

*Full Length Research Paper*

# An examination of co-existence of religion and politics

Kasomo Daniel

Department of Philosophy Religion and Theology, Maseno University in Kenya. E-mail:  
dkasomocounselling@yahoo.com. Tel: +254 722-770204, +254 733-703603.

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This article is an attempt to prove that Religion and politics are two realms inseparable basically because they concern the same subject matter, namely man and woman, who are both material and spiritual. This article sought primarily to provoke thinking in these great issues of the day, and tried to discuss how religious people, both individually and collectively, can take up the challenge and responsibility posed by the current political, social and economic thinking and action especially in Africa. The findings of the research indicate that there is no blueprint pattern of behaviour of religion and politics relationship anywhere that could be transplanted and fitted into our situation in Africa. The Bible, Qur'an or any other religious scripture will at best give the principles and not the prescription for their adherents in a particular place. It is up to the people of a particular milieu to apply these principles to their present circumstances and time.

**Key words:** Religion, church, state, politics, violence.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest issues in Africa today and the world over on which there is so much confusion concerns the relationship which exists, or should exist, between religion and politics. Many leaders today are declaring that their States are secular. If this is accepted, it poses a major problem for religion. In this situation, how can religion assume the role of being the national conscience, championing the course of national moral issues, and even saying a particular State has failed in its God-given function? Those who have been historically and spiritually formed under rigid and exaggerated separation and tension between the realms certainly find a serious problem with this topic. For them, the philosophical and theological dualism, which sharply separates body and soul, form and matter, spiritual and secular, hierarchical rule and democracy, becomes the guiding principle.

In this research we have established the inevitable link between religion and politics. Progressively, it was of paramount importance to understand the concepts of religion and politics. An examination was made to determine religion as the source of violence. The paper also examined the relationship between religion and politics. This was contextualised in African continent with much of the references dwelling on Eastern Africa. The climax of the discussion proposes the way forward for the co-existence of religion and politics. It is important to note

from the outset that there are no ready-made answers or solutions towards the relationship that should exist between religion and politics.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to examine the relationship between Religion and Politics.

## METHODOLOGY

The information contained here comes from content analysis gathered mainly from secondary sources, gathered from published books, unpublished books, articles, government records, archival materials, and local dailies.

## FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Politics, simply defined, is "the art and science of directing and administering states and political units." In short, it is the art of governance. It deals with the affairs of the state or "*polis*". According to Kastfelt (2004), Politics is based on the fact that individuals, families and various groups that compose the civic community are

aware of their own insufficiency. Many people make up the political community and these may be inclined to diverse ways of doing things. Hence human authority is needed to regulate the excesses of the individual persons and to direct people's energies towards the attainment of the common good.

As noted by Burner (2002), the term politics in Africa is poorly presented. Due to this people have different views on the subject. One category of people, politicians are associated with lies, corruption, complaining about issues, noisemakers and all kinds of undesirable and derogatory references. According to such people politics should not be associated with religious leaders. The second category of people thinks that, what constitutes politics is that critical utterance towards government.

According to Hansen (2002), indeed a politician may criticise his or her government but politics entails much more than that. Politics refers to all the activities of the government and the governed. Politics is therefore, the participation of the citizens for the welfare of the State. This implies that the State cannot be left either into the hands of few greedy politicians nor into the mercy of some religious leaders.

Politicians have various duties in a country:

- To promote the common good of all
- To promote the right to life, to employment, to education, to medical care among others.
- To promote the right to living and facilities to ensure people live a healthy life.
- To promote the right to educate children in the faith one chooses or confesses and freedom of worship.

### **General understanding of religion**

According to Molner (1988), Religion on the other hand has been defined and understood in many ways. We can define Religion as a "system of beliefs and practices" by which a group of people interpret and respond to what they feel is sacred and supernatural elsewhere. Religion is sacred, but this sacredness is relative, in the sense that it is the people who give or identify the sacredness of something, that can be an object or a person. This is to say that, it is the people who make things or persons sacred. Religion can also be defined as unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things that unite people into one moral community called a "Church". Therefore, religion involves;

- Faith (unquestionable belief) that cannot be proved from scientific point of view.
- Symbols and particularly, symbolic actions. In the African Traditional Religions, religious practices demonstrated through rituals are very important, and so are practised or performed all the times.

In essence Religion is the ultimate concern. This ultimate concern has a social dimension as well. From a sociological point of view, religion is pragmatic in every society. The function of religion in these societies is that religion forms the basis, the core or the binding thread of all human activities. It is therefore, not easy to delink religion from political, social and psychological life of a particular community. According to Roll (1972), Liberation Theology as an illuminator of certain oppression and agitation for justice, be it political or economic, is an example of politico-religious concern that is a potential time bomb of violence.

### **Religion and violence**

According to Edelen (2005) is convinced that religion, historically, has always produced violence. He traces this from Moses to the Crusades, Henry VIII, Salem, Hitler, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Israel, Palestine, etc. According to him, today in our times, it is those countries without religion that are least violent. According to Mayhem (1989), Japan, without the Bible but with Buddhism has less violent crimes than any nation in the world. America today is one of the most "religious" of the world's Industrialised nations, and yet it is the most violent nation in the world. The murder rate in America is simply alarming. According to Merton (1968), Louisiana for example has the highest Church attendance in America but it has twice the national average for murders.

According to Edelen (2005), Hitler had religion and wanted more of it for Germany. He was a Roman Catholic and was confirmed as a "soldier of Christ" in that Church. It is an established fact that Catholics and Lutherans pro-moted hatred for the Jews in Germany. Hitler had probably said he is completely convinced that he is acting as the agent of God. He is now a Catholic and will always remain so.

According to Merton (1968), Hitler never left the Church and the Church never left him. The Church banned great books but his book *Mein Kampf* was never banned. Hitler was never excommunicated. Under Hitler, "Jesus" prayers were mandatory in all schools, abortion was a crime, and homosexuality was criminalized. Yet violence reigned and the worst holocaust ever committed against humanity in human history was carried out. Twelve million people died in concentration camps 6 million of them simply because they were Jewish.

Nowadays, a large number of national and international conflicts have a religious character. The conflicts and war in many troubled areas have some kind of religion at the background. The ink had just dried on the Middle East Peace Accord between the Israelis and the Palestinians when car bombings began in Jerusalem. In one incident, two Muslims knowingly committed suicide as they drove their bomb-laden cars into a crowded Israeli neighbour-

hood in the occupied territory. They undoubtedly cried the triumphant "*Tonight in Paradise!*" This is the purported reward for dying while killing "Infidels". Violence in the name of Religion also happened during the bombings in Nairobi, Mombasa, Daresalaam and the aborted one in Kampala in August 1998 among other places.

According to Novac (1969), this is perhaps reminiscent of what took place from the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> century when a series of Crusades were conducted to regain the "Holy" Land. Repeatedly, under the orders of many different popes, Christians were charged with the daunting task of capturing Jerusalem by wresting it from the hands of equally determined Muslims who were not about to give it up. No one knows how many thousands died during the Crusades, but accounts refer to an enormous number of massacres and bloodbaths as the struggle continued.

Back in time and space was the building of Israel as a nation beginning roughly in 2000 BC, and the continuing centuries (according to the Bible's Old Testament, which the Jews consider to be an account of their own history), Jewish tribes slaughtered hundreds of thousands of people in the name of their God, Yahweh. They took pleasure and even sang hymns of thanksgiving to their God. Exodus 15:1 says: "*I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider He has thrown into the sea.*"

From then on, any people that Israel encounters as she journeys to the Promised Land is exterminated in the name of Yahweh. The climax was realised in the reign of the Great Statesman Joshua. The rest of the Canaanite cities were annihilated at the instructions of Yahweh (Joshua 6; 10:9-14; 23:13).

It is possible that by now there is no one in Northern Ireland who doesn't know of at least one friend or relative who has been killed in the ongoing violence there. For the last 40 years, Protestants and Catholics have been killing each other on a regular basis. Any cease-fire like all the last ones will be fragile. If history is any teacher, it will not last. In the early 1990s, the world watched in shock and horror as the Roman Catholic Croats, Ortho-dox Serbs, and Bosnian Muslims slaughtered each other relentlessly. News reports continually refer to those wars as the result of attempt to "ethnic" cleansing, but their religious underpinnings are transparently obvious.

All these experiences force us to ask: Is religion the source of violence? What is the relationship between religion and politics? What should be the relationship between religion and Politics? Can religion and politics co-exist?

## Religion and politics

As noted by Haring (1986) individual religion and churches have quite different histories in their responses to social

issues. Some have been more sensitive to issues of justice in the larger society especially historical churches such as the Catholic Church and Protestant Churches. As noted by Regamey (1966), others, especially the Evangelicals have been preoccupied with the evangelisation mission of the church and have not seen its task to be one of speaking out on society. Some people have questioned the church's role in politics. National leaders are frequently loathe to permit what they call church "interference in politics".

Haynes (1996) however argues that, church leadership always speaks to the church as well as for the Church, helping to educate and sensitise the membership concerning the implications of Christian belief for a particular social issue. For the Church to say and do nothing is tantamount to saying that the church is irrelevant in relation to the most important issues in human relationships. This would be a denial of all that faith stands for. Religion is not lived in the sky but in a particular milieu and context, which involves human beings - these human beings are social by nature and hence live in a community.

In the Christian Religion, the relationship between Church and state can be traced to the Old Testament. The prophets often acted as the finger of God challenging the state leaders, these included Prophets Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah, among others. These prophets challenged the rulers whenever they departed from the will of God for the people of Israel. In the New Testament, we find Jesus always at cross roads with some authorities and his death was judicial. Ratzinger (2001) says, that Christ's words remain fundamental; render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God things that are God's. This saying opened up a new section in the history of relationship between politics and religion. The following years saw violent deaths executed by the state in the name of religion. The eventual harmony between religion and politics was when Emperor Constantine claimed a victory in a critical battle given by Jesus in a vision. From then on, everything in the state was mixed with religion.

Islam as a religion has been very much linked to politics since its inception in 610. After the *Hijrah* Muham-mad decided to establish a community of believers who rallied behind him not so much because of his military prestige but his prophethood (Watt, 2003). According to Watt (2003) A document, known as the *Constitution of Medina*, may be taken to show that the people of Medina were now regarded as constituting a political unit of a new type, an *Ummah* or "community." The political community thus had a religious basis. Muhammad was by no means the ruler of this community. Through the *riidah* wars or wars of conquest Mohammed's religious leadership became more and more political. In him, religion and politics coupled with military might blended together. The religious claim for justice, equality and fair distribution of

wealth and resources is itself a seedbed of violence. The urge to convert, expand and propagate one's religion has sometimes been used as an excuse for political aggressiveness. *Jihad*, for example, is both a political and religious slogan that the Muslims use. The term, though meaning, "To strive in the way of Allah" suggests a violent force to make others submit to Islam.

In many traditional African societies, there were rulers of some sort who were kings, queens, chiefs or elders. These people were not simply political heads: they were the mystical and religious heads, the divine symbols of their people's health and welfare (Mbiti, 1969:182). The individuals as such may not have outstanding talents or abilities, but their office was the link between human rule and spiritual government. They were, therefore, divine or sacral rulers, the shadow of or reflection of God's rule in the universe. People regarded them as God's earthly viceroys. Mbiti notes that they gave them highly elevated positions and titles such as: "saviour", "child of God", "chief of divinities", and "lord of earth and life". Rulers, therefore, were not ordinary men and women; they occupy a special office, and symbolise the link between God and man. In Africa, therefore, there was no dichotomy between politics and religion. Religious ideals are the norms of society by which members of society are judged.

### **New religions and new systems of government in Africa**

Africa has had a lot of interaction with other systems of governance and other religious beliefs. Colonialism brought new systems of governments, which tended to be autocratic, centralised and global. This was also the time of arrival of Islam and Christianity into Africa. Hansen (2002) states that the flag followed the cross. The colonial Church seemed to work hand in hand with the colonising government and in hence people did not see any difference between the colonial masters and the missionary. Because of this marriage between the church and the colonial government, some Africans formed their own indigenous churches based on the quest for political independence.

One of the contributions that the missionaries brought was education, which in turn armed many Africans with ideas that later on turned out to be very useful in the African quest for self-governance. Many of the young leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor, Sekou Toure, Jomo Kenyatta, Patrick Lumumba, Julius Nyerere, Milton Obote and many others were products of the missionary education. They later organised crusades against colonialism and won their battles for political independence. At this time of the struggle for independence most Catholic and Protestant leaders did not fight to support the new leadership who were defending a

noble cause of freedom, liberty and human dignity. This complicity of the church forced many Africans to form their own churches. In the present Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, two major churches emerged: The African Protestant Baptist Church founded in 1956 by Bishop Kitobo Kabure-ka-Leza and Kimbanguist Church which fought against Belgium colonialism. The Mau Mau in Kenya and the Maji Maji rebellion had religious overtones.

According to Merton (1968), unfortunately, the hard fought independence in the 1960s entered into the era of death, doom and destruction in the subsequent two decades. There followed chaos, rise of militarism, the cold war, corruption, etc. The new elite moved towards centralisation, consolidation and silencing critics. The Religious organisations that had been recognised at independence as partners were sidelined. In other instances, religious institutions such as schools and hospitals were nationalised. Almost invariably, the church was marginalised in power sharing and at best given a ceremonial role of leading prayers at state-functions.

During the cold war, the churches played different roles and faced many difficulties. In some cases, the church took sides with the oppressed and as a consequence faced persecution. In other cases, it took sides with the dominant powers and kept quiet in the face of all evils of militarism and dictatorship. Such religious leaders were compromised with lavish gifts such as cars and handouts. But where the church chose the prophetic role, it faced persecution. The best example we can sight is that of Archbishop Janan Luwum of Uganda who stood out against the dictatorship of Idi Amin against all odds when all other religious leaders kept mum. He was consequently murdered by Amin agents. In South Africa, some churches did not compromise with the apartheid. They took the side of the poor and did not give up that role until the end of apartheid. Of the most outspoken and renown characters is Bishop Desmond Tutu. According to Merton (1968), Adeyemo also notes that, when Mobutu introduced Movement Populaire de la Revolution as a one party state and a political religion in former Zaire, the church vehemently opposed it until it was removed.

### **Religion and politics today in Africa**

In their quest for personal wealth and power some African leaders have impoverished their countries and perpetuated corruption. Greg (1997) notes that independent Africa has witnessed more violence of human rights, corruption, injustice and oppression than it did in colonial times. Many political leaders own public lands and assets wrongly. They take social positions to "eat" and to enrich themselves. A number of African heads of State have been trying to endure and get support, if not survive on power from some religious leaders.

According to Merton (1968), during the last two decades religion has again come to the forefront of socio-economic and political life of many countries. Religious organisations have been actively involved in various efforts aimed at conflict resolution and peace. The people of Africa turned to the churches for direction and solutions. African Churches suddenly became the centres of socio-political life. For example, the Churches initiated the peace agreement in Liberia. They also conducted National conferences in Benin, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Togo, Liberia, Mali and Democratic Republic of Congo. These National Conferences, usually led by religious leaders, brought all political, social and economic forces of the country together to analyse the political situation of the country, to draft a provisional constitution and to institute an interim government to lead the country's transition.

Greg (1997) notes that the Religious organisations helped many countries to draft the new constitutions. In countries like Benin, Congo, Togo and DRC, religious leaders were asked to be speakers of parliament. In Togo, for example, a bishop acted as speaker of parliament for two years and in Congo, a bishop acted in the same capacity for almost four years. In Liberia, during the war, the head of the Lutheran Church was asked to be the vice president of the country while people were looking for means and ways to end the civil war. Former President Nelson Mandela appointed Archbishop Desmond Tutu to lead the Truth and Reconciliation commission to deal with the crimes of apartheid and bring about reconciliation.

After fragile democracies have been installed in many countries, several issues are emerging. These issues require the church to reposition itself and redefine its ministry because the church's call for change generated conflict with those who wanted to preserve the status quo. Where elections have been held there is need for unity and co-operation that are pre-requisites for peace and reconstruction. In Uganda, for example, the churches have formed an organ called "*Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC)*" which combines the Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox Churches. They engage themselves in civic education of the whole population and are at the forefront of political and social issues of the country, especially election monitoring. They insist that they have the God-given moral duty to enlighten Christians to see that in advancing the values of democracy, they are advancing the values of God's kingdom. Hansen (2002) notes that at present, Professor John Mary Waliggo, who is a Catholic priest, was appointed by Government to be head of Uganda Human Rights Commission. This is a major breakthrough of the recognition that the church has a stake in the socio-economic and political advancement of the country.

Hansen (2002) notes that in Kenya, the church has played a significant role in the politics of the country. The

first Joint Pastoral letter of the Archbishops, bishops and Prefects Apostolic of Kenya was in July 1960. This letter was written at the time when Kenya was still finding its political bearing. Kenyatta and other leaders were still in prison. The letter was encouraging Kenya to independence. The concern for peace and pastoral admonitions against tribalism and revenge must be understood in the context of the Mau Mau struggle, which was still fresh in people's memories. The next significant letter was written on Independence and Peace on the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of Independence, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1973. In it the Bishops speak about peace which was threatened by greed for power and wealth. Other letters followed some written directly to the president.

In 1988, the Kenya Episcopal Conference established a "*Justice and Peace Commission*" which provided inspiration and support to promote peace and justice. Through this Commission they have spoken for the people during times of elections. They have assisted through "*National Ecumenical Civic Education Program*" to monitor elections. To this day this program is actively involved in the Constitutional Review process. There are also individual religious leaders who speak out whenever people's rights and freedoms are at stake. Notable among the vocal religious leaders are retired Archbishop Raphael Ndingi of the Catholic Church, The Anglican retired Bishop David Gitari and Sheik Balala, of Mombasa, a Muslim who was very political minded but later became silent for reasons which are not clear to the public. Other religious leaders have occasional political outbursts whenever there is a crisis although not out of principle.

It's a pity that in Africa, some African religious leaders avoid political issues affecting their countries and support the established order. The leaders argue that their role is to pray and not to be involved in politics. This category of leaders holds that politics is a "dirty game" that any religious person worth his/her vocation must disassociate and distance oneself from. They are quick to quote the Biblical episode concerning the payment of taxes to the Romans in Mark 12:13 - 17; Matthew 22:15 - 22; Luke 20:20 - 21. In these texts, Jesus gave the answer: "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar." They read into this answer a general principle of the legality and autonomy of states in regard to religious associations (Edelen, 2005). There are such Churches in Kenya like, Seventh Day Adventists, Salvation Army, Society of Friends, Africa Inland Church, African Gospel Church, Pentecostal Assemblies of God and the Church of God, that have distanced themselves from the National Council of Churches, partly because of its involvement in politics. Such Churches take the view that involvement in politics is not within their institutional interest and violates their understanding of Christian mission.

Religious leaders who despise politics give the impression that God is not interested or concerned with

people's socio-political, economic issues but only the salvation of their souls. To them religion has nothing to do with the social life of the people and politics is the sin of the highest order. This kind of religion is built on the foundation stone of the Hellenistic idea of the disembodied soul in which matter is sin (Okullu, 1974:1ff). This is the kind of Christianity that some missionaries preached. Our reaction is that if God is interested only in the salvation of souls, many people do not need such a God. Man is much more than the soul; the love of neighbour means also caring for the body as well. Jesus made this statement to the tricky political question he was asked, whether it is lawful to pay tax to Caesar or not. The fact that, Jesus answered the questions quickly shows that he had interest in political matters. The master of Christianity, Jesus, was involved and committed to politics. Therefore, the actual religious leaders should be committed to politics. It should be noted that, since religious leaders are God's servants for ensuring promotion of justice and righteousness, they must criticise the state if it does not promote justice and human dignity.

### **New religious movements and politics: rural areas**

As already noted earlier, some New Religious Movements were formed as a reaction to the mainline Churches that seemed to support the colonial governments. These Religious movements and Churches were of political nature and fought for independence. There are many examples of these Churches which include the Napramas of Mozambique: this was a pro-government militia formed by Antonio Manuel, in 1990. Antonio was a young man who claimed to have died at the age of 12 and resurrected to end the civil war between the government and RENAMO. Antonio fascinated his followers by claiming that he could neutralise RENAMO bullets with the ash of sacred tree, which gave them stupid courage. He was later defeated (Edelen, 2005).

Others are the emergence of Holy Spirit Movement of Alice Lakwena, who is said to have been a prostitute, in Northern Uganda. She claimed that the Holy Spirit called her and sent her to Uganda by the Christian God. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, her medium, Alice Auma Lakwena, a young woman from Gulu, built up an army to overthrow the government of Museveni, to cleanse the world of evil and to build a new world in which man and nature were reconciled. Not only men and women fought as the Holy Spirit soldiers but also 14,000 spirits and part of animate and inanimate nature such as bees, snakes, rivers, rocks and mountains, among others. The war of the Holy Spirit Movement was a cosmic uprising in which human forces, spiritual forces and forces of nature actively took part together (Hansen, 2002). In mid 1980s troops led by Alice Lakwena protected by magical medi-

cine engaged the National Resistance Army (NRA) in a series of fierce battles. Many who formed Lakwena's followers were Acholi of Uganda. Eventually, on the temporally basis they gained the upper hand against NRA. The Acholi were provided with "magic medicine" to encourage them in battle. President Museveni called them "Forces of Backwardness" and fought hard to eliminate them (Edelen, 2005).

Currently, in Kenya, the researcher has observed that the government of Presidents Moi and Kibaki have been having a difficult time putting up with the *Mungiki* sect that claims to have been started by God who is their "Chairman and decision maker". Lately, the sect has demonstrated a fearlessness and militancy that alarms other citizens and leaders. It has raided police stations, engaged the police in running battles, forcibly circumcised women, stripping and beating women dressed in trousers, attacking other Churches, administering oaths and many other subversive activities. The claim of the sect is that they are advancing the objectives of the *Mau Mau* which have been betrayed by the present government. They are at the forefront of the campaign for a people-driven constitution reform. They preach snuff, the female cut and worship a traditional god, bemoaning forgotten values and practices. The group, which is traditional, religious and also political, has been accused of being backward, anti-development and of harbouring subversives bent on visiting bloodshed and terror on other citizens.

During pro-democracy agitation in the 1990s, the Kenyan government regarded such religious groups as "ethno-religions", and so they were seen with intense suspicion. A Kikuyu cult by the name, "*Tent of the living God*" which combines traditional practices with Christian beliefs was banned and its leader (Ngonya wa Ngakonya) was arrested. This cult does share something in common with Mungiki Sect mentioned above. The government justified the cult's closure on the grounds that Kikuyu political opposition groups in their political campaign allegedly used it. It is noteworthy saying that, political parties come and hide themselves behind the new religious movements.

In Nigeria, Maitatsine movement led by a man (Marwa), who claimed to be a new prophet of Islam was grounded in social and political radicalism, which rejected the authority and counted upon the support of Northern Nigeria. This movement can be seen as a millenarian movement. About 5,000 people died in 1980 during the 11 days of rioting. Matatsine followers had contempt for the materialism of Kanu State and demonstrated their class antagonism by taking to the streets to destroy Godlessness manifested through shops (used to milk the poor), bars and Christian Churches. Marwa was by no means a conventional follower of Islam and showed no respect to the Muslim community and its founder. The Imam called him "infidel or magician". The interesting

aspect of Marwa is the high regard accorded by many of the high prominent class of Nigeria, because these high-class people used to go to "purchase" charms, and get certain power to prevent any kind of misfortune. The result of this was that Marwa became renown as a prominent dispensary of protection enjoying the company of politicians (Edelen, 2005).

### **Recommendation for politico-religious co-existence**

Having examined the various relationships between different religions and politics we note that there is no way religion can be separated from politics. It must be emphasised that the state is a divine institution of God for human society all over the world. It is created to keep law and order in society. Without outward civil order, no society can exist. Religion comes in an institution by God to bring the mind of God to bear upon total human life and to contribute to the building of value systems upon which a sound human society is built. Whilst religion does not claim temporal power over people, it however appeals to their hearts and consciences. The two institutions have a lot of common ends. They can work together in a task of building healthy and viable societies and in the moral and material development of the people. The foundation for such co-operation must be a friendly relationship between the Church and the state, based on mutual respect.

Bishop Okullu (1974) suggests another very important type of relationship. He suggests that a happy relationship between religion and politics will depend on each recognising the other as an independent and distinct body in their entire office and function. The State must recognise that the church has a divine right from God to possess and to use the rights of correction and admonition invested in it without threat or interference from the State. The different religious groups have the right to expect protection from the State in the interest of freedom of worship which comes from God. According to Taylor (2002), the Church on the other hand should recognise that the administration of public affairs belongs to the State. The formation of legislation and the enforcement of the same are the responsibility of government.

It is also important that religious organisation do not act in isolation and in contradiction as though the same God is speaking different things to different people. If the religious bodies speak about the love and unity that must characterise the nation, they must be seen as the champions in their own lives. Divisions and oppositions between the various religious bodies diminish, if not totally rendering useless, the moral authority of religion to speak about related issues in politics. This means that the various ecumenical councils which bring together several religious denominations must be consolidated.

These councils or whatever name they are referred to, help denominations to work together on certain social programs co-operatively and provides them with a platform for dialogue between them and the State. Because it is drawn from different religious denominations, the "National" Councils are likely to be looked at by government officials as having a stronger voice than just isolated individual religious leaders.

According to Smith (2004), religious leaders must reject to compromise or to be bribed by the state to rationalise political issues. They must remember that they have dual functions: To carry out the spiritual mission of building the kingdom of God and also as citizens of their earthly country, they cannot avoid political involvement. Therefore, religion and politics cannot be separated. They go together, though politics is subset of religion because as Ratzinger (2001) notes, men and women and their hopes extend beyond the thing that is the State and beyond the sphere of political activity. This is where religion rightly should come in to help form a just and humane society. The first president of Kenya Mzee Jomo Kentatta told the AMECEA Bishops "You are the conscience of society and if we go wrong and fail to correct us one day you may answer for our mistakes" (Edelen, 2005).

### **Conclusion**

The issue as to whether the church should be involved in politics is no longer a debate. Church and politics are inseparable. The question therefore, is not whether the churches should be involved in politics but how and to what extent the church can contribute to democratic politics without losing sight of its mission, vision and indeed, credibility. The church should review its approach to the promotion of democratic governance, especially considering the lack of consensus among churches, in order to forge an ecumenical consensus that would credibly enhance maximum input of Christians in shaping the destiny of African countries. Today, it is common for individuals, church leaders, denominations and church organisations to make pronouncements in the mass media, criticising various government sectors for "undemocratic" practices. One only needs to peruse the dailies to see the frequent accusations and counter-accusations between churches and state. This adversarial approach does not augur well with both parties. In practice, it tends to strain the relations between the governments and the churches involved, with each side blaming the other instead of mutual co-operation.

The various religious organisations should rethink about their mission of religion in politics and identify the appropriate approach to political issues. In this way, realistic strategies may be formulated, that can create better working relationships with secular institutions through identification of common interests between reli-

gion and politics. Religion has an obligation to participate in re-building the nations of Africa on the principles of genuine freedom, justice, peace and reconciliation. The task of religious leaders is not merely to vibrate the current waves of public emotion but to seek to understand, and help others understand the national situation in order to be able to change it for the better. According to Kytte (1983), the confrontational approach does not seem to bear any positive results.

Religion has a great opportunity to contribute to the reconciliation of the state and the states. Many religions are based on the basic principle of "Love of God and neighbour". It is with such contributions that religion can gain respect and relevance in the secular world. One of the most effective ways of imparting religious ideals is through schools. This avenue for direct religious influence, however, has been blocked by government take over of schools founded by religious organisations, putting both the church and the state in the horns of a dilemma. Many people, especially parents, today see the necessity of bringing up their children on religious principles. The need is even becoming more urgent in the face of indiscipline, riots and even mass murders (as in Machakos District in Kenya where over 60 students were burnt to death in an inferno when their dormitory was set on fire purportedly by fellow students) in our schools peo- today. The State must note that the problem of the young ple and of countries can only be solved if genuine religious principles are used as a moral basis of the civil code. This can be done if the religious principles are inculcated in schools through the teaching of Religious education.

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