

# Seeking the Justice of the Kingdom

20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Christian Heritage Party  
Abbotsford, B.C. 15 November 2007

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## *Introduction*

Faithful political action is about pursuing public justice. Probably most people in Canada would generally agree with that statement. However, what that means exactly depends on which story of the world you believe to be true. As Christians we believe that the Bible tells the true story of the world. It is a story of God's renewing and healing work to restore his just rule over the whole creation. It is a story of God's battle against human sin and injustice for the sake of the world he loves. It is a story that involves his chosen people in his journey to participate in his redemptive work. Our answers to questions of public justice and of political action must be found in this story.

## *The Biblical Story*

When God's good creation was corrupted by sin he set out on a long road of redemption. God chose Abraham, and promised to make him a channel of redemptive blessing to all nations. How would all the nations be blessed? Only as Abraham directed his children and his household to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just (Gen 18.18-19). Only as the people that descended from Abraham became an attractive model of justice that bore witness to the nations that the LORD was the living God.

When God redeemed Israel from Egypt he called them to be a holy nation, a light to the other nations that displayed the love and justice of God before the nations (Ex 19.3-6). They were to be a radiant and attractive community, a "display-people, a showcase to the world of how being in covenant with Yahweh changes a people."<sup>1</sup> They were to be a priestly kingdom who mediated God's blessing to the nations. And so God gave them the Torah, the law to guide their lives to embody God's love and justice. This covenant at Sinai was important: the rest of the Old Testament is really only a commentary on how well Israel fulfilled her calling given at Sinai to be a light to the nations.

The story of the Old Testament is one in which Israel fails to be a light to the nations. And the prophets arise and denounce her covenant rebellion. Probably no prophet is more severe than Amos. In a time when the wealthy lived in ostentatious luxury (3.12, 4.1, 6.4-6), where the poor were ignored and denied justice (2.7, 5.12, 6.6), where commercial practices were concerned only for profit (2.6-7, 5.11-12), where sexual promiscuity abounded (2.7), where political leaders were more concerned for their notoriety than justice (6.1) [sounds very much like our own day], Amos comes with very sharp words: "I don't care about your worship. Show me a just community!"

I hate, I despise your religious feasts;  
I cannot stand your assemblies. . . .

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<sup>1</sup> John Durham, *Exodus* (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco: Word, 1987), 263.

Away with the noise of your songs!  
I will not listen to the music of your harps.  
But let justice roll on like a river,  
Righteousness like a never-failing stream! (Amos 5.21-24)

Amos perhaps still believed Israel could be healed and fulfill their calling, and he calls them to repentance. But Isaiah sees judgment coming on Israel for her unfaithfulness. But that did not mean the end of God's mission. One would be raised up who would bring justice to the nations.

Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
My chosen one in whom I delight;  
I will put my Spirit on him  
And he will bring justice to the nations. . . .  
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;  
He will not falter or be discouraged  
Till he establishes justice on earth (Isaiah 42.1-4).

Isaiah and the other prophets saw a day coming when God would establish his just rule over the whole earth (Isaiah 2.1-4). It would be accomplished by his chosen King in the power of the Spirit (Isaiah 42.1-4). God's people would be regathered, healed, and purified (Ezekiel 26.14-27) so that they might again participate in God's work of liberating the whole world from bondage to sin.

Israel's longing for this day grows until Jesus of Nazareth steps onto the plain of history and announces that the day that Israel has been looking for has arrived. The Spirit is on me, Jesus announces, to usher in God's kingdom, to release the oppressed, to bring justice to the earth (Mark 1.15; Luke 4.18ff.). Good news, Jesus proclaims, God is breaking into history in love and power in me, by the power of the Spirit, to restore the whole life of humankind, indeed the entire creation, to again live under the just and merciful rule of God. This is an announcement that cannot be slotted in the private and personal realm, or tucked away on the religion page of the newspaper. This is front-page news, headline news, breaking world news on CNN. God is rousing himself and becoming King again!

But Jesus begins his ministry and it seems as if everything continues as it did before: Same Roman oppression and cruelty, same greed and injustice of the Jewish leaders, same grinding poverty, same ol', same ol'. And even Jesus seems to equivocate: The kingdom has already come (Matthew 12.28) but has not yet arrived (Matthew 7.21); it is a present reality (Luke 11.20) but is still coming in the future. Even John the Baptist wonders if Jesus is really the Messiah. He sends his disciples to ask if Jesus is indeed the One whom Israel has been expecting (Luke 7.18-23). Jesus sends word back to John that signs of God's restoring power are evident in his work: the blind see, the lame walk, the sick are cured, and good news is preached to the poor. Indeed the whole of Jesus' life is committed to making known the just and loving rule of God in his life, deeds, and words. The power of God's rule has broken into history but the final day has not yet come.

Then it seems a fatal blow is struck. Jesus is crucified. Like other would-be Messiahs before him the alliance of Jewish and Roman injustice nail Jesus to the cross in a cruel death. Surely now this talk of a coming kingdom can be put to rest! But when Jesus rises from the dead, everything changes—at least for his followers. The cross is now interpreted as a mighty act of God, his victory over the evil forces that subjugate his creation (1 Corinthians 1.18-2.4; John 12.31; Colossians 2.15).

The risen Jesus gathers his disciples together, those who have been gathered and will be purified according to prophetic promise (Ezekiel 36.24-27), and says to them: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20.21). As the Father sent me to live a life that embodied God's rule over all

things, as the Father sent me to demonstrate with my deeds the power of God's reign is present, as the Father sent me to announce with my words that God has broken into history to reclaim his world, so I am sending you to do the same. But you will need the Spirit to give you the life of the kingdom that you might be faithful.

And so based on the death and resurrection of Jesus, and on the coming of the Spirit, the community of Jesus' disciples are sent with the headline news that God reigns over all things and will one day put all resistance under his feet. But the mission of God's people change in significant ways from the Old Testament pattern. No longer are they a single ethnic group; no longer are they geographically based in one land; no longer are they a political community made up of God's chosen people ruled by God's law. This newly formed community is sent into the midst of all the nations to embody and announce the good news that Christ is Lord over all of human life.

This means that God's people are shaped by a different story than that of their cultural neighbours. Thus there will be an inevitable encounter between the gospel which tells one story about the world and the idolatrous stories that shape the various cultures of the world. And Jesus is clear—such a clash will likely bring suffering to his followers (John 15.18-21; cf. 2 Timothy 3.12). As they encounter the powers that rule culture there will be resistance and opposition. It will be a spiritual battle in which the conflicting powers seem so much stronger. Yet God's people are to continue to witness to the Lordship of Christ over all of human life in the hope that one day faith will be made sight. Indeed, it is the confidence that one day Jesus will return, put every enemy under his feet, and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father—it is this hope that sustains us in our mission (Philippians 2.9-11).

### *Nine Conclusions for Political Life*

For those of us who follow Christ and have taken the primary clue for our lives from his work and this story, our political calling will be shaped by this narrative. Let me in my remaining time sketch out nine conclusions for our political task in the world to seek justice.

#### 1. The gospel is public truth.

There is nothing that undermines the church's mission in the public life of western culture today, including our political task, more than a misunderstanding of the nature of the gospel and the biblical story. The gospel Jesus preached is not about individual salvation in a future spiritual world. It is about the goal of universal history. In Jesus Christ the kingdom at the end of cosmic history has been revealed and accomplished. It is an announcement that the goal of all history is the restoration of God's reign over all nations, over all of human life, over all of creation. And this reign has broken into history now! In our culture the Bible has been reduced to a 'religious' story that is relegated to the private or personal domain of life. Yet the Bible claims to tell the true story of the whole world. It begins with creation and ends with the renewal of the whole creation. The story of the Bible, and gospel which stands at the centre, is public truth—truth for all people, truth for all of life.

#### 2. Our place at this time in the story is to make known the good news of the kingdom.

The kingdom is *already* here but *not yet* arrived. The power of God's Spirit to heal, renew, and liberate is *present* but the annihilation of all opposition to God's rule will not be a reality until the *future* (1 Corinthians 15.24-28). God has given his people a foretaste of the kingdom. It is a real taste now of the end-time salvation. But the full meal of the kingdom will not come until the future. We live

in a time of the overlapping of the old age and new age, where the powers of evil, injustice, and death coexist with the power of God's Spirit who brings freedom, healing, and liberation. The battle has been engaged until the final judgment. Why has God held off the final judgment? Why an overlapping of the ages? Lesslie Newbigin answers:

The meaning of this 'overlap of the ages' in which we live, the time between the coming of Christ and His coming again, is that it is the time given for the witness of the apostolic Church to the ends of the earth. The end of all things, which has been revealed in Christ, is—so to say—held back until the witness has been borne to the whole world concerning the judgment and salvation revealed in Christ. The implication of a true eschatological perspective will be missionary obedience, and the eschatology which does not issue in such obedience is a false eschatology.<sup>2</sup>

We have been sent to continue the mission of Jesus. David Bosch has helpfully said: "Jesus has not left us with a rigid model for action; rather he inspired his disciples to prolong the logic of his own action in a creative way amid the new and different historical circumstances in which the community would have to proclaim the gospel." In our historical circumstances and cultural context how do we carry out the mission of Jesus to make known God's all-encompassing rule?

3. The mission of the church is as wide as human life and this includes politics.

This witness of which Newbigin and Bosch speak is not simply evangelism and missions. The church's witness is to Christ's Lordship over all of human life. Its mission is to make known the good news about God's rule over all of human life. The Christian Reformed Church's Contemporary Testimony *Our World Belongs to God*<sup>3</sup> puts it well:

The Spirit thrusts God's people into worldwide mission.  
He impels young and old, men and women,  
to go next door and far away  
into science and art, media and marketplace  
with the good news of God's grace. . . . (32)

Following the apostles, the church is sent  
sent with the gospel of the kingdom . . .  
In a world estranged from God,  
where millions face confusing choices,  
this mission is central to our being . . . (44)

The rule of Jesus Christ covers the whole world.  
To follow this Lord is to serve him everywhere,  
without fitting in,  
as light in the darkness, as salt in a spoiling world. (45)

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<sup>2</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (New York: Friendship Press, 1954), 153-154.

<sup>3</sup> This can be accessed on-line at [http://www.biblicaltheology.ca/blue\\_files/Our%20World%20Belongs%20to%20God.pdf](http://www.biblicaltheology.ca/blue_files/Our%20World%20Belongs%20to%20God.pdf)

What follows under the heading of ‘The Mission of God’s People’ is a call for the church to serve the Lord in our whole lives—our marriages and families, our schools and technology, our work and our leisure. About our political witness it says:

Since God establishes the powers that rule,  
we are called to respect them  
unless they trample his Word.  
We are to obey God in politics,  
pray for our rulers,  
and help governments to know his will for public life.  
Knowing that God’s people  
live under many forms of government,  
we are thankful for the freedoms  
enjoyed by citizens of many lands;  
we grieve with those who live under oppression,  
and we work for their liberty  
to live without fear. (53)

We call on governments to do public justice  
and to protect the freedom and rights  
of individuals, groups, and institutions,  
so that each may freely do  
the tasks God gives.  
We urge governments to ensure the well-being of all citizens  
by protecting children from abuse and pornography,  
by guarding the elderly and poor,  
and by promoting the freedom to speak, to work,  
to worship and associate. (54)

4. We need to take seriously the provisional nature of this already-not yet era of the kingdom for our cultural and political activity.

We live in a time when the kingdom has not yet come fully and evil remains very powerful. In fact, the parable of the tares (Matthew 13.14-30, 36-43) seems to suggest that Satan has picked up his work during this time period. One must not underestimate either the power of the gospel that has entered history or the power of evil that remains. This has numerous implications for political engagement including:

- A rejection of both a pietistic quietism and a radical activism: When Jesus announced the kingdom he did so in the context of a fervent longing for the kingdom. Yet one found different approaches. Zealots sought to usher in the kingdom with their revolutionary activism. Essenes waited and prayed for the kingdom with their passive quietism. Jesus rejected both of these roads, and so should his followers. And so, in our cultural and political endeavours we reject both an optimistic triumphalism and a pessimistic defeatism: We are not called to build and establish God’s kingdom on earth now. God will do that in his time when Christ returns. Nor are we adopt the political methods and cultural weapons of the world. If we are not to attempt

to build God's kingdom, neither are we to withdraw, to keep our heads low and give society over to the powers of idolatry. Both of these are real and present dangers in the Christian community today. There is power in the gospel, and God can use this to salt society. Our call is not to be politically successful but politically faithful. All political communities will ultimately crumble. Only a faithful witness in various areas of life will last through the fires of judgment.

- A second implication of living in the already-not yet is, that because of the continuing power of sin in this era, Christians must first engage in serious self-criticism. Simply because we are Christians doesn't mean we have escaped the power of idolatry in our culture. One of the primary reasons that many today do not believe that the gospel belongs in the public square nor that it has anything to offer in terms of a liberating political vision is because of an oppressive history in which Christians have all too easily allowed themselves to be captured by the dominant spirit of the day. The Christian person or party that does not struggle with their captivity to the idols of our culture *first* before engaging and encountering their expression in the public realm is open to the accusation of hypocrisy. Christians will pursue justice humbly recognising the provisionality of their own conclusions.
- Finally, Christian politics should reflect the patience of God in this already-not yet age. Jim Skillen, on the basis of the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13.24-30, 36-43) rightly says:

A Christian view of justice, a Christian view of modern politics, I believe, should be build on this understanding of God's gracious patience during this age. It would not be *Christian* justice for Christians to enjoy some political privilege denied to others. A just state, a just world, is one in which all citizens enjoy the same civil rights and public care. Christian politics cannot be the church's attempt to control the state for its own well-being; Christian politics cannot be constituted by typical interest-group competition to make sure that Christians get their way while others have to fend for themselves.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, as he says later the "Christian state is one that gives no special public privilege to Christian citizens but seeks justice for all as a matter of principle."<sup>5</sup>

##### 5. Our cultural mission, including political activity, is a communal mission.

'As the Father has sent me I am sending you' defines the church's role in the biblical story. The way Jesus made provision for the communication of the gospel through history was not by writing a book as Mohammed did. Rather he formed a community and sent *it* into the world to live and announce it. And so we are commissioned *as a community*.

One of the problems with our English language is that we do not distinguish between the second person singular and plural. 'You' can be one person or a community. We don't have a y'all like our

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<sup>4</sup> James Skillen, *The Bible, Politics, and Democracy: What Does Biblical Obedience Entail for American Political Thought?* in *Confessing Christ in Doing Politics* (ed. Bennie van der Walt and Rita Swanepoel, Institute for Reformational Studies, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, Potchefstroom, South Africa, 1995), 202. (Originally published in Richard J. Neuhaus, ed., *The Bible, Politics, and Democracy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 55-80.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 206.

American friends in the South. Here in John 20.21 the ‘you’ is plural. I am sending y’all, Jesus says, as a community, as a body into the world with the good news. This is a going together. The mission to bear witness to the kingdom of God thus bears a corporative and communal character.

Because of the complexity and size of the task, Christians have often believed that there is a need for Christian organisations and associations (political parties, trade unions, schools, universities, broadcasting corporations, etc.) to fulfill the task. This has been most prominent in the countries of continental Europe. This approach never took root in the United Kingdom, United States, or Canada in the same way. The Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC), the Heritage Party, and Christian schools and universities in Canada and the US are exceptions to this general pattern but this remains relatively untried in Canada.

Newbiggin correctly notes the importance of the individual Christian in the public square when he says that the ‘enormous preponderance of the Church’s witness is the witness of the thousands of its members who work in field, home, office, mill or law court.’<sup>6</sup> But Herman Ridderbos is correct when he adds that the mission of the church “bears primarily a communal character.” He continues noting that “without a proper organizational association we cannot meet our common responsibility in various respects.” He says it will be difficult to meet our Christian responsibility especially in scholarship and politics “without associating ourselves organizationally with one another.”<sup>7</sup>

## 6. We will encounter the idolatry of other stories that shape the public square.

Christian political activity will always clash to some degree with the politics of its culture since those political traditions have been shaped by another story. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment politics in Western culture has been increasingly shaped by a secular form of humanism that believes that science and the rational organisation of society can build a paradise on earth. This humanism took form in various political and economic ideologies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century which, as Bob Goudzwaard points out, filled the vacuum left as the “traditional Christian faith began to fade away in Western society ...”<sup>8</sup>

Those 20<sup>th</sup> century ideologies, like humanism itself, lived off the capital of the Christian faith. Political philosopher John Hollowell suggested over a half century ago that “the modern world has lived for many centuries off its Christian heritage”<sup>9</sup> and it has been that heritage that has provided a foundation for political life. Yet it seems to me that that heritage is almost spent and the scepticism, agnosticism, and relativism of our day cannot provide a vision or foundation for just democratic forms of political life.

Yet it is not true, as some suggest, that we have left ideologies behind today. Goudzwaard points out that since the tap from which these ideologies have surged has still not been turned off ideologies will continue to govern our political, social, and economic lives. He says: “Even in an entirely secular society people will continue to crave one ultimate meaning or another. And it is in that craving that ideologies take hold and prosper.”<sup>10</sup> Today’s powerful ideologies are primarily economic in nature.

Ideologies have to do with the formation of social, political, or economic idols. So there is a need for Christians in their political callings to identify, unmask, and challenge the ideologies and idolatries

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<sup>6</sup> *Our Task Today*. A charge given to the fourth meeting of the diocesan council, Tirumangalam, 18-20 December, 1951. Unpublished paper, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *The Kingdom of God and Our Life in the World*, *International Reformed Bulletin (Kingdom, Church, and Secularism)*, (Number 28, January 1967), 11-12.

<sup>8</sup> Bob Goudzwaard et. al. *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 37

<sup>9</sup> John Hollowell, *Main Currents in Modern Political Thought* (New York, 1950), 692.

<sup>10</sup> Goudzwaard, *Hope in Troubled Times*, 38.

that are driving political life. The marvellous book by David Koyzis *Political Visions and Illusions: A Survey and Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003) is an excellent starting point. More positively there is a need today for a normative and comprehensive guiding vision of society that can challenge the false visions of ideologies, and heal the tensions that exist between political philosophies driven to the right and to the left by those ideologies.

But we must not be naïve. As with Jesus and the early church, a missionary encounter with the idolatrous power that shapes culture may well mean suffering. Perhaps it is even true that increasingly suffering will be a badge of a faithful encounter with the powers in public life.

7. The pursuit of justice is central to this story, and central to the task of politics.

It is clear that justice is a central theme in the biblical story. In 1988 Alasdair MacIntyre wrote a book entitled *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* in which he argues that our understanding of justice will always be shaped by some tradition or story. In an earlier book (*After Virtue*, 1981) he shows that humanistic ethics is bankrupt in providing a true foundation for social justice. Perhaps this is an evangelistically opportune time for Christians to offer a view of justice that arises from the biblical story.

Emil Brunner describes justice in the biblical story in this way:

The Christian conception of justice . . . is determined by the conception of God's order of creation. What corresponds to the Creator's ordinance is just—to that ordinance which bestows on every creature, with its being, the law of its being, and its relationships to other creatures. The "primal order" to which every one refers in using the words "just" or "unjust", the "due" which is rendered to each man, is the order of creation, which is the will of the Creator made manifest.<sup>11</sup>

Christian justice will protect the rights of individual human beings to express themselves as God's image. Certainly this will include especially the unborn, the poor, the vulnerable and weak in our midst. But it will not fall into the individualism that characterizes so much Western politics which *only* or primarily protects the rights of individuals. It will also protect the societal space for institutions like marriage, family, school, business, and many other kinds of associations to flourish and fulfill their God-given calling. But if creation order is the basis for justice it will be more than this: it will include justice for the non-human creation and, moreover, in an increasingly global world will not focus on domestic affairs alone. A Christian public justice will move beyond a politics of national self-interest toward policies of international justice. The whole earth is the Lord's! Put simply: Christian justice will offer a comprehensive view that reflects the breadth of God's creation order.

8. Our mission, including our political activity, is for the sake of the nations.

It has been said that the church is the only community that does not exist for itself. Our call is to love God and our neighbour. Jesus came to a covenant community that had forgotten its calling to be a blessing to the nations. They longed for God's justice that would smash the wicked nations as a potter's vessel. Following the Pharisees many longed to withdraw into a Jewish self-righteous ghetto that avoided the contamination of Rome. But Jesus demonstrated what life in the kingdom is like when

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<sup>11</sup> Emil Brunner, *Justice and the Social Order*, translated Mary Hottinger (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), 89.

he washed his disciples' feet. Surely the reason we challenge ideologies and seek justice is for the sake of our cultural neighbours whose lives are diminished by death-dealing idols and ruinous injustice. Political activity is a labour of loving service to our neighbour. A document on 'Resolutions on Christian Organizations' of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod rightly says: 'The purpose of separate Christian organizations must always be the service of God and fellow-men and never a matter of seeking isolation.'<sup>12</sup> Skillen says "Christian politics will grow when Christians begin to take seriously Christ's command for us to love our neighbors. The love command will lead us to be dissatisfied with the unloving injustice of . . . every type of organization of political life which discriminates against some to the advantage of others."<sup>13</sup>

9. Finally, our political activity must be rooted in prayer.

A central theme of the gospel of Luke as it follows the mission of Jesus is that the kingdom of God is made evident as the Holy Spirit works in response to prayer. The justice of God's kingdom does not come by human effort, organisation, and insight alone. It is a work of God's Spirit. N.T. Wright has put it well:

. . . if the church is indeed to be Jesus' agent in bringing his whole agenda to his whole world, it needs his own Spirit. Indeed, if the church attempts to do what has to be done without constantly seeking to be filled and equipped by Jesus' own Spirit, it is committing blasphemy each time it opens its mouth. This is not a plea that all Christians should enlist in the charismatic movement. Rather, it is a plea that all Christians, particularly those involved at the leading edge of the church's mission to bring healing and renewal to the world, *should be people of prayer*, invoking the Spirit of Jesus daily and hourly as they go about their tasks, lest they be betrayed into the arrogance of their own agendas or into the cowardice of relativism.<sup>14</sup>

### *Conclusion*

About six years ago I gave a lecture in the university at Sevastopol, a city on the Black Sea in the Ukraine, to a large number of law students, most of whom were atheists. The theme of my address was 'Communism, Liberalism, and the Gospel: Three Foundations for Public Life.' My argument was simple: Communism had failed as a political and economic vision because it was rooted in idolatry. Even though much of the Ukraine was taking over the worst elements of Western liberalism, capitalism, and democracy—this political and economic vision too would fail one day. In fact, the book of Daniel makes clear that all empires will ultimately fall and only the kingdom of God will endure. Thus if one wants to build something that will last, politically, economically, judicially, or in any other area of human life, only the gospel and the biblical story will provide a reliable foundation.

One student challenged me asking why I had come to Ukraine to bring religious propaganda. I answered that I was not offering religious propaganda in the way he mistakenly understood religion. Rather I was offering what I believed to be the true story of the world, and the only foundation for

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<sup>12</sup> Reformed Ecumenical Synod, *The Church and Its Social Calling* (Grand Rapids, 1980), 61.

<sup>13</sup> James Skillen, Public Justice and True Tolerance, in *Confessing Christ and Doing Politics*, ed. James W. Skillen (Washington: Association for Public Justice, 1982), 60

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Thomas Wright, *New Tasks for a Renewed Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), 86 (emphasis mine).

public justice. I said that he was free to reject my claim but that he should not trivialise it by reducing it to religious propaganda. I asked him: As a law student, if he did not believe that the Bible offered the true foundation for a just society, what story did he believe would. He answered, he did not know, he hadn't really thought about it. He was only 21 years old. I challenged him to give it careful consideration since his parents had given their lives for an illusory vision that did not last. And they were paying the price. Surely he did not want to do the same.

Paul says that only work done, including political activity, on the foundation of the gospel will last through the fires of judgment. Even if these efforts do not appear to have any affect at all in history, faithful obedience will follow us into the new earth (Revelation 21.26). Skillen says it well:

. . . we can work with true expectancy in politics as those who know that our works will follow us. . . . Moses prays in Psalm 90: "Lord establish the work of our hands." In the apostle John's vision of the final revelation of Jesus Christ, God's blessing comes to those who die in the Lord, as the Spirit says, "that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them!" (Rev. 14.13). What we do in the Lord, by the power of His Spirit, in politics and in every other earthly occupation will be brought to perfection in the final Sabbath. We can be confident that our deeds of justice now are kingdom deeds that will never be lost. Christ is gathering them up into His great storehouse of treasures. They are gold that will not be destroyed by the fire because they are fruits of God's redeeming work in us.<sup>15</sup>

I close with the apostle Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian church: 'Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour is not in vain' (1 Cor 15.58).

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<sup>15</sup> James Skillen, Christian Action and the Coming of God's Kingdom, in ed. James Skillen, *Confessing Christ and Doing Politics*, 102-103.