

Editorial

This issue of *RCL* is devoted to the question of religion and change in Eastern Europe, but having already contributed an article on this theme it seemed inappropriate for the editor to comment further. Instead I have chosen to use the words of a distinguished Christian leader, writing in a very different context, to touch on the problem of religion and politics. And whilst political change will place new issues on the agenda of the churches, it will not undermine their continuing need to challenge the surrounding polities with the often unpopular claims of the Gospel.

In the past fifty-odd years radical developments have taken place in the social, economic and political fields. These are of such a nature that the socio-political issues have become increasingly inescapable. We have gained a better understanding of the political reality and its human quality. We have learned that social and political structures are not unalterables given by God, but created by human beings and therefore changeable. In addition we have begun to realise the growing political responsibility of the Church in general and of Christians in particular.

Furthermore, the Church knows that its witness in the world cannot be curtailed by the warning to proclaim the 'pure Gospel'. For what is pure Gospel? It surely is the good news of the liberation of God in Jesus Christ for all humankind. But this salvation is the salvation of the whole person, not only the 'soul' or 'inner being'. The Jesus Christ preached by the Church became flesh, took on a human body, and came to live among people. His message of liberation is meant for the whole person, for people in all aspects of their lives and their full human state. . .

The political responsibility of the Church is to witness to God's demands for justice and peace, for a meaningful life for

His people in the world. . .

It is clear that the Church has no choice: it has a particular political responsibility. It must speak. Sometimes its utterances will be more pastoral, where it concerns a matter not requiring an immediate decision, or where general opinions are so diverse that the Church can only gradually guide the people to a decision. Sometimes the Church will have to speak in a prophetic, admonishing way, even judgementally, especially if there is much at stake, even for just one person: life or death, freedom or bondage, the integrity of the Church or the credibility of the Gospel. . .

Alan Boesak, *If this is Treason I am Guilty*
London, 1988, pp. 22-28

May 1990

JPA

The editor would like to express his warm appreciation to Anne Thompson, formerly editorial assistant and then deputy editor of RCL, for her hard work and dedication in ensuring that its high standards have been maintained over recent years. He would also like to thank John V. Eibner, Morven McLean and Grazyna Sikorska, until recently researchers at Keston College, for their many contributions to the journal.