In a previous article in this journal, which was entitled "The Kingdom and the State," we explored the possibility of formulating a biblical-theological view of the state. In a sense that article could as well have appeared under the same title as is found above the present one, for in our enquiry we found ourselves continuously and inescapably involved in the question of the relationship between the church and the state. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that, when one looks at things from the perspective of the Christian revelation, one will inevitably be confronted with the reality of the church in all her particularity. This is how it is in the Christian religion, where the church is not regarded as finding her origin in man—in other words, is not regarded as an association of religiously minded people—but as the body of Christ, instituted by him and preserved through the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. In short, the particularity of the church is given with the particularity of the revelation; from the Christian point of view religion and church belong together. Consequently, the perennial question of religion and politics has manifested itself in Western culture during the past nineteen hundred years mainly in the form of the problem of the relationship between the church and the state.\(^2\)

As the central figure of our analysis we found the church addressing her prophetic proclamation to the ruling authorities, so that, in the confrontation with the revelation, the state may come to a true self-understanding concerning its nature and function. The statement of A. De Quervain, that the church will have to understand the state better than it understands itself, is so true indeed!\(^3\) The church, as the bearer of the divine revelation, has a political apostolate, the core of which is to be found in her prophetic proclamation to the governing authorities. And it is important to stress that this political apostolate of the church is not something foreign to, and not even something added to her basic ministry, but a fundamental part of it. It belongs essentially to the priestly aspect of the church's ministry in the world that she intercedes for those who are placed in positions of high authority, and it belongs just as es-

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\(^1\)See the issue of April, 1957 (Vol. 10, No. 3), pp. 28-37.
\(^2\)Cf. A.A. van Ruler, Religie en Politiek, 1945, pp. 249ff.
\(^3\)Quoted by W. A. Visser 't Hooft, The Kingship of Christ, 1948, p. 138.
sentially to her prophetic ministry that she proclaims God’s will to the ruling powers, thus calling them to obedience to his Word. In this article we shall be particularly concerned with the question of what all this means in terms of the concrete social-political conditions of our day. In other words, can such ideas really be taken seriously in this second half of the twentieth century, or must they be discarded as too fanciful, and above all too unpractical for our age of “Realpolitik”?

**The Insoluble Question**

It might be well then that we proceed with a discussion on the very practical question: What do we expect? Do we expect, for instance, that a simple scheme will furnish the solution to this vexing problem of the relationship between the church and the state? No, we do not. In the course of the argument it will become quite apparent, I believe, that the kind of relationship which we visualize is not a simple matter indeed. But above all, we do not believe—and this should be stated emphatically at the very outset—that our views will supply the solution to the problem. Quite to the contrary, we are convinced that the problem cannot be solved! The question of the relationship between the church and the state is both theoretically and practically insoluble. It cannot be solved; it can only be *lived*—lived in the attitude of faith and prophecy.

The confrontation of Christianity with the political order, which finds its core in the relationship between the church and the state, can only *happen* in the dynamic reality of history; it is never static, never in rest, never a finished and closed system. Our systems leave no room for the open prophetic reality. As Christians and as the church of Jesus Christ we stand in history, not providing its “solution” but confessing God and his redemptive activity in history, and witnessing to the present and approaching kingdom.

Our rejection of the final scheme and the closed system does not imply, however, that we expect nothing to happen. It is the Word of God that is proclaimed, the Word of the living God! And then always something happens. With its sharp edge, its universal claims and its imperialistic drive it penetrates into all the various spheres of existence. It enters into the innermost depth of the soul, and by the power of the Spirit it sanctifies lives, and thus it takes form and comes, as it were, to a certain embodiment. Not *merely* in the lives of individuals! The power of the Word and the Spirit are operative in wider spheres and leave their impact upon the structures and institutions of society as well as upon individual existence. And thus it comes also to a certain embodiment and a provisional formgiving in the structures of communal existence. When the first preacher set foot in Europe, that event was not only of great religious significance, but one that proved to have tremendous social-political and
cultural implications! In more than one respect we have cause to smile about such expressions as "the Christian West," and yet, one cannot but wonder what things would be like if the gospel had taken a different course. 

**Historical Observations**

It has happened; the Christian faith has exerted a marked influence upon the cultural and social-political developments in the West. But when we set out to discover the organizational framework in which the Christian faith could most effectively exert her moulding influence, we find ourselves faced with innumerable and intensely perplexing problems. The lessons of the past may well prompt us to diffidence and hesitation in this matter. The attempts to find a structured relationship between Christianity and politics have generally led to a resolving of the dilemma by a **dissolving** of the tensions. This has been done mainly by dissolving either the state in the church, or the church in the state, or by dissolving the question altogether by declaring the state secular.

The story is a familiar one. At times the church has betrayed her unique nature as church of Jesus Christ and her particular ministry in the world, and has sought to acquire worldly power, frequently usurping the prerogatives of the state and using coercive measures to enforce her will. At other times the throne has sought to master the church, subordinating the church to the state, and using her as a **tool** in its political manipulations and designs. Thus resulted the chronic friction and prolonged struggle for supremacy which have proven so detrimental to both the church and the state.

In the Western section of the Roman empire we see the development of the doctrine of the **universale regimem** of the pope over the whole world, which development eventually culminated in the bull "**Unam Sanctam**," issued by pope Boniface VIII in the year 1302, and promulgated the claim that Christ had conferred upon Peter and his apostolic successors the power of the two swords, viz., the spiritual and the temporal, and that therefore "both are in the power of the church," so that it is only fitting that "the temporal authority be subject to the spiritual," i.e., the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

In the Byzantine empire the development was different, moving rather toward the system which is generally but perhaps not too accurately described as "Caesaro-papism," and in which the church was to a large de-

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*As Christopher Dawson has stated in his *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, 1950, p. 24: "When St. Paul, in obedience to the warning of a dream, set sail for Troy in A.D. 49 and came to Philippi in Macedonia he did more to change the course of history than the great battle that had decided the fate of the Roman Empire on the same spot nearly a century earlier, for he brought the seed of a new life which was ultimately destined to create a new world."

*Van Ruler, op cit., p. 319.*
gree made subservient to the state. As T. M. Parker has pointed out, the reference to papal power in the term "Caesaro-papism" is therefore somewhat confusing, because in this case it was not a spiritual ruler attracting to himself temporal power, but the issue was rather "whether the emperors arrogated to themselves spiritual prerogatives to which Christian tradition gave them no right."\(^6\)

It remained for modern days to advance the very drastic solution of simply cutting the Gordian knot by declaring the state "secular," "neutral," and "autonomous," i.e., not only independent from the church, but also from religion and revelation, thus making religion and politics two completely heterogeneous spheres which have little or nothing to do with each other. I would not like to deny that in some instances this emphasis has been a salutary corrective against illegitimate ecclesiastical interference. But in the long run it is an impossible position, because in its very structure, policies and practices, the state makes some kind of confession of some kind of religion.

But we must return from this brief historical excursion to our discussion on the question of practicality. Is it realistic to speak of addressing the Word of God to the state and calling the state to obedience to the divine revelation? Putting it concretely, do we presume for one moment that the American state would ever officially acknowledge and adopt the Christian revelation as an authoritative source by which it seeks to be guided in its governmental activities? And then we do not yet speak of those countries where the Christians form a small and insignificant minority, proclaiming their message in the midst of a sea of paganism and heathenism. And even if some country were to adopt the Christian revelation as a confessional basis for the affairs of state, the crucial question would still be how it would be interpreted and applied. The study of history gives us some cause for apprehension on that score too!

Both the cultural and the ecclesiastical realities of our day should offer sufficient warning against succumbing too readily to the temptation of losing ourselves in dreamy phantasms about a unified and harmonious \textit{respublica christiana}. Western culture is torn by many conflicting forces and ideologies. The Christian church is divided into numerous denominations and factions, which often do not only lack a unified witness, but at times contradict and oppose each other, thus raising the question which church shall direct which message to the ruling authorities. In view of these and many other considerations, the temptation is great indeed to adopt the principle of neutralism as the best of all possible solutions. And yet, can we remain Christian if we cease to dream and to live from the vision of the kingdom of God? I am not speaking of the dreams that are

\(^{6}\textit{Christianity and the State in the Light of History, 1955, p. 72.}\)
rooted in our ideals, but the ones that find their ground in the divine promises.

Let me repeat, however, that instead of losing herself in idealistic notions, the church will do well to be always prepared to be met with gross misunderstanding on the part of the world. Where Christ is not confessed the church will quite likely be regarded as one of the many organizations and associations of society. How can the world take the church seriously as church and her confession as confession of the living God? As far as the state is concerned, the church will most probably fall under the laws and regulations that pertain to associations and corporations. It is good to face these matters frankly and squarely. And it is also good when from time to time they are forcefully called to our attention. But after we have heeded these warnings, we are still faced with the prophetic imperative. Will considerations of success quench the burning fire within the prophet's soul (Jer. 20:9), or can they absolve us of the apostolic "necessity" (I Cor. 9:16), which does not weigh the chances of success, but motivated by the "nevertheless of faith" speaks in the name of the Lord?

"The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophecy?" (Amos 3:8). Shall the church ever acquiesce in the misunderstanding on the part of the world? Shall she take it for granted, or in the name of "realism" remain silent? That is the danger in the slogan "the free church in the free state." Everything depends, of course, on how such phrases are interpreted. But all too frequently the thought behind this slogan seems to be that the church will desist from "bothering the state with religion" as long as the state is willing to let the church be as one of the organizations of society. Of course, this implies that the church shall not become "radical," or become a threat to "law and order." I am not advocating revolution, but churches under the cross of modern dictatorships have discovered once again that there are times in which, in the name of her Lord, the church may not let the state be "free," and that it can be better to be a persecuted church than to be a "free" church which has ceased to be a prophetic church.

No doubt it is a great venture to direct the prophetic proclamation to the ruling authorities. But that is equally true in the case of our preaching to individuals. There is no preaching without risk! Who is equal to this task? It is always a venture, always doing the impossible, always to be done in the expectation of a divine miracle. It makes no difference whether the church is in the majority or in the minority; it is irrelevant whether her chances to succeed are considered good or bad, or whether she is a voice in the wilderness of indifference or perhaps even hostility; she must

7As Karl Barth has done once again in his Kirchliche Dogmatik, IV, 2, 1955, p. 778.
speak. And in her political apostolate the church "calls the state from neutrality, ignorance and paganism into co-responsibility before God, thereby remaining faithful to its own particular mission." 

**THE WORD GIVING FORM TO LIFE**

We have maintained that where the living Word is preached, it is effectual; it does something. This is so, not because of the effectiveness of our words, but because of the power of the Word and the Spirit. We emphasized that it comes to a certain embodiment in the sanctified lives of people, but also in the cultural and social-political structures and institutions of society. Now, in view of the preceding discussion, it should be almost superfluous to state that these forms and configurations about which we are speaking can in no way be regarded as "pure" expressions of the revelation, and can never be identified with it, but, on the contrary stand always under its judgment. They are fragmentary, relative and provisional.

Is there really a biblical basis for assuming that these statures and embodiments in the realms of culture and politics belong less essentially to the work of the revelation than its effect in the human soul? So often the impression is created, either explicitly or implicitly, that the revelation is primarily or even exclusively concerned with the inner depth of the soul, and that the outward and what could be called the surface of life is therefore secondary or at least of no religious significance. Such presuppositions also underlie the glib manner which often speaks of the "purely religious" nature of the church and the "essentially secular" functions of the state. Such phrases raise fundamental questions! When are things "purely religious," and what is really "essentially secular?" Is there anything in this world, or any activity in which man can be engaged, which is secular in essence? One thing is certain, that if "purely religious" must be interpreted in the sense of being confined exclusively to the inner life, the biblical revelation could hardly be considered to fall under this designation. The Word of God simply refuses to be limited to the inner life; it seeks to be operative in the wide field of history.

It seems to me that if we only keep in mind that revelation in the Bible means historical revelation, the presence and activity of God in history, we will then discern more clearly the profound affinity between Christianity and politics. When we say that the Word of God has political implications, we mean more than that Scripture furnishes us

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8Karl Barth, *Against the Stream*, 1954, p. 34.
9William A. Mueller, for example, in his book *Church and State in Lutheran and Calvin* (1954), speaks of "our modern idea of the state as an autonomous entity" (p. 127) and "our modern concept of the state as secular in character and therefore neutral in religion" (p. 164). I would admit that at the present time this is the prevalent view, but I would caution against a use of these concepts which makes it appear as though they are entirely undisputed and unproblematical in our day.

Cf. A. A. van Ruler, *Droom en Gestalte*, 1947, Ch. I.
with guiding principles in our political activities. There is a more direct relationship. Our political activity is the most fundamental way in which we seek to order life and protect it against the forces of chaos. And from the Christian point of view, from the perspective of God's dealings with the world, which he does not want to perish in the chaos of sin, but which he wants to preserve for the future of the kingdom, this formgiving of life in the political order, this restraining of the chaos, is an activity of immense religious significance. It can therefore be said that “politics is a holy matter” (Van Ruler). And a thousand woes to us, if it becomes the “dirty business” of unscrupulous individuals or groups!

**Prophetic Theocracy, Its Relative Nature**

When we try to find a formula by which to describe the kind of dynamic *modus vivendi* of the church and the state which we have sought to indicate above, and which seeks to avoid the pitfalls of either the church-state, the state-church, or the secular society, we soon discover that this is not an easy task. If the term were not so repellent to modern ears and so encumbered with false notions, and if the chance of misunderstanding were not so great, we would be inclined to use the designation “prophetic theocracy.” But we realize the disadvantage of the word “theocracy,” especially since for most people today it seems to denote something absolute, and massive, and final. Josephus, who coined the word to describe the political order in Israel under Moses, was himself aware of the fact that the term, as he expressed it, involves some “violence of words.” For Israel was not an absolute theocracy. Such a thing has never existed, and can never exist in this world. It is as hard to imagine what that would be like as it is to visualize the eschatological reality in which God will be “all in all” (I Cor. 15:28).

We must be careful not to oversimplify our picture of the conditions in theocratic Israel for the sake of buttressing the widespread notion that in Israel church and state were one. I doubt seriously whether the biblical data warrant the picture of the kind of monolithic structure that is so often portrayed to us. Israel had its various spheres of authority; it had its prophets, its priests, and its kings, and frictions and tensions were certainly not unknown in Israel's body politic. One could even speak of a dualistic tendency in the polity of Israel, which existed already from very early times. Beside Moses we find an Aaron, and the later judges and kings had independent prophets over against them. Perhaps we could also speak of a democratic tendency in Israel, since the relation between the chief or the king and the people was regarded as resting on a covenant or pact that was sanctified and confirmed before Yahweh. In

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1 Cf. T. M. Parker, *op. cit.*, pp. 8ff.
the face of the biblical evidence it seems hard to maintain that in Israel church and state were completely one.\textsuperscript{13}

The difference between the position of Protestantism and the absolute theocratic pretentions of Rome must be made apparent. Roman Catholic absolutism has received new impetus since in 1870 the doctrine of the two swords was reinforced by that of the infallibility of the pope. When one can thus have the revelation and the truth, political absolutism is most likely to ensue. The danger of the Roman Catholic position is that it really seeks to establish the rule of clericalism instead of serving the rule of God through the Word and the Spirit. The essentially relative and dynamic "prophetic theocracy," which places the church as well as the world under the continuous judgment of revelation, is then turned into an ecclesiocracy. On the other hand it must be emphasized that without being oblivious to the threat that Roman Catholic absolutism poses, Protestants shall have to be guided by more positive motives than merely fear of Rome if they are going to contribute constructively to the problem of the relation between Christianity and politics. Some of the organizations that claim to speak for Protestantism seem to be mainly negative, more inclined to witness against than for.

In the context of these remarks on the "prophetic theocracy" let me add a few words on the Calvinistic theocratic ventures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I did not mention them in the few historical observations which I presented earlier in this article. Whatever can be said in criticism of these experiments in the building of a Christian commonwealth, and I certainly do not wish to exempt them from criticism, it can hardly be disputed that at least in principle the unique nature of the church and the independence of the state were clearly recognized. In other words, Calvin and his later followers did not advocate clerical rule. It is true that their practice was not always in complete accordance with their principles, and at times they had too naive an interpretation of the biblical dictum that "when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan" (Proverbs 29:2). Moreover, it is obviously true that the "rule of the saints" can be accorded idolatrous sanctity just like anything else. To the extent that these fallacies have occurred in these Calvinistic ventures, we would agree with Reinhold Niebuhr that from them also we can learn "how dangerous it is for the Christian faith to equate any form of historic virtue or power with the sanctity of Christ."\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13}Already H. Bavinck, expressing his agreement with Ph. J. Hoedemaker, reached the following conclusion in his \textit{Gereformeerde Dogmatiek}, IV, 1901, p. 133: "Incorrect is it therefore to say, that in Israel church and state were one."

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Faith and History}, 1949, p. 203.
Yet, although, as I have stated before, we could not think of imitating or copying these experiments of the past, we should, in my estimation, consider some of the basic insights and motivations that underlie them more seriously than is generally done. Davies has pointed out that we should compare Calvin's thought with that of his older contemporary Machiavelli, whom he calls his real antagonist as far as matters of the secular realm are concerned. Such a study would undoubtedly bring us closer to the central issue than a one-sided emphasis on the "rule of the saints." These Calvinists knew that the saints are not immune from the temptations that beset man, and they knew the limits of sanctification. Nevertheless, they did retain a basic element of the medieval view of society, namely the vision of a "christianized" society, which in all relativity is an expression of the divine rule in the world. Machiavelli was the political realist of that age, and he was more "modern" than Calvin. Now, in the light of modern history, we can say that the issue between Machiavelli and Calvin is still a most timely and immensely pressing one. Shall secular "realism" or the Christian "dream" be the moulding force in the development of our civilization?

THE MEANING OF SEPARATION

There is a formidable objection which we must yet face. Some will contend that the views expounded in the preceding paragraphs are impossible and wholly unacceptable in view of the fact that they are in irreconcilable conflict with the basic constitutional principles to which the American people have committed themselves from the very earliest days of their history. We have laid strong and repeated emphasis on the relative, fragmentary, and provisional nature of any of the forms or expressions to which the Christian witness may come in the cultural and social-political order. The real cause of embarrassment for most people today, however, is not that so little seems to come of it, but that there should be any embodiment at all! It may not happen, because it involves violation of the principle of absolute neutralism which so many people have come to regard as axiomatic! The majority of Christians will perhaps concede that from time to time the church should direct her message to the state, but even if the state should hear, it may not listen. It seems to me, however, that the issue is not at all one between neutralism and faith, but between various kinds of faiths. The Committee on Church and State of the American Humanist Association has recently formulated a platform

16Horace M. Kallen seeks to lend an aura of divine sanction to his brand of secularist faith by entitling one of his books Secularism is the Will of God, 1954. It is interesting to note how this secularist faith has its own type of eschatology, as Kallen envisages "the uncoerced self-orchestration of the peoples of the globe" (pp. 40-41) by way of absolute neutralism.
of legislative principles in order that their views may be more seriously considered by legislative and other governmental agencies. In our laws we reflect our beliefs, perhaps the tenets of the humanist platform, perhaps those of the Christian confession, perhaps others, but when it comes to penultimate decisions, as is often the case in government, neutrality is out of the question.

The American position is usually characterized by the principle of separation, or, to use the Jeffersonian phrase, "the wall of separation" between the church and the state. Concerning this principle John C. Bennett has remarked that, "the separation of church and state stands for very important truths but it is dangerous as a dogma or as a slogan unless carefully defined." An attempt at careful definition, however, will lead one inevitably into all the intricacies and perplexities that are inherent in this issue, and it is therefore not surprising to find that the "dangerous" use of the phrase is the most common and the most popular one.

To what interpretation does careful definition lead us? This seems to be the crux of the matter in the contemporary American debate, for there is as yet no communis opinio among us as to the exact meaning of the phrase "separation of church and state." The First Amendment to the Constitution provides that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ." This is sometimes referred to as "the establishment of religion clause in the First Amendment." Few would dispute that this provision implies at least "disestablishment," or, expressed affirmatively, equal status for all the various religious bodies and complete impartiality on the part of the state toward them. The early colonists revolted against ecclesiastical interference and dominance; they did not want to see the service of God made a matter of compulsion, and they did not want to allow the coercive power of the state to be used to compel conformity to Christian ideas and practices. Repeatedly one can find the view expressed in early American writings that the church shall not occupy a position of favoritism and special privilege, and that religious dissent should not be considered a crime or civil offence punishable by law. But some would insist that establishment in the British colonies in North America meant something quite different from what it meant originally in England. They would interpret the term "disestablishment" in the sense of the secular state, holding the view that the state has nothing to do with religion beyond affording protection to the various religious bodies, so that they can be free in the exercise of their faith.

17Christian Ethics and Social Policy, 1946, p. 93.
18So, for instance, C. H. Moehlman, The Wall of Separation between Church and State, 1951, p. 71.
Does the American principle imply an "absolute separation?" This is undoubtedly the interpretation given it in a decision of the Supreme Court of Iowa of 1918. Here we can read "that if there is any one thing which is well settled in the policies and the purpose of the American people as a whole, it is the fixed and unalterable determination that there shall be an absolute and unequivocal separation of church and state, ..." 19 Note the tone of finality in the language, "well settled," "fixed," "absolute," and "unequivocal." Yet, I am not so sure that this statement is correct, and I hold Merrimond Cunnggim to be closer to the truth when in a recent book he says "It is absolute separation that neither history nor present practice supports; but some kind of degree of separation is supported by history and honored in present practice." 20 The variance between these two positions is in my judgment not just a matter of more or less; there is a qualitative difference, and one's decision one way or the other carries with it far-reaching implications. I sometimes fear that there is reason to believe that the extremist view of absolute separation is on the ascendancy in America.

I also have the impression that we in the church are at times too much inclined to wait passively and see what can be salvaged after the courts have made their pronouncements. It behooves us to regard our judicial system with the greatest respect, but I do not think that it borders on sedition when one adopts a bit more critical attitude toward the decisions of the courts than is frequently done. On the contrary, one may thereby display a genuine concern for the preservation of the best that this system has given us. Constitutionality depends to a large degree on judicial interpretation 21 as for instance decisions in the realm of social-economic policy have made quite clear again during the past decades. And I do not think that we fall into the snare of complete relativism when we point out that judicial interpretation depends to some degree on what could perhaps be called "the spirit of the age." And it is precisely here that the church has an important task! For instead of waiting passively, she should take the initiative in pervading the cultural and intellectual atmosphere of the nation with the Christian witness and perspective.

Whenever the church proclaims the demands of God upon all of life, upon individuals as well as communal existence, there will be those who protest that the church seeks special privileges or attempts to dictate the consciences of those who are of different persuasion or to infringe upon their personal freedom. Take the question of Sunday legislation. In this

19Quoted in A. W. Johnson and F. H. Yost, Separation of Church and State in the United States, 1948, p. 129.
case the religious and the social-economic issues happen to be inextricably intertwined. The church is interested in all these aspects, because she is concerned about the whole person. But it seems to me that the church should never base her case solely on sociological grounds. We must have the courage once in a while to speak "in the name of the Lord," in spite of the risks that are involved. It is of course quite true to say that one cannot legislate moral motivation and that outward observances are not always a correct indication of inner spirituality, but it is not true that from the biblical point of view the inner life is everything, and that the relative and rather outward order on the surface of life is insignificant. One can hardly overestimate, it seems to me, the spiritual and beneficial impact which the traditional and often perhaps rather outward observance of the Sunday has had upon our people and our culture. Is that not the will of God?

Occasionally it is suggested that Christianity is indeed normative in American life, and recognized as such by the state, but that this does not apply to the Christian religion as such, but only to Christian morality. One has to adopt some kind of norm! It is easy to philosophize about the supremacy of conscience, but this of course leads to chaos if it is taken to mean that anything is permissible if it is declared to be motivated by conscience. In an interesting opinion which was delivered by Justice Duncan in the case Updegraph v. Commonwealth of 1824 in Pennsylvania, the Court declared that "a general Christianity" must be considered as normative for our conduct. And when we wonder what a "general Christianity" consists of, we receive the following bit of philosophical theology: "Its foundations are broad, and strong, and deep; they are laid in the authority, the interests, the affections of the people."

This is a typical example of a widespread nineteenth century illusion that one can have a Christianity independent from the Christian revelation, and that one can preserve Christian morality without Christian faith. Over against any "general Christianity," which in the very nature of the case will be a Christless Christianity, the church must persist in proclaiming the message of the cross and the resurrection, the message of the lordship of Christ over the church and the world.

This very brief discussion on the concept of the separation of church and state may suffice to give some indication that the debate in America on the interpretation of this phrase has by no means come to an end. The fundamental question seems to be whether separation means that the church and the state shall be mutually independent, the church not dominating the state, nor the state controlling the church, or whether it means a complete divorce between the Christian faith and the political order.

22 Cited in Merrimon Cuninggim, op. cit., p. 67.
The kind of dynamic relationship which we have defended in this article is not in conflict with the first interpretation of the principle of separation, because it recognizes the unique nature of the church as well as the independence of the state. We have rejected the second interpretation, because the free and autonomous state, which is not bound by the revelation, will in our judgment not remain free, but will eventually fall victim to the demonic powers. The truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Lord, shall also make the state free!

**INCONCLUSIVE CONCLUSION**

It is clear then, that we have not solved the tensions. Nor do we have a satisfactory answer to offer, no formula, no scheme, not even a long range "program" on which to fix our hopes. Basically things remain as they already are, and as they have been for centuries. It has never been an ideal situation as regards the preaching of the church and the transformation it has wrought in the cultures of the nations. It has not led to a "brave new world." Yet, the preaching has spread a knowledge of "the Name," and a transforming power has permeated the lives of people, and it has influenced the manner in which they have given form to the inner life in cultural and social-political structures and institutions. The tensions remain, and the problem remains a problem. For the church, therefore, remains the venture—the venture of faith. We do not call the church to idealism, but to a deepened awareness of her political apostolate, and to a greater openness and appreciation for the relative and provisional embodiments in society that result from her witness. Instead of a feeling of inferiority and embarrassment we need a more positive and affirmative attitude on the part of the church toward these fragments of order which her witness affects on the surface of existence.

Through the Word and the Spirit some order is established in existence, thus protecting life and preserving it for the kingdom. That is the theological significance of these embodiments. Like the statutes of the Spirit in the sanctified life, they are signs and seals. The work of the Spirit is of a provisional and preserving nature; it is the promise which finds its ground in the presence of God in history. We must beware, lest an unbiblical social idealism, or an equally unbiblical spiritualism should lead us to look disparagingly upon these embodiments because of their inherently fragmentary and outward aspects. In the context of an eschatologically oriented theology, which also knows of the hidden but real presence of the kingdom, they must be acknowledged in their positive function in God's dealings with the world. Thus Calvin saw it as the divine mandate for the magistrates to preserve the true humanitas, so that life on earth may be more livable and not perish in chaos and nothingness.
For a few moments we allowed the term “prophetic theocracy” to enter the discussion. Considering the quotation marks, as well as the qualifying remarks that followed, plus the nature of this exposition, I think that was quite permissible. However, as was hinted already, in the long run the term may prove to be more confusing than enlightening, and I will readily grant that the matter itself is more important than the term used to express it. The church knows that the ultimate answer will not be man’s answer, but the kingdom of God. The church fulfills her mission in “the last days,” the end-time. Her whole thought and life must be imbued with the vision of the coming kingdom. The Lord is at hand! And it is the redemptive presence through the Holy Spirit which gives the expectation such a consuming and urgent quality. In the presence of the Spirit we receive the pledge and the foretaste of the future. We receive these pledges in the experiences of the heart. We receive them also in the fragments of a Christian society. The statutes in the heart, nor those in society are the realization of the kingdom. They point beyond themselves to the new polis, the new heaven and the new earth into which the kings of the earth shall bring their glory, and the glory and the honor of the nations; they point to the time when instead of the present as pledge we shall have the inheritance, in which it shall be true: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man” (Rev. 21). Until that day the life of the church shall be a venture in faith, and in her political apostolate she must, like Abraham, go forth in obedience, even if she does not always know exactly where it will lead her.