

# A study of Christian involvement in politics in postmodern world: From an early Christian understanding of Salvation

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## 국문요약

본 연구는 절대적 의미란 존재하지 않고 진리란 상대적이라는 입장을 주장하는 포스트모던 사회에서 기독교적 원리가 정치적 상황에 적용될 수 있는지에 대한 타당성을 고찰한 것이다. 이를 성경신학적 관점에서 논하기 위해 초대교인들이 구원이라는 개념과 메시아라는 인물을 어떻게 이해했는지 살펴보기로 한다. 이들에게 구원이란 단지 생후 영생만을 의미했는지, 아니면 사회 정치적 차원에서 정의실현도 함께 포함되어 있는지의 대한 문제가 제기된다. 이는 종교와 정치가 각기 독립적인 영역을 유지하면서 서로 간섭하지 않는 것을 전제로 하는 사회에서 반드시 짚고 넘어가야 할 부분이지만, 한국 복음주의 신학계에서는 이 분야를 심도 있게 다룬 연구가 매우 부족한 상황이다. 이는 복음과 교회의 세속화를 방지하기 위한 방안으로 간주할 수 있기도 하지만, 오히려 사회변화와 요구에 무감각해져 버리는 현상을 초래하기도 한다. 이는 반드시 한국에서만 나타나는 현상은 아니다. 전 세계적으로 복음주의 기독교 공동체가 겪고 있는 ‘딜레마’이기도하기 때문에 본 논문을 영문으로 집필하게 되었다.

최근에 전 세계적으로 ‘학문의 융합’이 방법론적으로 주목을 받으면서 신학 또한 더 이상 교회에서만 국한되어있는 것이 아니라 사회 전 분야에 접목시켜야 할 해석학적 도구가 되어가고 있다. 이에 대한 전반적 보수 기독교인들 및 국민적 인식이 부정적이라는 점도 성찰의 대상이다. 기독교의 진리는 사회정치적으로 혼란스러워지는 상황에서 마지막 보루가 될 수 있는 도덕적 기준이기 때문이다.

주제어: 기독교신학과 정치, 학문적 융합, 초대교회 구원론, 문화 상대주의

## I. Introduction

*The Messianic Kingship of Jesus*<sup>1)</sup> is the title of author's latest

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1) Choi, S. (2011). *The Messianic Kingship of Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Wipf&Stock.

publication in which I have attempted to present a case of understanding the Christology of the Synoptic Tradition on the basis of the Old Testament, namely, Psalter. In closely examining Israel's messianic expectation especially in the context of exile, I have encountered fundamental tension in the relationship between the Old and New Testaments' portrayal of salvation. This tension is perhaps the most controversial and theologically challenging aspect of Christian faith and yet one of the most neglected aspects of biblical theological scholarship especially in conservative evangelical circle. In short, the question really boils down to "What is salvation and how would one describe salvation on the basis of biblical principle? Is it something that only pertains to the life after death or is it something that has practical bearing in our modern contemporary context?" Is the biblical teaching of salvation only intelligible in spiritual realm? This type of questioning naturally arose in the interpretation of the use of the Old Testament text by the early Christian authors and a critical examination of such question has led to some challenging interpretive outcomes which may indeed go beyond conventional Christian understanding of salvation. It is this aspect of biblical theology that needs to be addressed first before engaging in a debate as to whether it is "biblically justified" for Christians to be engaged in political affairs in order to promote ethical and spiritual ideals of the Bible in the modern contemporary world.

In conjunction with this, conservative attitude or even skepticism towards Christian engagement in politics has cultural grounding which is heavily influenced by postmodern ideals of relativism and pluralism which result in fundamental conflict with the doctrinal stance of Christian doctrine of the absolute truth. Even within the realm of biblical hermeneutics, methodological approach such as "Reader-Response Criticism"<sup>2)</sup> relies on the idea that an each individual reader inevitably brings one's own prejudices and preconceptions to the realm of interpretation that is, by nature, dynamic and creative. Such individualistic approach is rooted in the presupposition that a reader plays a crucial role in the creation of meaning of the text under scrutiny. This also presupposes that a meaning of a text is not fixed but is fluid and dynamic according to various circumstances of its readers. Whether such methodological approach, which is largely influenced by postmodernism and pluralism is fact warranted by the early Christians in their original social setting and theological intention, shall be scrutinized in this paper.

In the context of modern day pluralism and relativism under the

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2) Thiselton, A. (2009). *Hermeneutics: An introduction*. 김동규 역 (2012). 성경해석학 개론. 서울: 새물결플러스.

influence of postmodernism, have given rise to the idea that any religion, Christianity in particular, which claims the absolute truth in its doctrinal stance be best left as personal devotion and commitment rather than in public domain. However, the question also arises whether such view is what the original writers of the Biblical texts actually wanted and hoped for. Such tension has recently given some rise and accumulation of scholarly discussions, albeit very limited since the days of Max Weber, who have seen the relevance and, indeed, the significance in terms of the relationship between religion and social/political development, which unfortunately, has not been the case especially in conservative evangelical circle.<sup>3)</sup> Even outside Christian circle, it has also been pointed out that the academic enterprises such as economic, development and political sociology including social science of cultural anthropology have largely neglected a close examination of the relationship between the participation of religious values in public arena. This might be largely attributed to the growing "anti-religionism" by the majority of sociologists in their fear of the abuse of religious power in manipulating the public, are reluctant to admit the crucial role religious world views play in society. It has been pointed out that "the more modernized the world becomes, the more secular the religions become" is indeed the sociological theory that holds true in our modern day.

However, there is an increasing scholarly acknowledgement these days that a comprehensive approach to religion and political development is required as such approach holds several crucial factors in determining the outcome of successful political advancement as well as the political awareness of public in general which has been shadowed by postmodernism of our modern world. S. Kim notes that a fairly new intellectual movement known as the "culture and development school" have stated that whereas certain culture promotes progressiveness and development but certain others hinder such positive advancement. Recently, scholars based in fast developing countries such as Latin America, China and South-East Asia are experiencing visible social/political development where religious values play a crucial role in their respective cultures.<sup>4)</sup>

Such concern has also been addressed by W. Grudem in his comprehensive yet deeply searching work entitled *Politics according to the Bible*<sup>5)</sup> deals with the subject through biblical theological perspective. He

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3) 김성건 (2013). "종교와 발전에 관한 이론적 검토 - 종교 사회학을 중심으로." 담론. 201 16(3). 95-117

4) 김성건, 109-110

5) Grudem, W. (2010). *Politics according to the Bible-A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

argues that "since all absolute moral standards are in some way based on religious convictions and a sense of moral accountability to God, 'exclude religion' view would tend to remove from the entire nation any sense of absolute moral standards or any sense that there is any clear way of knowing right from wrong. Therefore, the ultimate goal of this viewpoint is not only the destruction of all belief in God, but also the complete moral disintegration of society."<sup>6)</sup>

In such research which not only requires the understanding of biblical theology and the social/theological setting of the early Christians in particular, but also an acute political awareness in our modern world, naturally warrants interdisciplinary approach as an appropriate methodology through which a discussion of an actual implementation of the Word into reality becomes feasible. Such methodological approach is also receiving growing attention these days as the world is becoming increasingly more pluralistic and, therefore, complex. In response to such dynamic and fast changing global trend, A. F. Repko et al. comprehensively propose that interdisciplinary approach can effectively widen our horizon in addressing issues that would not be intelligible when one solely relies on traditional mono disciplinary mind-set. They state that "to make a difference, we must prepare for realities of life in the 21st cent. with its growing complexities... This requires developing the abilities to make connections and integrate information from multiple sources and engage in effective ways of making decisions and solving complex problems."<sup>7)</sup> This rests upon the assumption that in order to resolve problematic issues in one arena, say, politics, necessarily entails knowledge that may be outside the confinement of a single discipline of thought, It is the author's conviction that a careful analysis and a sound integration of Biblical world-views into political dimension can indeed produce positive outcomes, already witnessed by many, which lies at the heart of the biblical teaching of righteousness or perhaps better known, justice which serve as the foundation of the "Kingdom of God." This is supported by the very definition of interdisciplinary approach which is "a cognitive process by which individuals or groups draw on disciplinary perspectives and integrate their insights and modes of thinking to advance their understanding of a complex problem with the goal of applying the understanding to a real-world problem."<sup>8)</sup>

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6) Grudem. 36, 46 He adds that "governments do make a difference to the work of God's Kingdom. For instance, governments can allow churches to meet freely and evangelize or they can prevent these things by force of law as is the case in North Korea."

7) Repko, A. F. with Szostak, R. & Buchberger. M. P. (2014). *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*. USA: Sage. 3-7

8) Ibid. 32

## II. The early Christian Understanding of Salvation

Given the fact that the New Testament texts are written by and for the early Christian communities who were mostly Jewish and regarded themselves to be the legitimate heir of Israel's historical and spiritual legacy, it seems plausible then to ask the question of how they would respond to such question. It is important to remind ourselves that every single texts of the Bible is a carefully designed response to specific social, political, economic, cultural and religious contexts in which authors and recipients of texts lived. In order to properly understand the concept of salvation in the Bible, we need to understand the redemptive function of the Messiah. In other words, an understanding of salvation will be determined by who Messiah is and what he is expected to accomplish for his people. The messianic fervor originates from the Old Testament period and reaches its peak in Israel's exilic plight as she eagerly awaits messianic salvation from foreign oppressors (cf. Ezekiel 20:33-38; 34:23f; 37:15-28; Isaiah 51:17-52:12). Despite the fact that it seems that God Himself is the prominent figure in the actual salvation and the restoration of Israel rather than the messianic agent, there can be no doubt that Israel's understanding of salvation is a political liberation and the restoration of national stability.<sup>9)</sup> What is interesting and unique about Israel's religion and her understanding of salvation in comparison with other ancient near Eastern religions is that the God of Israel is very much involved in how the sons of David perform their duties as kings according to the standard of the decrees of the Lord by which the success of their leadership is determined (cf. Psalm 89:30-34). For instance, during the Assyrian invasion prior to the Babylonian captivity the national theology of Israel which was anchored in the affirmation of God's choice of Zion and his promise to the Davidic dynasty was thrown into crisis. We need to be clear that the prophetic message was a direct response to these real historical circumstances. Ezekiel spoke of the greater New Exodus (20:33-38) as he eagerly anticipated the restoration of Davidic kingship (34:23f; 37:15-28). In Deutero-Isaiah, the entire prophecy is dominated by consolation and conviction that God as Israel's true King will not abandon Israel (51:17-52:12). The prophets Haggai and Zechariah give message of comfort that God will not abandon Zion and affirmed the fulfillment of His promise in the national theology of Israel and the Davidic dynasty. With this prophetic consolation the Temple was rebuilt and dedicated

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9) Cf. also Choi, S. (2011). *The Messianic Kingship of Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Wipf&Stock.

in 515 BCE (Ezra 1-6), which marks the beginning of the Second Temple Judaism. What is significant is that despite countless disappointments and failures, Jewish eschatology never detached itself from the messianic hope that was firmly anchored in the historical reality of Israel.

What many interpreters struggle with is the way such messianic expectation was indeed believed to have been fulfilled through the person of Jesus Christ by the early Christians. There is an "uneasy consciousness" as the salvation which Jesus teaches is far from exclusive nationalism as it deals with much more fundamental issues of salvation. Jesus represented spiritual regeneration through defeating the power of sin (Matt. 12:31; 13:41; Jn. 1:29; 5:14; 8:34; 9:41; 15:22; 16:8, 9). Is then the Old Testament's understanding of salvation, which has heavier political connotation, fundamentally inconsistent and incompatible with that of the New? Bearing this intrinsic tension in mind, evangelical Christians who tend to place priority on the New Testament and pay closer allegiance to the New Testament' message of Christ, have developed the tendency to lean more towards the depiction of salvation which seemingly places more emphasis on the spiritual regeneration of individuals by professing Jesus as their Savior. It is not in any way the author's intention to downplay such belief of salvation as I would agree that it is the most fundamental aspect of understanding salvation. However, I would suggest that if that is the only way of understanding salvation (that it really only pertains to life after death), then it has fallen victim to a partial understanding of what the Bible is trying to convey about the meaning of salvation. Such partial view of salvation may very well be the reason why some Christians are skeptical about the idea of direct involvement in political and social arena as the world is regarded to be inherently evil and, of all domains, political arena filled with corruption and conspiracy and that Christians must detach themselves in order to preserve spiritual purity and holiness. Such interpretation of salvation coupled with the current trend of modern pluralism and relativism would have very little difficulty in effacing Christianity and its values from the public domain into the isolation of personal devotional commitment.<sup>10)</sup>

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10) Cf. Wright, N. T. (1990). "The New Testament and the State." *Themelios* 16.1. 11-17 One of the major reasons for such isolation also finds its root since the destruction of Jerusalem Temple approximately in AD70, as the focus of Jewish identity moved away from the Holy Land and more towards the Holy Book, which naturally encourages the idea of ghetto: a safe place where one could worship Israel's God in private rather than in public while the world went on its own way.

However, such view would struggle to intelligibly answer questions as to why the evangelists of the Gospels first and foremost described Jesus as the Son of David (Matt. 1:1) and goes at great length to regurgitate the historical lineage of Israel in asserting Jesus' historical origin and national identity. Or, if Jesus and his followers regarded Israel's understanding of salvation to have been inherently erroneous in their hope of national political liberation, why the evangelist would go at great length in emphasizing the fulfillment theme that runs throughout the New Testament (e.g., Matt. 1:22-23; 2:15; 2:17-18; 2:23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35; 21:4-5; 27:9-10). N. T. Wright also argues that;

When Jesus called some followers and arranged them into a group of 12, the analogues pointed, not to a primitive ordination ceremony for a church with minimal ties to socio-political reality, but to the groups of desperate men who went off into the wilderness to prepare for God's action in restoring Israel .<sup>11)</sup>

However, there still seems to be a clear delineation between the Kingdom of God which Jesus depicts and that of the world under human leadership when he said "my kingdom is not of this world" (Jn. 18:36). In response to this, N. T. Wright proposes that the sentence should not be read as referring only to an other-worldly, platonic, non-physical kingdom. Rather, the ways with which Jesus seeks to establish the order of God's Kingdom are different in terms of its values and method from worldly ways. In conjunction with this, H. C. Waetjen who employs a post-modern reading of Paul's Letter to the Romans in an attempt to evaluate the concept of salvation<sup>12)</sup> comes up with an interpretation that the word "justice" according to Paul transcends the personal religious connotation of the word "righteousness" to promote and embrace the transformation of the world by the actualization of God's justice.<sup>13)</sup> The interpretations of these scholars have one thing in common; they all take the "holistic approach" to the Bible, which encompasses both the spiritual and physical dimensions in creative unity when it comes to explicating the concept of salvation. In other words, Jesus Christ not only has the very authority of God to break down the chains of sin in spiritual

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11) Wright. 13 "For the 1st cent. Jews, the Temple was the equivalent, for 20th cent. Britain, of the Houses of Parliament... and it was against this central and vital institution that Jesus spoke against and acted."

12) Waetjen, H. C. (2012). "A Post-modern Reading of Paul's Letter to the Romans and its Disclosure of a New Image of God and a New Understanding of Salvation." *Theology Today* 69 (2). 197-212

13) Waetjen 202

regeneration but he is also by origin a political descendant of David who is expected to fulfill Israel's messianic expectation. Waetjen asserts that the reason why Christian understanding of salvation has shifted towards "do evangelism, not politics" is a result of the reformation doctrine that emphasizes the justification by faith which has and continues to dominate Protestant theology of salvation which is heavily tied with individualistic approach and understanding of salvation. This will be discussed in greater detail later on in this paper. In principle, I do not think Waetjen's criticism on Reformation teaching of justification by faith to be the core reason for misleading the concept of salvation is an accurate assessment of such tendency but his point of looking at the text itself rather than solely relying on the teachings of the Church or any religious movement which can sometimes enable the readers to discover elements that are often neglected, is a valid point.

Holistic approach to the Bible in the context of conflicting tension between the Old and New Testaments' description of salvation, clearly indicates that salvation is not merely limited to personal domain or regeneration of individual spirituality but it also has wider social and political implications. From an early Christian perspective, salvation of God is for the community of His chosen people rather than individual merit of righteousness or moral excellence. For early Christians, salvation is by nature communal. In other words, they have never regarded their faith to be exclusively confined within the personal commitment to faith but had much wider social/political dimension which also entailed responsibilities of promoting the justice of God for the communities in which they were part of. This corporate view of salvation has been appreciated by numerous scholars such as T. Holland who has persuasively presented a case on the basis of the Letter to the Romans especially that for Israel, salvation fundamentally depended on the membership to the community of God rather than individual righteousness.<sup>14)</sup> He argues that for Israel the Exodus event played a crucial role in shaping her experiential understanding of salvation. In this redemptive event the death of the firstborn, otherwise known as the Passover, was God's wrath and judgment upon the system of sin which Egypt represented.<sup>15)</sup> In this event, it was made clear that

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14) Holland, T. (2012). *The Divine Marriage—A Biblical Theological Commentary*. Eugene OR.: Wipf&Stock.

15) Although Holland doesn't quite lay it out in his work, it follows from his reasoning that the Passover was a punishment not on Egyptians *per se* but upon the system of evil such as slavery, murder, arrogance (since the Pharaoh was addressed as god) which Egypt nevertheless represented and was guilty of. The descendants of Abraham were



regardless of how morally blameless one may have been, the individual righteousness did not necessarily earn him salvation. Rather, it was the membership in the community of God symbolized by the blood of the lamb (thereby replacing the death of the firstborn son) that provided a way of vindication in the context of God's judgment. However, the Exodus event was merely a political liberation which could not solve the fundamental problems of sin which is at the heart of God's judgment. According to Holland, the Apostle Paul uses this Exodus theme in further explicating that the salvation brought about by the Son of David is a greater redemption, the Second Exodus, which once and for all solves the fundamental problem of sin that was always at the heart of Israel's political atrocities throughout her history.

This has a far reaching significance and implication for modern day Christians in their understanding of salvation. The separation of Church and state on the assumption that religion is purely a private matter could not be further from the biblical teaching of salvation. This is not to say that Bible regards any individual attempt of moral excellence as futile. This would be absurd since any given community has individuals as necessary components that make up a community. But, the salvation or judgment which the God of Israel implemented was never based on individual merit of righteousness or lack thereof but how the community as a whole performed which was measured by the decrees of God. Incidentally, if one was to ask which of the two; personal conversion which entails the repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior or active involvement in social/political affairs for justice, takes priority; the author of this paper would agree with the view that the former would certainly take priority over social transformation (Mk. 1:15; Matt. 9:2; Lk. 9:23-27). However, a genuine spiritual regeneration and the acceptance of Jesus as Savior would naturally compel one's attention to the surrounding community and seeking to promote justice for the wider world. The author would argue that such notion of salvation reflects the early Christian understanding of salvation as well as their Jewish predecessors. This guarded Israel's religion against mythical understanding of God which was a prevalent characteristic amongst neighboring countries of ancient Israel. We may conclude, then, that the Bible is thoroughly historical which is rooted in the concrete reality of Israel's history.

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clearly victims of such evil order. However, it is important to recognize that the God of Israel is neither promoting nor conducting genocide simply because he favors Israel.

### III. Christian involvement in politics

This brings us to the core of our discussion in the paper, namely, the controversies surrounding the actual involvement of Christians and their values in the realm of politics. As we have discussed above, our post-modern world with its pluralistic values and world-views, discourages the belief of the absolute truth. Indeed, this is a subject that requires in-depth thinking that really has no simple solutions. Even if we grant that Christian ethics and world-views do have some positive impact on our society, any claim that the Kingdom principles should form the basis of public policies and civil law of a state would be met with immediate confrontations.<sup>16)</sup>

Perhaps the most classic historical example that certainly deserves a mention is Abraham Kuyper, who as a calvinist and a Christian democrat grappled with the interdisciplinary issues of Christian involvement in politics. He, too, understood that authentic Christianity is deeply historical which encourages public engagement. However, he taught that religious pluralism had to be respected but he was against the idea of the privatization of faith. Each confessional community must be granted its legitimate proportion of access to and participation in all sectors of public life without subordinating others.<sup>17)</sup> For Kuyper, all knowledge was founded on some type of faith and the most fundamental ideal of democracy to which he was politically committed is to welcome pluralistic world-views.<sup>18)</sup> This does not mean, however, that he was willing to compromise his Christian belief as his goal was precisely to advance the Christian truth in Netherlands but in a democratic and civilized manner.

More recently, urgent social problems such as political corruption and related issues are a constant threat to the foundation of political enterprise as the voters of the Republic of Korea, for instance,

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16) Klein, W. W., Blomberg, C. L., Hubbard, Jr. R. L. (2004). *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers. 410 Cf. also 전명수 (2014). “종교의 정치참여에 대한 일 고찰-한국의 종교와 정치 발전 연구의 일환으로.” *담론* 201 17(3) 031-056 According to the survey conducted in Republic of Korea in 2013, 74.6% responded that they were very much against the idea of religious involvement in politics whereas only 23.1% supported the idea of religious involvement in politics.

17) Bratt, J. D. (2013). *Abraham Kuyper-Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. Grand Rapids, Michigan; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. XVI

18) Ibid. 217 "Kuyper helped arrange a meeting between Calvinist and Catholic leaders that forged a plan of comity whereby each side would support the other's candidate in the run-off phase of the general elections." His intention was not to subordinate other religious beliefs under Calvinism but to accomplish wider objective; namely, restoring a Christian Netherlands.

regarded the moral uprightness of presidential candidates as the most important criteria which determined their voting behavior. As we have noted above, any sense of absolute moral or ethical standard cannot be founded upon the values of relativism unless it is anchored in some religious ideals. It is therefore undeniable that religious faith that promotes the absolute truth will always act as the center of collective moral guidance and social justice. It is precisely for this reason that Kuyper felt that the privatization of religious belief only leads to the disintegration of morality in a state.

Moreover, assuming that people live in a state that allows the freedom of religion and the basic human rights including voting, are bound to be influenced by the religious tendencies or preference of political candidates, albeit to varying degrees, which affects the way a certain candidate, if elected, approaches social/political issues that may indeed have direct impact on the formulation of public policies and civil law. Whether one is prepared to acknowledge or not, religious faith always plays a vital role in political dimension. This then shifts our discussion from whether religion should or shouldn't be involved in politics to how religious believers should exercise their rights with the sense of responsibility and a sound political judgment. This was in fact the burden of the biblical prophets who, with their clear allegiance to the God of Israel and the Law, sought to uphold the justice of God even to the extent of publicly criticizing kings for not living up to the standard of decrees prescribed by God Himself. This has in fact been the role of Christians leaders as well as other religious leaders in certain parts of the world that consciously assumed the prophetic role of upholding the absolute justice of freedom and the values of democracy. According to G. Tinder, such prophetic stance is not necessarily conservative or revolutionary or even idealistic in its political tendency. It is firmly rooted in the biblical truth but at the same time having the acute awareness of social issues and having the flexibility to respond to the ever changing demands of the world.<sup>19)</sup>

This poses the final question for this paper; if religion is to exercise influence on politics, can it be the other way around? Is the relationship between Christian religion in particular and politics

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19) 전명수 (2013). “한국 종교와 정치의 관계-대통령 선거를 중심으로.” *담론* 201 16(2). 75-101 Cf. also Wald, K. D., Owen, D. E., Hill, S. S. (1989). "Evangelical Politics and Status Issues" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 28(1) 1-16. In this article, a social conservative movement in the USA known as the New Christian Right has attempted to imbue public policy with "traditional values" such as resisting gay rights, indecent abortion law, the spread of humanism in schools and other perceived threats to public morality.

reciprocal? A. Kuyper would highly disagree as he rejected the view that the state is the unitary expression of the will of the people into which the Church should be assimilated. It seems, therefore, that he placed higher emphasis on the role of the Church rather than the other way round. Such view would seem biased and somewhat self-centered but the sociological research on the impact of state regulation of religion on religious belief conducted by J. Fox and E. Tabory shows that the relationship between religious faith and state is by nature largely one-sided.<sup>20)</sup> Of course, state regulations can restrict religious participations in public altogether by the decree of law but Fox and Tabory's observation is that state regulations have very little impact, if any, on the religious belief of an individual. In other words, even though government influence by way of regulation can affect the ostensible aspect of religious practice and participation, it cannot influence the internal religious belief of an individual or a group. They state that:

This study provides evidence that when there is a statistically significant relationship between state regulation of religion and religiosity, it is the negative relationship predicted by supply-side theory. The results also show that the relationship between state regulation and religiosity is statistically significant mostly for attendance at religious services and whether people consider themselves religious, but rarely for belief.<sup>21)</sup>

It means that, by nature, the relationship between religion and politics can only truly be one-sided as religious faith can certainly influence political arena whereas the other way round only has external impact.

#### IV. Final Remarks

On the basis of the early Christian interpretation of the Scripture, I have presented a case that the holistic understanding of salvation includes not only individual spiritual regeneration by confessing Jesus Christ as the Savior but also a transformation of society, which should be a natural consequence of genuine spiritual regeneration. I would agree with W. Grudem that some Christians are called to engage in political arena and implement the values of the Gospel in positively influencing governments. Many evangelical Christians have inadvertently resorted to a partial understanding of biblical salvation

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20) Fox, J., Tabory, E. (2008). "Contemporary evidence regarding the impact of state regulation of religion on religious participation and belief." *Sociology of Religion* 69:3 245-271.

21) Ibid. 266

in shying away from active public engagement, which may in part be attributed to post-modern values of relativism. This has deeply penetrated into the realms of biblical hermeneutics which has produced "ghetto churches" that rely on evangelism alone to preserve world order. On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge, however, that relying only on socio-political action to solve world problems would result in the disintegration of faith into nothing more than social movement thereby undermining the value of spiritual transformation which believers have and continue to experience in their solitude with God.<sup>22)</sup>

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22) Moore, R. D. (2004). *The Kingdom of Christ-The New Evangelical Perspective*. Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books. 82.

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