

## CAN FAITH BE DIVORCED FROM THE PUBLIC SQUARE?

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Most scholars have wrestled since time immemorial with the linking of church and state as well as Christian's involvement in politics. To a certain extent we have offered appropriate answers to this question.<sup>1</sup> Some have argued that we cannot separate religion from politics.<sup>2</sup> The question left unanswered is whether involvement means involvement with faith or involvement without one's faith. There has emerged a section in society who are arguing that faith be kept private. In most African countries the problem is not that we don't have Christians in public office<sup>3</sup>, but the problem is that we have many whose faith does not make a difference on how they carry out their work. In spite of the overwhelming statistics of Christians in many African countries corruption, tribalism, nepotism etc continue to be the order of the day.

Most Sub-Saharan African countries have overwhelming statistics of Christians. The current statistics show that 93% of Kenyans claim to be Christian.<sup>4</sup> The same can be said of Rwanda which was 90% at the time of the genocide.<sup>5</sup> The reality on the ground does not reflect these statistics. In Kenya corruption in public office has been the order of the day. In 2007-2008 Kenya witnessed horrific post election violence, this violence was mostly directed at people from certain communities, meaning tribalism is very much alive. There seems to be a detachment between faith and how people carry their work. This paper seeks to argue that this separation of faith from work is contrary to an African worldview, a Christian worldview as well as the Wesleyan understanding of the Christian faith.

### *African Worldview*

Professor John Mbiti has argued that Africans are notoriously religious.<sup>6</sup> According to Mbiti for an African religion permeates all of life, there is no formal distinction between the

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<sup>1</sup> A thesis by Hermann Mvula *The Christian's Active Participation in the Secular Political Arena and its Implications: An Examination of the Defensible options for the African Context* submitted for an Master of Arts in Religion degree at African Nazarene University.

<sup>2</sup> R. Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1999) xxv. Rorty and Vattimo have argued for separation in *The Future of Religion* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2005) 36.

<sup>3</sup> The public office or the Public square in this paper will mean anything one does outside the church and the home for economic gain. In other words the everyday work place, it is assumed that those who work for the government affect most people in society because of the nature of their work.

<sup>4</sup> These statistics are were released by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics on their official web site retrieved on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2011 from <http://www.knbs.or.ke/censusreligion.php>

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Longman, "Christian Churches and Genocide in Rwanda," In *God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Ed. Omer Barton & Phyllis Mark (New York, Bergham Books, 2001), 139-179.

<sup>6</sup> John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1989) 1.

sacred and the secular, between religion<sup>7</sup> and the non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. The African does not separate himself or herself from his/her religion.

wherever the African is, there is his religion; he carries it to the field where he is sowing seeds or harvesting new crop; he takes it with him to attend a beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or at the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament....it accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death<sup>8</sup>

It is important to note that Mbiti is here not talking about Christianity or Islam but African Traditional Religions. Concerning the religion of the African people Mbiti says that there are no creeds to be recited, instead the creeds are written in the heart of the individual, and each one is himself a living creed of his own religion. Where the African is there is his religion, for he/she is a religions being.<sup>9</sup> Mbiti here is talking about the traditional African not necessarily the modern African.

When western missionaries came to evangelize Africa and preached a religion that has meetings on Sunday at church, many were left wondering what to do with Monday to Saturday. Of course true Christianity encompasses all of life meaning all the days of the week not just Sunday. If indeed Africans are notoriously religious, is it possible for them to divorce their faith from what they do in public office? To ask an Africa to exist without his/her religion is to ask for more that what an African is willing to give.

The preceding discussion has highlighted that divorcing ones faith from public office is foreign in an African worldview. Even though African Traditional Religions are no longer impacting how people carry themselves in modern African, it is still the default Religion for most Africans. African Christians and Muslims alike have reverted back to African Traditional Religions when faced with difficulties. The church has to take advantage of this worldview and use it, as it seeks to help African integrate faith and public life.

### *The Kenyan Example*

In December 2007 to March 2008 Kenya went through a difficult period in her history. Following the general election the country plunged into violence. The violence of this magnitude had never been witnessed in the history of Kenya with the exception of the war for independence. On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2008, some 36 people were burnt alive at Kiambaa Kenya Assembly of God Church, following the 2007 disputed election.<sup>10</sup>

Jackline Omoke of the Sunday Times reported that, “On the roads everywhere, hordes of terrified women, children, the aged and disable were fleeing for dear life with [mobs of youth

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<sup>7</sup> Religion here refers to one’s faith.

<sup>8</sup> Mbiti, 2

<sup>9</sup> Mbiti, 3

<sup>10</sup> Vincent Bartoo, Team insists on Kiambaa Monument, *The Standard* 20th May 2009, p 11.

pursued them] sic baying for blood. Those who dared remain behind for some reason or another were hunted down like animals and butchered”<sup>11</sup> She goes on to record the exact words from one survivor of the violence, “Everything seemed to move so fast and there were cries and screams everywhere from those under attack. And not far so far away from our *Muchorwe* came a distress call for help from a relative. And as we went to the rescue, we were unaware that our home was next in the line of fire.”<sup>12</sup> These attackers came with a well organized and coordinated came in three large groups with a mission to kill, and torch homes of their victims. Omoke goes on to record one incidence involving a young man in these words,

For Benson the only recourse to save his relatives was to call the police. He managed to contact them, but to this much needed help either arrived too late or was reluctantly offered. Accompanied by police, Benson met the mutilated bodies of his father and brother lying soaked in a pool of blood, a testimony of the grisly manner in which their lives were ended by blood thirsty hounds in the name of attackers.<sup>13</sup>

It is important to note that most these people who were killing each other were neighbors who had lived together since time immemorial. Again some were parishioners in the same local church, yet they could find no problem mutilating those with whom they had shared communion together.

The media in Kenya is said to have played a key role in the post poll violence. This was reported in the Waki commission,<sup>14</sup> the report stated that the media did this by preaching negative ethnicity thus helping to spark the deadly violence. ‘Witnesses recalled with horror, fear, and disgust the negative and inflammatory role of vernacular radio stations in the testimony and statements to the commission, they said the stations contributed to a climate of hate, negative ethnicity and inciting violence in the country’<sup>15</sup>

The Former President of Kenya his excellence Daniel Arap Moi blamed the religious leaders over failure to act on post election violence. He said they were guilt for their silence and failure to take action. He said it was unbelievable that atrocities of such magnitude have been planned and executed without the clergy raising a voice.<sup>16</sup> There were many others who share the same sentiments. In a report on the causes of the Post Election Violence –the church was heavily blamed as being partisan during the conflict. “the reason why churches were targeted for attack during the chaos was to due to the position taken by church leadership. The church leadership

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<sup>11</sup> Jackline Omoke, A Family’s agony over Post Election Violence, *Sunday Times*, 19th October 2008, p 12.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>14</sup> The Waki Commission was a commission mandated to investigate the causes of the Post Election Violence.

<sup>15</sup> Obadiah Ayoti, Media blamed for role in Poll Violence, *Kenya Times* 16<sup>th</sup> October 2008, p 3.

<sup>16</sup> Correspondent, *Kenya Times* 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008, p 7.

lost credibility because places of worship in Kenya have increasingly taken an ethnic membership and this could be a basis of conflict and violence”<sup>17</sup>

It is estimated that about 1200 people lost their lives during the post election violence. Thousands were displaced from places they had known as home and became homeless. Many of which lost their livelihoods. The question that has to be asked is why in a country with so many Christians and churches being registered by the day would something like this happen? In the preceding narrative the church has been blamed, the media also, the political class also as responsible for the chaos.<sup>18</sup> If more than half the Kenya population go to church then why did this violence take place? Most political leaders in Kenya do attend church regularly and some are full members of the church they attend.<sup>19</sup> The problem is not that Christians are not involved in politics or in media, but that there is failure to integrate faith and work in the public square.

This problem is not just a Kenyan problem but throughout the African continent the same can be said. Social evils like Tribalism<sup>20</sup>, Corruption<sup>21</sup>, Nepotism<sup>22</sup>, injustices<sup>23</sup>, are the order of the day in many African states. Some of the poorest people in the world live on the African continent yet the continent is privileged with numerous natural resources.<sup>24</sup> Some have said that Africa is a continent of paradoxes<sup>25</sup> –on one end she is rich yet her people go hungry. It is also true that some of the most paid government ministers<sup>26</sup> are on the African continent yet most of her people live on less than a dollar a day<sup>27</sup>. In the words of Ayyitei in his book *Africa in Chaos*:

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<sup>17</sup> Susan Anyangu, Report hits out at Church over post poll chaos, *The Standard* 16<sup>th</sup> Sept 2009, p 17.

<sup>18</sup> Six individuals were named by the International Criminal Court as being most responsible for the violence. Two of which were government officers at the time. Four are members of Parliament who were/are in the coalition government.

<sup>19</sup> President Mwai Kibaki is a Roman Catholic, The Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka is a born again Christian, and the Prime Minister Raila Odinga is a Christian.

<sup>20</sup> Tribalism here is defined as being loyal to one’s social group at the expense of individuals who belong to other social groups.

<sup>21</sup> Corruption here is defined as taking and giving of bribes so as to get an unfair advantage.

<sup>22</sup> Nepotism here is defined as giving family members jobs simply because they are family.

<sup>23</sup> Herman Mvula, *The Christian’s Active Participation in the Secular Political Arena and Its Implications: An Examination of the Defensible Options for the African Context*, Thesis submitted to Africa Nazarene University March 2005, p 3. D. M Waruta in *Moral and Issues in Africa Christianity: A Challenge for African Christianity*, edited by JNK Mugambi and Anne Nasimiya-Wasike (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1999)

<sup>24</sup> These resources range from Oil, Gold, Diamonds, Copper, Nikkel, Platinum etc.

<sup>25</sup> George B. N Ayittei, *African In Chaos*, (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1999) 6

<sup>26</sup> Dana Hughes, *Some of the Best Paid Politicians In the World Are in ...Kenya ABC News* retrieved from [abcnews.com/theworldnewser/2010/07/](http://abcnews.com/theworldnewser/2010/07/) In this article Hughes is lamenting the fact that the average annual income in Kenya is about \$730 and the united states is \$50,000, yet the Kenyan legislators salary is at par with the US congressmen and women.

<sup>27</sup> Not all African people are living on less than a dollar a day. There is an emerging middle class in some African countries.

Africa is four times the geographical size of the United States and, with its approximately 770 million people, has more than thrice that of the United States. It is a continent with immense untapped mineral wealth. Africa has '40 per cent of the world's potential hydroelectric power supply; the bulk of the world's diamonds and chromium; 30 per cent of the uranium in the non-communist world; 50 per cent of the world's gold; 90 per cent of its cobalt; 50 per cent of its phosphates; 40 per cent of its platinum, 7.5 per cent of its coal; 8 per cent of its known petroleum reserves; 12 per cent of its natural gas; 3 per cent of its iron ore and millions upon millions of acres of untilled farmland. There is not another continent blessed with such abundance and diversity.' In addition, Africa has 64 per cent of the world's manganese, 13 per cent of its copper, and vast bauxite, nickel and lead resources. It also accounts for 70 per cent of cocoa, 60 per cent of coffee, 50 per cent of palm oil, and 20 per cent of the petroleum total petroleum traded in the world market, excluding the United State and Russia. The tourism potential of Africa is enormous. Unrivaled wildlife, scenic grandeur, and pristine ecology constitute Africa's third great natural resource after agriculture and mineral wealth.<sup>28</sup>

After giving all these statistics Ayittei says "Yet paradoxically, a continent with such abundance and potential is inexorably mired in streaming squalor, misery, deprivation and chaos"<sup>29</sup>

### *Historical Overview*

The question of faith and public office begs the question of the relationship between the church and the state. According to Hermann Mvula<sup>30</sup>, "some Christians horrified by the abuses of secular institutions have advocated complete separation between the church and the state, Christians and politics. Others have struggled to find some balance in between the complete separation and total involvement"<sup>31</sup>. Those who advocate for the separation of church state argue that the world is idolatrous and an association with it will result in a breach of their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Following Tertullian's example Christians are to shun certain vocations like the military because it violates the law of Christ.<sup>32</sup> Mead calls this

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<sup>28</sup> Ayittei, 6.

<sup>29</sup> Ayittei, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Mvula sees the four options in the relationship between church and state. He identifies the Separationist option which sees the church and state as having nothing to do with each other, secondly the Lutheran option- here he identifies Luther's doctrine of two kingdoms which are both created by God but have different functions, thirdly is the Prophetic option which advocates indirect participation in the political processes and forth is the Radical Anabaptist option who advocates for a church that is free from state inference- those who subscribe to this option will not participate in state activities. Other research done in this areas was by James W. Skillen, *The Scattered Voice: Christians At Odds in the Public Square* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), Donald G Bloesch, *Freedom for Obedience: Evangelical Ethics in Contemporary Times* Cambridge: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987)

<sup>31</sup> Mvula, 15

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 15.

approach the apostolic paradigm.<sup>33</sup> When the church was in its infant stages, this seems to be the approach than most people took. The state was the persecutor and the church had to be separate from it.

The other option that people have subscribed to is the marrying of church state, what has been termed the Christendom paradigm<sup>34</sup>. According to Nesson, “The era of Christendom was initiated during the fourth Century when Constantine and subsequent emperors gave favored status to the Christian faith...Christianity was inseparable from citizenry. The church functioned as a broker of power alongside and frequently in competition with the state.”<sup>35</sup> According to Greg Forster when Christians came to power in Rome they started developing ideas on what to do with it and Augustine’s *City of God* is a clear expression of their efforts.<sup>36</sup> Forster believes that the *City of God* “was the first real masterpiece of Christian political thought.”<sup>37</sup> In Augustine’s understanding there are two cities and these cities are the City of Man and the City of God. The City of Man is made up of those who place their interests above those of God, on the other hand the City of God consists of those who place God ahead of themselves. These two cities have different understanding of “the good” the question being what purposes are prudent for humanity to pursue. The City of Man seeks only its good in the here and now only while the City of God seeks its highest good in heaven.<sup>38</sup> Forster summarizes Augustine when he says,

...even though the City of God does not seek its highest good in this world it still has a responsibility to participate in political life and promote its proper good, which is civil peace...the City of Man has only one citizenship, the citizenship of the present world; but the City of God has dual citizenship. Christians exercise citizenship both in the city of this world and in another city, which the New Testament calls “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb 12:22). The City of God must perform a delicate balancing act, exercising citizenship in the earthly city but ultimately loyal to its higher citizenship in heaven.<sup>39</sup>

Augustine’s caution is in place especially when he cautions those who enter the public square not to expect to establish heaven on earth. The City of Man will never be free from self-love. In his own words “In one city, love of God has been given first place, in the other, love of self”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Mead, *The once and Future Church* In Craig L. Nesson, *Beyond Maintenance to mission: A Theology of Congregation*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 46.

<sup>34</sup> Mead, *The once and Future Church* In Craig L. Nesson, *Beyond Maintenance to mission: A Theology of Congregation*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 46.

<sup>35</sup> Craig L. Nesson, *Beyond Maintenance to mission: A Theology of Congregation*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 46.

<sup>36</sup> Greg Forster, *The Contested Public Square* (Illinois: Downers Grove, 2008), 63.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 64

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 64

<sup>40</sup> Augustine *City of God 14.13*. in Greg Forster, *The Contested Public Square* (Illinois: Downers Grove, 2008), 73.

Forster says it this way, “Christians must work to promote the best “compromise” they can get and be satisfied with that.”<sup>41</sup>

After Augustine, Christian political thought was shaped by Thomas Aquinas and William of Oakham. These two according to Forster helped develop the idea of natural law.<sup>42</sup> Forster goes on to explain natural law theory when he says, “This idea hold that the only proper basis of political authority is the moral laws pertaining to life in the present world (do not kill, do not steal, keep your promises, help those in need, preserve the community, etc.) rather than laws pertaining to eternal matters.”<sup>43</sup> Even though this idea found full expression in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, the idea had been around as early as the early church. Some have argued that in the Christian apologists arguments (especially Justin) when he argued that Christians were good citizens even though they did not share the religion of the empire.<sup>44</sup> St Augustine shared this belief in that he understood Christians and non-Christians as desiring similar things from politics. One such thing he envisioned was peace, “...peace with the law by which the natural order is governed.”<sup>45</sup> Natural law is based on the Christian understanding of the *imago dei* (the image of God, Genesis 1:26-27). Since all human beings are created in God’s image, they can know the moral law through reason and conscience. Even though humanity is not saved from sin by this knowledge, this knowledge does affect what they do or cannot do.<sup>46</sup> It is natural law that permits society to establish its own government and the established government is not above the law, it primarily exists to enforce this law.<sup>47</sup>

During the reformation period, the doctrine of Natural Law was used in the church. Martin Luther in many ways was in agreement with Augustine’s doctrine of the two cities. Luther called the City of God- Kingdom of God and the City of Man-Kingdom of the world. In Luther’s understanding the state is needed because not all live according to God’s ideals. If all lived according to God’s dictates there would be no need for the state. Luther did not believe that the state should do more than restrain human sinfulness; he did not expect the state to punish heretics. Luther believed that the state should control political matters and not spiritual matters.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Forster, 83

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 85

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 85

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 85-90

<sup>45</sup> Augustine, *City of God* 19.13 in Greg Forster, *The Contested Public Square* (Illinois: Downers Grove, 2008), 89-90

<sup>46</sup> Forster, 91 Forster also says that “Natural Law doctrine also holds that natural law is the proper source of political authority, and that it gives each human society the authority to establish a government by which it will govern itself.” (91)

<sup>47</sup> Forster 91 The English Philosopher Thomas Hobbes in his book *Leviathan* saw the existence of government as extremely important since in his understanding man is brutish and without a government to enforce laws, the result is chaos.

<sup>48</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity Vol 2: Reformation to the Present Day* (Los Angeles: Harper Collins Publishers, 1985) 36. Forster, 124

Forster believes that Luther's political theory borrowed heavily from the natural law conception of politics more than that of his Roman Catholic opponents.<sup>49</sup>

An extreme form of the collaboration of church state has been called a theocracy. This view found its clearest expression in John Calvin's understanding of Christian political theory. Calvin was able to implement his experiment in the city of Geneva, which went through a series of civil and religious reform under his guidance. Unlike Luther, Calvin did not see a problem with state enforcement of religious uniformity. Calvin's views of Christian political theory are found in his *Institute of Christian Religion*. All authority comes from God, be it civil or spiritual, because of this the two institutions (church and state) should work together and help each other.<sup>50</sup>

Religious wars resulted in a lot of bloodshed. These wars were fought among Catholics, and Protestants-Lutheran and Reformed. As a way of preventing the bloodshed a policy was adopted known as, "*he who rules, his religion*".<sup>51</sup> Under this policy the prince would choose a religion that suits him and subject would follow the religion of the ruler. In this case the political powers decided what religion would exist under their rule. During this time period it was not conceivable that two religions would exist in one territory. Under this policy in Lutheran territories, the princes would appoint the local priest.<sup>52</sup>

According to Forster the peace of Westphalia is viewed by political scientists as the origin of the modern international political system. He believes it is at Westphalia were the *nation state* was born.<sup>53</sup> Forster define "state as the tangible institutions that exercise power and nations as the units of cultural identity that have no concrete tangible existence"<sup>54</sup> After the peace of Westphalia most people were tired of wars of religion. Many started realizing that "outlawing religious dissent is the cause of political conflict over religion"<sup>55</sup> Religious tolerance was seen as the solution to these wars of religion.

The enlightenment ideas<sup>56</sup> with their emphasis on reason eventually led to the adoption of the principle of religious toleration. John Locke in his essay *A Letter Concerning Toleration* attacked all forms of civil discrimination and violence on the basis of religion, and in it he defended religious toleration. According to Locke part of what it means to be truly Christian is to be tolerant of others who share different beliefs from us. He established religious tolerance on the basis of Scripture especially the New Testament.<sup>57</sup> He went beyond the bible in presenting arguments in support of toleration when he says that for the community to survive it does not need a shared religion but shared rules of social interaction. In his words Locke says, "The

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<sup>49</sup> Forster, 125.

<sup>50</sup> Forster, 133-134

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 138

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 139

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 140

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 140

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 143 English Philosopher John Locke represent those who realized this fact.

<sup>56</sup> Seventeenth and eighteenth century explosion of philosophical and scientific activity. Here we are referring to the ideas of Immanuel Kant, Rene Descarte, John Locke and David Hume.

<sup>57</sup> Forster, 154-155

commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving and advancing their own civil interests.”<sup>58</sup> It is on that basis Locke would say a magistrate should not punish people for sins that do not disturb public peace. Toleration was not only for Christians, “whether he be Christian or pagan...ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth because of his religion.”<sup>59</sup> It is clear from our discussion that Locke would be in support of natural law theory. Due to his understanding of the nature of faith, Locke believed that no one should be compelled to accept the faith against his convictions.<sup>60</sup>

Locke’s philosophy final destination was not religious toleration<sup>61</sup> but religious freedom<sup>62</sup>. It is important to remember that Locke is writing during the time of established religion- meaning there was state religion. According to Locke if the state sponsors a religious tradition, those who belong to that tradition have a different relationship with their state than those who do not belong to that tradition. No one should be treated differently simply because they are a member of a religion. By going this direction Locke wanted to safeguard justice and equity which apply to everyone equally. It is not very clear in Locke’s writing whether he opposed religious establishment but it is clear that his ideas were used by the founding fathers of the United States against establishment.<sup>63</sup>

In the modern nation states separation of church state has become the norm. The ideas of John Locke are the foundation for such a separation. To a larger extent the public square is where people of different religions meet, it is assumed that the only way in which people are going to co-exist is if they keep their religions private. It is also assumed that in the public square we are neither Christians, nor Muslims, we are just human beings.

### *Contemporary Perspective on Faith and Public Office*

Different people have diverse views on the issue of faith and public office. Some believe that the two are inseparable, others believe that the two cannot co-exist- one has to sacrifice one. The former American President Bill Clinton at an interfaith breakfast prayer meeting said that “freedom of religion does not mean that those of us who have faith should not frankly admit that we are animated by that faith... and that it does not affect, what we think, what we do”<sup>64</sup> Here the Clinton was admitting that it is actually impossible for people to lay their faith down as they enter their public offices and then pick it as they go home in the evening.

Recently the current Prime Minister of the United Kingdom David Cameron told Pope Benedict XVI on his four day visit to the United Kingdom that, “faith was part of the fabric of

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<sup>58</sup> Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration* par. 5 in Forster

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 27 in Forster

<sup>60</sup> Forster, 160

<sup>61</sup> Allowing minorities to practice their religion even though the state has an established religion

<sup>62</sup> Allowing people to worship as they please on the grounds that government has no rightful authority in religion

<sup>63</sup> Forster, 164-165

<sup>64</sup> *Christianity Today*, 10/4/93, Vol 37 Issue 13, 52.

our country... a vital part of our national conversation.”<sup>65</sup> On the same visit Pope Benedict called for recognition of the necessary interconnectedness of faith and reason, religion and politics, belief and society. The main point is that faith and public life were interconnected. The Pope went on to warn against what he termed “a failure to appropriate not only the rights of believers to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, but also the legitimate role of religion in the public sphere.” He ended by quoting Cardinal Newman’s call for “men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand”<sup>66</sup>

Roger Trigg in his book *Religion in Public Life: Must Faith be Privatized*, quotes Rorty who believes that “the main reason religion needs to be privatized is that, in political discussion with those outside the relevant religious community, it is a conversation- stopper.”<sup>67</sup> Trigg has a problem with privatizing religion and not do the same with science. “What is it about science which makes it acceptable in the public square, and about religion which does not?”<sup>68</sup> According to Trigg “Truth is not a private matter, but of universal concern.” If religion belongs to that sphere on articulating what Truth is then they cannot be a private matter. Trigg believes that when religion is treated as something for consenting adults behind closed doors, religion is likely to become a potentially dangerous. Something as powerful, historically significant and socially motivating as religion must not only be taken seriously but subjected to scrutiny and held to public account. If, for instance, a group were to claim that ritual slaughter is essential to its religious identity, Trigg’s concern is that members of a given society should be able to counter this claim in public and offer reasonable grounds for doing so.<sup>69</sup>

The late Julius Nyerere of Tanzania once said ‘Tanzania has no religion, the party has no religion and the government has no religion’<sup>70</sup> Most Sub Sahara African countries constitutions categorically state that state and religion shall be separate.<sup>71</sup> According to Henry Okullu these constitutions proceed to guarantee each citizen the right to choose his own religion.<sup>72</sup> Is it possible that if practice their faith they can divorce it from the way they discharge their duties in the public square?

The problem we are dealing with in the Christian faith in particular is not that we lack Christians in the public square. The problem is a lack of integration of faith and work in the public square. What we need is not more Christians in the public square but an effective witness

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<sup>65</sup> Austen Ivereigh, Signs of the Times: United Kingdom Pope on faith in Public Life. Oct 4<sup>th</sup> 2010 *American Press Inc*, retrieved from [www.americanmagazine.org](http://www.americanmagazine.org)

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> R. Rorty Philosophy and Social Hope in Roger Trigg, *Religion in the Public Life: Must Faith Be Privatized*. (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2007) 196.

<sup>68</sup> Trigg, 197.

<sup>69</sup> Esther D. Reed, Book Review- *Religion in the Public Life: Must Faith Be Privatized*. University of Exeter retrieved from © 2008 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2008 Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

<sup>70</sup> Henry Okulu, *Church and State in Nation Building and Human Development* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 2003) 53.

<sup>71</sup> Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Uganda etc

<sup>72</sup> Okullu, 53.

for Jesus Christ from those who already are in the public square. The church has not taken a keen interest in equipping men and women who serve God in the public square. The church has instead been concerned about itself- that is preparation of men and women for 'ministry' not understanding that even those who are in the public square are servants of God. According to Professor Fletcher Tink churches need to pray for men and women in business and politics as much as it does for those who serve God in the church.<sup>73</sup> This is taking seriously the Christian doctrine of Priesthood of all believers.

### *The Christian Perspective*

Christians are those who have put their faith in Christ Jesus. We will refer to them as disciples of Jesus Christ because central to what it means to be a Christian is to be a disciple of Jesus. To use Bonhoeffer's understanding of discipleship it is following Jesus in the world, in this case following Jesus in the public square. Having faith in Jesus is itself a public and not just a private matter. A good example is the one Christians follow, Jesus Christ even though he tried to keep his mission a secret especially according to the Markan perspective<sup>74</sup>, his mission still became a public affair.

Nico Koopman affirms that

God's love for the world, which comes to expression in the *magnolia Dei*, does have meaning, significance, and complications for all dimensions and terrains of life, from the most private, personal, and intimate to the most public, open, social and cosmic. At its heart then Christian theology is public theology. It reflects on the love of God who is at work in all spheres of life.<sup>75</sup>

When the people of God keep their faith as a private matter its an indication that they lack a good theology. The God of the Bible is a God who is interested in life in all its aspects. In the Old Testament we see God's interest in issues of justice, oppression, governance etc. Robert Benne says that "Judeo-Christian religion has a public dimension: it cannot be relegated completely to the private sphere without diminishing its significance or, more seriously, truncating its very message. God's will applies to the whole world in all its varied activities, not just to private life. The Christian faith makes comprehensive claims that cannot be limited to the private dimensions of our common life."<sup>76</sup> All those who belong to the Christian faith must realized that the very core of the Christian message is at stake when we agree with the assumptions of our modern or postmodern day culture.

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<sup>73</sup> Fletcher Tink, MA class Theology of Work, at Africa Nazarene University Dec 2010

<sup>74</sup> Alex Varughese et al, *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith* (Beacon Hill Press: Kansas City, 2005) 130.

<sup>75</sup> Koopman, Nico. 2010. "Some Contours for Public Theology in South Africa." *International Journal of Practical Theology* 14, no. 1: 123-138. *Academic Source Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 1, 2011).

<sup>76</sup> Robert Benne, Lutherans in Public: Four Lively Options, (*A Journal of Theology* Volume 45, Number 4 Winter 2006, ) 357

Jose Miguez Bonino shares this conviction when he says that:

Christians throughout the world can no longer evade: if we intend to live our faith as a reality in today's world, we cannot avoid coming to grips with this 'thing' that shapes individual and collective life, that both confers meaning on and denies meaning to human plans and actions, that encompasses and invades all areas of human existence, and that offers and dispenses both life and death to thousands of millions-political struggle. When Christians come to grips politics, however, it becomes necessary for our faith to die and be resurrected. We have to learn anew to name God and confess Christ, to believe and to be church, to pray and receive, the sacrament, to be 'holy' and to expectantly wait for 'eternal life.'<sup>77</sup>

Bonino makes this the thesis of his book, even though his concern is political ethics what he says is applicable in all areas of the public life. To use Bonino's words Christ can be confessed in the public square and not just at the altar in church or at the family altar at home. Its also important to note that Bonino believes strongly that we can be holy as we name God and confess Christ in the public square. According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer when we stay close to the presence of God can we actually be able to follow Christ in the world- in our case following Jesus to the public square. For Bonhoeffer to be a Christian means to participate in the life of the world, to serve God in the world and not isolation.<sup>78</sup> This is where the church comes in to provide the spiritual nourishment necessary for one to be in the world but not of the world. Bonino is also saying something very radical here that 'to believe and to be the church' the question is where are we to be the church? –Is it only at church on Sunday morning- the answer is no but everywhere we find ourselves we are to be church of Jesus Christ.

Taking seriously the theological affirmation that God is the creator has implications for faith in the public square. Christians hold that all that is was created by God and all that is exists for him. This means that the sacred and the secular lose their distinction in God, it is a human temptation to compartmentalize the two. This need not be the case when we believe that God is the creator of everything. God is the one who gives us the talents and the skills we use in the public square as the Bible says in Exodus 31:1-11:

Then the Lord said to Moses, See, I have chosen Bezalel the son of Uri...and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab...

Bazalel and Oholiab were the first people to be mentioned as having been filled with the Spirit of God. It is interesting to note that they were not filled to do prophesy but to work. How can the

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<sup>77</sup> Jose Miguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) 8.

<sup>78</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, trans. Eberhard Bethge (London: Collins, Fontana Books, 1953), 91.

God who gives the skills for work be kept out of the office or the factory where these skills are used?

Reflecting on the resurrection of Jesus, Adams and Brown in their article *Power for What? Implications of the Exodus Narrative* argue that the fact that Jesus got up can provide Christian congregation with an impetus for social action. These messages can move people from the pews into the public arena. In their conclusion the authors seek to answer the question posed in their title, Power for what? They do this by arguing that it is “power to confront and transform the Systems, not simply survive them- power to move them toward greater equality, justice, community and freedom for all.”<sup>79</sup> This is a very critical part of the integration of faith and work in the public square. Those who engage in this vocation have to realize that there is power available for them. They have to draw strength from the Almighty God, the one who raised Jesus from the dead.

In an article *Prayed Politics* Robert Bachelder argues that we are both summoned and sent. He goes on to say that “We are summoned before God to be judged and forgiven through confession and pardon. Then, nourished by Scripture and edified by preaching, we are sent again into the spheres of our public responsibility. These movements are held together in a dialectical tension.”<sup>80</sup> Bachelder in support of his thesis quotes James Fowler who tells us that a mature faith knows that truth has contrasting dimensions that need to be held together. The faithful are neither the summoned nor the sent but those who are both coming and going. One ear hears the imperative to active public life expressed in Amos: “Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” The other ear listens to the parable of the growing seed in Mark 4:26-29 with its rebuke of self-righteous zealous activism, and its claim that God, not the people, will establish the kingdom when the time is ripe.<sup>81</sup> He concludes his article by saying the prayed politics is a gift to the world by those who know that they are both summoned and sent, and so have communion with a God who is doing something new.<sup>82</sup>

The Wesleyan tradition provides some helpful insights to the question under discussion. This tradition goes back to John and Charles Wesley’s preaching in England in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. When John Wesley considered the reason for the Methodists, he could not think of anything but to reform the nation and to spread scriptural holiness. At times those of us in the tradition have emphasized heart felt holiness at the expense of reforming the nation. It is important to remember that Wesley never separated the two- in his understanding holiness led to the reformed nation. It is also interesting to note that in the mission of the Methodists reforming the nation is mentioned first to indicate how important this is.

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<sup>79</sup> Adams, Jana, and Charles S. Brown. 2001. "Power for What? Implications of the Exodus Narrative." *Social Policy* 31, no. 4: 32-33. Academic Source Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed July 1, 2011).

<sup>80</sup> Robert Bachelder, *Prayed Politics*. *Christian Century*, January 29, 1986, p 92.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 92

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 92.

The logical question that follows this discussion is can a privatized faith result in a reformed nation? Can the holiness folks afford to keep their faith a private affair? Before we can answer these questions it is important to respond to the question what is Holiness? At the heart of holiness is the idea of separation, being separate from sin, being set apart for God. According to Purkiser holiness is the state or condition of being holy, whole, healed.<sup>83</sup> Commenting on the relationship between the individual experience and social justice Chanchi Chanda in his book *Christlike Justice and the Holiness Tradition* says “While the cleansing of an individual heart is fundamental, the saved person ought to grow in the faith and act out of his or her belief system when he or she is away from the Church building and in the public office or market”<sup>84</sup> Holiness results in a changed lifestyle, which leads to Christlikeness. This Christlikeness will then permeate all other arenas of life including life in the public square.

In the Bible the 8<sup>th</sup> century prophets especially Amos called on nation of Israel to stop exploiting the poor. God proceeded to punish the nation of Israel by sending them into exile because they neglected the poor. The people in question here are the chosen people, the holy priesthood, the people of Israel. There is no doubt that holiness has social implications. John Wesley would say I know no other holiness except social holiness.

It is clear that the people of God in whatever age have a clear mandate to oppose economic systems that oppress people. Anything that hinders people from living life to the full is to be rejected on the basis that humanity is created in God’s image. A privatization of faith will not help to fulfill this mandate.

### *Recommendations for the Church*

The church has a role to play in preparing her members for the world of work. The reason why most Christians have not made an impact in their work place is because they don’t know that they have a role to play beyond doing their jobs. Christians have to be sensitized about God’s mission in the world, his desire to renew all things for the glory of His Son Jesus Christ.

1. First of all Christians need not dichotomize sacred from secular days. God is interested in secular days the same way he is interested in Sunday. They need to realize that Monday is as important as Sunday. The church is still the church on Monday or Thursday- Jesus is still Lord even on these days of the week.
2. The Church need to teach individual Christians how to integrate their faith and their work. God is interested in their work, just the same way he is about their church attendance.
3. The Church needs to pray for those in various professions, just like she prays for her own workers. Professionals need God to carry out their responsibilities just like ministers need God in carrying on their pastoral responsibilities. Certain Sundays

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<sup>83</sup> W. T Purkiser, *Exploring Christian Holiness* V1 (Kansas City MI: Beacon Hill Press, 1993),13

<sup>84</sup> Chanchi Chanda, *Christlike Justice and the Holiness Tradition* (Gauteng: Africa Nazarene Publications, 2010), 23.

need to be set aside for prayer for specific professions for example Teachers, Police, Doctors etc..

### *Conclusion*

Privatization of faith is a dangerous doctrine. This doctrine is against the African, Christian particularly the Wesleyan Holiness Tradition. A failure to understand faith and the public square will have disastrous consequences for the community. Privatization of faith means that the individuals are missing a major part of what it means to be a Christian, and they certainly cannot claim to be Christian. To be a Christian means to follow Jesus even to the work place. The things we can or cannot do are determined by our faith.

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