

## The Church-State Relationship in Kenya after the Second Liberation Struggle

Stephen Kioko David and Michael T. Katola

### Abstract

*The paper examined the dynamics of Church-State relationship in Kenya after the second liberation struggle. It is argued that the public theologies in Kenya have been experiencing a process of decay albeit with seemingly faint hope of resurgence. The era of struggle for the second liberations (late 1980s and throughout 1990s) saw a very active prophetic church calling for democracy and development. However, with the realization of democracy from 2000, the mainstream Christianity which was the voice of masses relaxed and eventually lost its credibility and legitimacy as the conscience of the society. It was further argued that despite the current euphoria depicting Pentecostals as the new prophetic voice, just like the mainstream Christianity, Pentecostals have not upheld their prophetic mandate. They have also been easy targets of co-option by the political class. Indeed, it is the voice of the mainstream Christianity that is beginning to resurface. The paper also highlighted that the death of public theologies has also negatively affected democracy and development. The study of Church and state relationship in Kenya requires retracing history in order to understand the ever changing and evolving roles of the Christian churches in public life in pursuit of second liberation, during the second liberation and after the promulgation of the new constitution in 2010. The paper then covered four political regimes (Moi, Kibaki, coalition government (Kibaki and Raila) and Jubilee governments (uhuru and Ruto). Consequently it opened a wide range of understanding the dynamics of church and state in Kenya in a democratic era.*

**Keywords:** Church, School, Religion, Kenya

---

### Introduction

Religion plays a critical functional role as an agent of the process of social change and development. This social functional role of religion translates to the fact that religion cannot be restricted to the specific order of personal spirituality at the expense of the public sphere. Indeed it is as Tarimo (2009) notes that if religion is excluded from the public life, it normally resurfaces through a back door. This explains why enlightenment and secularization movement's attempts to disfigure the public role of religion have proved a wishful thinking. Religion has and continues to buttress public life effecting social, economic and political reforms. This is especially in indigenous African worldview where secularization is an alien concept. The African worldview was built on an integral whole not demarcated with lines of secular and sacred (Smith, 1971; Chepkwony, 2008; Gecaga, 2007). What existed was a religio-political context in which the ideological bases of the state were guided by entirely religious ideas. It follows that the church in Africa as a religious institution cannot be left out

in the participation in the public life. The church endowed with the word of God, becomes the paradigm of God's will for the society. In being the paradigm of God's will for the society, the church then becomes the salt and the light of the society (the conscience of the society). In this respect, the church fights against all forms of retrogression inform of Institutions or ideologies that rob people the opportunity of experiencing their full humanity. This calls for a constructive engagement on the part of the church. And indeed just as Ellis & Gerrie (2004:22) reason that the study of the religious thought is a privileged opportunity for observing political practice in Africa, this papers proofs its importance. This paper investigated the relationship between church and state in Kenya after the second liberation. The critical question(s) the paper attempted to answer was, "What are the dynamics of church –state relationships in Kenya in a democratic era? Is the prophetic voice of the mainstream Christianity dwindling and what explains it? How has the fading voices affected democracy and development that the church fought for from 1990s? Is Pentecostalism the new prophetic voice in Kenyan politics? Towards that end the paper interrogated church and state relationship in Kenya from 1985-2002 (under Moi regime), Church and state relationship during Kibaki and Coalition government (2003- 2012) and Church and state relationship during Jubilee government (2013-2016).

### **Theoretical Framework**

In order to understand Church-state relationship in Kenya after the second liberation struggle, Prophetic Realism Theory by Fowler (1987) guides the paper. Prophetic Realism Theory is an extension of Niebuhr's writings (1952) on Christian Realism. The term 'prophetic' is borrowed from the Biblical Old Testament prophets who spoke against the evils in their society .Prophetic Realism Theory is stated as a strategy in the spirit of biblical prophets that refuses to let people ignore the oppression and injustices that the society produces and condones. It does this, by seeking to raise awareness of the structural and personal evils that mar society. At the same time, it points in practical and concrete terms what changes are needed for the society to be in the light of the word of God. The theory is utilized in the paper to show that Christian leaders must actively and realistically become engaged in the socio-political sphere creating a holistic environment for people to experience their full humanity. This is because if the church does not make the Gospel truths practical to the society it risks losing its relevance. Endowed with the Gospel truths, the Church then becomes the paradigm of God's will for the Society/nation. It is in this context that the words of Julius Nyerere warn and admonish the clergy in their quest for prophetic mandate:

What is the church, if not the defender of the defenseless? What is the mission of the church, if not like its master, it does not readily give its life so that the world may live? What is the task of the minister of the church, if not to identify with, and participate in the liberation of people from all sorts of physical and spiritual slavery? (Magesa 1988:115).

It is against this theoretical background that the analysis in this paper proceeded to discuss the dynamics of church and state in Kenya after the second liberation struggle.

### **The second Liberation Struggle: The Active prophetic Church (1985-2002)**

The second liberation struggle in Kenya was a search for democratic reforms and development within a closed one-state party state and dictatorial retrogressive political rule under Kenya African National Union (KANU). It was a pursuit of a new dispensation and the church especially the mainstream clergy together with the help of civil society spearheaded the reforms. The activism of the Church during that period saw the church labeled as, the

bulwark against authoritarianism and the church leaders as "firebrand". In the context of this paper, this period is between 1985-2002. Though it forms a section of period during Moi's era, it is preceded by church and state before the independence and during the Kenyatta regime.

The relationship between Church and State in Kenya during the search for independence was that of collaboration and hegemonic control between the missionaries and the colonial government (Hayness 1996, Githiga 2001). This was with an exception of few missionaries<sup>1</sup>. During the Kenyatta era despite the church being mainly under the leadership of the white missionaries, it was also under a learning stage. She had to learn how to relate with the African government. As Aboum (1996) observes the African government expected the Church to be loyal as it had been in the previous colonial government. Generally, during the Kenyatta era, the church and state had cordial relations, except on critical occasions like 1966 and 1969<sup>2</sup>. The relationship between the Church and State during the Moi era has been extensively covered by many scholars such as Paul Gifford (1999, 1992, 2009); David Throup (1995); Henry Okullu (1979; 1988); Babere Chacha (2010) Damaris Parsitau (2008; 2011) among others. All these studies have underscored the conditions leading to a closed political system and the Mainline Christianity emerging as the voice of the voiceless. This paper will capture a brief section outlining the efforts of the church in search for multiparty reforms and development.

The early period of Moi era (1978 -1985), was the honeymoon period between the Church and the State (Githiga, 2001). From 1986 onwards the church begun being critical of president Moi's rule. From 1986-1992, the focus of political debate was abuse of civil liberties through replacement of secret ballot to queuing system, and the clamor for multipartism. The church through the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the later by the Catholic Church condemned the queuing system expressing that it infringed on the citizens civil rights. The church leaders went further in condemnation of how the government handled 1988 elections.

Early 1990, the church began to call for constitutional reforms as a requisite to multiparty democracy. In this period, the church touching the individual church leaders like Bishop Alexander Kipsang Muge; Bishop David Gitari; Bishop Henry Okullu (all from Anglican Church of Kenya). Others were Rev. Timothy Njoya (Presbyterian Church of East Africa) Bishop Ndingi Mwana-Nzeki, (Catholic Church) and Rev. Mutava Musimi (former NCCCK secretary) among others. All these Church leaders under NCCCK as the umbrella body became the voice of the voiceless standing against the authoritarianism of KANU regime. By December 1991, the efforts of the church bore fruit with the repealing of action 2A and making Kenya multiparty state. Moreover, to safeguard the political reforms, the church did not just give public pronouncements, but also educated the citizens on participatory democracy. Indeed this is in line with Tarimo's (2009) observation that the public role of religion is not limited to giving public pronouncements, but rather, to participate in the formation of public conscience that effects social practice.

---

<sup>1</sup> Key missionaries were Archdeacon Walter Owen and Archdeacon Leonard Beecher. see Githiga (2001:30-34).

<sup>2</sup> In 1966 the Church through NCCCK exposed KANU's plan of misusing public money in building an ostentatious headquarters at Uhuru Park. See Okullu (2003: 54). Again in 1969 the church condemned the secret oath-taking after the assassination of Tom Mboya. see Githiga (2001:54).

In addition, in effecting this public conscience the church entered into the second phase of second liberation; an initiative towards constitutional reforms. The church sponsored a civil society movement in 1994, labeled citizen's coalition for Constitutional Change (4Cs). The initiative was dubbed the *Kenya we want*, and was drawn by Law Society of Kenya (LSK), International Commission of Jurists (ICJ –Kenya), and Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) but it was sponsored by Catholic Church and the NCKK. Further, in 1996, the NCKK and the Catholic Church revived the earlier initiative that had slowed down and demanded constitutional reforms as a precondition to 1997 elections (Maupeu, 2005). The church was very strong in calling constitutional reforms using all means like forming conventions like National Convention Executive Council (NCEC) and demonstrations. Indeed some like Presbyterian clergy Timothy Njoya was beaten by police to a point of being in coma while Bishop Alexander Muge, died in mysterious accident; a death seemingly connected to his advocacy. While some churches remained strong supporters<sup>3</sup> of the authoritarian Moi government, most of the churches and leaders took their prophetic mandate with vigor. The efforts of the church bore fruit through the 1997 minimal constitutional reforms. Towards 2002 elections, a key constitutional reform was enacted to check the presidential powers, thus presidential term was limited to two terms of five years each. Consequently, through the Ufungamano initiative, the church pushed hard the agenda of constitutional reforms this time round towards reforms for a smooth transition from Moi's presidency. Therefore, during the era of the search for political liberation, the church together with the civil society emerged as a strong supporter for reforms which would guarantee democracy and development. Would the church retain the same vigor after the realization of the democracy?

### **The era of Democracy: The Fading Prophetic Voices (2000 -2012)**

As Maupeu (2005), rightly observes the December 2002 elections results giving President Mwai Kibaki a hands-down victory, met the expectations of the political reformers, key among them, the mainstream Christianity. However, it is the observation of this paper that it was the realization of this long waited victory, which brought lethargy to the prophetic spirit, and progressive death of public theologies. The critical question(s) is what happened to the once active Church on sociopolitical issues? What factors can explain the dwindling voices of the mainstream Christianity? Did the Pentecostals come in as new voices?

The relationship between the church states during the democratic era is characterized by dwindling prophetic voice of the Mainstream Christianity and emergence of new voices (Parsitau, 2012). It saw the Mainstream Christianity slowly and eventually compromised such that by 2008 post-election violence (PEV), it had no voice to negotiate for peace; it had become part of the compromised and divided political class. A number of reasons explains this sad turn of events and thus explains the dynamics of church-state relationship in Kenya after the second liberation struggle.

### **Christian ideology**

In the context of this paper, Christian ideology sets in when the church attributes a certain political change or reformation to God to the extent that it becomes an end to itself thus leading to compromise and lack of prophetic voice. As discussed in the previous sections, the church in Kenya was a key participant in the second liberation struggle. Indeed it was the voice of the voiceless to a point of almost being the opposition party of the moment

---

<sup>3</sup> See Africa inland Church, Evangelical churches and Pentecostals

(Throup,1995; Gifford, 2005; Chacha, 2010) .With the struggle for multiparty and constitutional reforms, the results of the December 2002 elections marked the arrival of the much sought new dispensation labeled Mwamko mpya (a new awakening). (Maurpeu, 2005). With the defeat of KANU regime and the ushering in of the National Alliance of Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government with the promises of democratic change, a new chapter was setting in. Chacha (2010: 111) captures the expression of the feeling of arrival of a new awakening in the following words:

... when Kenya went into polls December 2002, there was much at stake than the fate of the KANU regime under Moi. For many Kenyans, it was an issue of whether or not they could break the 40-year monopoly of power and determine who would lead the country out of the then crippling economic and political crises in which civil liberties such as free speech that had been severely circumscribed ...indeed as Kibaki's optimistic speech echoed, it was a historic moment for democracy in Kenya

The NARC victory was not only a triumph of political principles, but also a victory of the mainstream churches as stalwart participants in the search for political reforms. In embracing the changes, celebrations and ceremonies ensued. In these celebrations, religious leaders were given large part of the proceedings. These celebrations and ceremonies took the form of prayer breakfast, which marked the early period of Kibaki's presidency (Maupeu, 2005). Notable prayers breakfasts were like the National prayer breakfast in 2003, the Nairobi municipality, the universities and police prayer breakfast.

The Christian ideology was further cushioned by the partial *sacralization* of Kibaki's political leadership. With President taking the figurative posture of the biblical Moses who led the children of Israel from slavery to the Promised Land and promising to lead the country from wilderness to the Canaan, the president was painted a Christian leader. He further affirmed this Christian posture as he visited churches vowing to lead the country using biblical principles (Gifford, 2009). According to Chacha (2010), based on this promise the religious leaders in Kenya relaxed their stance to Kibaki's government. This marked genesis of the loss of prophetic voice by the Church thus marking her just a mere conscience of the nation, with very shallow morals and partisan postures. In such a relaxed mood, the ground was ready for the co-option of the church by political leaders.

### **Co -option of church leaders to the political system**

Co-option of the church by the ruling system happens when the church begins to enjoy a privileged position in the government/political class. In essence, the church loses her prophetic ethics and authority by being part of the ruling regime. It robs itself the moral authority and credibility to comment on the political and the ruling class because it becomes part of it. During the Kibaki era, the co-option of the Church leadership had its genesis when Rev. Mutava musyimi became a close ally of the then president (chacha, 2010). After Musyimi successfully contested for Gachoka Parliamentary seat he thus become part of the ruling regime and his prophetic voice was completely lost. His new silence posture generated public debates on what had happened to his former erstwhile criticism of the government (Parsitua, 2012).

Besides the appointment of Rev. Mutava musyimi, was the appointment of two Anglican bishops. Bishop Bernard Njoroge sat full time for the commission tasked with drawing up the new constitution. Bishop Horace Etemesi sat for the commission investigating the Artur



brothers<sup>4</sup> (Gifford, 2009). While there is nothing wrong with clergy holding a position in public commission, it was the act of the appointment bringing silence on the part of the church. Parsitau (2012) rightly observes that such appointments were largely viewed as a strategy to win the regime's support and heavily compromise the clergy's ability to speak out against sociopolitical injustices and the state excesses.

Likewise, the Catholic Church regarding president Kibaki as one fight their own in matters of faith went silent on his government. Cardinal Njue remained a close ally of the president. In most cases, his pronouncements were interpreted as pro- government. It is within this context that Chacha (2010) rightly argues that the courting of religious leaders by patriarchs of political parties had begun. From this time onwards, the prophetic voice of the church began to dwindle. For example, as the NARC government came to crisis due to the dishonor of the MOU with the Raila Odinga faction, the Church remained silent. This silence and co-option would later result to a loss of credibility and legitimacy of the church in 2008 Post election violence (PEV). The co-option of church and a continued lack of voice would be entrenched in the politics of 2005 draft constitution and the politics of 2008 general elections.

### **Politicization and Ethnization of the Church in 2005 Draft Constitution and 2007 in General Elections**

From a general scope, the participation of church in 2005 draft constitution has been viewed as a moment of regaining prophetic voice. However, a critical analysis indicates that the participation of the church was entrenched only on the contentious issues affecting her spiritual moral values. It was mainly the provision of the Kadhi courts in the draft constitution, which provoked the position taken by the Church. It resulted to a Church that was politicized/partisan. The patriarchs of political parties angered by the failed Memorandum of Understanding<sup>5</sup> (MOU) co-opted the church in the process of voting down the draft constitution. As the country fell apart between banana (YES- Camp) and Orange (NO-Camp), the church did not seem to care to unite Kenyans. After the citizens voted against the draft constitution, the victory was not only for the Orange Camp (NO VOTE) but also for the Church. This explains why as the opposition leaders had a breakfast meeting for celebrations of the victory, the Kenyan Church bishops were conspicuously present (Chacha, 2010, Parsitua, 2012).

The defeat of the draft constitution saw the formation of Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) as a political outfit to compete with Party of National Alliance (PNU) in 2007 general elections. By the end of 2006, the church was completely divided as well as partisan as the 2007 general election approached. The posture of being divided and partisan led to sharp condemnations of the Church by the society. A good example is in report where Obongo lamented:

NCCK's recent omissions and commissions clearly suggest that the faith group's leadership has failed to exercise wisdom and restraint when commenting on issues relevant to the 2007 campaigns, thereby alienating sections of their members with different political preferences (Obongo, 2006).

---

<sup>4</sup> The Artur brothers were international crooks/drug barons whose entry into Kenya was mysterious, seeming enjoying state security and threat to national security.

<sup>5</sup> The MOU was an pre-election pact between Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga on how to share political power after a successful election in 2002. After MWai Kibaki successfully became the third President of Kenya, with the great support of Raila Odinga, he did not honor the pre-election/campaign agreement. This angered Raila and his team to a point of creating an opposition within the government.

The faith community sunk deep into divisive and partisan politics. The church leaders wanting to become part of the ruling regime in 2007 became divided between ODM and PNU. Parsitau (2008) captured the mood of the moment that the clergy departed from being fishers of men to fishers of votes as they declared interest in civic, parliamentary and even presidential positions. This made the church more politicized and divided. There was the talk of politics “everywhere”. A cartoon picturing on daily nation 14th October 2007 illustrated it best. The cartoon illustrated Wanjiku (common citizen) complaining that in Kenya there is politics everywhere; in Newspapers, radio, television, name it... So she decides to look for a political neutral place, and she goes to church, the pastor stands for the reading as follows, " *our first Reading will be from the book of ODM-K, our second reading will be from PNU Testament, and our third reading will be from the ODM proverbs*. Further as Barrack Muluka lamented, the Church had become an integral part of the political system thus making Christianity one or more element of the patrimonial structures (standard, 9, June, 2007 6; Gifford, 2009).

Besides the lapse of the mainstream Churches, the entrance of the Pentecostalism stream of Christianity into politics further complicated the political scenario. Since 2005, Pentecostal Church leaders became active in the debate over the 2005 draft constitution. Towards 2007 general elections they begun being conspicuous in the socio-political sphere. Pentecostal leaders like Margret Wanjiru and Pius Muiru declared interest in civic and presidential posts. Obfuscating the political scenario were the prophecies of various neo-Pentecostal leaders declaring a win for the 2007 general elections. Prominent prophecies were those directed to favored presidential candidates either Mwai Kibaki or Raila Odinga (Chacha, 2010). The prophecies were also partisan by being tribal in nature for example the one declaring Raila Odinga’s win came from Theodhore Aluoch; his tribes man<sup>6</sup>.

As the country approached the 2007 general elections, it was completely polarized along ethnic lines. The church leaders were also part of the polarized community. That is why the post-election violence was sudden even with burning of churches. The burning of the churches and the inability of the church leaders to mediate for peace expressed the complete loss of prophetic authority of the church leaders. What will be the future of the Church’s prophetic voice? Would she rise again to her respected position?

### **The coalition government (2005-2012): A glimmer of hope & politicization and divisions in 2010 draft constitution**

After the PEV, the NCKC and the Catholic apologized to the nation for their partisan posture during the 2007 general elections (Stinton, 2008). The church organized itself to seek reconciliation but it was quite evident that it was no longer the respected conscience of the society. Even the Pentecostal church, lauded as the new voice in Kenyan politics, failed in upholding her prophetic ethics. However in seeking to restore her credibility, as the conscience of the nation the church embarked on a peace-building platform. This strategy figured a glimpse of hope of restoration of the prophetic voice. One of the commendable strategies was the involvement of the church in an inter-religious forum consisting of Muslims, Hindus and Christians. This forum vowed to collect one million signatures in support of the prosecution of the instigators of the PEV. The second strategy was the formation of “wheels/caravan of hope” (*msafara*) initiative. This forum organized national prayers, distributed food to the internally displaced persons all the way from Mombasa, Through Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret and Kisumu (Kilonzo, 2009). At the same time, during the

---

<sup>6</sup> See <http://melgoshrain.wetpaint.com/> A NEW+PROPHETIC+WORD+FOR+ KENYA+2008?t=anon.

wrangles in the coalition government, the church called upon the President and the Prime minister to solve their differences amicably<sup>7</sup>.

The second center of stage bringing the church to public limelight was the clamor for 2010 new constitution. After the bungled 2007 elections, and after signing of the National Peace Accord, a coalition government between Kibaki and Raila was put in place and tasked with restoring the country back to its fallen glory. Although in the first year of its rule the coalition government suffered from misunderstandings from the two principles (Kibaki as President and Raila as Prime Minister), the executive finally agreed on the way forward though throughout its five year term suffered the wars of “lack of consultation”. One of the key strategies to put the country on track was to enact a new constitution. In effecting the constitutional agenda, in 2008 the Committee of Experts (CoE) was tasked with drafting the new constitution (Parsitau, 2012). The 10<sup>th</sup> parliament passed harmonized draft on April 2010. After the publishing and passing of the constitution draft, the Church took issue with it. Church leadership vowed not to vote in the new constitutional draft unless the government deleted the provisions and clauses allowing the inclusion of Kadhi courts and abortion. In an ecumenical spirit, the clergy from different denominations came together forming an anti-constitutional front dubbed Kenya Christian Leaders Constitutional Forum (KCLCF). In this spirit, the church leaders and the anti-constitution politicians joined hands in launching a *No campaign*. The church held mega prayer rallies calling upon their faithfulness not to endorse the new constitution that they deemed dangerous even using red colour in efforts to steer away their congregants (Parsitau, 2012).

Nevertheless, despite the ecumenical spirit fostered by the church for a No vote, the church remained divided. While majority of the church leaders vowed to shoot it down some clerics like the late Rev. David Gitari of ACK and Rev. Timothy Njoya of PCEA were pro-constitution. Rev. David Gitari was so vocal to an extent of pro-constitution politicians asking him to lead a Yes Campaign<sup>8</sup>. The retired Rev. Timothy Njoya painted the anti-draft clerics as anti-reforms and retrogressive. After the citizens vehemently voted in the new constitution on 4 August 2010, Njoya, called the Church to say sorry and ask God for forgiveness for misleading Kenyans<sup>9</sup>. Further, some days before August 4 2010, the immediate former<sup>10</sup> Anglican Bishop Eliud Wabukala seemed to change his position when he advised the faithful to vote with their conscience<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, the Church did not speak in one voice towards the promulgation of the new constitution. Just the like the Politicians the church leaders were divided<sup>12</sup>. The pro-reforms clergy like Gitari and Njoya saw the promulgation of the new constitution as a new beginning and a platform for democratic reforms and development.

---

<sup>7</sup> See Susan Kilonzo (2009). *Silent Religiosity in a Sniveling Nation: The Role of Religious Institutions in Promoting Post-conflict Reconciliation In Kenya*. 17 (1&2). Africa Media Review 95-107 (July 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Salim Lone. Gitari finished his fight on high note ( Daily Nation, Friday, October, 2013).

[www.nation.co.ke/new](http://www.nation.co.ke/new). Gitari-finished-fight - on - high-note/-1056/2019348/-/1283144/-/index.html

<sup>9</sup> Tom Osanjo (2010). Coalition against document fragmented in final days. Found in

[www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/augustweb-only/41.52.O.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/augustweb-only/41.52.O.html).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Bishop Eliud Wabukala the immediate former Bishop of ACK after being in this position from 2009 -2016. He has now being succeeded by Jackson Nasoore Ole Sapit (Saturday Nation, Saturday, and 20.may 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Although majority of the church leaders were anti-new constitution, the different voices of former pro-reforms clergy should not be ignored. While the voice of the many of the church leaders had dwindled, the voices of these retired clergy couldn't be silenced by their retired positions.



Despite the calls for a No vote by the a big section of the Kenyan clergy and anti-constitution politicians, the draft was overwhelmingly voted in by Kenyans with a 67% *Yes vote* compared to a 30% *No vote*. Promulgation of the draft on August 28 2010, announced a new chapter of democratic reforms and development. The 67% victory was sure impression that the faithful did not listen to the voice of their shepherds (the clergy). It further translated that the Church was no longer the credible and legitimate voice in Kenya. It was only the voice of the pro-constitution and pro-reforms retired clerics that would suffice. As the church tried to come to terms with the overwhelming Yes Vote, Cardinal Njue of the Catholic Church had this to say, “We are convinced before God that we have played our role as mandated to us with diligence and respect. God will be our judge”.

Therefore, the relationship between the church and state during the Kibaki era was that of a dwindling voice. The Church did not emerge a strong supporter of the democratic reforms and development that it had fought in the second liberation struggle. Instead, co-opted by the ruling regime it became partisan losing its credibility and legitimacy. The failure of the church to negotiate for Peace during outbreak of the PEV proved that it was no longer a moral authority to reckon. The PEV caused the country much damage in all aspects; socially, economically, politically. The onset of economic, political and social reforms that President Mwai Kibaki had begun where blown. Further, when the Church aligned itself to a No Campaign, against the proposed new constitution, it proved itself anti-democratic and anti-development. However, it was not whole cross-section of church leadership. As indicated above, former pro-reforms clerics like late David Gitari and Timothy Njoya represented the voice of the church. In a way, their voices were a re-awakening call on the part of the church to bring back the lost sphere of “public theology”. What would be the dynamics of church and state in Jubilee government?

### **The Jubilee Government: The praying Church and the pentecostalisation of the political life (2013 onwards)**

The relationship between the church and jubilee government is characterized by strong presence of Pentecostalism leading to pentecostalisation of political life. Though the voice of the mainstream church has been heard, it has been scanty. In this section the key questions are, how did Prayer become woven to the political context? How did this ideology of spiritualization of political leadership affect the prophetic voice of the Church?

#### **Prayer and Pentecostalisation of Political life**

Pentecostalisation of political life has been a feature in jubilee government whereby a Pentecostal ideology has been woven in the political sphere of the country especially by the executive. This aspect is traced to 2012 presidential campaigns for the 2013 general elections. However, the context is deeply rooted in 2008 PEV. As Maupeu (2014) notes that, the 2013 general elections were post-crisis elections. The country was on the process of healing from the effects of 2008 PEV. One process of healing was availing justice to PEV victims. Besides the formation of Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TRJC), the suspects who bore the greatest responsibility were supposed to be prosecuted. Since the country failed in forming a local tribunal to prosecute the culprits, it was the International Criminal Court (ICC), which entered the scene to try the suspects and thus end impunity among the elites.

In December 2010, News of Moreno Ocampo (then ICC prosecutor) coming to Kenya were horrific. As Ocampo vowed to make Kenyan a good example of Justice to PEV victims, all

the suspects trembled with fear. The political language was filled with the Ocampo six. The six were generated from the Waki list, which had been handed over to the ICC. Waki document arose of the coalition governments' pact that they needed to form a commission of enquiry to try the perpetrators. Among the Ocampo six, two stand out for the purposes of this paper; Uhuru Kenyatta, the then deputy prime minister and minister of Finance and William Samoei Ruto, the then minister High Education.

The government as well as the Kenyan parliament attempted to halt the ICC process to no avail. They even appealed to the United Nations Security Council and the International Court itself to no avail. The parliament also tried to withdraw Kenya from the Rome statute. While the suspects cooperated with the court by appearing for preliminary hearings in April 2011 and September for confirmation of charges, it was a picture of innocent people being victimized by ICC. And since all other means to save them had failed, they appealed to God through prayers (Maupeu, 2014).

As a result in 2012 both Kenyatta and Ruto organized prayer rallies cum-campaign sessions. As the two traversed the country in "prayer meetings cum-rally sessions" church leaders were conspicuously present; especially leaders from Pentecostal churches. What ensued was a political-religious framework amounting to reconsolidation of Christianity as a state religion leading to pentecostalization of political life. It was the main stream Christianity which first laid the foundation for the pentecostalisation of political life. In 2012, as Uhuru Kenyatta announced his candidacy for president it was in NCKK premises in Limuru. In the same forum critical were the statements of some clerics. Bishop Emeritus, Peter Njenga (An ACK) and Bishop Lawi Imathiu (Methodist) calling for the unity of the GEMA people against "false accusations of internal and international enemies"<sup>13</sup> On the part of Ruto it was the connection with Bisop Korir of the Catholic church in Eldoret. At Catholic pastoral Centre it was the Bishop who invited Ruto to give his speech. In the same forum many pastors spoke expressing the innocence of Ruto and the whole Kalenjin community. Indeed one Rev. Murpus stated,

...the Kalenjins never premeditated 2008 election and the responsibility of the conflict rested on Raila Odinga who rejected the election results (Daily Nation, April 14, 2012).

With the mainstream Christianity giving a gesture that both were falsely accused, Christianity then became intertwined to politics. Christianity became the intervention measure for the victory of the both Uhuru and Ruto. It echoed the words of the columnist Keguro Macharia that the prayer meetings were a larger part of the dynamics of pentecostalisation of the political and social life (East African, March, 9-15, 2013; Maupeu, 2014). It was at this point that the Pentecostal ideology was born.

Though Uhuru and Ruto (now President and Deputy President respectively) are not members of Pentecostal Churches, they sought to employ Pentecostal ideology to their advantage. Key to Pentecostal theology is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for salvation, speaking in tongues, miracle working, witnessing, spontaneous singing and prayer, discernment, healing and most importantly deliverance and prophesying. In their electoral campaign Uhuru and Ruto employed prayers, redemption and prophetism. Maupeu (2014) captures the use of redemption and prophetism in the following words:

---

<sup>13</sup> The internal enemies were Raila Odinga and the external ones the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The Jubilee electoral campaign appeared as prophetism or the redemption of leaders and their people that should lead to prosperity if not a golden age which prosperity evangelists have repeatedly promised since the beginning of the great revival age

As they traversed the country in prayer rallies, and the Pentecostal leaders painting them as God's chosen, the prosperity of Kenya and all citizens was alluded to them; prophetically Kenya would be redeemed through them. Fortunately enough, and to their advantage, both communities (Kikukuyu and Kalenjins)<sup>14</sup> have a historical focus on redemption and prophetism (Maupeu, 2014). Later after their victory, would Prophet Awour claim he had a revelation of UhuRuto win in February 2013 but kept it a secret to avert political chaos (Gathogo, 2014). Therefore, this was the pentecostalisation of the political life which would be evident in jubilee government afterwards. How did this pentecostalization of political and social life affect the public theologies?

#### **After the March 2013 presidential victory**

As noted earlier, Jubilee government has been a government of "Christianity". The march 9<sup>th</sup> presidential victory was fully associated with God and the future of the Jubilee government was totally 'placed on God' so to say. This explains why the swearing in of Uhuru and Ruto on April, 9, 2013 was peculiar. In the first time in the history of the nation, the president and his deputy knelt down to be prayed for<sup>15</sup>. The prayer was led by Rev. David Oginde of Christ is the Answer Ministries (CITAM). William Ruto( Deputy President) during a prayer breakfast in June would confirm that it was their choice to kneel down in honor of God who gave them victory, though humorously expressing how difficult it was to inform the Chief of Defense Forces that the Commander in Chief (President) would kneel down while the soldiers were on their feet. Before the prayers the Bishop<sup>16</sup> read from Isaiah 45, displaying Uhuru and Ruto as God chosen. In his prayer he invoked that the prosperity of the country will be through the two leaders. Later Rev. Oginde would be captured in cameras visiting both political leaders in the statehouse quite often.

The early months of jubilee governments saw the two leaders attending Churches for thanks giving. Immediately after IEBC declared him the presidential winner on March 9, 2016, Uhuru Kenyatta flew to Mombasa. But of interest was his church attendance at Kisima Cha Neema on Sunday March 10<sup>th</sup> 2013. His visit was in fulfillment of a promise that he was to visit the church after his victory in response to the prayers of the saints there. He stated,

Am happy to join you once again today for prayers to thank God for his blessings and for the peace he has given us. Am grateful for your prayers and I have come to fulfill the promise I made during the [political] campaigns that I will be back to give thanks to God when I emerge victorious (Gathogo, 2014).

On the part of Ruto, after swearing in he developed the tendency of attending well televised Church services especially Pentecostal churches. The media would catch him breaking down in several instances (Gathogo, 2014). In all these services the Deputy President attributed their victory to God. One particular instance was on Sunday March 10, 2013, when he

---

<sup>14</sup> See, Herve' Maupeu, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sWtHXMG08>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

attended service at Faith Evangelistic Ministry in Karen. When a microphone was added to him to address the congregation he broke down including his wife Rachael. After calming down in his address to the congregation he admitted that:

I have not cried like this for many years. The only time I remember crying like this was when I was a little boy and my mother is here to attest to that. My wife knew me as a strong man because she had never seen me emotional like this.... The same God who gave us victory against all odds will do more exceedingly and abundantly for us. It will be more than the people of Kenya want. God is going to do great things for this country (Gathogo, 2014).

The political careers of both the president and his deputy have been so much “christianised”. During the 11<sup>th</sup> parliament prayer breakfast on June 2013 at Safari Park Hotel, the language was that of a church service. The deputy president’s language pictured him a strong Christian narrating that among the lessons he has learned in his political career was the *power of prayer*. He further humorously commented on Jakoyo Midowo’s act of reading the Bible and the presence of Baba Yao (Ferdinand Waititu) in the choir of that day<sup>17</sup>. The Deputy President revealed that prayer is so important noting that the first time they entered Statehouse he and the president had to pray first. In this posture, Jubilee’s government was sacralized.

After the acquittal of President from ICC, and later the Deputy President and Journalist Joshua Sang, the country was set into a celebration mood. In Eldoret, citizens flooded the streets in celebration to a late night even flowing to the following day (Daily Nation, 5 April, 2016). Since the victory was associated with God a thanksgiving Rally was organized at Afraha stadium in Nakuru on April 16 2016. Bishop Mark Kariuki prayed in the rally announcing the collapse of the ICC cases as ushering in a new day, and a new chapter for the nation<sup>18</sup>. It was this moment of intense prayer mood that would see Mike Mbuvi (Sonko) the Nairobi senator lead the people in his own composed song, “ si uchawi ni maombi ( it is not witchcraft but it is prayers) and also a second Christian common hit, “ Hakuna Mungu kama wewe, Twasema Asante ( There is no God like you, we say thank you)<sup>19</sup>

The prayer moments as pentecostalisation of political life in Jubilee’s government are many and multifaceted. As a result, the church especially the emerging voice of the Pentecostals was completely woven into the country’s politics. Indeed Pentecostalism has been the new state religion if not denomination. With this picture of a prayerful government what happened to the prophetic voice of the Church?

### **Church’s prophetic Voice in Jubilee government**

It is the observation of this paper that the church during the Jubilee government can be described as the praying church. Right way from the 2012 electoral campaigns, prayer rallies for intervention over ICC cases to the victory of UhuRuto and the running of the government; the church has been co-opted as an indispensable arm of the government. Deputy President

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVwRBU>. Also Daily Nation Sunday 17, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFFUb6jvMIU>.

while attending Mt. Kenya Full Gospel Church Conference, reiterated that the Church in Kenya was a key partner in Jubilees presidential victory<sup>20</sup>

The strong presence of Pentecostalism has led to conclusions that it is now the new prophetic voice in Kenyan politics (Parsitau, 2012). However, it is the contention of this paper that their voice has been scanty, non-committal and non-uniform. Their strongest voice is only heard when the political class brings an ideology which jeopardizes the church's moral fiber or freedom of worship. For example, in January 12, 2016, Pentecostals leaders within Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK) threatened to vote out Jubilee in 2017. This was in expression of their bitter dissatisfaction with the introduction of law on regulation of religion, with one clause requiring theological training for all clergy to be certified as preachers. Their threats were so strong such that the President had to direct the Attorney General to review the proposals (Daily nation January, 2016).

The other though few instances of the Pentecostal prophetic voice has been on calling the government to end corruption and tribalism. Bishop Mark Kariuki and other Pentecostal clergy vowed to launch a "the National Transformation Campaigns" to reclaim the country's lost glory and trust<sup>21</sup>. However, to date no such launching has been witnessed yet. Therefore, their voice has not been forceful. The same churches leaders have benefited from donations from the political class. The money contributed to during such church fund drives has been suspected of being proceeds from corruption. This explains why the immediate former Anglican Bishop Eliud Wabukala admonished clerics to stop using politicians as Guests of honor in the church harambees (fund drives) in order to retain a moral authority and to fight corruption<sup>22</sup>. In essence, Pentecostal clergy has not been strong a voice to warrant the label of the new prophetic voice. Indeed during the Moi era, Pentecostal leaders praised Moi's leadership even when glaring antidemocratic ideals, abuse of human rights and antidevelopment ideologies existed (Gifford, 2009; Parsitua 2012, Maupeu 2005).

It is difficult for Pentecostalism to have a sustained prophetic voice. First because of her prosperity tendencies tied to wealth. With money being an aspect of prosperity and with the political class dishing money to church leaders, Pentecostal leaders falls as easy victims of co-option by the political class. Second, just like all other Church leaders in Kenya the Pentecostal clergy have also been tribalised. Third, most of Pentecostal clergy lack critical biblical hermeneutics relevant for developing a critical political theology. Instead they have mostly developed a tendency of spiritualizing the political issues without critically dealing with them (Marshall, 2012; Gifford, 2004).

The mainstream church leaders have also not been critical of jubilee government. Their voices can be interpreted as soft and non-committal. The commonly heard voice has been that of Eliud Wabukala in response to issues like corruption and tribalism. The voice of the Catholic Church has been scanty. During the 2016 Easter celebrations, Catholic Church ministers in different parts of the country called upon the Jubilee government to address the increasing levels of corruption and tribalism<sup>23</sup>. While this is appreciated as an awakening of the prophetic voice, the Church has failed in coming out strongly as the conscience of the

---

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin wafula. [Citizentv.co.ke/news/ruto-government-to-tame-rogue-church-preachers-97897](http://Citizentv.co.ke/news/ruto-government-to-tame-rogue-church-preachers-97897).

<sup>21</sup> Antony Gitoga. Standard News Paper. [www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000/8093](http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000/8093)

<sup>22</sup> Dickens Kasami. <http://tuko.co.ke/80413.html>. Bishop Eliud Wabukala has been a voice during Kibaki and UhuRutos government calling upon them to end tribalism and corruption.

<sup>23</sup> Daily Nation, March 26, 2016. Found in [www.nation.co.ke/news/](http://www.nation.co.ke/news/).



society. The NCKK has occasionally commented on corruption and tribalism but her voice has also not been critical. The recent calls by NCKK for reformation of independent electoral and boundaries commission (IEBC) have been noteworthy. Their attempts together with the help of business community in addressing the IEBC stalemate by requiring the Head State and Opposition principles reach an amicable solution deserves credit<sup>24</sup>. However, some political class has condemned the church leaders citing it as ill-advised. The church in general has not come strongly on corruption, the seemingly dictatorship creeping in Jubilee government among other matters of national importance. Instead of being a prophetic voice in practical relevant means, the church has just mostly prayed. In general observation the prophetic voice of the church is yet to be strongly felt. Nevertheless, the ongoing attempts by NCKK to the reformation of IEBC; with attempts of brokering for peace between the Executive and Opposition aroused glimmers of hope of the resurgence of the public theologies.

### **Conclusion**

The relationship of the church and state in Kenya after the second liberation struggle has been that of progressive death of public theologies albeit with weak glimmers of hope of the resurgence of the prophetic voice. During the pursuit for the second liberation, the church (mainstream Christianity) and NCKK came out strongly as the national conscience. However, after voting out the dictatorial KANU regime, the coming in of NARC government with prospective promises of democratic reforms and development, the Church relaxed her stance on the government. The church celebrated the victory of the new democratic dispensation to the point of forgetting to guard and sustain what it had sacrificially achieved. Consequently, the public theologies started facing a progressive demise. The effects were fully realized in the wake of 2008 PEV with church having lost her credibility and legitimacy as conscience of the nation. Although during the Coalition government the voice of the church started resurfacing as the church apologized to the nation and attempted to preach peace and social healing, up to date the voice has never been strong as before. In 2010, the church's position against the new constitution further painted her as retrogressive. The 67% YES vote meant that even the church members disregarded the calls from their shepherds to vote down the draft constitution. The implication was that the Church was no longer the voice of masses.

In the current Jubilee government, the voice of the Church has not been strong and convincing. Indeed the lauding of the Pentecostals as the new voice has proved otherwise. Their voice has been scanty and non-committal except on matters touching directly the running of their religious activities or affecting their moral and spiritual values. Although they have once in a while condemned tribalism and corruption, they have not come out strongly enough since have also been tribal and have benefited from money from corrupt deals. It is the voice of the Mainstream Christianity which has mostly been heard though faint. The Church leaders especially ACK, Catholic Church and NCKK have attempted to address issues of corruption, tribalism and the current IEBC stalemate. Therefore, although there is a seemingly resurgence of the prophetic voice, it is still weak. The church has easily been co-opted by the political class and easily loosed her prophetic voice.

Finally for a vibrant resurrection of the prophetic mandate, the Church in Kenya must employ a critical-detached method (Okullu, 2003; Odamaro, 2007). In this sense, the church guards herself against a privileged position which robs her prophetic voice and also interferes with

---

<sup>24</sup> Daily Nation, June 4, 2016 and Daily Nation May.

her prophetic ethics. For the critical-detached method to be effective its three basic components must be utilized so as to form a health church political ethics: separation, transformation and involvement ( Kunhiyop, 2008). By separation the church must be distinct in terms of her values and morality. It must oppose and repudiate attitudes and standards which are accepted in the rest of the society; it must uphold purity so as to be the salt and light of the world. Through transformation the church seeks to transform the values and morals of the society using the gospel values. In essence it becomes the paradigm of God's will in the society. By involvement, the Church avoids being aloof to in socio-political concerns. However, the call beckons, where is strong and effective voice of the prophet?

### **References**

- Abuom, A. C. (1996). *The Churches' involvement in the democratisation process in Kenya*, In Hizkias Asefa & G. Wachira, (Eds.), *Peacemaking and democratization in Africa: Theoretical perspectives and church initiatives*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Chacha, B. K. (2010). *Pastors or bastards? The dynamics of religion and politics in the 2007 general elections in Kenya*. In Karati Kanyingi and Okello (Eds.), *Tensions and reversals in democratic transitions, The Kenya 2007 General Elections*, Nairobi: Society for International Development (SID) and Institute for Development Studies (IDS).
- Chepkwony, A. (2008). African religion and modern African states, In Gichure, I and P. Benson (Eds.) *Religion and politics in Africa: Theological reflections for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Nairobi: Pauline's Publications.
- Ellis, S. & Gerrie T. (2004). *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political practice in Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Fowler, S. (1987). *The Christian's Social Calling*. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.
- Gathogo, J (2014). *Theo-Political Dominance of Afro-Pentecostalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Lessons from Kenyan Socio-Ecclesial Context*. [www.academia.edu/.../AFRO-PENTECOSTALISM\\_IN\\_K](http://www.academia.edu/.../AFRO-PENTECOSTALISM_IN_K).
- Gecaga, M. G. (2007). *Religious Movements and Democratization in Kenya: Between the Sacred and the Profane* in, Godwin, R. Murunga & Shadrack, W. Nasong'o (eds), *Kenya: The Struggle for Democracy*. London: Zed Books Ltd
- Githiga, G. (2001). *The Church as the Bulwark against Authoritarianism; Development of Church-State Relations in Kenya, with Particular Reference to the Years after political Independence 1963-1992*. Regnum Books International: New Delhi.
- Gifford, P (2009). *Christianity, politics and public life in Kenya*. London: Hurst & Co.
- Haynes, P. (1996). *Religion and politics in Africa*. Nairobi : East African Educational publishers.
- Kilonzo, S. (2009). *Silent religiosity in a sniveling Nation: The role of religious institutions in promoting post-conflict reconciliation in Kenya*. *African Media Review*, Vol17, Numbers 1&2. 95-107.
- Magesa, L. (1988). *Has the Church a Role in Politics*. In: *Towards African Christian Liberation*. Nairobi: St Paul Publications – Africa.
- Maupeu, H. (2005). *Religion and the Elections*, In: *Maupeu, K. Musambayi and W Mitullah (Eds). The Moi Succession Elections 2002*, Nairobi: Transafrica Press.

- Maupeu, H. (2014). *The ICC, God and the 2013 Elections*. In Thibon C. Mildred N. Maurice-Aude, F & Susan M. (eds), *Kenya's Past as Prologue: Voters, Elections, violence and the 2013 General election*. Nairobi: Twaweza Communications Ltd.
- Obongo, J. (2006). 'Leaders need prayers', *The public eye*, October.
- Odomaro, M. (2007). *The Church as Liberator: Towards an African Ecclesiology of Liberation*. 37. *Journal of Hekima College, the Jesuit School of Theology* 31-44 (October 2007).
- Okullu, H. (1987). *Church and State in Nation Building and Human Development*. Nairobi: Uzima Press.
- Okullu (1974). *Church and Politics in East Africa*. Nairobi: Uzima Press
- Parsitau, D. (2008). 'From Fishers of Men to Fishers of Votes: Pentecostal Church Leaders in the Scramble for Votes in 2007 General elections: Paper presented at the Kenya Conference, Oxford.
- Parsitau, D. (2012) *From Prophetic Voices to Lack of Voice: Christian Churches in Kenya and the Dynamics of Voice and Voicelessness in a Multi-Religious Space*.  
<http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/6620/Parsitau.pdf?sequence=1>
- Throup, D. (1995). *Render to Caesar the Things that are Caesar's : The Politics of Church – State conflict in Kenya, 1978 – 1990*. In Hansen H. & Michael T (Eds.), *Religion and politics in East Africa*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Smith, D. (1971). *Religion, Politics and Social Change in the Third World: A Source Book*: London Macmillan Publishers.

### **Biography of Authors**

Stephen Kioko David is a PhD candidate in the Department of Discipline Group of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, South Africa.  
Email: [stephekioko@gmail.com](mailto:stephekioko@gmail.com)

Dr. Michael Katola is a senior lecturer in the department of Philosophy and religious studies, Kenyatta University, Kenya.  
Email: [mtkatola@yahoo.com](mailto:mtkatola@yahoo.com)



© 2016 The Author(s). Creative Commons CC-BY: This open access article is distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License. This permits anyone to share, use, reproduce and redistribute the work without further permission provided the person gives due credit to the work.