

'The Kingdom of God is Forcefully Advancing and Forceful Men Lay Hold of It'

Senator David Coltart

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Introductory Remarks

Greg Lindsay, Executive Director, CIS

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2011 Acton Lecture on Religion and Freedom of The Centre for Independent Studies. It is also my pleasure to welcome our speaker tonight, Senator David Coltart, Zimbabwe's Minister of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture to this auditorium, part of the NSW Parliament that contains, as I understand it, the oldest extant parliamentary chamber in the Westminster tradition.

Senator Coltart will speak for about 30 minutes, followed by a brief question period and a concluding vote of thanks to be delivered by the Rev Peter Kurti, a Visiting Fellow at CIS.

For a number of years, the Centre had a program of studies titled Religion and the Free Society, of which the Acton Lecture was a component. For a strictly secular organisation as the Centre is, this was considered an interesting development. However, a core feature of the Centre's work has been to examine the role of voluntary institutions in a free and open civil society, and it seemed to us, that the churches and religions more generally were an important component of this and worthy of some attention. The program ended a few years ago when its Director, Sam Gregg, moved to the United States, but we decided to continue the Acton Lecture as a feature on the CIS calendar. We have also begun to re-establish some other activities in the program.

The purpose of this lecture is not, I must stress, to discuss internal matters of discipline, dogma or organisation with which all faiths and churches wrestle from time to time. Instead, it offers a secular platform for prominent individuals to offer their own reflections on issues affecting aspects of religion in the modern world and to inform the public about various aspects of this and how it interacts with the free society. They may or may not be active in

religious affairs. They may not even be religious, but they will bring some important perspectives to the issues.

David was born in Gweru, Zimbabwe and when young relocated to Bulawayo, where he now lives. After school and the obligatory period of national service, he enrolled at the University of Cape Town in 1978 and pursued a successful legal career in Zimbabwe.

He moved into politics in 1999 as legal secretary to the newly formed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) of which he was a founding member. In the 2000 election, he unseated the ZANU-PF MP for Bulawayo-South, and served as Shadow Justice Minister. After the MDC split in 2005, Coltart was the only member to remain impartial in the efforts to reconcile the opposing factions.

In the March 2008 Senate election, David won the seat of Khumalo, and is now Minister of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture in the coalition government of National Unity that was sworn into office in February 2009. He has fought passionately in Parliament and the courts for justice and human rights in Zimbabwe. David is married to Jenny and has four children and, as you would expect from a Minister for Sport, is a passionate follower of rugby, cricket and golf.

It is my pleasure to invite Senator Coltart to address us.

'The Kingdom of God is Forcefully Advancing and Forceful Men Lay Hold of It'

David Coltart

This coming September will be the 10th anniversary of the horrors of 9/11, one of the world's worst assaults on freedom in the name of religion. The greatest freedom is a life lived without fear. The 9/11 attacks left people, particularly in the West, with the sense that there was nowhere safe and that no one was immune from attack. The random and massive attacks on civilians in New York far from any theatre of war, and subsequently in London and elsewhere, have severely curtailed the freedoms of people across the globe.

The West's reaction to these assaults has been dominated by an extreme but understandable preoccupation with 'security' at great cost to freedom, which ironically, is exactly what security is meant to protect. The United States has diverted a vast amount of its international resources and attention to the same wars that undoubtedly have had domestic consequences such as its now massive domestic debt. Australia itself has been drawn into costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite these massive efforts to protect freedom, a recent survey shows that the United States is more unpopular than ever in the Middle East. It follows that the security threat against US citizens is presumably just as grave; if that is correct, it is a tragic indictment on Western foreign policy.

But the indictment against the West's foreign policy goes further than that. Despite the infusion of trillions of dollars of Western aid into Africa in the last 50 years, much of it has been squandered—there being no better example of that than my own country, Zimbabwe. In the 1980s, for example, hundreds of millions of dollars were spent in building the infrastructure of Zimbabwe's education sector. Most of these buildings are now in a serious state of disrepair, and the education sector itself is in crisis. This has

happened because ironically, Lord Acton's adage that 'power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely' was not a part of Western foreign policy. Money was poured into Zimbabwe unconditionally in the face of massive human rights abuses, including a genocide in the 1980s, but very little was spent on promoting freedom in Zimbabwe. As a consequence, power was abused, and inevitably, the economy collapsed, in turn leading to the deterioration, if not total destruction, of much of what had been built with Western aid.

I would argue that for decades now, key Christian principles have been disregarded in the formulation of Western foreign policy. From Vietnam to Afghanistan, it's clear that not many lessons have been learned because mistakes are still being repeated. The reason I focus on the West is partly because it remains the most powerful collective of nations in the world and partly because it is rooted in Christendom. I should also stress that I do not solely blame the West—far from it. In my own country, we must take our own share of the blame for the near total destruction of Zimbabwe's economy. But tonight, my remarks are directed towards a Western audience and that will remain my focus. Even the use of the phrase 'the West' is flawed because it is obviously not a homogenous group of countries, the foreign policies of countries differ, and the foreign policies of some Western countries do not suffer from the problems I speak of.

I need to place my remarks this evening in a personal context. At the outset, let me say that I do not consider myself 'religious' in the sense that I do not slavishly follow a particular denomination or sect. But I do believe in a personal God who is the very essence of freedom. Thirty years ago, I came to place my trust in the historical Jesus Christ. I was challenged by the point made by C.S. Lewis that this historical man (for no one seriously disputes the historical fact of Christ having lived) was either who he said he was or was a lunatic. Given the deep wisdom of Jesus's teaching, it was impossible for me to think of Him as a lunatic. I was also deeply moved by Frank Morison's book *Who Moved the Stone*, which forced me to consider the historical reality of Christ's crucifixion and the

growth of the church out of what, if one doesn't believe in Christ's resurrection, was an absolute disaster. The historical fact of Christ's crucifixion is also a constant reminder to me that the desire for justice is one of the constant elements of God's character. For it is in the cross that we are reminded that the death of Christ was the sentence for all the evil perpetrated by mankind through the ages.

By church I do not refer to the physical church of historical times and today but rather of the body of all the individual people who have placed their trust in Christ over the ages. The church is composed of those who have placed their trust in Christ, not in the physical institutions created by man. While I appreciate the great architecture of magnificent churches and the glorious singing that takes place within them, I fear that sometimes the very institutions of the church undermine Christ's teaching that God's Kingdom is not something you can watch for and see coming (Luke 17:20), and that there should be a clear separation between church and state (Matthew 22:21). In short, I do not advocate any form of official statist theocracy or the rigid application of Christian principles in the formulation of foreign policy. Likewise, I do not believe in 'Christian states' or that the church can dictate to secular governments what their foreign policy should be. I would simply argue that certain Biblical truths have been neglected in the formulation of Western foreign policy.

Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address delivered on 4 March 1865 makes some profound statements relevant to this topic. The focus of his address was the cause of the American Civil war, namely slavery, which constituted a 'peculiar and powerful interest' to both sides in the conflict. Lincoln observed that both sides 'read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other.' He also noted somewhat wryly that the 'prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully [because] the Almighty has his own purposes.' In addressing the causes of the war, Lincoln referred to Christ's statement, 'Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come.' (Matthew 18:7) Lincoln assumed that God viewed

slavery as a sin and that the Civil War was the ‘woe due’ to those, both North and South, responsible for that sin. He concluded with these memorable words:

If God wills that [the war] continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn from the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword ... so still it must be said ‘the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’

These thoughts are rather unfashionable and certainly politically incorrect today—the thought that there are certain sins so objectionable to God that He is prepared to wreak great suffering on those responsible for them no doubt offends many modern thinkers. It is hard to imagine any current American political leader prepared to advance such thoughts. But Lincoln clearly believed in the notion that God abhors and judges the sins of nations, not just of individuals.

What is also noteworthy is that earlier in his address, Lincoln observes that the South wanted to ‘strengthen, perpetuate and extend’ slavery and that the North merely ‘claimed no right more than to restrict the territorial enlargement’ of slavery; in other words, the North did not abhor slavery sufficiently to be fundamentally opposed to it, and its sin was indifference. That observation, tied to the lament that God had given ‘to both North and South this terrible war,’ indicates that Lincoln believed that God wanted to punish both acts of commission and omission—the North was indifferent to the suffering of slaves and God was delivering judgment on the North as well for this indifference.

Lincoln is arguably America’s greatest President. He is universally revered in the United States and throughout the West for his great wisdom in steering the nation through its gravest hour. If he were alive today and applied the same principles, what would be the national and international sins of the West—those that Lincoln would fear to be the object of God’s wrath and judgment? Might

he have argued that America's costly wars in Vietnam and Iraq were the 'woe due to those by whom the offence came'?

It is in this context I venture to suggest that critical mistakes, if not sins, have been committed by some countries in the West in the formulation of their foreign policy since World War II. It is my belief that Christ's teachings have some profound statements to make in the formulation of Western foreign policy, which are designed to protect freedom.

'Blessed are the peacemakers'

The first concerns a reliance on military might over principle and morality. I vividly recall the triumphant 'shock and awe' demolition of Baghdad in 2003, followed by President George W. Bush's claim that the war in Iraq was effectively over. NATO forces are displaying a similar attitude in the demolition of Tripoli. I should stress that I am not a pacifist, and nor do I hold any brief for Colonel Gaddafi; indeed, I loathe what he has done in Libya and the negative influence he has had throughout Africa. I recognise the extreme dilemma the world has faced in dealing with dictators like Gaddafi, but nevertheless, my fear is simply that the West appears to put more trust in its own military superiority than in the consistent moral force of principle. Resorting to force seems to be the rapid default position of some countries in the West when their national interests are threatened, and yet, when force is crucially needed but there is no national interest at stake, as was the case in Rwanda, that superior force is not employed.

Although Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke the following words more than 40 years ago in the context of the Cold War, they are arguably even more applicable today:

The large power blocs of the world talk passionately of pursuing peace while burgeoning defence budgets bulge, enlarging already awesome armies, and devising even more devastating weapons.

I also wonder whether some of the new devastating weapons, which were not around 40 years ago, are particularly effective and perhaps may make the West even more insecure. Drones and stealth bombers cannot prevent the atrocities we have seen perpetrated against civilians in the last decade, and may even inflame terrorists to do more 'remote control' killings of their own. My argument is not that Western countries should abandon their defence technologies, but I think it is misleading to think that defence is primarily where the West's security lies.

A related concern is that because the West trusts in its military might, it pours a vast amount of its resources into the military rather than directing more of its resources into what ultimately are the root causes of most of the international turmoil today, namely poverty and a lack of education. Once again, King, Jr. is devastating:

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defence than on programmes of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

I wonder how different the world would be if all the money paid to prop up and arm corrupt regimes had been spent on, let's say, building a free press or constructing schools and hospitals in the benighted countries some Western countries have fought wars in since World War II. I spoke at the outset about the recent survey done in the Middle East that shows the United States is more unpopular there now than ever—in other words, for all the billions of dollars spent in fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the root objective, namely to make the United States safer, has not been achieved. As long as there is a perception that the West is motivated by self-interest, such as securing sources of oil, rather than by a genuine desire to uplift the people of those regions, the fertile ground for Al Qaeda and other terrorist organisations will continue to grow. The West's greatest long-term security lies in doing what it can to remove the sting of grinding poverty and ignorance in the breeding grounds of terrorism, which motivates terrorists and provides terrorist leaders with deep reservoirs of angry young men. That is why fair trade policies and development assistance, particularly

investment in educating both women and men, is vital to the stability and security that the West seeks so desperately.

History shows that when raw military power is used aggressively in pursuit of a flawed cause it ultimately fails. All the military power of the Nazis, the Soviets, the Americans in Vietnam, the Rhodesians in Rhodesia against nationalist guerrilla forces, and the Apartheid regime in South Africa ultimately lost to the sheer will and courage of weaker forces who had a more just cause. Going back to Lincoln, the American Civil War is instructive of this—the South clearly had the better generals but that didn't help them prevail over the North; the North had overwhelming economic might but lost a series of battles initially. One could argue that it was only after the Emancipation Proclamation was brought into effect on 1 January 1863 that the North started to get the upper hand; major victories such as the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863 gave impetus to those on the side of the right. The point is that mere military superiority alone is not sufficient to win wars; ultimately, history shows there needs to be a moral principle for a just cause to prevail.

Some argue that if we are to prevent war and deter evil regimes, it is important that democratic nations maintain military superiority. This argument is then used to justify massive military budgets. I do not advocate a significant reduction in military spending, but at the very least, Western development budgets need to be substantially increased. We need to remember that even the shocking state of ill-preparedness of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth in the face of the rising Nazi power was ultimately sufficient to allow good to prevail over evil. In short, in the most important war the world has waged in the last hundred years, military underspending by those on the side of right did not prevent God's justice from prevailing.

Coming closer to home, many people in Zimbabwe fret about the fact that ZANU-PF still controls the military, which in turn has vastly more raw military power than those fighting to bring about a more democratic order. However, for all that ZANU-PF and the military establishment has thrown at us in the last 10 years, and for all the resources they have at their disposal, they are weaker than

ever—and getting weaker. Our campaign, which is based on non-violence, has been long and hard but I am more confident than ever that it is going to succeed. As long as we strive to do what is right, raw military might will not prevail over forces for good.

War and violence are manifestations of sin, and it is our failure to resolve disputes between and within nations peacefully that results in war. War and violence have been glorified by politicians and generals through the ages, but stripped of the propaganda, they are as much a consequence of the fall of mankind as is disease. They should be a last resort, but that is rarely the case.

Peaceful means of resolving strife should also be given a chance. In 2008 in Zimbabwe, we chose a flawed political settlement just to avoid plunging Zimbabwe into a civil war. Sadly, some Western countries have not supported that process, consequently undermining our chances of making this non-violent process work.

‘The kingdom of God is forcefully advancing and forceful men lay hold of it’

My second concern relates to what I perceive as a failure to trust that God will ultimately honour, and be on the side of, good. Many in the increasingly secular West do not even believe in God, so it is not surprising that there is so little reliance in the notion that ultimately, a sovereign God will prevail in attaining justice and equity on Earth. I have no doubt that it is the same lack of trust that contributes to massive Western military budgets—the feeling that unless man alone plans for the future, there can be no security.

In Matthew 11:1-19, Jesus made the interesting statement that ‘the Kingdom of God is forcefully advancing and forceful men lay hold of it.’ He said this in the context of John the Baptist’s prophetic ministry and his harassment. What Jesus was highlighting was the principle of the universal experience of opposition that characterised John the Baptist’s entire life and which culminated with his beheading. John experienced opposition throughout his ministry, but it did not stop him from continuing—and it never

confused him. He did what was right and suffered for it—and God did not rescue him on Earth. Jesus states that this is what all Christians must expect.

What happened to John has happened countless times since then: God's judgment is often delayed. Evil men—the forceful men laying hold of God's kingdom—go from bad to worse, do what they like, boast of their disdain for God, and apparently get away with it. Christians cry out to God for help, and His answer is often unendurably slow—that has certainly been the case in Zimbabwe.

But God's blessings are often 'hidden.' Even in the time of His Ministry on Earth, Jesus's miracles were never so blindingly obvious that they compelled belief. If people were determined not to believe, they always found a way to explain away what Jesus had done, and so justified their unbelief. That is certainly true today in the different ways we can see God dispensing justice in the world. If we have eyes to see, we can witness the wonderful ways in which God has delivered justice in His time. The last hundred years have witnessed the collapse and destruction of Nazi fascism, Soviet communism, Apartheid, and the downfall of numerous dictatorial regimes. Virtually all these evils were defeated only after long and tortuous struggles, and many were brought down by inferior forces. Indeed, the parable of the mustard seed and the invocation for us to be the salt and light are reminders that God very rarely uses the strong and powerful to achieve His purposes; instead, He generally uses the weak and insignificant.

Jesus had all the power to confront Herod, but he turned his attention to 12 simple, humble and timid men—who ultimately turned the world upside down and changed it forever. Paul almost certainly met and challenged Nero—the greatest and most awesome ruler of his time. Slavery was eventually defeated through the efforts of relatively powerless men like Wilberforce over many decades. Lincoln himself is a case in point—at the second inaugural address, a journalist called Noah Brooks described Lincoln as a 'tall, pathetic, melancholy figure'; Lincoln came from a poor background and yet God used him mightily. In short, God tends to do the unexpected and uses the most unlikely cast of characters.

This method, and our need to have eyes to see God's means, is wonderfully summed up in the following poem of Arthur Hugh Clough (1819–61):

Say not the struggle naught availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke conceal'd,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright!

We have certainly often wondered in Zimbabwe whether our struggle has been in vain and whether there is any hope in the offing. We have seen the ZANU-PF regime seemingly get away with terrible acts, including a genocide in the 1980s and the systematic and brutal repression of democratic opposition in the last decade. Sometimes it has seemed as if God was just not listening, but as time went by it became apparent that God is working slowly but deliberately in Zimbabwe. I have absolute confidence that good is prevailing in Zimbabwe. But mine is a confident hope mixed with a sober realism that forceful evil people will continue to do whatever they choose until good prevails.

In short, if we have eyes to see God's Kingdom is indeed forcefully advancing—and God's standards of justice are ultimately

respected—God does hear the cries of those who appeal to Him against injustice. We can take heart that history shows that in His time, God and good do prevail. But through it all, we must always expect ‘forceful men to lay hold of it.’ The emergence and strength of evil people and evil regimes are part and parcel of the forceful advancement of God’s Kingdom. Opposition is in fact a sign that God’s work is succeeding. Violent, evil people attack God’s Kingdom and those who are doing His will precisely because it is forcefully advancing. And what is more, we must always expect a resurgence of evil—it is never fully quelled.

The challenge for the West is to have more confidence in the goodness, sovereignty and power of God despite the presence and resurgence of evil. The West must resist the temptation to resort to the tactics of evil men, such as the use of torture and extreme force, knowing that ultimately the best way to deal with ‘forceful men’ is by upholding goodness.

If the West focuses consistently on using non-violent methods in the resolution of conflict wherever possible, it will not have to spend as much on building massive armouries and fighting wars. Its foreign policy needs to move away from what is perceived as the pursuit of self-interest to the consistent application and support of God’s standards of morality. I use the word ‘consistent’ because over the last few decades, the West has been shockingly inconsistent in applying international mores.

Many of the wars fought by the West since World War II have occurred because of the appeasement and sometimes encouragement of dictatorial regimes. Since World War II, many corrupt and violent regimes have prospered because of either Western support or indifference. Saddam Hussein was supported by the United States in its fight against the Iranians, as was the Taliban in its battle against the Russians. The cosying up by Britain to Gaddafi to secure access to Libyan oil bolstered and strengthened him. In Zimbabwe, the West looked the other way when ZANU-PF committed a genocide in Matabeleland and even rewarded Robert Mugabe with a knighthood in 1994—mainly to keep Mugabe out of the Soviet sphere of influence. In all these cases, the ultimate

cost to both the West and the innocent citizens of those nations ruled by violent people has been enormous.

In short, the West should never be on the side of the 'forceful men seeking to lay hold' of God's Kingdom and its principles of morality. At the root of this is the Judeo-Christian teaching of the Psalms and Romans 3 ('there is no-one who does good')—in other words, all politicians and military leaders throughout the world, if left to their own devices, ultimately have a bias towards exploiting or abusing power for their own benefit. It was Chamberlain's belief in the ultimate goodness of man that influenced him to appease Hitler. I reiterate that I am not a pacifist. Using every last peaceful means to prevent war does not stem from believing that people are basically good but rather because of knowledge of the human propensity for evil. In this regard, the threat of war and capacity to conduct war are necessary means to prevent forceful people from achieving their goals.

I have no doubt that if the West changes, it will be less likely to be dragged into the intractable messes it now finds itself in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. I recognise that sometimes there is no choice but to intervene to save the lives of innocent people, as is the case in Libya. But the West needs to learn from its mistakes. Doing so would mean that it no longer has to spend billions of dollars sorting out the mess created by dictatorial regimes.

What then about existing powerful non-democratic nations run by 'forceful men' that the West is dependent upon for fuel or trade? In practical terms, it is very difficult for the West to avoid dealing with these nations.

However, I would suggest the following. Suffering for doing 'good' is a theme in the Bible. If a nation suffers economically for doing good, it is submitting itself to God's will. 'It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.' (Peter 3:17)

In my own country, Zimbabwe, we have suffered for decades for doing wrong. The oppressive white minority government, by not giving black people a fair deal, drove the moderates in the black community to support violent and extreme nationalists, and the entire nation suffered a decade of civil war. The greed and poor

governance of the last 30 years has led to the catastrophic state of our country. But through it all God has been faithful, and ordinary Zimbabweans are far wiser now. They have seen the extreme and have opted for a peaceful solution to their problems. While we still have a long way to go, I believe we are headed in a better direction now than at any time over the last 50 years. The nation is still fragile, and I pray that by God's grace we can steer a peaceful transition to democracy.

The point I am making is that although we have suffered for doing wrong, our nation has come out stronger—and that was certainly the experience of post Civil War America and post-Apartheid South Africa. The West may face dire economic consequences if it takes a more principled stand against all 'forceful men' and their governments irrespective of their power, but it will emerge stronger.

'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents'

It is a fact that all but two of Jesus's parables are about money and possessions. God cares deeply about the stewardship of the good gifts He gives to individuals and nations. He desires that we use our money wisely, generously and in the common good.

The harsh reality of the world today is that there remains a huge gulf between rich and poor nations. Some of these inequities are perpetuated by Western dominated trade policies and the West's pursuit of self-interest. At a recent meeting I attended in Morocco regarding education in Africa, a graph was displayed showing that Africa's tertiary institutions and their related research capacity are in fact weakening. Many of Africa's best brains end up in the West, strengthening already powerful nations. At the same meeting, it was shown that most African nations are spending far greater percentages of their national budgets on education than most Western nations; despite that, the investment is simply not enough to enable African countries to catch up. As a result, African children are lagging behind their counterparts elsewhere in the world, making the prospect of African development harder to achieve.

When I consider the billions of dollars spent on fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the billions of dollars spent on bailing out AIG in the United States, and the billions of dollars spent on bailing out profligate Greece in relation to how much is spent by the West on education in Africa, I am appalled. The West has a moral duty to be better stewards of the enormous wealth it has.

First, the amount the West spends in reducing the inequalities in the world is pitiful in relation to what it spends on defence and on itself. Denmark spends approximately 0.7% of its budget on development aid, but for such a small nation it has done remarkable things in developing nations. However, nations with far bigger economies than Denmark spend a fraction of that on developmental assistance, and often, the assistance is conditional upon contracts being awarded to their own nationals. Furthermore, the situation is compounded when one considers trade barriers such as the European Union's protective measures and subsidies in the agriculture sector, which prevent countries in, for example, Africa from fully exploiting their comparative advantages. As stated above, if the massive amounts of money spent on military defence were reduced and reallocated to international development assistance, then targets such as Denmark's 0.7% would be relatively easy to attain.

I have no doubt that if this were to change, not only would huge strides be made towards reducing the inequalities in the world but the world will also be a safer place.

Second, the West has to be wiser in how it spends development assistance. The parable of the talents is a useful guide for this. The last 50 years of developmental assistance are littered with stories of aid being wasted on profligate and corrupt governments; in many cases, there is little to show for the aid money that has been spent. Far too much is spent on inefficient central government projects, including building up the military. I suspect that a vast portion of the US assistance in both Iraq and Afghanistan has been and is being spent on building up the military rather than on constructing schools and supporting the private sector. I can say with absolute certainty regarding Zimbabwe that when the ZANU-PF government was still in favour with the West in the 1980s and 1990s, hundreds

of millions of dollars were spent propping up central government and little, if any, was spent on supporting the private sector and promoting, for example, a private media. I find it ironic that every time the police in Zimbabwe have come to arrest me, they have done so in Landrovers supplied by the British government in the 1990s!

In other words, development assistance should only be spent on governments that spend that money in the right way. If governments are faithful in the 'few things ... then they should be ... put in charge of many things.' (Matthew 25:23). And if governments cannot be entrusted with talents, then developmental assistance should be directed to those responsible people who live under irresponsible governments. In the 1990s, when the World Bank and International Monetary Fund were pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into Zimbabwe and propping up a patently corrupt regime, we found it impossible to raise any money from Western governments to research and write a human rights report exposing the genocide committed by the ZANU-PF regime. Eventually, Amnesty International provided us with US\$10,000 to finance the entire 'Breaking the Silence' report.

Furthermore, developmental assistance needs to be more targeted towards building the skills of the coming generations and ensuring jobs for them in the private sector. There needs to be a massive investment in the education sector throughout the Third World for building institutions that foster democracy and in private sector industries and businesses.

Conclusion

There is interconnectivity between all the points I have raised this evening. If the West takes dramatic steps to change its foreign policies, the world will become a better place and meaningful freedom will be realised. Western nations need to reduce their defence budgets; they need to believe that the consistent pursuit of principle provides greater security than bombs; they need to rechannel the money saved from defence spending into reducing inequalities between nations; and they need to be principled and firm in how and on what that development aid is spent.

Indeed Lincoln's closing remarks in his second inaugural address are apposite:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

It will only be through charity, firmness in doing right, binding of international wounds or inequities and care for the destitute of the world, that a just and lasting world peace, and therefore freedom, may be achieved.

Concluding Remarks

Rev Peter Kurti, Visiting Fellow, CIS

Senator Coltart and distinguished guests and friends:
As Greg said at the outset, the annual Acton Lecture is one of the principal features of the Religion and Free Society program, established by The Centre for Independent Studies some years ago. The lecture is intended primarily to address the broad theme of freedom, whether from market or social or a cultural point of view, and to do so from a religious perspective.

Tonight Senator Coltart has brought a distinctly religious perspective to one of the most vexed questions faced by many religious and secular communities. My own community, the Christian community, faces the pressing question of aid (development aid, to be precise: How much? How effective? To whom? With what controls?). And yet they tend to be second order questions. The first order question concerning aid, both for religious institutions and for governments, is why. In July this year, English conservative MP David Davies argued that the so-called Arab spring in the Middle East must be supported with huge sums of money. He warned that the British government should not ignore the important role that aid can play, not just in bringing relief from suffering and encouraging development but also in protecting British interests. Aid truly deployed, he said, can be both compassionate and in national interest.

Senator Coltart has articulated a very eloquent counter-position to this point of view. The answer to the question ‘Why development aid?’ is because it is just, and because aid budgets must be administered in a selfless way so as to express God’s priorities and God’s concerns for what is equitable and just.

Senator Coltart speaks from his own experience of the absence of justice, over many years in his own society. He brings an African perspective, a Zimbabwean perspective, as a conservative from

a Christian country, if a somewhat chaotic country at the moment. Nonetheless, Senator Coltart brings to this debate his own faith, which clearly informs his values and judgments and decisions as a politician; incidentally, he is the only white member of Robert Mugabe's Cabinet and represents an overwhelmingly black electorate.

Furthermore, Senator Coltart calls for the community of nations to act in ways that advance the Kingdom of God by ensuring that the prevailing values of God's goodness are upheld by governments and by individuals. Secularists often argue that religious views and values have no place in the public square; we know this is the case in Australia. Religious people here are told they may express their beliefs in private, but they must never expect to influence the development of public policy. Senator Coltart has shown how Christian principles can and must bear on policy formulation, aspire to the consistent application of God's standards of morality, express policy in a selfless way, and lastly administer development aid in a selfless way.

I'm delighted that Senator Coltart has been able to come to Sydney to give the 2011 Acton Lecture. In doing so, he has made a distinguished contribution to the debate about the place and importance of religious values in the public square, and if I may say so, a distinguished contribution to the revival and renewal of the Centre's Religion and the Free Society Program. I congratulate and thank Senator Coltart, and I thank all of you for joining us this evening at Parliament House and for your generous support of The Centre for Independent Studies over the years.



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