13. This vision on office, authority and power prevents two dangers: both *tyranny* and *egalitarianism*, thus both absolutisation of the office and lack of respect for the office. The former is often the case with traditional hierarchical views of office, while the latter often happens with the so-called democratisation of a societal relationship (university, industry, whatever). The challenge is therefore to construct and to practically apply a third, reformational vision.

2.11 Open for correction

My viewpoint about office, authority, power and responsibility is not the final word. It will have to be elaborated, tested, improved and even corrected. After I have finished writing the above, I realised for instance, that the close connection I see between authority and insight could be problematic. A colleague and friend from New Zealand (dr. Alan Cameron) indicated the way towards a possible solution: a distinction between two meanings of the concept *authority*.

In the way in which I used the word, these two distinct senses are conflated. They are:

(1) Authority as that which is granted by law, whether by state law or by the internal legal organs of non-state bodies. This is the *legal* or *juridical* sense of the word.

(2) Authority in the sense of personal qualities or insight into the task or office. For example: "The lecturer spoke with authority." This is the *Biblical-religious* meaning. Authority in this sense is not primarily juridical, but has a much wider connotation like the Biblical concepts of stewardship and responsibility.

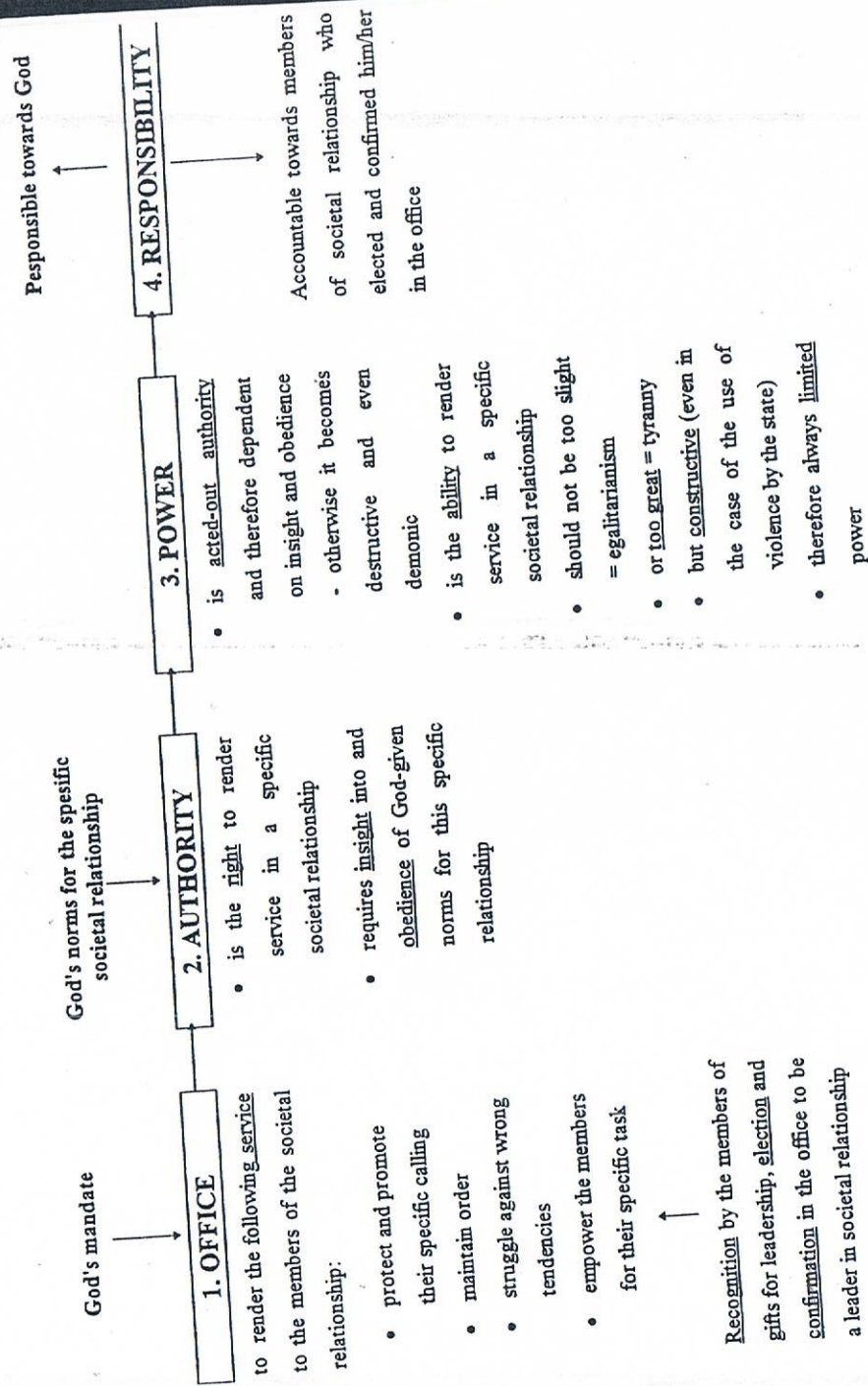
However distinct, these two senses of the word are also related. "The lecturer spoke with authority" could also mean that the teacher was authorised by law (e.g. internal regulations of the tertiary institution) to say what he said.

This distinction may solve some of the problems which I encountered with my own idea, namely that a person without insight does not possess authority. According to this new distinction lack of insight does not deprive a person in office from *legal* authority. Insight is not a prerequisite for the possession or exercise of *legal* authority in either the sense of personal authority (attached to the office of individual persons), or communal authority (attached to communal authorities like a university council, a board of trustees or directors, local government etc.). From a Biblical perspective we may, however, still be critical about authority - even if it is legal - without insight.

This kind of constructive comments will be greatly appreciated.

2.12 In conclusion

If this whole chapter is visualised in a diagram, it would look more or less like this:



3. A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE STRUCTURING OF SOCIETY

The essence of our problem in this section will be: What is a Christian view of society? Perhaps there is nothing which we at the moment need more urgently in Africa and elsewhere than a Christian philosophy of society. Otherwise many people may conclude that the Gospel is merely something for the individual with no relevance for the greater political, economical, social issues. And for this reason they may reject Christianity as useless.

3.1 Introduction: three Biblical perspectives

The reason why Christians either condone the establishment or join the revolutionaries, is to be found in the dualist Christian worldviews which have infected our thinking also on this point. Most Christians still try to live in two kingdoms: the one spiritual, where the commands of Christ are supreme, and the other one secular, of this world, where we have to make it on our own. Therefore most Christians strongly believe that the Gospel provides spiritual clothing and footwear, but when it comes to socio-political clothes and shoes, the Gospel cannot provide. Because we cannot go naked and barefoot, Christians then buy socio-economic-political clothing at the secular market and walk in shoes which do not really fit them as Christians. On the surface this secular market place may offer a great variety of fashions. Closer investigation will, however, reveal that there are only two basic ones: communalism and individualism.

We, however, believe that the Gospel also provides excellent, distinctly Christian clothes and footwear to appear in public and not only pajamas or a Sunday suit for private life.

I will provide three different but nevertheless closely related Biblical starting points for a real Christian philosophy of society. The first will start from the idea of man as the image of God, the second from the idea of different offices and the third from the idea of diversified love. These three ideas are not at all new to Christians. The implications drawn from them for an own philosophy of society are, however, surprisingly new.

* From the perspective of man as the image of God

The essence of sin lies therein that, instead of being an image of God, man wants to be like God, God Himself. In reality this sinful attitude usually results in the fact that man "replaces" the real God with the gods he prefers. (1) Man serves other gods; (2) he himself resembles more and more the god(s) he serves; (3) he also creates societal relationships according to his own image. A line could therefore be drawn from the god one serves to the type of society which one creates. Because this is an important point, allow me to explain in detail.

■ The main phases in the history of the world are creation, fall and redemption (or formation, deformation and reformation). The second phase (fall) has caused man to come to stand in a relationship of disobedience rather than obedience towards God. Instead of being the image of God (his viceroy on earth) man wanted to be God (the only king). Because man has now lost his firm anchor and deepest certainty, he cannot do other than create new certainties for himself. From creation itself man creates new idols. He now expects of his idol to provide him with protection, salvation, redemption - while the self-made god can never provide this. Idolatry is self-deception. But unfortunately an idol is able to deceive people because Satan uses it to seduce mankind.

■ After the fall there are only two possibilities for man: he either loves the true God, or he serves an idol. In both cases man more and more resembles the God/god to whom he has given his allegiance. Should he serve the true God, he is renewed more and more towards the image of Christ. Should he give his allegiance to Mammon, he becomes a greedy, loveless and obsessed person.

■ Idolatry, however, is not something merely individual. It has social effects, because an idolator does not only resemble his god, but also creates institutions which look like himself. What man makes of his marriage, his family life, political party, etc. is a mirror image of himself. In the various societal relationships we therefore see the deepest convictions, hopes and expectations of a specific person or group, from which emerges, for example, whether they are obeying the laws of the true God or not.

Also in our public or social life we should therefore ask the basic question: Which god are we serving? Stated in simple terms: in communalism (where every "I" is a "We") the "we" or the community is the god. In individualism the "I" (individual) is the god. As Christians we reject both the "I" and the "We" as gods. God is our (only) God!

This sounds very pious, but does it bring us any closer to a solution? One may agree that the "I" should not be *drowned* in the community (like in communalism), but at the same time the "I" can never be *without* the "We"! How does the individual then fit into society?

* From the perspective of different offices

Let us have a look at how the true God guided his elected people, Israel, in their societal life. As almost all societies, it started with a family, then a tribe and finally twelve tribes. A tribe is not a state. Israel became a state (kingdom) only after the time of the judges. A tribe is rather like a large family, unified by ties of blood, loyalty and tradition and governed by a family of chiefs. The chief decides what land each family may use, where they may build houses, whom they should marry and even what their religion should look like - their whole life. Tribalism is basically an authoritarian and totalitarian view of society. Justice is also not fair towards everybody (like the foreigner) but favours members of the own tribe.

The history of Israel shows, however, how tribalism disintegrates where Biblical faith takes hold. Already when Israel was travelling through the desert under the leadership of Moses they had a well-organised government (cf. Exodus 18:13-26), not identical with the tribal chiefs any more. Also the independent office of prophet (Deuteronomy 18:14-22) and that of priest (Exodus 29) were instituted.

Later on, when Israel became a kingdom under Saul, the office of king was added. Long before Israel had a king the Lord already gave specific commandments for the kingship (cf. Deuteronomy 17:14-20). In contrast to other despotic kings of the East, Saul had only *limited* power, status and wealth.

In this way the initially "closed" society of Israel, where all the functions were concentrated in only one figure (the family or tribal chieftain), gradually "opened" to a diversification of functions held by different people (the king in the state, the priest in the church, the father in the family etc.) with different responsibilities. Israel started using their historico-cultural formative power in a positive way, because the diversity and richness which God has given in creation was deployed in this way. Different human relationships, each with their own sphere of authority, came into existence.

It was also clear that the previously unlimited power of the tribal head was now limited. The king's power was limited to the specific task he was assigned to fulfil. The same applied to the priest(s). Also, the prophets did not have royal or priestly responsibilities. Their task was to proclaim the Word of God to everybody - also to priests and kings.

We can mention quite a few examples where the kings of Israel did not respect these limits set to them by God and transgressed, for instance, into the sphere of the priesthood. Every time this happened they were severely punished by God Himself. Compare for instance Saul who did not wait for Samuel to offer to the Lord (1 Samuel 13:8-14), or Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16-21) who took over the priest Azariah's responsibility and burned incense on the altar in the temple. Both of them finally died because of disrespecting God-given boundaries.

Offering incense in the temple as such was not wrong. The priests did it on a daily basis. But when the king did it, it was a very serious sin. He used his royal status and power to go out of the sphere of his God-given royal responsibilities and to intrude into the sphere of the God-given responsibility of the priests. In direct opposition to the will of God, he did not want to make use of the institutions God provided, but wanted to provide for his own religious happiness. He pretended to be a priest. And by appointing himself to the priesthood, he was in fact "playing God," because in the time of Israel God appointed people to various offices. God so seriously regarded this transgression that Saul was removed as king and that Uzziah was not only punished with leprosy, but God declared him unfit for his royal responsibilities too.

Because God also reveals Himself in creation, every human being - even those who have never heard of the Bible - intuitively knows that a

family is something different from a business, a church something other than a state, that a school should not be identified with a soccer club etc. Also non-Christians agree that we should not mix politics and sport and, as a consequence, select (or reject) players on political grounds instead of on merit. Or, to mention just one final example, if the government in Nigeria acts in favour of the Christians, the Muslims may with perfect justice protest, because it is not the task of a government to *choose* between religions or to get religiously involved, but only to guarantee *freedom* of religion for all its citizens.

Some Christians - also in my own country - have difficulty in understanding this. Have I not emphasised previously that a Christian can never be neutral, but always has to serve the true God or an idol? Am I thinking consistently when I now propagate religious neutrality in the case of government and the state? Do I myself not fall prey to dualist Christianity with its Christian private life but neutral public life?

The answer is: No. The state cannot be religiously neutral. But its God-given (religious) task is not to favour one or the other religion or faith. Its God-given task is to administer justice fairly to each person within its boundaries. It cannot be religiously neutral to this command from God: it either obeys or disobeys!

It is therefore even possible - as was the case in apartheid South Africa - to have a so-called Christian government (= a government consisting of mainly Christian members) governing in a very unchristian way, because they did not know - or did not want to know - what the real task of government has to be.

* From the perspective of diversified love

We can also explain what has been said thus far from another Biblical perspective, viz. that of love. God is king. His kingdom is a kingdom of love. He rules in love. Because He loved us so much, He redeemed us in Christ. He, however, also commands love from us towards Himself and our fellowmen. This is the only way to achieve real happiness individually and also in society at large. When we start looking for other ways to make us happy we substitute the real God with our own god, we replace our only Saviour with another saviour.

It should be kept in mind that love is not a feeling of affection: we also have to love those we do not like - even our enemies - just as God loved us while we were still his enemies. Real love is sacrifice and service!

Thus far nothing has been said that a Christian does not know and will not endorse. New doors, however, will open when we realise that love is not simply love. There are different kinds of love, because love has to take on different forms in different situations. The following types of love are all different: love for one's parents, wife, children, cattle, dog and farm. This fact offers promising perspectives for a Christian philosophy of society.

A secular philosophy of society will have much to say about competition, contracts, rights etc., but definitely not about love. Love is limited to the private life in marriage, family and the church. To speak of love in the case of politics (government and the state) will make people laugh. The state may have something to do with justice, but definitely not with love! Justice, however, is not the opposite of love. It is simply another form of love, the form in which love is realised or concretised in the case of the state as societal relationship. In the same way God's central love commandment has to be realised differently in the various other relationships: as fidelity in marriage, care in a family, stewardship at work, compassion for the poor, health for our bodies, clarity in our thinking and many more.

Our conclusion: If we are able to again discover the richness and diversity of love, we will have no difficulty in surprising the world with a unique Christian philosophy of society.

3.2 Individualism, communalism and a Christian view of society

On the preceding pages we have already indicated the desired direction from a closed (undiversified) to an open (diversified) society. As an example of a closed society we used the primal societies of Israel (before it became a kingdom) and Africa (during pre-colonial times). Other examples of closed, undiversified societies could be the Medieval society (about 500 - 1500 A.D.), in which case the church had authority over and dominated the whole of society, or the terrible

regime of Adolf Hitler in Germany (prior to and during World War II), when the German government acted in a completely totalitarian fashion.

True development and progress, however, can only occur when and where the different spheres of life (marriage, family, school, church, business, university etc.) grow towards independence, and authority is differentiated rather than centralised. Of course this should occur, as already indicated previously in obedience to God's laws, proclaimed in his creational and Scriptural revelation, for the various societal relationships.

As against the *individualist* view of society and the *communalist* view, the Christian worldview therefore holds to a *pluralist* view of society. It wishes to do justice to both the individual and society. The reformational Christian worldview therefore does not make a choice in the framework of the false dilemma of an individual or a social Gospel. It does not perceive tension between either proclaiming the Gospel or restructuring societies. This does not indicate that the reformational way is simply a combination of the two other worldviews or the golden mean between the two struggling groups. It indicates a wholly new third way.

I would like to present the following diagram which provides a summary of the three models for society. The diagram may be of help in obtaining an overview. It indicates very briefly the aim, philosophy, practice and final result of each of the three philosophies of society.

A COMPARISON OF THREE MODELS FOR SOCIETY

	Individualism	Communalism	Pluralism
Aim	First liberty, then equality	First equality (unity, solidarity, brotherhood) then liberation	Freedom (individually and socially) to serve God
Philosophy 1.	Parts (individuals) more important than the whole (society)	Whole (society) more important than the parts (individuals)	False dilemma solved by the principle of unity in diversity or diversity in unity
2.	Higher ontic status for the individual	Higher ontic status for social collectivity	Individual's existence interwoven with a variety of different social relationships
3.	Societal relationships are artificial and contractual collections of individuals	Individuals find meaning and fulfillment only by belonging to the larger group	Pluralism does not overemphasise either the individual or community

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4.	Overestimates individual and underestimates associative nature of human life	Overestimates community and underestimates individuals	Balance (not a compromise) between individual and society
5.	Human (individual) autonomy (one's own boss)	Obedience to collective will of "people"	Obedience to God's will (in His creational ordinances and in Scripture)
Practice 1.	All activities towards enhancement of individual (e.g. primarily individual rights)	All activities only a means to serve the purposes of the community at large (social rights)	All human activities in the service of the kingdom of God
2.	Atomistic relationships - also between societal relationships	One over-arching social institution (e.g. church, state, business as megastucture)	Societal relationships exist alongside/next to each other in mutual service

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3.	Totalitarian via an indirect route - because human beings cannot live without societal relationships	Totalitarian simply by being consistent in applying its basic philosophy	Anti-totalitarian (only kingdom of God all-encompassing). Each societal relationship has (limited) authority in its own sphere
4.	Destroys unity of mankind	Destroys plurality and diversity in human life	Enhances both unity and diversity
Result	Libertinism (but finally also tyranny)	Tyranny	Real freedom - for individual and society

3.4 An example

According to the pluralist position the *state* is neither a single all-encompassing structure with higher ontic status than all other human relationships, nor is it simply an artificial social contract among individuals. According to pluralism the state has its own identity and limited sphere of competence - balanced by the rights and competences of other societal relationships. The specific purpose of the state is to promote public (general) justice, that is, to balance the rights and duties of the other societal relations, to cope with differences between them and to protect the rights of all. The state, in terms of an image, is the balance wheel, which has to co-ordinate and regulate the other wheels (relationships) so that all of them can fulfil their own functions and also function in mutual harmony.

Although the state has to play a kind of refereeing role, it may not under normal circumstances interfere in the sphere of competence of another societal sphere. It should play a supportive role and promote the free and equal development of each societal structure - in partnership with all the others. The state only has the right to interfere if a societal relationship, for example, does not fulfil its own task or interferes in the sphere of other societal relationships.

Because the state (consisting of government and citizens) is such an influential societal relationship, allow me to say something more about it from a pluralist-reformational perspective.

Because of sin man tends to misuse political power for his private interests. As Christians we have the duty to call governments back continually to God's order for the state otherwise we will have no freedom, peace and justice. It is a pity that, through inappropriate use of Scripture (cf. passages like Romans 13:1-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-2 and 1 Peter 2:13-14) - and by overlooking the many passages in the Bible that describe the duties and limits of rulers and also God's judgment over unfaithful rulers - Christians have often been satisfied with sinful passivity. In this way they have furthered corruption among government officials, furthered its pragmatic approach and finally its total secularisation.

What is the norm for faithful government? The great commandment of love should be the basis of all man's activities - including government. The *promotion of justice for all* is a government's way of practising love, as already stated above. God's norm demands that a government provide fair treatment for all its citizens, all societal institutions and organisations. Public life ought to be regulated in such a way that all citizens can fulfil their tasks responsibly and in peace. All people and all areas of life ought to be allowed free development. One person or group should not be favoured above another. Government should interfere where and whenever unfairness threatens. It should make laws and provide public services (especially for the basic requirements of life, such as housing, water, food, medical care, etc.) that ensure a free, safe and healthy society. People also ought to be protected against violations of their persons and property - if necessary through a police force or even the army.

We should therefore not ask (like the individualists): how much government do we need? The real question is not *how much*, but: Is the government truly promoting fair treatment of everybody, and does it truly allow all sectors of life the necessary development? We need enough government to provide justice for all.

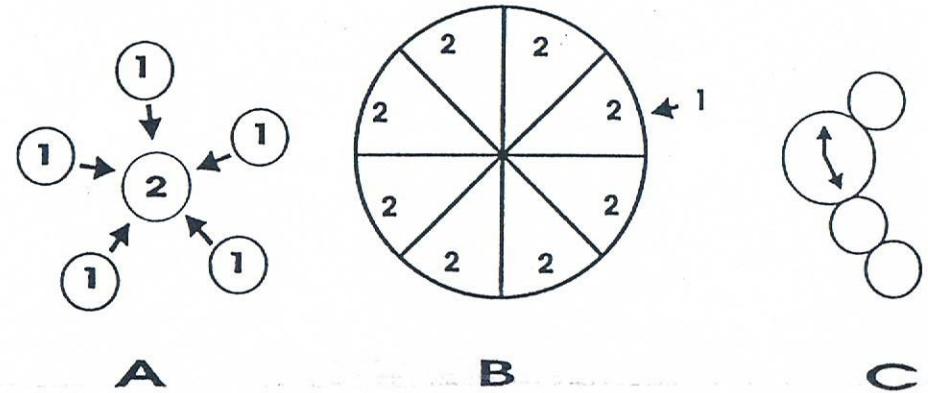
This norm for government therefore stands in direct opposition to the popular idea of (individualist/socialist) democracy: the rule of the individuals/people, *by* the individuals/people, *for* the individuals/-people. The subjects (citizens), however, are not a law unto themselves through the government they have elected. There is a God-given norm to which *both* rulers and citizens are subjected.

3.5 Summary

In recapitulation, we could compare the three visions of society discussed above with the following images: that of a collection of atoms, that of an orange and that of a clock. According to the individualist model society resembles a cluster of atoms - there is no social reality apart from the individual identity. According to collectivist communalism the segments of the orange have no separate identity apart from the whole orange, which is then of course more real and more important than the segments. Pluralism teaches that, as every cog in a clock has its own place, and simultaneously all interlock so

that the clock can run, in the same way each societal relationship is a reality and has its own place and right to existence - in harmony with all the other societal relationships or structures.

Visualised in a diagram:



Explanation:

- A = *Individualism*: individuals (1) loosely connected in a societal structure (2)
- B = *Communalism*: individuals and societal structures (2) merely part of the greater, more important whole (1)
- C = *Pluralism*: societal structures closely related but also independent

There are, of course, many variations on these three models, as well as many combinations which occur in practice, but they are the basic ones, and nobody has as yet brought forward a fourth model.

Many African states have, in the wake of independence, and in conjunction with traditional African communalism, experimented with various kinds of socialism. In the Western world, again, individualism is the dominant view of society - even in the East Bloc countries there has been a movement away from socialism to individualism in the course of the last few years. More or less the same thing is at the

moment happening in Africa, with the push towards Western models of democracy.

4. A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT AND CHANGE

In this section we will mention three models for changing society: the dualist-pietist, the revolutionary and the Biblical or truly reformational. Our emphasis will, however, be on the first type, because it is this viewpoint which I think is most common amongst African Christians. We will have to critique this viewpoint because it is not in agreement with the Word of God and therefore also not allows the Christian to be fully present in the "world".

In order to bring out my viewpoint clearly, I will contrast the viewpoints of the Evangelicals (as an example of the dualist-pietist model) and that of the Ecumenicals (as an example of the revolutionary model).

4.1 Evangelicals and Ecumenicals in Africa

Before we continue allow me a remark. I have studied the materials of both the Evangelicals in Africa and even paid a visit to their headquarters in Nairobi. (*The Association of Evangelicals in Africa* and the *All Africa Council of Churches*.) I am therefore not criticising from a position of hear-say. And I included in my critique also the church to which I belong - which I would describe as mainly evangelical.

* "Not of but not *in* the world"

In view of the statement of "in but not of the world", one could typify the two opposing stands of the Evangelical and Ecumenical brothers in the following terms. One stand emphasises the aspect of not being *of* the world. The other stresses the fact that the church has to be *in* the world.

The first viewpoint is faced with the problem of the extent to which the church (which is not of the world) can still be *in* the world. The latter vision has to deal with the question of how the church (which stands in the world) can see to it that it does not become *identical to* the world. The first viewpoint is thus involved with the problem that the church should not *withdraw* from the world, and the second has to face the problem that the church may not allow itself to be *swallowed* by the

world. From the first viewpoint the second position is regarded as *secularisation* (accommodation) while the second group accuses the first of *flight from the world* (isolation).

* The precarious balance

It would thus seem as if the old saying (*in* but not *of*) is not that easy to keep in balance in practice: if the pendulum does not swing too far to one side, it swings too far to the other!

Have our Evangelical and Ecumenical friends perhaps each noticed part of the truth? Is the correct viewpoint situated somewhere in between these two extremes?

With our background of a radical Christian worldview we are in the position to unmask both viewpoints as well as a choice between them, or the search for a balance or compromise between them, as false. Why? Because the viewpoints of both the Evangelical and the Ecumenical are the result of a dualist Christian worldview.

Their dualist starting points is clearly revealed in the terminology they use. Take as an example the terms horizontal-vertical. We may not divide our lives like that. According to the Bible we cannot live horizontally without any reference to God. Neither can we live vertically without any relationship to God's created reality. No, *in* our so-called horizontal relationships we have to serve God!

Dualist oriented Christians, however, also have problems with this position of the church: the church also ought to be involved *in* the world! But, be careful: if the church gets too deeply involved in the world, it will become "worldly" and lose its "churchly" (or divine) character! The only solution, therefore, lies in seesaw tactics: *in* the world but not *of* the world.

But what does this really mean? To say the least, this is a very vague point of view. We are not surprised by the vagueness, however, because we know that a *dualist* Christian worldview cannot be clear and unambiguous. Only a *radical* Christian worldview can clearly and unambiguously show the way.

* Twin brothers

If the starting point of both the Evangelical and the Ecumenical Christian is a dualist worldview, why then do they differ? The reason simply is that they adhere to *different* dualist worldviews. The Evangelical puts more emphasis on the one pole (grace), while the Ecumenical does exactly the opposite. In the dialectic tension between nature and grace he emphasises nature more than grace. This is clear from the fact that the Evangelical brother is concerned with the (supra-natural) identity of the church, while the Ecumenical brother is concerned with the importance of the world. In a dualist worldview one is always confronted with an uneasy situation of divided loyalty. It is not possible for one to have only one loyalty as is the case with a radical and integral Christian worldview. Finally - because a "seesaw" policy is not very satisfactory - one has to give priority to one of the parts of the dualism. But at the same time it is not possible to totally ignore the other part. The dialectic tension inherent in the dualist worldview does not permit it. The one pole cannot exist without the other! When the one side of the seesaw goes down, the other end swings upward. A horizontal checkmate position also does not satisfy!

Somebody once said: "Without true and sustained contact with God the church loses its transcendence. But without true solidarity with the world, it loses its relevance". On the surface this statement sounds like an excellent compromise. But one can once again clearly discern the dialectical tension (the seesaw) between transcendence and relevance (or immanence), grace and nature.

According to a reformational, pluralist view of society, the church is simply a societal relationship among other relationships. It is not elevated above them as a supernatural kind of institution above the world. We therefore do not have to bring it (down) into the world - it is part of God's creation!

4.2 Historical background: the type of Christianity introduced to Africa

A survey of the road which Western Christianity has trodden is important, because to a great degree African Christianity has - unfortunately! - followed Europe on foot. For the sake of clarity we

shall simplify a bit and divide the spiritual history of the West in three phases: the Biblical, the dualist and the secular.

* The original Biblical vision

The Biblical message is that the whole of life is religion. The religious direction of the heart of man (positive in obedience to God, or negative in disobedience away from God, directed toward a series of idols) determines his *whole* life, *everything* that he does or says. The *whole* of life (not only prayer, reading the Bible and going to church) is religion, service of God, or, obversely, idolatry. The Gospel is not only something spiritual (for Sundays only), but it is a *full*, complete Gospel. It touches the fields of labour, commerce, political and social relations - everything that man does. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has power to change and renew the whole of life. *Biblical spirituality encompasses the whole of life.*

Allow me to represent this Biblical vision as a circle with no divisions in it, to indicate that man's whole life is undivided, integral, total and radical service to God. In this circle we place an arrow facing upwards in order to indicate that this spirituality is determined by the true God of Scripture and is directed towards Him. The diagram thus looks like this:

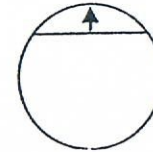


* Dualist Christianity

The true Biblical vision of life was only briefly - if at all - given shape by Christians. Already early in the history of Western Christendom, religion came to be seen as an addendum, a plus factor, additional to the ordinary secular concerns of life. It was not the whole of life that was spiritual or religious, but only the "upper part". This upper part of man's existence was called the sacred or holy part, over against the lower or secular part, which would then include such things as science, economics, politics, commerce, labour, social life, etc. The all-

embracing word for the lower sphere was "nature", as against the higher "supernatural" part, the sphere of grace.

In this case we can once again draw a circle, but a horizontal line should be drawn through it in order to represent the higher and lower parts of the two-spheres doctrine. In the upper part there is an arrow pointing upwards and in the lower part there is no arrow, in order to symbolize the fact that this is a so-called neutral sphere or terrain.



The vision of man and his task in the world is no longer radical, total and integral. Man's religious life (which should be all-encompassing) is now limited to things such as praying, reading the Bible, going to church and doing theology - the so-called spiritual things - and perhaps also leading a good moral life. Religion, instead of being all-encompassing service to God, becomes a private issue that no longer has an influence on the social, political and economic spheres. It is clear, however, that this vision on spiritual matters is something totally different from the Biblical perspective, which sees the whole of life as spiritual, that is, determined and directed by God or an idol.

The two-spheres doctrine is not simply slightly wrong. It is totally unbiblical. This is clear *inter alia* from the fact that the Bible nowhere makes a distinction between nature and grace. The correct Biblical distinction is between grace and sin. The awful fact is that this incorrect view has been held by Christians for almost 2 000 years, and is still widely accepted. This means that we have a half-hearted, impotent Christendom, because the influence of the Gospel is reduced to a small part of life, for instance to Sundays, that is, to one-seventh of the week!

It was exactly this kind of pietist, world-negating Christianity that missionaries mostly brought to Africa.

The process of secularisation - of which we can see the bitter fruits so clearly in our own times - therefore started early in the history of

Christianity. It is not the "world" which is guilty of this in the first place. Christianity itself sowed the seeds. Modern secularism is simply the harvest which has been yielded by the infected seeds.

* Modern secularism

We can represent secularism diagrammatically, this time by the remaining lower section of the circle. Secularism entirely rejects the upper (spiritual) section. It refuses to have anything to do with religion. Life has to be divorced from the church. And because God and religion were limited to the upper or spiritual section (church life), man's life is also stripped of God. Man now has to live as though God does not exist. The supernatural has fallen away. All that remains is the natural, the visible life, here and now. The diagram thus looks like this:



While in the two-spheres doctrine there was still a little influence from the spiritual-religious sphere on the secular sphere, the world has now become wholly and totally secular, and has nothing more to do with service either to God or to idols.

We should not, however, deceive ourselves into thinking that the "secular" sphere is wholly neutral. Many Christians have capitulated to secularism (as they previously had to the two-spheres doctrine) by accepting the idea that there are things and areas in life which have (or should have) nothing to do with their religion.

Man, however, cannot live "neutrally" or secularly. The truth is that man will, having scrapped one God (formerly placed in the supernatural sphere), simply replace Him with another god. Should the true God be rejected, his place would be taken by idols, because man is an inherently religious being who cannot live if he does not live for something or somebody. Today we are able to see how a large variety of neo-pagan cults and superstitions have sprung up on the dungheap of secularism.

How did these worldviews influence African Christianity? Africa has followed Europe on foot. We find today that Africa holds both the dualist and the secular views.

* Dualist African Christianity

In following most Western churches, life in Africa is divided into "spiritual" and "secular" spheres. There is a wide range of opinions concerning the relationship between these spheres, how they influence each other and which should enjoy preference. The more conservative Evangelicals of Africa allocate priority to the spiritual, the church and redemption. The "vertical" (the relationship to God) is the most important for them and all stress is therefore placed on evangelisation (the gaining of souls for Christ).

The Ecumenicals in Africa (the more liberal Christians), tend to think more "horizontally". Good relations between people at the natural level are more important and they therefore strive for a more humanitarian society.

The Evangelicals believe that new (reborn) people will gradually, through their individual testimony, change society with all its societal structures, such as state, industry and education. They are very naïve, however, because they do not see the depth and breadth of human lostness. The tragic fact is that reborn Christians, even where they are the majority in a society, do not necessarily renew social structures, but have in fact perpetuated oppression. They narrow the Gospel down to its "vertical" dimensions - with at most some implications for the social involvement of individual Christians. They are very aggressive about "winning souls", but are mostly fairly passive when it comes to social renewal.

In contrast to this the Ecumenicals believe that evil is situated in the first place not in man but in his environment. For this reason the renewal of social structures and the overturning of the oppressive "establishments" will change the world. Reconciliation between people is more important than reconciliation with God. They too are naïve because they do not see that the Gospel should call man first of all out of the darkness of sin, out of a Godless life. They limit the Gospel to its "horizontal" dimensions. Although they are aggressive in social

reform they are satisfied with a more or less passive Christian "presence" as a means to evangelisation.

Both these groups of Christians in Africa fail at the same point, viz. in their faulty (dualist) worldview. They simply put the stress at different poles. Neither of them truly realizes that Christ is the King of heaven and earth, soul and body, individual and society. The solution for us is not to try and *combine* the Evangelical and the Ecumenical visions. Their dualistic worldview has to be *replaced* by the full Gospel of God's kingship in every sphere of life.

* Secularism in Africa

People in African societies, who become modernized without obedience to the full Gospel, will become secular - as has also happened in the West. This has already happened in many African countries with the absorption of secular Western ideologies, such as socialism, mixed with traditional African communalism or even more radical Marxism.

And once these ideologies begin to lose their popularity, as is happening now, what remains? We can already see clear examples of naked, empty secularism in which neither the traditional nor the Christian worldview plays a role.

Secularism provides a fertile breeding ground for an endless variety of worldviews. Because I view them negatively, I prefer calling them ideologies. In modern Africa we have authoritarianism or totalitarianism (not only the head of state, but also the civil servant wants to exercise power!), tribalism, nepotism, sectarianism and many more. What is causing the greatest havoc in contemporary Africa, is materialist individualism - or individualist materialism.

* A third possibility for Africa

The correct choice for African Christianity is, of course, a return to the original Biblical worldview. Such a worldview is a prescientific attitude to life, which determines the spiritual direction of man's life. It is thus not the product of science (theology or philosophy), but lies at the basis of man's scientific thought.

In this Biblical viewpoint the concept of the kingdom of God is central. This perspective includes three coherent ideas: God's *kingship*, the *sphere* of his dominion (creation), and the *fruits* (or blessings) of his sovereignty. It is therefore nothing less than the basic Christian confession that Christ is King and that we have to recognise and give substance to his kingship in all spheres of life.

Although the church fulfils an important role in God's kingdom, his kingdom is much wider and broader than the church. It touches on all spheres of life: commerce (Acts 4:32-35), justice (1 Corinthians 6:1-6), the relationship between master and slave (1 Peter 2:18), the relationship between husband and wife (Ephesians 5:21-32) and many more - even the food and drink we ingest (1 Corinthians 10:31).

A real Christian worldview based on the Word of God is a total, integral and radical worldview. It is the real medicine for the sickness of African Christianity!

4.3 A preliminary critique

Why do we not simply accept the traditional dualist worldview? Why do Christians, who are all believers of the Word of God, hold divergent worldviews? Most Christians should after all agree with the following core confession of their faith: "God the Father redeemed His creation, which had fallen into sin, through the death of His Son and renewed it through His Spirit to become the kingdom of God."

There are many, but one of the most important reasons for the differences is that not all Christians understand the core concepts in this confession of faith (creation, fall, redemption, kingdom of God) in a universal, all-encompassing sense, but limit it in one way or another. According to Scripture creation includes *everything* that God made, the fall corrupted the *whole* of creation, redemption is intended for the *entire* creation and the concept kingdom of God points to the fact that God is King of the *whole* of reality.

* Starting from the wrong perspective

In the history of Christianity, however, creation (as nature) has often been regarded as a specific (delimited) *area*. The fall has been regarded

as a loss of *something* and not a totally penetrating corruption of everything. Or else it has been *localised* in an area of creation which would be neutral or even bad *as such*. In the same way redemption is seen simply as the return of *something* and not as total and integral renewal. In this way too the kingdom of God is seen as an area or *separate sphere* of creation or even apart from creation.

The end result of such a mode of thought is a dualist Christianity. Reality is divided into two spheres: a secular, profane or natural; and a religious, sacral or supernatural one. Nature (creation) and grace (redemption) are situated alongside, above, or even in opposition to each other. Redemption, according to Scripture, does not mean, however, that creation is *rejected* or *replaced* or that it is situated in *opposition* to creation, or that we have to *move away* from creation. No, redemption is rather a *recovery* of creation. Redemption does not mean *another* but rather a *new* creation. Redemption is therefore *re-creation*. Salvation does not make a new cosmos, but makes the cosmos new!

* How to identify a dualist Christian worldview

Whenever you encounter certain contrasts like the following, be careful - they may be the result of one or the other form of dualist thinking: kingdom(s) of the world - kingdom of God; secular - religious; autonomous man - sovereign God; the god of the philosophers - the God of the Bible; God the Creator - God the Redeemer; earth - heaven; visible world - invisible world; flesh - spirit; lay person - clergy; world - church; state - church; emperor - pope; politician - priest; marriage - celibacy; natural (general) revelation - supernatural (special) revelation; reason - faith; natural theology - supernatural theology; university - seminary; class room - chapel; natural law - divine law; horisontal - vertical; temporal - eternal; natural virtues - Christian virtues; research - prayer; human - Christian; love for the world - love for God; physics - metaphysics; natural history - redemptive history; general grace - special grace; historical - transhistorical; worldly - spiritual; citizen - Christian; science - religion; this world - the next world; secular - holy; profane - sacred; worldly - heavenly; immanence - transcendence; material - spiritual; etc. etc.

Especially Christians advocating a two-realm theory will try to "prove" the above distinctions from Scripture itself. They will, for instance, quote Christ Himself saying that his followers should not - like pagans - be concerned about earthly things like food, drink and clothes, but should be concerned above everything else with the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 6:25-34). They should not store up riches for themselves here on earth, but in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). Christ also explicitly says that his kingdom does not belong to this world (John 18:36). And in line with this Paul reminds the Colossians (3:1-2) to put their hearts on the things that are in heaven and not to fix them on things here on earth.

Other parts of Scripture, however, warn us to be careful not to deduce from the above texts a dualism of earthly as against heavenly things. In Genesis 2:15 already God gave Adam and Eve the mandate to cultivate *the earth*. And in Matthew 5:13-14 Christ gives his followers the task to be the salt and light of *the world*. He also prays that the Father should not take us out of the world but keep us safe from evil (John 17:15).

Christ's kingdom is certainly not *from* (out of) this world, but it is very clearly intended *for* this world and directed *towards* this world. We have to find the "treasures in heaven" *here on earth*, in our daily, often difficult labour (cf. Matthew 13:44). This treasure is the same as God's kingdom, where we obey God's commandments - *here and now*. Paul's expression "the things that are in heaven" should also not be contrasted with "the things of the earth", but with *sinful things* (cf. Colossians 3:5,8,9). The "things of heaven" are gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to people *on earth* (Colossians 3:12-17). The expression "kingdom of heaven" (used by Matthew because his Gospel was written for Jewish people who avoided using the name of God) does not indicate that his kingdom has nothing to do with this earth. It simply indicates that its *origin* is with God in heaven.

We therefore do not have to retreat or withdraw from the *world*, but from the *worldly* (sinful) things of this world (1 John 2:15). None of the above-mentioned texts prove the doctrine of two realms! We have to look for its origins outside the Word of God.

* Three meanings of the word "world"

Because the word "world" has both positive and negative connotations in the New Testament, it opens the door to the above two types of dualist Christian worldviews. If one only emphasises the positive meaning of the word "world", there is a real danger of accommodation to the world (the "Christian *of* the world" position). If, on the other hand, one views the word only negatively, it prompts Christians to retreat from the world (the "Christian *above/alongside/against* the world" position).

The third, correct, position is to clearly distinguish between the two meanings in which the word is used in the New Testament. What makes this so difficult, is that the two different meanings are sometimes used together even in the same section, for instance, in Christ's prayer (John 17:9-19) where He says that his disciples are not *of* the world (negative meaning), but He does not pray that they should be sent *out of* the world but rather *into* the world (positive meaning). Because of the two meanings Christians should maintain simultaneously a distance from (or anti-thesis to) and an involvement in (compassion for) the world. We have to be converted *from* the sinful world and converted *to* God's world!

A further careful study of the New Testament reveals that the word "world" is used in two positive and one negative way.

In the first positive sense "world" (Greek: *cosmos*) refers to God's creation, the place He has given us to work and live. A second positive connotation is indicated in the "world of people", all the relationships of the human world. We could also say that the two positive meanings denote the structures of the world created by God. Christians should not shun the world in this sense, because it is the handiwork of God Himself. They should be present *in* the world.

The third usage, in contrast, has a directional, religious meaning, indicating the anti-Christian, demonic forces of the kingdom of Satan, the whole of unredeemed life dominated by sin and awaiting God's judgment. It is with the "world" in this sense that Christians should not associate, they should not be *of* this kind of world (cf. for instance 1 John 2:15-17).

* Conclusion

I fully agree with what James Mageria had to say at PACLA I (in Cassidy & Verlinden, 1978:142): "It is impossible to divide one's life into the spiritual and the non-spiritual. Many people are coming to realise that it is also unscriptural. What are God's spiritual acts and what are his non-spiritual ones? The idea of this distinction is absurd".

4.4 The dualist-pietist model for social renewal

We will now concentrate on one dualist worldview, the pietist type, which is sometimes also indicated as the Evangelical viewpoint. Because of lack of a better term, it will be indicated as the dualist-pietist approach to social change. I do not intend a condemnation of all Evangelical viewpoints. There is much to be appreciated in Evangelicalism, for instance its efforts to be faithful to the Gospel. Everyone knows that "evangelical" is a very broad and even vague term that covers a great variety of viewpoints through the ages.

* A dualism of evangelisation and social action

The Evangelical point of view is in general conservative. It tends to defend current norms and values, to strengthen the authority of ruling group(s) and even to legitimise the *status quo*. Since 1974 (Lausanne) and earlier too, a great deal has been said about the *two tasks* which the Evangelicals see for Christians, viz. that dissemination of the Gospel and socio-political involvement go hand in hand and that the former is not more important than the latter. But in spite of all the discussions since 1974 not much has changed. Although it seems that their intention is to make the *whole* of the Gospel relevant for the *whole* of man, they remain stuck in the dualism of evangelisation on the one hand (the primary) and social responsibility on the other hand (the secondary). At Manilla (Lausanne II, 1989) much emphasis was put on the dissemination of the Gospel, but less on the social dimensions of the same Gospel. According to reports there was not much discussion, for example, of unjust, repressive social structures. This was the case in spite of the excellently formulated article A4 (*The Gospel and social responsibility*) of the *Manilla Manifesto*, calling the whole church to take (*nota bene!*) the whole Gospel to the whole world. The Evangelical position remained ambiguous and the difficulty of relating

and integrating evangelism and social responsibility could not be resolved.

In the early part of this century the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility was an *either/or* one. In recent years evangelism and social action have been viewed as constituting a *both/and* relationship. The Evangelical tradition has sought to relate evangelism to social concern in this *both/and* relationship in three possible ways: (1) social activity is a *consequence* of evangelism; (2) social involvement can be a *bridge* to evangelism, and (3) social concern may be a *partner* which accompanies evangelism. However, in none of these approaches the inherent dichotomy is challenged at its root.

* No real involvement in society

Evangelicals regard the proclamation of the message of redemption as their main responsibility towards society. Apart from having to obey the existing government, they are not allowed to play any role in politics. If the Gospel has a liberating role to play, it is not to liberate from a wrong and unjust social order, but at most from alcohol, tobacco, intellectualism and poor morality.

Their message of "hands off politics" does not mean that their interpretation of Christianity indicates no political role. They simply become a handy, passive support for the existing order. By directing the attention at the spiritual or the supernatural, they divert attention from the economic and political causes of the realities within which people live and therefore do not encourage any critical views of the economic system of a society. They do not encourage Christians to evaluate the existing social order, but only to draw advantages from it. With their emphasis on spiritual, personal salvation and rebirth, they also divert attention from social deficiencies and injustices which call for correction. By one-sidedly putting the emphasis on a personal moral life, they avoid the necessity of reforming institutionalised injustices. By spiritualising the whole of life, they leave no room for social involvement - apart from the influence which may emanate from a personally pious life. This type of Christianity therefore is more or less a voice in favour of the structural *status quo*.

They, for instance, do not look at development from a broad or comprehensive perspective. Development demands social analysis. For example: Who created the social structures? Who maintains them? To whose advantage? Development also presupposes a purposeful effort to effect social change and then not merely in the short term, and also not only for the sake of relieving a single kind of suffering.

For this reason this kind of Christianity limits itself to emergency aid which, according to them, is the correct kind of Christian action. Anything more would be unwarranted interference in the political sphere. The words of Camara illustrate this very clearly: "When I give bread to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor do not have bread, I am called a communist."

* The dualist background

Evangelical Christians have not been blind or insensitive to social problems. They have revealed a surprising amount of creativity and energy in an attempt to alleviate the problems, or rather the symptoms. Their approach, therefore, has been aimed at alleviation, rather than finding solutions for the problems. They do not realize that the misery which they try to relieve has to a large extent been caused by the same social order that they have been helping to establish or maintain. They have simply come to the aid of the victims of their own structural violence!

The worldviewish background of the Evangelical viewpoint reveals a dualistic manner of thought, or a two-sphere vision of life and a dichotomous view of man. The world of faith, grace and religion is the higher world for which we need God's revelation. We have to concentrate on that. For the lower world, the natural world, human reason suffices. It is a non-religious, secular and neutral area. In this area there is no difference between the Christian and the non-Christian, because both here live according to the laws of nature and human reason.

Diagrammatically one can represent the two worlds in the following way:

higher	holy	grace	revelation	spiritual	soul	church	theology
lower	secular	nature	reason	material	body	world	philosophy

This dualism has led to the popular conception among Christians that their religious obligations can be separated from their scientific, political, economic and other activities. The only sphere over which God still has authority in man's life, apart from his religion and his faith, is his ethical life. Christians have to avoid unethical, immoral behaviour. For this reason Evangelical Christians put all the emphasis on two matters, viz. the dissemination of the Gospel and a personally moral life (no smoking, drinking, whoring, etc.).

This dualism has never been officially acknowledged, but has always been unconsciously present. For this reason it has usually also been denied when attention has been attracted to it.

* Practical consequences

Evangelisation and medical as well as educational work are therefore often seen as *two* tasks of the church. This dualism has prevented Christians from establishing a Biblically-founded holistic view concerning the relationship between the dissemination of the Gospel and social action. Social projects (such as schools and hospitals) are often only undertaken to the extent that they could serve the primary function of evangelisation. Economic activities are only of secondary importance as long as they could support the task of evangelisation. The socio-economic guidelines which the Bible clearly offers are seen as *mere implications* and not as *real part* of its message.

Christians involve themselves to such a degree in "sacred" matters, that they never fully come to terms with an analysis of developments in the "profane" world. This is not only due to a lack of time, but is the result of the hierarchical dualism, which allocates matters such as economy to the lesser realm of nature. Because religion, which determines the whole of the social structure from the core outwards, is shifted and narrowed to a single little compartment of life, economic matters are allowed to take their own course and set profit as the highest criterion. Religion is reduced to the sphere of the individual's soul and his

salvation, while economics organises commerce among men in an autonomous fashion.

This dualism has also hindered a fundamental analysis of politics among Christians. Missionaries, for example, were totally involved in colonial capitalist politics - while they denied with pious insistence that they were politically active. The issue here is not that they were hypocritical, but that they were blind, due to dualist styles of thought.

The missionary churches could therefore not equip the African Christians for their great political tasks after independence. By means of the dissemination of the Gospel they did evoke social sensitivity among the people of Africa, but without helping them to apply the Gospel *fully* and *concretely*. The Africans inherited their "politico-phobia" from Western missionaries. Christians could therefore not offer dynamic guidance in the midst of transitional phases and political struggles. Christian politicians of Africa complain that they have not yet come across a single book which really deals with the relationship between the Gospel and politics. And the churches continue to warn their members against participation in "secular politics" because they belong to the "party of Christ"!

Allow me to quote from the back cover of a small booklet *As it was in the beginning; 31 social meditations* by J.H. Boer (published in 1992 by the Institute for Church and Society, Jos, Nigeria): "The time has come for Christians to be serious about their involvement in the different areas of society and culture. The Bible is much more concerned with business, politics and other social issues than you may think. So, while I hope that you will not lose interest in personal spirituality or family matters, these meditations will help you focus on matters you may not have connected with serving God.

"Though it is fitting for us to thank God that the Gospel was brought to us, it must be admitted that sometimes it was not the FULL Word of God that was preached. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Northern Zone, published a booklet, *Leadership in Nigeria*, in which CAN complains that 'missionaries did not impart to us the technique of governance'. The booklet then proceeds to outline the traditional missionary approach:

'For anyone to be interested in the governance of a country was 'blasphemous'. A Christian should not be interested in politics ... We are often reminded that politics is a dirty game and true Christians should distance themselves from it.' The CAN writer then argues in very strong words that such an approach is not only unbiblical, but it has also pushed Christians to the edge of society, away from the centres where decisions are made, and has left them powerless."

Viewed from a radical Christian worldview perspective evangelisation without thorough knowledge of politico-social issues can be very superficial and irresponsible - especially on a continent such as Africa where socio-political issues have become so important.

* A Biblical alternative

In response to the dualistic way of thinking, we advocate the holistic Biblical perspective of the kingdom of God as the *central concept* in Scripture. In contrast to the views of traditional Christianity, church structures are not all that important according to the Word of God. The Kingdom of God is also *all-encompassing*, it includes the whole of creation. In their worldview, however, Evangelical Christians have limited the kingdom and narrowed it down to spiritual issues and the church. However, according to the Bible the kingdom is all-encompassing. Christ says, for example, that all power in heaven and on earth has been granted Him (Matthew 28:18), and in his miracles He reveals his power over nature, death, Satan and his cohorts, over people and their possessions - over the whole of life.

At the beginning of creation man receives a mandate from God to work and to conserve creation (Genesis 1:26-28). We can call this the mandate of culture. The first command of God to man is, remarkably, not to pray, to build a church or to engage in one or the other spiritual task, but to work in a garden, to rule over the world. And this was not simply a *secondary* task, but rather man's main task. It was his encompassing religious calling!

The command to man was also not simply a call to be an agriculturalist. The garden represented the *whole* of creation and the task of cultivating the garden and to take care of it therefore encompassed *all* human activity.

Many Christians unfortunately do not know this cultural mandate any more. They remember the great mission call of Christ, viz. to take the Gospel to all nations and languages (Matthew 28:19,20). Our calling as Christians, however, is not to forget our cultural mandate, to neglect it or (in contradistinction to the call to mission) to give it a secondary place. No, we have to proclaim redemption in Christ *within* our cultural task. God's two commands (in Genesis and in Matthew) are basically the same - it is not a matter of the one being something secular (the cultural mandate) and other (the call to mission work) something spiritual or sacred.

God and his word does not acknowledge our dualism of a spiritual as opposed to a material world. The very first chapters of the Bible indicate to us God's pleasure and joy in the creation of matter, plant and animal, for it is repeatedly stated that God found it good. From the rest of the Old Testament too one can infer that God was interested in food, hygiene, animals, agriculture and true religion. The "spiritual" was not considered as a separate sphere - it was a "complete" Gospel which encompassed the whole of Israel's existence.

The fall did not end the cultural mandate. Adam still had to till the soil, but now by the sweat of his brow, and Eve would still be the mother "of all the living", even if through pain and suffering. When God drowned the earth in the flood, He saved a remnant, and He renewed his covenant with Noah (9:8-17). With Noah the cultural mandate continued; the earth could be repopulated (9:7) and as a farmer Noah could plant a vineyard (9:20).

Because God made man as a creator of culture, he cannot cease his task, even through he fulfils it in imperfect ways. Because this is the way God has made us, we cannot even survive without being culturally busy!

With the advent of Christ this command is renewed, but also redeemed from the bonds of sin. We became children of God again, his heirs (Romans 8:16,17). In Christ we are liberated to enable us to fulfil our cultural tasks in obedience.

With the second coming of Christ the human cultural mandate will be perfected. Redeemed human history will be subsumed under the

recreation, the new heaven and earth where Christ will reign as the unchallenged King (Revelation 11:15). Man will bring the treasures and the cultural wealth of nations into the holy city (21:24).

The fact that Evangelical Christians are not familiar with the concept "cultural mandate" is not simply innocent coincidence, but constitutes the core of the problem. Most of them just know the "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:19: "Go then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you". This is seen *in isolation* from the original cultural mandate. Therefore it cannot be clear what Christ meant with "Teach them to obey *everything* I have commanded you". For Christ, after all, taught the *all-encompassing kingdom!*

We should therefore understand the great missionary mandate in a far wider sense than is done by Evangelical Christians today. *Evangelical pietist believers tend to make the cultural mandate subservient to the missionary command.* Thus, for example, medical service and education are mere instruments for evangelisation. They are not seen to have their *own right* within the kingdom of God. This is exactly the opposite of what is propounded in Scripture. There the "missionary command" is given so that nations can again fully understand what their total calling as Christians, their cultural mandate, involves. It is therefore the missionary command which chronologically comes second and not the cultural mandate. Therefore these two mandates should holistically always go hand in hand and the one should not be regarded as being more important than the other.

It is not an *either/or* option (the older viewpoint). But neither is it a *both/and* option (the more recent viewpoint among Evangelicals). These two mandates should not be *added* to one another. Then we portray them as *separate things*, rather than *two facets* of one overall task.

P. Marshall (1984:36,37) draws attention to the fact that also the terms "evangelism" and "social action" are too vague and narrow: "Evangelism includes winning individual converts, but it also includes proclaiming the whole *evangel*, God's good news for all creation. It includes proclamation to the nations about obedience to God, to the

prisoners about freedom, to the poor about release - in short it includes many of the things now labelled as 'social action'. Repentance and conversion themselves involve turning from one life to another in every aspect of human existence.

"'Social action' also covers a wide range of things. Its core meaning seems to be helping those in need, particularly those in physical need. But the whole range of service implied in Christ's redemptive activity cannot properly be captured by this term. Making music does not seem to be 'social action', nor is it 'evangelism', but God tells us to do it, and do it well. Making clothes and shoes and chairs that are good for people to use does not seem necessarily to be 'social action', but is an essential part of the 'cultural mandate'. Similarly for composing, choreography, dance, plays, poems, growing crops and eating good food, teaching mathematics well, enjoying games, and writing this paper. 'Social action' is too cramped a term for such a wealth of goals, service and achievement".

Marshall's conclusion is therefore that true Christian evangelism is always social action as well as the converse: true Christian social action is always evangelistic work.

Whether man acknowledges it or not, he is a religious being fulfilling a cultural mandate. He is never irreligious. He can only replace one religion (service to the true God) with another (idolisation of an aspect of creation). We are all believers. It is not true that some people are believers and others intellectuals. The rationalist is also a believer - he believes in his own reason.

Against dualist, pietist Christianity we should therefore again place the kingdom of God in the centre - as Scripture does - and see God's cultural mandate as the centre of all his commandments. In this way evangelisation is not despised, but seen in the right perspective. Evangelisation may never be an end in itself, but only a means aimed at enabling us to fulfil the original cultural mandate again. Naturally we should first bring the *Gospel* to people, so that they can once again see the kingdom and be willing to seek it in the first place. We bring, however, to people the Gospel of the *kingdom*, so that they can be equipped again to seek the kingdom of God and in doing so fulfil their cultural mandate.

If we replace dualistic Christendom with the holistic concept of the kingdom, then we can begin to reflect again on the Christian way of dealing with all spheres of life - including the political and the economic: How can we fulfil our cultural mandate in these spheres? One should not only superficially look for unethical things, but one has to look deeper.

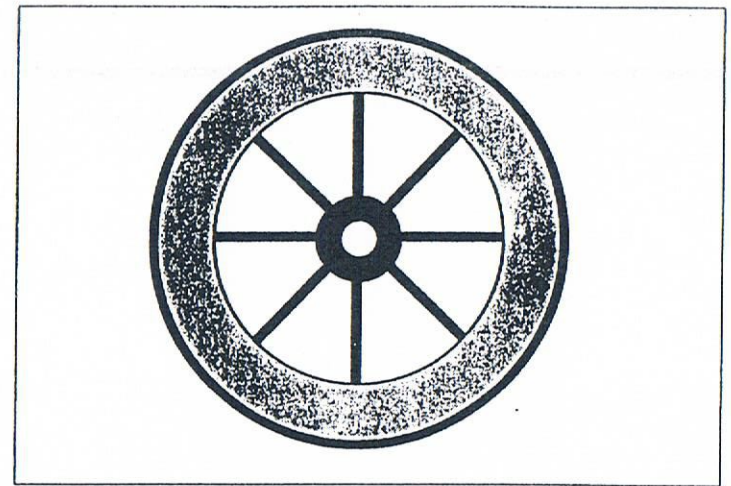
Then we could see, for example, that God has been dethroned in the economic field, to be replaced by profit at all costs. This basic error has to be addressed. It does not help simply to try to relieve unethical practices, while the basic point of departure of a capitalist or socialist economy is not confronted. Instead of the "ambulance method" we need a far more radical approach. The primary purpose of business should not be obtaining the most profit, but in the first place it should be service, human fulfilment and justice for all.

Because Christians in Africa have learnt little of a holistic kingdom-Christianity, their Christian political leaders have also largely failed. It is significant that most *coups d'états* in Africa have been committed against leaders who have called themselves Christians. Can we blame the people of Africa because all that their leaders could achieve was to make pious Christian statements or even confessions of guilt, without something more happening?

The task of African Christianity - and this is no less true for Western Christians - is to read the Bible *again*, this time without the blinkers of a dualist worldview or the double focus glasses of one or the other form of two-spheres doctrine, but with the correct glasses, given to us in the Bible, which are the glasses of God's all-encompassing kingdom.

4.5 The relationship between the kingdom of God and the church

This relationship between church and kingdom could be explained with the image of a wheel, consisting of three basic elements: (1) an axle in the centre, (2) different spokes connected to the centre and pointing in all directions and (3) finally the rim at the outside.



The axle symbolises the church proclaiming the Word of God to its members. The different spokes are the Christians, members of the church and citizens of the kingdom applying the Word of God in all areas of life, for instance, the fields of politics, education, labour, economics, art etc. The outer rim, holding all the spokes together, indicates the all-encompassing kingdom of God. It is not possible to have a wheel without one of these three elements. In the same way church, Christians and kingdom cannot be separated.

What is crucial here is the fact that the church as it manifests itself in its offices, administration, service of the sacraments and preaching of the Word, does not encompass the entire life of the faithful. Man's faith and the expression of his faith should not be regarded as being limited to the church. As subjects of God's kingdom we have a far wider and more encompassing calling. The church as church (institution) has a very particular, limited task and vocation. Should it interfere in all spheres of life, the whole of life would become subjected to the church and this would rob the faithful of their all-encompassing responsibilities to the kingdom.

The church therefore has to fulfil its responsibility in the world *in accordance with its particular nature*. It may never degenerate into a social, cultural, political or economical organisation, movement or party, or identify itself with any of these.

The task of the church does not lie in the design of all sorts of socio-political blueprints or programmes. Should this happen, it would mean that the church was trespassing. In such a case there is the very real danger that salvation is identified with political and social liberation from poverty, exploitation and oppression.

My impression is that the people of Africa have not only been expecting too much from the state, but that African Christians have also been expecting too much from the church regarding change in society. This is clear in the case of the more conservative Evangelicals, but is also evident in the case of the more liberal Ecumenicals of Africa. Both try to "Christianise" life by "churchifying" it. The churches have to guide and dominate the political, economical, educational and all the other areas of life, otherwise we shall not be able to live a Christian life in society! (This is evident, for example, in the search for a "theology of economics, politics, education" etc. instead of a *Christian* economy, politics, education etc.)

According to our pluralist view of society the church, however, has a *specific* nature and a *limited* task which should be respected. It is the community of the believers and should faithfully proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom to its members. This vision of the kingdom they should apply - as citizens of the kingdom and not as members of a church, or under supervision of the church - in the broad society with its different societal relationships, e.g. as employer/employee in a business, as governor/citizen in a state, as husband/wife in marriage. The church may have a word about our responsibility as voters or rulers, but it may never become a political party or advocate membership of a specific party. It may indicate our educational responsibility as parents, but never offer detailed prescriptions to schools. This will amount to "ecclesiastical imperialism". It is not the task and calling of the church to do so. The church is also not equipped to do so, because it simply does not have the expert political, educational or whatever kind of technical knowledge.

Practical circumstances may, however, necessitate church involvement in non-ecclesiastical areas. In many largely undifferentiated societies, like many African countries, the church may be more or less the only Christian institution or voice of the people. Then it should not remain silent. Especially because governments and societies who would not

listen to - and would even persecute - outspoken Christian individuals, may still listen to the church as a body. This should, however, be regarded as temporary and emergency tasks of the church.

A pluralist view of society then agrees that Christians should, like salt and yeast, as individuals be involved in society. It also sees a task - although limited - for the church in the renewal of societal life. But these are not the *only* two channels for Christian action in society. If we regard them as the only means, we become the victims of an individualist and churchist worldview, which does not reflect the unity of all Christians outside the church and the all-encompassing nature of Christ's kingship.

4.6 The need for a radical Christian social critique

Why do Christians then not develop their own Biblically inspired philosophy of society? At times they consider (as is seemingly the case with the Evangelicals) it to be *not necessary*. In such a case religious convictions are limited to the personal and the ecclesiastical spheres and are not broadened towards encompassing the whole of life so that man's religion has comprehensive meaning. In other cases (as is seemingly the case with the liberation theologians) they are of the opinion that it is *not possible*. Then Christianity becomes - consciously or unconsciously - the victim of one or the other worldview (like Marxism) that is alien to the Bible.

The reason for the lack of a really Christian analysis of society may also be that many serious Christians are unable to find a model in the Scriptures. They do not realise, however, that a critique of society cannot be deduced *directly* from the Bible. To be able to arrive at a radical Christian analysis of society one first has to establish - in the light of God's revelational perspectives - a Christian worldview and (on the more scientific level) a Christian philosophy. Without an integrally Christian worldview of which a critique of society is a constituent part, it is not possible to talk meaningfully about social change.

We only had enough time to discuss in detail the dualist-pietist type of social change. We merely gave a few indications of how a revolutionary and a reformational model could look like. The following diagram, which provides a summary of the three models, may be

SOCIAL RENEWAL ACCORDING TO THREE MODELS

	Dualist-Pietist	Revolutionary	Reformational
1. Worldviewish starting point	<i>Dualist</i> (Sacred-secular, church-world) <i>Above/Next to/even against</i> the world - actually accommodating to the world	<i>Secular</i> (only this world) <i>Against</i> the existing order	<i>Radical</i> (God transforms the world) <i>Positive</i> obedience to God - for the sake of His world.
2. Purpose	<i>Pietist</i> - Evangelise the world through the church	<i>Utopian</i> - Create a paradise on earth	<i>Realistic</i> - Renew and improve the world - but not utopian perfectionism
3. Strategies	<i>Conservative</i> - the existing order should be respected and, if necessary, changed in a slow, "evolutionary" way	<i>Aggressive</i> - rapid, abrupt change	<i>Transformational</i> - renewal is always necessary, but can be a difficult, arduous process
4. Means	<i>Defend</i> the status quo	<i>Destroy</i> the status quo	<i>Renew</i> the old which is wrong <i>Improve</i> the relatively good

helpful to complete the picture. It briefly indicates the starting points, purposes, strategies, methods, character and results of the three models.

5. Methods	<i>Non-violent</i> mainly emergency aid (charity, relief work, hospitals etc.)	<i>Violent</i> (Spirits of salt, fire) - even armed struggle	<i>Non-violent</i> (like salt, yeast, light) - but not limited to emergency aid (symptoms only)
6. Character	<i>Leaden-footed</i>	<i>Fire-starters</i>	<i>Light-bearers</i>
7. Results	<i>Irresponsible</i> : merely a change of heart (reborn) leaving Christians in secular world without norms	<i>Superficial</i> : overthrow of structures but no real change of individual attitudes (sinful hearts)	<i>Radical and total</i> : conversion of the human heart in order to change sinful structures from within
7. Results	<i>Only half the road</i> - Christians not really present in the world, also no resistance against eventual secularisation	<i>Closed road</i> - Further decline, new revolutions	<i>Open road</i> - What is reformed should continually be reformed - otherwise deformation

4.7 Christian organisation as a strategy for social change and renewal

It is important to keep in mind that different ways or avenues of transformation are possible and have been applied in the history of Christianity. There are, for example, the following possibilities: (1) By way of the *organised church itself* through its preaching, clergy activities, synodical decisions etc. This is usually the strategy of the so-called mainline churches. (2) The *church as an alternative community* - as for example emphasised by the Hutterites and Mennonites. (3) Through *individual Christians* - the Evangelical approach. (4) By establishing *Christian organisations and institutions* like Christian schools, colleges, hospitals, radio stations, publishers, political parties etc. This is the method usually advocated in the Reformed tradition. I am of the opinion that each one of these approaches has strong as well as weak points. We will, however, in the rest of this chapter concentrate mainly on the last method mentioned.

* A sub- or contra-culture?

In the midst of rampant secularism in Africa - in spite of the growing number of Christians - we have two choices. Against secular culture we can consistently proclaim and live a radical Christian worldview. Then we will be a real counter-cultural movement. Or in the "public" sphere (politics, economics etc.) we can accommodate to secularism and try to maintain our Christian identity only in the relatively unimportant "private" life (like personal faith, church and ethical behaviour.) Then we settle for Christianity as a mere sub-culture. Explained in the form of an image: We can either be the hammer or the anvil. Stated in another image: many Christians prefer to be thermometers - they merely register the "temperature" of the surrounding secular culture of the majority - instead of being thermostats which *regulate* the cultural "temperature" and "climate" around them.

Do we prefer to be a counter-cultural movement, challenging secular culture with Christian alternatives, or a sub-culture, capitulating to secularism and thereby opting for irrelevance? If we choose the first option, the next question will be: How exactly can Christians as a counter-cultural movement effect change and renewal in society?

* Three options

We can in the *first place* try to do something individually, like maintaining high standards of personal integrity in business, adopting a modest personal lifestyle or writing letters to a local newspaper about matters in society that are wrong. Such individual efforts are indeed necessary, because their cumulative impact can be very significant. The presence of impeccably honest people on a company board of directors will, for instance, no doubt limit the possibilities for corruption. However, because of the highly organised and complex structure of modern society, it is sometimes very difficult and even impossible for individual Christians to bring about real change. Large and powerful companies, political parties, organisations and institutions today direct our lives. Because we live in an "age of organisation" (H. van Riessen), it is often only corporate action that will have an effect on major decisions.

In the *second place* the church, as the community of believers, has a task to fulfil. It should equip its members with the basic norms for life, it should be the conscience of all political parties and even make public statements if necessary. Most of human life, however, occurs outside the immediate context of the local church. It is in the workplace, the economic, political and other areas where the dominant direction of society and culture is determined. If we therefore confine our communal efforts as Christians to the church, then our cultural and social relevance will be seriously weakened. We also cannot fight the spiritual battle in isolation from Christians in other denominations. We have to act communally as Christians *outside* or *beyond* the church itself - the third possibility.

In the *third place* then, we need real communal Christian cultural action. Depending on circumstances we may, for instance, do the following:

- Establish *workplace groups*, where Christians in the same office, factory, school or university can meet on a regular basis to discuss issues arising from their work and to support each other. They may even organise to apply pressure for a certain decision or to redress an injustice.

■ Establish *specialist study and action groups* to bring Christians from specific professions, like teachers, artists, doctors, politicians, trade unionists, lawyers, nurses, engineers, ministers, farmers etc. together in order to investigate what a Christian perspective would be in these areas. They can for instance help each other by way of mutual support.

■ Establish *alternative Christian organisations* with the aim of equipping Christians to penetrate existing non-Christian organisations and institutions like political parties, companies etc. These alternative organisations can also go further and establish distinctively Christian institutions like Christian schools, colleges, political parties, trade unions etc. They emphasise a specifically Christian way of education, doing politics, business and conducting labour relations. A Christian newspaper, periodical or even publishing house may, for example, provide a channel for Christian writing that secular publishers would usually not accept.

* **Combatting structural evil**

In earlier times Christianity was exclusively concerned with personal vices, or the harm that one individual could cause another. Today there is a reverse obsession: an increasing pre-occupation with institutional violence.

This went so far that the older generation tends to think that, because they do not smoke, drink, swear, lie or fornicate, they are faultless - despite the fact that they participate in big companies which exploit the poor of this world. On the other hand, young activists argue that because they fight for the rights of minority groups and against economic exploitation of the poor, they are just - in spite of a personally sinful sexual life.

What is the Biblical reply? It is very clear that God condemns *all* sins: personal sins or vices (such as drunkenness, sexual vices, lying, deception, stealing, idolatry) as well as sins within the social system (oppression, violence, exploitation, social injustice). There are no *big* or *little* sins in his eyes. Were one to deprive one's labourers of a fair wage, one is as guilty as a bank robber.

It is very important to be aware of structural evil for the following three reasons:

■ In the first place it is necessary because we have not yet been made conscious to a sufficient extent of this form of sin against God. This is probably because we still insist on interpreting the Gospel in an individualistic fashion. (Only my personal salvation is at stake.) We have to realize that sinful structures are just as abhorrent to God. Read Isaiah and Amos in this context!

■ In the second place social evil concerns many people. Many suffer, for example, when the state does not fulfil its task of impartial justice for everybody.

■ In the third place structural evil often operates very subtly. One's eyes have to be opened to recognise this, as it might seem natural by virtue of having been legalised. Often there is no sign of direct oppression - the wielders of power and the rich simply neglect their duty to do something about the plight of the poor.

Here too we find extremes. On the one hand Ecumenicals twist the Biblical truth when they suggest that to know God means nothing more than to find justice for the oppressed. This is unbiblical humanism. On the other hand many Evangelical Christians prefer to forget that social justice has to prevail. They are quite happy to talk piously about eternal life. They forget that knowing God is linked indissolubly to a honest quest for social justice. Should we neglect to help those in need, we cannot have God's love - no matter what we say.

It will gain us nothing to have a pure doctrine regarding incarnation, resurrection, ascension and the advent of Christ while denying the other parts of the Bible where God does say that He wants nothing to do with our religion because we do not practice justice (cf. for example Amos 5:21-24). Such a one-sidedness is just as heretical as having a wrong conception of the dual nature of Christ!

* No more than preliminary signs

The kingdom of God is already in our midst, but still has to be perfected. We live in the interim period: between the first and second advent of Christ.

We may not underestimate the presence of Christ and his kingdom in the world. That would imply a retreat from the world, while we seek our comfort and consolation in the intimacy of our personal spiritual lives, our families and our church. We then accept the *status quo* too easily, forgetting that Christ sent us into the world to salt the insipid and to shine a light in the dark. Quietism is not Biblically defensible.

Activist radicalism, on the other hand, is also not Biblical. This group would, if necessary with violence, realise the coming age now. They do not realise that the church can at most establish signs of the kingdom of God on earth. They forget that Christ did not command us to *establish* His kingdom but to *await* it (Acts. 1:7). The consummation of the salvation of God cannot be accomplished by our own efforts - not even our best works - but only through his final intervention (Romans 8:18-25; Revelations 20-22).

5. A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE STATE (GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS)

The winds of change are sweeping across our continent in this last decade of the 20th century. One of the areas where these winds often develop into hurricanes is the political. Therefore nobody escapes its effects. Politics influences the whole of African society: from the simple farmer in a remote rural area to the sophisticated businessman in the city, not only the political conscious but also the so-called a-political citizen, both members of government and subjects.

We will, however, not discuss politics in general, but concentrate on political leadership. What Chinua Achebe had to say on his previously mentioned book (1983:59) is also applicable to the rest of Africa: "I believe quite strongly that if Nigeria is to avoid catastrophes of possibly greater dimensions than we have been through since Independence, we must take a hard and unsentimental look at the crucial question of leadership and political power". We will understand "political leadership" in a very broad sense, including the responsibilities of both government and citizens.

5.1 The background

I think the main problem with African political leadership lies in the idea of the power-state according to which possession of power makes right whatever a government wants to do.

When we have a look at the historical background we could identify various factors which contributed to this kind of power politics.

* The religious roots

A recent issue (nr. 9, July-December 1991) of the *Newsletter* of the Akrofi-Christaller Centre in Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana discusses the issue of politics and religion. He has important things to say: "It is well known that African indigenous political organisations tended to sacralise human power, and strong centralised rule was embodied in a sacral ruler, who thus united religious and political power in his person. Perhaps there is no more potent symbol of this sacralisation of human power than the tradition of the ancestor cult, which in many

African societies is also made the guarantor of the authority of reigning monarchs. By presuming the power of rulers to be that of ancestors, the tradition makes every challenge to political authority an attack upon the sacral authority of the ancestors, on whose goodwill and favour the community's continuance and prosperity are held to depend. Therefore, to challenge political authority in any radical way, appears to mean subverting tradition and customs; indeed, it amounts to undermining the very foundations of the identity and continuity of the community itself ... Much of the sacral prestige which attached to traditional rule has been shed, but sacralisation of political power has found its way into the new ideologies of states. The seemingly inexorable drift of African politics into instability may have less to do with the alleged non-workability of 'imported' constitutions and electoral systems, than with secular versions of the old sacral power structures. The ready justification in some quarters of the one party state, the uncertain fortunes of political dissent and the holding on to power by unpopular leaders, all suggest that we still encounter in modern African politics the 'old' royal ancestor who never ceases to rule from the realm of spirit power ... Therefore, if African politics is to manifest greater tolerance of dissent and to accept a wider pluralism, African societies are going to need new concepts of power" (p. 6).

* Reactions at independence

At independence (round about 1960) African countries were left with (Western) colonial forms of government. They, however, did not debate the issues, but simply rejected multiparty democracy because it was considered a foreign type of rule as opposed to self-rule, white type of government versus black government. "What they (the colonists) want, we do not want. What they do not want, we want." Or another statement, clearly indicating this reactionary mentality: "It is better to misgovern ourselves than to be governed well by foreigners". The more the colonialists warned against communist "democratic" centralism (one-party government), the more the indigenous people wanted it! Country after country - except for a few home-grown forms of "African socialism" - accepted the one-party idea inspired by the Soviet model and a variety of models in Eastern Europe and other "socialist" countries.

* The "strong men"

African politics was a kind of "follow the leader" policy. The leaders' struggle for independence had made them infallible. The leader and the party had a certain kind of mystique around them. Immediately after independence there was uncritical acceptance of whatever the leader said. The interest of the party and that of the people were viewed as being the same. Africa was very uncritical about its heroes at this stage of post-independence euphoria. It did not realize that leaders who *liberated* the continent were not necessarily the best leaders to *administer* their countries!

The result was the development of the African "strong men", the tyrants who started to rule brutally with an iron fist. The mystique of the heroic leader and his party therefore soon disappeared. It was replaced by a fear-of-the-party syndrome which lasted longer. This fear first attacked non-members of the ruling party (arrest, detention and even disappearance). Then the fear spread to members of the party. Finally the fear virus infected the party leaders themselves.

* Politicisation of society

This process after independence led to the politicisation of the whole of society, because the *social* order was equated with the *political* order of the all-encompassing state.

5.2 The solution of the problem

Three important changes are necessary: (1) a rejection of the idea of the power-state, (2) a radical depoliticisation of society, and (3) an acknowledgement of qualified social authority.

* Rejection of the idea of the power-state

The power-state must be rejected, because it is not the *possession of power* (in such a case a government is no more than a bunch of criminals), but the *enforcement of justice* which justifies the use of power. No government is legitimate without this guidance of might by justice.

The already mentioned *Newsletter* of the Akrofi Christaller Centre has the following to say about Christ's concept of power:

"... Jesus' way was one of engagement and involvement through a new way of overcoming, arising from a unique concept of power - the power of forgiveness over retaliation, of suffering over violence, of love over hostility, of humble service over domination - all supremely exemplified in His death on the Cross ..." (p. 5). "For the mind of Jesus, as related to the questions of politics and power, is *not* a dominating mind, *not* a self-pleasing or self-asserting mind, but rather a saving mind, a redemptive mind, a servant-mind. 'For Christ did not please himself' (Romans 15:3). Jesus' way of dealing with political power represents the perfect de-sacralisation of all worldly power ..." (p. 7). "This understanding of power will always remain a significant Christian contribution to politics in any society, particularly those which are feeling their way towards a true and genuine sharing in political power. For African societies with their own distinctive political and religious background, faith in Jesus Christ as alone Lord and Mediator of blessings and power, frees political leaders to become true human beings among fellow human beings, and ennobles politics itself into a service of God in the service of fellow human beings" (p. 6).

I fully agree with this Christian from Ghana when he stresses throughout his article that African societies and politics need a new concept of power and that the Word of God can provide in that need in the form of a non-dominating concept of power. What he advocates is in full agreement with and underlines what has already been said about office, authority and power in *service* of our fellowmen.

S. Fowler (1991a:7-9) elaborates on the necessity to have a critical look at political power - even when it is exercised with the approval of the majority. What he has to say, is so important that I quote from him extensively: "... Power is a dangerous thing. Properly controlled it can do great good but without proper control it can do untold harm.

"In this connection we only have to think of the power of fire. Properly controlled it is one of creation's great blessings. It keeps us warm in cold weather, it cooks our food, it sterilises surgical instruments, it

powers motor vehicles, aircraft and ships. On the other hand, without proper control fire is one of creation's most destructive forces.

"The situation is very much the same with the power of the sword that God has placed in the hands of the state. Properly controlled it is a great blessing, ensuring a just social environment in which individuals and communities can live in peace and prosperity. Without proper control this same power becomes life-threatening tyranny, spreading violence and destruction through human society, leaving devastation in its wake.

"The crucial question is: What constitutes a *proper control* on the exercise of state power? The commonly accepted modern answer is that it is popular consent. A state may properly do whatever the majority of its citizens consent to its doing. This doctrine is a commonplace of modern political wisdom that few, even among Christians, question. Yet its roots are deeply embedded in modern secularism with its assumption of the autonomy of human social life.

"Let us be clear. That governments should have the consent of the people to govern is a perfectly sound political doctrine. But this is not at all the same thing as the doctrine that popular consent provides a proper control on the exercise of state power. The will of the people does not guarantee right any more than does the will of the ruler. Hitler might be said to have had the consent of the people but that did not justify his policy of genocide.

"In the internal affairs of the state this doctrine that popular consent legitimises the use of the power of the state, if applied consistently, leads inevitably to the tyranny of the majority. It is tyranny because the exercise of power is subject to no law or authority other than the will of the majority. In this fundamental sense the exercise of power is arbitrary.

"Such an arbitrary imposition of the will of the majority on a minority is no less tyranny than the arbitrary imposition of the will of a minority on the majority. The number of those consenting to an act does not change it from an evil to a righteous act. Murder, rape and genocide are evils no matter how many consent to them.

"The tyranny of the majority is likely to be a benevolent tyranny so long as there is no serious threat to the will of the majority. Yet a benevolent tyranny is no less tyranny. And behind the benevolence there always lurks the threat of the awesome power of the state ready to be used with whatever degree of ruthlessness is needed to suppress any threat to the majority will.

"There can be no effective safeguard against tyranny unless it is recognised that the exercise of human power is subject to the constraint of a law that is independent of the will of those who hold this power. This is just as true when this power is deemed to be held by the people as when it is deemed to be held by authoritarian rulers. The idea that those who control the power of the state are subject to no law than their own will is the root of all tyranny.

"In this respect a well drafted constitution interpreted by an independent judiciary is an important safeguard against tyranny in the internal affairs of the modern state. It provides a law independent of their own will that constrains those who hold the legislative and executive powers of the state. Nevertheless, such a safeguard remains inadequate while there is recognition of no ultimate authority other than the will of the people constraining the use of state power.

"Like every other human authority, the state is a servant of God subject to the authority of his Word in the exercise of its power. One of the most important consequences of this is that the authority of the State is a *qualified* authority, qualified by the nature of its office within the God-ordained order of creation. Absolute, unqualified authority belongs to God alone. To ascribe such authority to the democratic state is an act of idolatry. The state is not authorised to do anything and everything that those holding the power of the state judge to be for the good of society. The will of the majority, or even the unanimous consent of the citizens, cannot legitimise a use of state power that goes beyond the qualified authority of its office as God's creaturely servant. Neither will any amount of moralising justification legitimise such an abuse. To exceed that authority on any ground whatsoever is an act of rebellion against God.

"The only proper control on the use of state power in the final count is a proper recognition of the limits placed on the exercise of that power

by the God whom, knowingly or unknowingly, the state serves. For those interested in a genuinely free society, therefore, there is no more important task than the careful identification of the qualified character of the office of the state and its associated authority."

It is therefore not wrong to say that "politics is about power". There is nothing wrong with power as such. God even granted government the power of the sword! A state will not be able to function without some power. The question, however, is: *What kind* of power? In *which way* is the power to be executed?

* A radical depoliticisation of society

Today's world has to an alarming extent become politicised. Like a giant octopus the states in most countries reach their tentacles into every corner of life. We, however, need to cease thinking of society as a unitary political organisation under a supreme government, with the smaller social units (marriage, family, school, industry etc.) seen as mere sub-units of the encompassing state. We have to think of society as a complex of diverse kinds of communities, each having its own internal sovereignty. The state should be a societal relationship for *public justice*. It should provide an environment in which a diversity of societal relationships can flourish harmoniously independent of the state.

The political order is only *one* component of the much larger social order and the social order can therefore not be identified with the political order. The political order arises from the broader social order which is prior to the political order and not *vice versa*.

A sharp distinction between social and political order is a necessary condition for the growth of all kinds of societal relationships from below. Such structures are necessary if society is to be depoliticised, because it gives people power over their own lives, individually and communally. Popular sovereignty - the heart of democracy - can never be a practical reality within a structure imposed from above - even if imposed by those viewed as the representatives of the people. This radical depoliticisation of society will be no easy task after at least two centuries of radical politicising of Western thought and practice and at least thirty years in Africa.

This, however, is the key to genuine democratisation. State control of society inevitably leads away from the practice of democracy by concentrating power in a bureaucratic elite. Democracy can only be achieved by empowering people at the grassroots to take control of their own lives. Democracy - as the original word indicates - requires power to be exercised by the people. And this can only be achieved in a society in which the social order, the network of societal relationships, is acknowledged as having priority over the political order - a society in which the political order of the state is viewed merely as an empowering servant of the whole social order.

R. Clouser (1991:255) emphasises the same point when he says: "... if state authority is elevated above all others on the excuse that it is needed for the state to ensure justice to all individuals and communities, totalitarian consequences cannot be avoided - not even by making the state a democracy. Once the state is believed to have an unlimited and overriding authority, it will matter little whether its authority is vested in one person, a governing group, or all the citizens.

"The last point is worth dwelling on for a moment because so often democracy is spoken of as though that *form* of government alone is sufficient to guarantee the freedoms we enjoy. It is not. Simply giving everyone a vote does not ensure a single right or freedom. Unless the authority of government is *limited in principle*, democracy will only guarantee a tyranny of the majority worse than that of a single dictator. (Even with modern surveillance methods it is hard for a dictator to keep track of what everyone is doing, but we are always surrounded by the majority.) What is needed to ensure liberty is the idea of a *limited* state: a state restricted as to what it may make laws about so that there are bounds to its legal competency ... it is not too much to say that more rights and freedoms can be preserved where the sphere of sovereignty idea prevails even if the state is governed by a king, than where the government is a democracy which operates without any idea of its being restricted to a distinct sphere of authority."

Apart from the democratic principle of the equality of individual persons, the effective practice of democracy therefore also requires the recognition of the equality of social communities or social relationships. We do not simply have individual persons, but individual people living in a variety of differentiated communities which are not

sub-units of the political order. They are of different kinds, each with its own internal organisation and sovereignty. At the same time these diverse differentiated societal relationships are mutually interdependent. Their communal life can only be sustained in a symbiotic relationship.

We therefore need a basic shift from a conventionalist to a constructivist account of society, which recognises the social order as a human construction within the constraints of a law-governed reality. The state is not a mere contract or convention. Furthermore the social order is not, as the social contract theory assumes, a product of the political order. And social unity is not the product of unified political organisation. As already said, the social order is prior to the political order.

* Qualified social authority

A major flaw in the modern idea of democracy is that it rejects the absolute authority of the *ruler* but not the idea of the absolute authority of the *people* or society. It simply transfers the authority! In practice this implies that absolute authority is vested in the government of the state - provided that it is elected by the people. In reality then, sovereignty remains with the ruler(s)! The only difference is that the citizens have some say in the choice of the ruler(s).

The idea of *absolute* social authority, however, leaves no room for real democracy. It should be replaced by the idea of *limited* and *qualified* social authority. Social authority in a differentiated society is divided among the different societal relationships of the society. Each of them is an internal sovereign community with its own specific kind of authority. The usual question "*How much* authority should a societal relationship (like the state) have?" is wrong. The correct question should be: "*What kind* of authority should it have?"

As already indicated above, the state is not the supreme authority in society, but only one kind of societal relationship vested with its own kind of authority. It is true that the state is the *most comprehensive* of all human societal relationships and therefore its authority is also the most comprehensive. However, this comprehensiveness does not legitimise a claim that its authority is *absolute* or *superior*. As in the case with all other societal relationships, its authority is also *qualified*.

The state has the exclusive right of public physical power. This "power of the sword" (Romans 13) should be used, however, for a specific purpose: the commonweal (common good or public interest). If acts of state power are directed in ways that favour sectional private interests, it is not serving the public community.

This commonweal is qualified, however. The state is not responsible for *all* social good. In that case it should have had *absolute* authority - something which we have already rejected. The government only serves the commonweal in as far as it is directed to the end of *public justice*. The ideas of justice and commonweal qualify each other. Public justice should be understood as a balancing of the private interests of the public political community so that all may have a share in the resources available and also share in the costs of maintaining the public order. The state is the "balancing wheel" in society. It should use its coercive power to restrict the activities of the more powerful communal interests in order to protect the weaker ones. All its activities should be directed solely towards the end of public justice for the sake of the commonweal.

Unlike anarchism we therefore do not regard it as wrong that people should exercise power over other people. On the contrary, it is only through exercising power that we can empower others! It is therefore not the exercise of power *as such* but the way in which the power is exercised that may be abusive. The power of the state is not intrinsically oppressive or by nature evil. The contrary is true: a strong state is necessary to ensure the commonweal.

The government is neither the people (citizens) nor the representatives of the people, holding the delegated powers of the people. It is the *servant* of the people. And as a servant it has a qualified mandate.

It is therefore important that the terms and conditions of this mandate under which the government of the state is to function as a servant of the political community be made explicit. Such a constitutional covenant should be the result of a community-wide negotiated consensus. This covenant both authorises and limits government action. A government cannot claim a mandate to implement whatever it sees fit simply on the basis of popular election!

5.3 The right of protest, resistance and disobedience against a bad government

Generally speaking Christians in Africa has not yet found an answer to the question of how best to relate to political structures. Even within one country, Christians of different ecclesiastical traditions will tend to differ on this issue.

* Four possible attitudes

David M. Gitari in his book *Let the bishop speak* (1988:70) identifies the following four stances: "The Church historically has adopted one of four possible attitudes to the powers and states with which it coexists: enthusiastic support; passive ignoring; constructive dialogue; or outright opposition. Each of these positions has its own attractions and drawbacks. Analysis leads to the conclusion that the first two positions - enthusiastic support or passive ignoring - are both forms of betrayal of the Church's God-given prophetic ministry. The only godly position for the Church vis-a-vis the State is constructive dialogue when times are good, and direct opposition to the State when the latter's conduct warrants this."

Elaborated the four viewpoints are (p. 71):

- "The churches *adapt themselves actively* when they identify themselves with the goals and intentions of the power or the State;
- The churches *adapt themselves passively* when they abstain from any statement on decisions and activities of the power or the State;
- The churches can *engage in critical and constructive collaboration* with the power or the State by evaluating on the basis of their understanding of the Gospel political decisions and proposed programmes;
- The churches may be led to *resist or oppose* the power of the State. The obligation to resist which may arise under certain circumstances has no destructive intention; the attitude of resistance will be adopted to serve society and even the State, because the State as well is called to be the servant of God and the people (Rom. 13)."

In the rest of his book bishop Gitari explores concrete examples of churches in Africa which have followed each of these models, analysing the reasons for their success or failure.

Because of the serious political situations in many African countries, we will concentrate on the fourth option: to resist or oppose the state. And we do not want to confine this resistance to the church, because Christian's in general (especially as citizens of a particular state) has a responsibility.

* The issue

- How can we adhere to Christ's command to pay Caesar what is due to Caesar, *as well as* God what is due to God (Matthew 22:21), or Peter's terse command to have reverence for God *and* to honour the sovereign (1 Peter 2:17b)?
- Exactly when do we reach the boundary where the Christian does not only have the right but even the duty to say that we should be more obedient to God than the government, that is, when we will be forced to be disobedient to the government?
- What form should this disobedience take? Should it remain passive resistance? Or should it start as passive resistance but later, if nothing is achieved, turn into violent resistance?
- How should we determine that the point has been reached where nothing remains but to fight government violence with counter-violence?
- Once we are certain that we have in fact reached this point, where should we draw the line in the use of violence - only hard (military) targets, or soft targets too, women, children, other civilians?
- And if we use violent means in order to be more obedient to God than to government, are we really still obedient to God, Who in Christ teaches us to love our enemies and not to redress violence with violence (cf. *inter alia* Romans 12:19-21)?

* What does the Bible say about resistance and violence?

The Bible is full of violence. In the first pages already we read of fratricide (Genesis 4:8) and Lamech sings his song of violence (Genesis 4:23,24). The world was so corrupted and filled with violence (Genesis 6:11) that God had to send the flood to wash it away. The books of the prophets such as Jeremiah, Amos, Micah and Malachi are full of evidence of structural (politico-economic-social) violence.

The first pages of the New Testament too are drenched in blood. Think of the horrendous infanticide of Herod (Matthew 2:16). Israel was occupied by a foreign power, the Roman Empire, which was known for the cruelties it perpetrated. In vain did the Jewish Zealot terrorist bands try to throw off the foreign yoke. It is only in the last chapter of the Bible (Revelation 22:15) that we read that murderers will be excluded from the new earth.

We find the following types of violence in the Bible: in the Old Testament violence from the outside (foreign nations) and violence from inside (Jews oppressing Jews), and in the New Testament oppression from the side of the Jewish Council and synagogue, the Roman Empire and the pagan nations.

It is important for us to know what the reactions of believers were in Biblical times. We find basically two reactions: a passive one and an active one.

Christ Himself speaks the well-known words (Matthew 26:52) that everyone who depends on the sword will perish by the sword, and in John 18:11 He says to Peter: "Put your sword back into its place! Do you think that I will not drink the cup of suffering which my Father has given me?" As opposed to *destructive* violence He opts for *constructive* suffering, because the only victory *over* suffering is the victory *through* suffering. His cup of *suffering* at the same time becomes a cup of *victory*!

Paul (Romans 2:1-11) and Peter (1 Peter 4:12-19), in conjunction with Christ, advocate a passive reaction in the case of suffering and oppression. The word *passive* is possibly a misnomer, because suffering in this way is one of the most difficult *activities*. A Christian

has to know what it means to *suffer* injustice, but he may not *commit* any injustice.

Two examples should be sufficient to illustrate this "active" reaction. The first is found in 2 Kings 6:8-23 where we are told how the Aramaic army wanted to capture Elisha and kill him. In the end they are captured by Elisha! But when the king of Israel wants to kill them, Elisha says: "as for these men, give them food and water, let them eat and drink, and then let them go back to their master". Violence in this instance is not answered with violence, or passively endured, but answered with love (cf. also Romans 12:20).

We find something similar in Acts 4:18-31. Herod, Pontius Pilate and the heathens conspired against the first Christians. The Jewish Council even forbade them to disseminate the Gospel. Peter and John, however, tell them that they have to decide for themselves what is right: to obey them or God. And the disciples do not take recourse to violence, but all the believers unite in prayer to God (verses 24-30). The response of the Church to violence is prayer. And God's response to their prayer is that He fills them with the power of His Spirit, so that without fear they can continue to preach the Word of God (verse 31). This is in keeping with the well-known words by Zechariah: "Neither by force of arms nor by brute strength, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts" (4:6).

You can study the rest of the Bible by yourselves. Cases where believers refused to obey the authorities whose instructions they considered against the will of God can be found in Exodus 1:15-17, Daniel 3:16-18 and 6:11, Acts 5:29, but you won't find anywhere in Scripture that this was accompanied by violent resistance.

* What does the Christian tradition say about resistance and violence?

I would like to mention very briefly four different viewpoints from the history of Christianity.

- In the first place we find the *radical passivists* in the early Christian church and in later movements such as the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century and the Jehovah's Witnesses today, who reject any resistance. The Anabaptists (today's Mennonites) even taught that Christians

should not occupy government office, be a judge, take an oath or resist if one should be attacked by robbers or looters. This, however, is clearly not a Biblical viewpoint.

- A next approach would be the *partial passivists*. They do not reject all resistance, but only violent resistance. Examples of this were Mahatma Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King (Jnr.) in the USA. This group, to my mind, comes nearest to what we are taught in Scripture.

- The *partial militarists*, while approving of violence and war as means to effect resistance, set the following conditions: (1) it should be the last resort (after all peaceful means have been exhausted); (2) it should be justified, that is, take place as self-defence (only a defensive war, not an offensive one, is a just war); (3) the counter-violence should be limited as far as possible so that tyranny is not simply replaced by anarchy; (4) the government should oppose the freedom to obey God, and (5) the rebellion/resistance against the government may not be run by the mob, but should be led in efficient and orderly manner by responsible leaders, once again to prevent, as far as possible, anarchy.

One could call this the dominant trend within Christianity from Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, the sixteenth-century reformers up to today. It is clear, however, that this viewpoint can no longer be fully justified by the Bible.

- Even further away from Biblical guidelines are the *radical militarists* who approve of unlimited violence, even nuclear war.

Which one of the four viewpoints, from a passive lack of resistance to absolute militarism should we choose?

Before we respond to this question, we have to digress first to gain more clarity about certain concepts and to reflect specifically on the task of the state.

* What do authority, power and violence mean in the case of governments?

■ *General Biblical perspectives*

To a certain degree we will have to repeat here what has already been said concerning office, authority, power and responsibility in general. All these perspectives are, however, focussed here on a specific societal relationship, viz. the state.

In each societal relationship there are two components: those invested with authority and those guided by authority. In an industry there are employers and employees, in a family parents and children, and in a sports club the committee and the members.

The purpose of authority is twofold. In the first place it should co-ordinate, guide and help the members of the societal relationship so that they can fulfil their specific task and calling (as determined by God) in this specific societal relationship. As a result of the sinfulness of man, authority, in the second place, should also struggle against evil and corruption and, with a view to the fulfilment of the calling of the members in that societal relation, maintain the necessary order.

In Romans 13 we saw already that the government should punish the bad and reward the good. Furthermore Paul also says that the subjects should not *fear* their government. If the government governs correctly, there should be no reason for fear - you need fear only if you have done wrong. Subjects do, however, have to have *respect* for their government.

We have to remember very well, however, that authority exists not for the sake of the office-bearer, but for the sake of service. A servant is not the same as a representative or, to put it more strongly, a substitute. Government may not assume for itself the place of God. It is only a servant, an instrument. Authority and power which are not characterised by this service motif (cf. Christ's statements on leaders) ultimately become self-devouring monsters. A state proud of its omnipotence is already on the threshold of helplessness and destruction.

Office-bearers are therefore not higher or more important than those who have to obey them. They are also not elevated above the rules and laws of the specific societal relationship. They are subject to the laws just like any other person - even if they have made these laws themselves.

Office-bearers also have to know God's norm for the societal relation in which they have to provide guidance. For the state the norm is the maintenance of public justice. The government receives authority for that purpose, and not for the purpose of furthering its own interests and for oppressing its subjects.

The quality of life which is enjoyed in each societal relation is directly linked to the extent to which office-bearers and subjects obey the norms for the specific relationship. If the realisation of vocation has become blurred as a result of an imperfect understanding of the norm, the quality of life also deteriorates within that specific relational sphere: the government declares war against its own citizens and the subjects revolt.

It speaks for itself that authority within any relation is maintained in a unique manner. The state is the only societal circle to which God has granted the right to enforce authority with the sword: police, courts of justice, even the death sentence.

It is also important to remember that the office-bearers of each societal relation can only exert limited authority - only within the sphere in which they have been appointed. No man or societal relation has absolute power over another. Only God has power over all and everybody.

The word *power* in the light of the foregoing implies the responsible exercise of authority. No societal relation is possible without the proper exercise of power. There is nothing wrong with power as such. In the case of the state the police force is necessary to maintain the laws and the defence force is necessary for peace and security.

Violence is the illegal, unnecessary, excessive and even harmful abuse of power. This does not mean, however, that violence in all instances is an abuse of power. When a policeman, for example, has to capture a

murderer by violent means, we could call this constructive violence - as against destructive violence when he should assault or shoot an innocent person. When one country is attacked by another, the government has the duty to defend its territory and its citizens against the aggressor by means of violence (war).

As a result of the corruption of sin office-bearers do not know any longer how to distinguish the boundaries of authority, and they do not know any longer what their calling is within the societal relationship in which they have been appointed. Or they do know, but neglect it, and simply fail to comply with it. Should a government, for example, consistently and out of self-preservation and own advantage only act on behalf of a certain group of its subjects and deny privileges to others, it does not fulfil its God-given calling of general justice. Such a government can then be regarded as having become revolutionary in the profoundest sense of the word: it inverts God's order and rebels against Him.

Such a government should be called back to its real task by its citizens because no human authority is sacrosanct. The glorification of authority (power for the sake of power, order for the sake of order, instead of for the sake of justice) is wrong. We should *respect* our governments, but show *reverence* only to God.

■ *Civil protest and disobedience*

The important question is of course the form that this civil protest may assume. In the light of what has already been said, I am personally of the opinion that if nothing is achieved by means of legal channels (appeals to the government) something has to be done along the lines of civil disobedience. It is very difficult, however, to decide *who* has to judge *when* the time has come to take such a step.

Civil disobedience means ignoring the laws of the country, being disobedient to them. The following could serve as a definition: *Civil disobedience is a demonstrative action which deliberately breaks the law in order to try and bring about change in the attitude and policy of a government in a forcible, yet non-violent way.*

It is important to note that civil disobedience is *demonstrative action*, in other words, it should not take place in secret as in the case of tax evasion. The action further has a *forcible character*, it instigates actions which the government finds irritating - such as sit-in strikes, hunger strikes, boycotts against shopkeepers, disruption of traffic - and not only peaceful protest marches of which government does not take a blind bit of notice. In the third place civil disobedience envisages *non-violent action*. I explicitly say envisages, because in practice intended non-violent actions often culminate in violence. Precisely because it is an act of *disobedience*, the dividing line between non-violence and violence is often very vague. Whoever disrupts traffic should not be surprised if it causes emotions to boil over, so that in the end cars are set on fire and shops are looted. Those who carry out civil disobedience are naturally not simply devils, but at the same time they are not exactly angels either.

Added to this we have to say that civil disobedience is only possible under governments where an awareness of freedom and democracy has been retained. Under a dictatorship, a totalitarian government, it is impossible to disobey the laws of the country and remain alive! This is confirmed by the history of three of the greatest proponents of non-violent civil disobedience, viz., Mahatma Gandhi (in India, against British colonialism), Martin Luther King (in the USA against discrimination to blacks) and Kenneth David Kaunda (in the Rhodesian independence struggle following UDI).

As a result of the fact that no man nor government is perfect, it is thus very important that each government for the sake of its subjects, but also for its own sake, should leave open as many channels of peaceful protest as possible. Such channels provide an escape valve. A government which resolutely closes down these channels is looking for violent resistance against its rule, as this becomes the only recourse the citizens have.

■ *Responsibilities of government*

I would like to recapitulate what I have said so far with regard to the government:

- God appoints people as office-bearers. In the case of the state, He appoints a government which has to serve the citizens according to His will and, apart from the citizens, also owe Him an accounting.
- The service of the government consists of its guiding the citizens in such a way that their calling as citizens can be fulfilled, and that that which is wrong and which stands in the way of fulfilment can be opposed.
- The norm for the fulfilment of the calling in the case of the state is public justice towards all the citizens.
- The government may not unnecessarily intrude in the spheres of other societal relations and so assume for itself totalitarian authority.
- A government also may not suppress basic rights of citizens such as public expression of opinion. It can be to the advantage of the government itself if ways are always left open for the citizens to express their dissatisfaction with government in a peaceful way.
- For the exercise of authority, the government has received a special power from God - the might of the sword. If forced to exercise its power in a violent manner, it should, however, always be a matter of constructive or positive and not destructive or negative power. Stated differently: it should promote and not destroy public justice.
- Should a government neglect its calling, or even forget it altogether, it should be reminded of its calling by other societal relationships (such as, for example, the church) or by its subjects. For the Christian this protest (or even rebellion) against the abuse of the office of government will be carried out in a peaceful way. All legal ways of protest should be tried first. Should this not succeed, nothing will remain but non-violent civil disobedience.
- The big question now remains as to what might happen if the government should remain blind and deaf to entreaties, if it keeps making empty promises which again and again culminate in nothing, if it is paralysed by a cowardly fear of restrictive influences in its own ranks, if it continually keeps ascribing the cause of the unrest to "agitators", even from outside the country, and if civil disobedience is

suppressed because it endangers "law and order". Such a government should not be surprised if law and order finally evade it altogether because it has been deaf to pleas and entreaties for justice.

• **What is the calling of the subject or the citizen?**

It is not only the government that has duties towards its subjects, but the subjects clearly also have duties towards the government. I am not going to repeat well-known points such as that the subject should bow to the government (not uncritically), that he should respect (even though it may be unjust) the government and pay, in direct obedience to God's command, the taxes of the government.

- The Christian citizen may never be involved with violence. He should be involved with peace: God is a God of peace (2 Corinthians 13:11), Christ is the Lord of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) and his Gospel is a Gospel of peace (Ephesians 2:17). Peace, however, does not simply mean the maintaining of the existing *status quo*, but the upholding of God's peace.
- The believer has to be an example of love and conciliation: "Call down blessings on your persecutors, blessings, not curses" (Romans 12:14). Even though it may be very difficult, we may never tire of doing good (2 Thessalonians 3:13).
- We have to help all people, but special care has to be given to the poor, the dispossessed and the suffering. And structures, which in many cases are the causes of the suffering and poverty, should be examined critically. I have no doubt that the believer's first responsibility is to be on the side of the poor, the little, the widows, the orphans, the oppressed, the exploited, the rejected of society - and to help them.
- The believing citizen may never stop praying: "First of all then I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be offered for all men; for sovereigns, and all in high office, that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in full observance of religion and high standards of morality" (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Have we tried to imagine how difficult it must be to sit in high office? Do we still realize the strength of prayer in effecting change? (James 5:16b).

- The believer may also never neglect his prophetic calling as a citizen. He has this calling not only in his capacity as subject or citizen in relation to government, but also to other subjects: poor and rich, weak and strong, believers and non-believers. The Old Testament prophets can be an example to us in this. They made audible their stringent criticism not only to other nations, but also did not spare their own nation and rulers. A government is simply a reflection of the nation, and a nation sometimes "deserves" the government that it has!

- I am of the opinion that we should also gain clarity about the relationship between the church (or let us say Christianity, which is more than the church) and the state (or politics). We may certainly not mix the two or identify them. Then it is all too easy to get to the point where support for Christendom means support for the political establishment - and *vice versa*. Or, if you don't support the political *status quo*, it becomes a matter of betraying the Christian faith! We are, however, also not allowed to separate them or to view them in opposition to each other, which would result in no influence emanating from the church towards the state, or in anything that has to do with politics automatically being regarded as bad. Church and state are independent entities, but they are not isolated from each other and may exhort each other to reform.

- All possible (permissible) means should be used to change an unjust situation to a just and peaceful society. Both the oppressors and the privileged should be addressed. An *oppressor* is somebody who actively uses existing structures to commit injustices to his own or his group's advantage, and to the detriment of others. A *privileged person* is not necessarily somebody who has had a hand in the creation of an unjust structure, and he does not use the structure consciously to his own advantage. But, it is still the duty of *both the privileged and the exploiter* to end the injustice. Injustice should not be ended only when the exploited, as a last resort, turns to violence.

- In the final instance it is the duty of especially Christians to keep on talking, trying their best to convince the government that it has to change. A very concrete example of this attitude is to be read in the gripping booklet by Bishop Festo Kivengere: *I love Idi Amin*, with the sub-title *The story of triumph under fire in the midst of suffering and persecution in Uganda* (1977).

6. CONCLUSION

A good conclusion requires that the snake will take hold of its tail, that the end will connect with the beginning.

At the beginning of this book we asked the question what kind of leadership we need to tackle the African crisis. Our conclusion consists of two points: (1) what types of leadership we do not need and (2) what type of leaders we badly need.

6.1 Leadership traditions in Africa

Ali A. Mazrui and Michael Tidy devote a special chapter of their important book (1984:184-193) to different leadership traditions in Africa before and after independence, indicating which of these styles (or a combination of them) were most prominent in the leadership of political leaders. I am of the opinion that the models they identify are not only practised in politics, but also apply in other areas of life. As leaders we should have a closer look at them - not as models to be imitated, but as a warning that they should be avoided.

The different styles often overlap (as will become clear from the examples mentioned), but the following five could nevertheless be clearly distinguished:

- * *The paternalistic elder tradition.* The original first presidents of African countries were usually regarded as the real father, commanding filial reverence, intertwined with traditional African reverence for old age and wisdom. Examples are: Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, first president of Kenya and Kwame Nkrumah, first president of Ghana.

- * *The sage tradition of the leader as the ultimate teacher.* Ideology as a way of transmitting his ideas becomes a monopoly of the centre and attempts is made to ensure substantive responsiveness. Usually alternative schools of thought are not permitted. Examples are: Léopold Sédar Senghor, poet-president of Senegal and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, who is the example *par excellence* of the sage ruler.

- * *The warrior tradition of liberation fighters and military rulers.* They believe in the "myth of discipline", which can compromise intellectual

freedom, and rely on intimidatory leadership based on fear and instruments of coercion to assert authority. Examples are: Mu'ammar Gaddafi of Libya and Idi Amin, the "second Shaka" of Uganda.

* *The charismatic style of the inspiring personality.* With their personal charismatic qualities they inspire their followers with devotion and enthusiasm. They capture the public with a kind of mystique surrounding their names, warmth of personality, personal magnetism or immense personal presence. When, however, the charisma declines, this type of leader often becomes a despotic, uneasy and certainly an undemocratic strong man. Mazrui and Tidy mention as examples here again the names of Kenyatta, Nyerere and Amin.

* *The monarchical style.* Here we find (1) a quest for aristocratic effect like splendid attire, large expensive cars, conspicuous consumption, symbols of power, etc. - the cult of ostentation. (2) The leader is viewed as redeemer - the personality cult. (3) The glorification of the leader as a hero - the sacralization of authority. Nkrumah is also mentioned as an example in this case: he was called Osagyefo, the Redeemer, a quasi-monarchical title.

When M. Bourdillon discusses authority and power in Africa (1990:65ff) he reaches similar conclusions, concerning, for instance, divine kingship and charismatic leadership.

6.2 *An alternative leadership model*

What we today need on our continent is not in the first place father-leaders, teacher-leaders or charismatic leaders, neither aristocratic leaders, and least of all warrior-leaders. We need responsible servant-leaders.

A concept like this may be difficult to grasp. In the light of our history, it may even sound like a contradiction of terms. It implies nothing less than a revolution in our leadership style. But it could herald the real liberation of our continent!

At the beginning of this paper I stated that we need leaders with a *vision*. In the rest of the paper I have tried to provide you with the outlines of such a vision. It is time that you as Christian leaders realise

that life cannot be separated into a religious compartment and a secular compartment in which Christian religion plays no role. The claims of Christ never release us at any time, under any circumstance or in any occupation - God must be obeyed in all of them, not merely in some. His Word has relevance for all aspects of life and therefore for leadership in all of them.

At the end I want to add that we also need *action*. We need Christian leaders who, inspired by such a great vision, want to concretise it, to change, to improve society. The hallmark of a real leader, after all, is not only that she/he *knows* what should be done, but that he/she also *does* what is correct.

I have tried to indicate to you that real, Biblical Christianity is not a *passive, status quo* religion. It is an *active, reforming* religion. Christian religion, far from being an opium that puts people to sleep, has all the resources needed to develop a new vision for the structuring of society as well as to critique and oppose the misuse of power, injustice and oppression - but without the shedding of blood.

My task is completed. Yours still have to begin. It is to demonstrate - by way of your concrete involvement in all areas of life (economic, political, industrial, educational, cultural, agricultural, ecclesiastical etc.) - that you are real leaders, servant-leaders, Christian leaders!

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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