

**MONTHLY BREAKFAST FORUM SPONSORED BY
THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS (I.E.A.)**

**WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE HON. JUSTICE
D. F. ANNAN, OSG, SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT AT THE
SECOND BREAKFAST MEETING ON THE SUBJECT
"THE CHURCH AND THE STATE"**

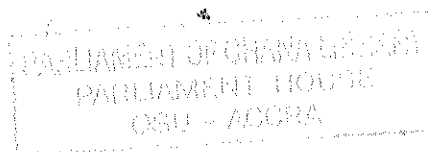
VENUE : CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE SPEAKER'S BLOCK

DATE : MONDAY, 20TH OCTOBER, 1997

TIME : 9.00 A.M.

**GUEST SPEAKER : RT. REVD. PROF. EMERITUS KWESI A. DICKSON,
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT OF THE
METHODIST CONFERENCE, GHANA**

**HON. MINISTERS OF STATE,
MEMBERS OF THE BENCH AND THE COUNCIL OF STATE
YOUR EXCELLENCIES
VENERABLE MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:**



On behalf of the Honourable Members of the Parliament of Ghana and on my own behalf I wish to extend a warm and cordial welcome to all Dignitaries assembled at this Second Breakfast Meeting.

2. May I first of all thank all of you assembled here for honouring my invitation at such a short notice. I also consider it a duty to say a big **“Thank You”** to representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, Donor Agencies and other Friendly Governments for the valuable contributions they have, in diverse ways lavished on our Government in the form of funds, logistics support and institutional support towards the consolidation of Democratic Governance in Ghana. The Danish Government also deserves our commendation for its firm and sustained commitment to the financial sponsorship of the programme of Breakfast Meetings. This occasion also affords me another opportunity to record my thanks to the Institute of Economic Affairs and the staff of Parliament for sponsoring and organising the Breakfast Shows.

Distinguished Participants,

3. Breakfast forums have become an integral part of Parliament’s expanded publicity programme. These forums together with other forums to be announced in due course bring together experts and functionaries from various fields of public and private activity in Ghana to interact with the Leadership and Members of Parliament, the Executive and Judiciary, among others. During these meetings

discussions take place on topical and current issues of National importance particularly those that have a bearing on the functions of various arms of government.

4. For the Second Breakfast Meeting our focus is on **Religion and the State**. The precise topic is **“The Church and the State”** and we are indeed privileged to have as our Guest Speaker a renowned Theologian and doyen in that field namely, the Rt. Revd. Prof. Emeritus Kwesi A. Dickson, the Immediate Past President of the Methodist Conference of Ghana.

Distinguished Participants,

5. A few reasons may be given for the choice of the subject for our current meeting. Firstly, the activities of the church have and will continue to have a crucial and critical role to play in the moral and spiritual upbringing and rearmament of the citizens of our country who are to be counted upon as the vanguard of our struggle for the attainment of honest and healthy democratic governance in our country. The organisers of the meeting are also taking advantage of the opportunity to introduce a cross-section of the clergy to the

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leadership of the various arms of the government for them to be assured of their unstinted support and co-operation in our united effort of producing honest, dedicated, reliable and patriotic citizens for our dear country.

Distinguished Participants,

Permit me now to make a few preliminary remarks relating to some constitutional, legal and other provisions that have been made by the state and the church to foster cordial relations between them.

The state of Ghana through the constitution (Article 21(1)(c)) guarantees the right of worship namely, freedom to practise any religion and to manifest such practice. It has been the determination of our Parliament to ensure that such provisions are not mere paper guarantees of abstract liberties. Having set the stage for worship without let or hindrance, it is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that his or her association with the church benefits not only his or her church, but society as a whole. It is against this background that I find this interaction between Parliament, the state and the church very appropriate.

From the beginning our nation, Ghana, has also been influenced by the values inherent in the christian faith. At the promulgation of independence and first

Constitution in 1957, prayer was offered by the leaders for wisdom and guidance in setting up the Government. The framers of the Constitution did not intend to separate the values of christianity from the values of our system of government, even though to assure individual liberty they established in the Constitution a strong separation of the institutional church from the government. Thus, the government could not set up a preference for one religion over another by special privileges. As a result of the separation of church and state, we find great religious diversity in our country.

6. Because of the constitutional separation, christianity in the form of the institutional, organised church is constrained from structural or formal integration with government. But christianity in the form of an individual's theological and spiritual identification with the body of Christ can and should play a part in political and governmental processes. Working individually within the political system is not contrary to our christian faith. We believe in the redemption of humanity, a redemption that takes place on an individual basis, not on an institutional basis. Likewise our political influence comes primarily from the involvement of individuals, rather than institutions. In fact, any free and

democratic country must be based on the strong participation of individual citizens, in the various aspects of national development.

7. Operating as individual christians we in Ghana have made a real impact by working through secular organisations to help our laws, policies and programmes reflect christian values. Some christians believe that being the conscience of society means being separate from the political process. But the common denominator of any political issue is a spiritual problem. When we talk about a fair and efficient tax system with no common denominator of any political issue is a spiritual problem. When we talk about a fair and efficient tax system with no loopholes on the one hand or unduly burdensome requirements on the other hand, we are talking about the spiritual issues of fairness and justice. When we consider the problem of corruption in politics, and inefficiency in public administration again we are talking about spiritual questions - honesty, dedication and integrity. We therefore need to maintain a spiritual perspective on these secular issues.

8. Even if christians are not directly or immediately involved by our individual actions or identification with any particular political party, we are still expected to

have important personal political roles to play. Both institutionally, in the church and individually, as christians, we are instructed by the Bible to pray for those in political office. We need to pray for the issues confronting our society and for the hurting individuals and vulnerable groups within our society. And we have a responsibility to reach out to minister to the poor, the sick, the under privileged.

9. Whether christians choose to work directly in politics or to support it with our votes and prayers, the political process in a democratic country gives us a vital opportunity to manifest our adherence to christian principles in the service of our country.

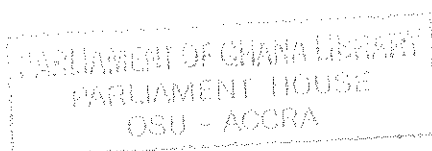
10. We christians have a clear obligation to be involved in our world. The Holy Bible urges us first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for Heads of State and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all Godliness and Holiness. The ability to help ensure justice, peace, national unity and development as well as an open door for the gospel is what we should look for as we make our individual contributions in aid of good governance.

11. In Paul's day, the form of government was empire. Although citizens could not elect Caesar, they could pray for him. It would, however, appear hypocritical to pray for someone for whom one is not willing to work. This is a debatable point.

We may however say that once we are obliged to pray for a government then we are also morally obliged to work to make it successful. No one is always wrong or always right. So christians need to be fair-minded, objective and balanced in their responses to national issues. Many such issues have important moral implications, and christians ought to support Godly principles wherever they are found. When there is a clearcut moral, political, developmental or social issue, christians are obliged to become involved.

Distinguished Participants,

12. The church has a unique role to play in the development of the nation. Over the decades the early churches have fulfilled their mandate not only to God the Creator, but society as well. Many of us herein gathered today are products of institutions established by the church. The pioneering role of the church did not only manifest itself in the establishment of schools, but hospitals and other job training centres throughout the country. The schools, established by the early



churches rank among the best in the country even up to today. Probably, the leadership of the churches may wish to examine the question whether the modern day church is as forthcoming as the early church, with respect to developmental issues; and if not, find out the reasons and a solution.

13. It is also sad to observe that the recent events in our nation have been replete with cases of moral and spiritual depravity. Respect for authority has been on the wane whereas absence of patriotism or love for one's country has become the bane of the country's existence. Ironically, this is at a time when so many churches have sprung up. This situation should pose a challenge to the churches. A debate should be opened on how our youth could be saved from the menace of drug abuse, prostitution and alcoholism.

14. Permit me to observe at this juncture that the period when religious bodies distanced themselves from state affairs and only acted as critics or at best observers must now belong to history. The clergy may agree with me that the state and the church should partner each other in the fight against corruption and other malpractices that have plagued society. As revered members of society, the

leadership of the church should be well placed in influencing government policies. Government also should demonstrate its readiness to work in partnership with religious bodies. The church and the state must therefore, complement each other's efforts to make constructive contributions to the development and implementation of national policies.

Distinguished Participants,

15. As christians we must always uphold the values of prayers. A couple of months ago, I had the opportunity to formally inaugurate the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship, a praying body in Parliament comprising MPS and Members of staff. The formation of this Fellowship was borne out of the need to constantly interact with God. As a practice, the House commences its daily business with prayers. Parliament realises this need for God's help out of the conviction that as mortal human beings, there is little we could achieve without God. In the light of this I wish to take this opportunity to commend all religious bodies who have made it a practice to intercede for the nation and its leaders at all their functions. Similarly, I wish to urge all churches who have not made it their practice to do so, to consider starting.

16. As we reconvene Parliament tomorrow to look at important national issues, I can only hope that christians and indeed non-christians will seek the intervention of God to enable the House find common ground to expeditiously deal with this urgent business before us.

17. And on this note, I have the honour and privilege to introduce to you our illustrious Guest Speaker for this occasion, **the Rt. Revd. Prof. Emeritus Kwesi A. Dickson, Immediate Past President of the Methodist Conference of Ghana** and to pray for God's guidance for the resounding success of the Breakfast Meeting!

THANK YOU.