Margull Claims Africans Find Politics And Religion Inseparable

By PHIL STRANGE

Christian missionaries brought the Gospel to Africa, but it was received with a mixture of understanding and misunderstanding.

This was the verdict pronounced by Dr. Hans J. Margull, Friday, March 9, in a talk in the Rice Chapel entitled "The Hope of Africa."

THE UNDERSTANDING was the call of the Gospel to Freedom; the misunderstanding was in terms of the cultural heritage of the African people. They understood the call in a radically present tense. When the promised freedom failed to materialize under the white missionaries, and since the white men were associated with colonialism, the Africans turned to black messiahs.

Because in the African idiom religion and politics are inseparable, the religious messiah and the political messiah were understood as one. When the Belgians imprisoned one religious messiah, Dr. Margull said, his followers proclaimed an impending second coming to establish a political kingdom.

THE POLITICAL LEADER of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, became the "Hope of Africa" in terms of the religious-political frame of reference when Ghana became the first African nation to gain independence in recent years. Because the expected freedom did not accompany independence, and the expected kingdom was not established, a new spirit of disillusionment has set in.

What does Dr. Margull suggest to the West in this situation? He recommends patience, non-interference, and trust. And to Christians he counsels the preaching of the Biblical story of the Exodus from Egypt.

He suggests that this story—the escape from bondage, the wandering in the wilderness, the attempts by some to find a tangible god in the Golden Calf, and the ultimate triumph of the people of Israel through faith in the God of History—has a present relvance to the African people.