

God's Kingdom and the transformation of society

Dion A. Forster¹

1. Introduction

Rob Bell writes that, “A Christian should get very nervous when the flag and the Bible start holding hands. This is not a romance we want to encourage”². Many Christians would agree with this statement in principle yet in practise the lines separating Church and State are not always that easy to distinguish.

When I travel in America (and other places in the world), I frequently find churches that display their nation's flag alongside other liturgical icons and symbols in the sanctuary. On numerous occasions I have heard sincere Christians praying that God would establish a ‘Christian government’ or bring their current political leadership to a faith in Christ. In other settings I have seen how Christians submit themselves, uncritically, to the governing authorities of their nation, frequently citing Romans 13:1 as their reason for doing so. Of course there are many places across the world where religious institutions and the State seem to be one and the same thing. Then, on the other side, one also finds Christian individuals and groups who are radically opposed to their government. Some pray against the leaders of their nations, as some Christians did during the years of Apartheid in South Africa, others even turn to action in the hope of seeing change in the leadership of their nations.

One feature that appears to run as a common thread among all of these divergent perspectives is the thread of a sincere desire for obedience to God's will. Each of these groups (and individuals) believes that they are honouring God by holding a particular position and working for the establishment of that position in society. How is it possible that people who share the same faith, read the same Bible, and sincerely seek to honour the same God could

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² Rob Bell and Don Golden. *Jesus Wants to Save Christians: A Manifesto for the Church in Exile* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 18.

hold such different views on the relationship between the Church and the State? Moreover, what should the relationship be between the Church and the State?

In this essay, I propose what I believe to be a theologically and Biblically responsible understanding of the relationship between the Church and the State. In summary, it is my contention that the best possible form of government that the Church can work and pray for is a secular government. This may sound contentious to some Christians, however, I hope that my argument will be clear and convincing in this regard. In order to make this argument I will first present why I believe a secular state is the best option among the various possibilities. Then I shall consider the role of the Church in a secular democracy. I shall give a brief overview of the contemporary models of the relationship between the Church and the State. In conclusion I shall sound a call for the Church to take up its role and responsibility in society in order to work for true transformation and the establishment of the principles of God's Kingdom in the world.

2. Why a Secular State is a good idea

What kind of State do you think is best for the citizens of the country in which you live? I have asked this question of numerous Christians all over the world. As part of my work I have the privilege to travel a great deal. I have found that in most settings, Christians tend to give similar answers. Whether they are in countries such as South Africa or America, with a predominantly Christian population (even if it is nominal Christianity), or whether it is in countries like Malaysia and Turkey that have a predominantly Muslim population, or countries such as China or France that have a non-religious or post-religious social outlook, the answers from Christians seem to correlate. Most Christians would like to see Christians in power in their countries.

This perspective displays a naïve belief that if one's president or prime minister is a Christian, he or she would influence the country's laws and policies in favour of the Kingdom of God. Some even express the desire that a Christian leader would favour Christians above citizens of other religious persuasions. Many Christians believe that if a Christian political

party governed their nation, it would bring them closer to the values and principles of God's Kingdom.

It is fair to say that most ordinary Church members have never reflected deeply on what a Christian State might look like, how it would operate, and what exactly it would mean for all of the citizens of their nation. I have discovered that most Christians believe that a Christian State would be beneficial to their nation and their faith.

It is my contention that a Christian State is counterproductive to the aims and principles of the Kingdom of God in the world. However, before I get ahead of myself, let's consider for a moment the three broad kinds of State that one could have:

The first is what could be classified as a *Religious State*. In this type of State, there is a clear relationship between a formal religion and the nation State. In some instances there is an overt relationship between the nation State and a particular religion. A contemporary example of a Religious State is Iran where Islam is prescribed as the official religion of the State and the tenets of this religion are enforced by law. In other instances there is a less overt relationship between the religion and the State, however matters of State are strongly directed and even dominated by the perspectives and powers of a religious grouping within the State. The United States of America is an example of such in practice, even though the US constitution purports a stringent separation between Church and State.

A Religious State is problematic in that it must compromise, and even deny the rights of its citizens to freedom of religion. This denial of religious freedom is frequently accompanied by the denial of other commonly accepted human rights – for example issues related to gender rights, and free access to democratic processes³. In some extreme cases, such as in Serbia and Bosnia, State supported or State sponsored religion has led to genocide⁴.

Furthermore, it would be naïve to think that even if the ruling party or grouping in a nation shared one's broad religious convictions (e.g., if they were Christian) there would be

³ Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner, *The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 172-174.

⁴ Michael A Sells, "The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia" *Comparative Studies in Religion and Society* 11(1998):. xiii-xviii.

agreement on all matters of faith and life. The struggles between Catholic and Protestant Christians in Ireland and parts of Europe are a clear example of how religious and social differences within the same nation can lead to conflict and strife.

From a theological perspective, any nation that oppresses its people cannot be in line with the values of God's Kingdom. Pragmatically, it is also not sensible to expect that the principles of God's Kingdom would be upheld through State sanctioned, or State enforced, religion. As a Christian I would thus conclude that a Religious State is not desirable.

The second kind of State is what can be classified as an *Anti-religious State*. This is a State in which the government has a policy of actively working against religious conviction among its citizens. In such a State, religion is seen as harmful to the intentions of the State and so religious conviction and religious institutions are forbidden by law. Among the best-known modern examples of such practises are the anti-religious campaigns of the Cambodian Khmer Rouge and the anti-religious efforts in the former USSR⁵ from 1921-1928. During this period the Soviet Union formally supported the elimination of religious ideals and institutions since they were seen as being counter to the national social ideologies of the State⁶. In some anti-religious States, some forms of religion are allowed to exist (for example the State-approved churches in China). However, these groupings often operate under extremely narrow and restrictive regulations that impinge upon everything from religious gatherings to doctrinal matters. Such a situation would significantly hamper the work of the Church, negatively impacting its mission and witness. As a Christian, I would thus conclude that an Anti-Religious State is not desirable either.

The third broad category is what is commonly classified as the *Secular State*. Prozesky explains that the secular state secures, "...freedom of belief and associated practice for all belief systems, such as all the country's religions and that none of them has preferential status in law"⁷. He further points out that it is a mistake to equate the Secular State with atheism or anti-religious sentiments⁸. Since the State seeks to secure freedom of belief and religious

⁵ United Socialist Soviet Republic, commonly referred to as the Soviet Union.

⁶ Dimitry V. Pospelovsky, "A History of Soviet Atheism in Theory, and Practice, and the Believer" In *A History of Marxist-Leninist Atheism and Soviet Anti-Religious Policies*. Vol. 2. New York: St Martin's Press, 1987:34, 50-55.

⁷ Martin Prozesky, "Is the secular state the root of our moral problems in South Africa?" *Alternation* 3 (2009):239.

⁸ Prozesky, *Is the secular state the root of our moral problems in South Africa?*, 243.

practice it will neither support, nor suppress, religious belief and the associated religious practice. The Secular State takes no formal position on religion, rather such matters are left to religious communities (as long as they do not transgress the law of the State which has the primary intent of protecting all of its citizens). Prozesky gives four convincing arguments why Christians should support the concept of a Secular State⁹. I shall summarize, and comment upon, his arguments below.

The Secular State and religious belief. Religion is structured upon the premise that persons believe certain things that shape their lives. For religious belief to be sincere, and effective, it must be freely chosen. Faith cannot be compelled upon a person. This is the problem with a Religious State – the relationship between the State (which is an institution of social power) and the freedom to choose a faith perspective is inappropriate. Persons may tacitly conform to the pressure of the State-religion, but where faith really matters, such as in moral choices, sacrificial service, commitment to community ideals etc., there will be no substantial commitment. The Christian faith certainly understands that personal belief is an essential element to true Christian faith. One cannot be born into Christianity, or be truly Christian simply by being associated with a particular social grouping, or performing a set of ritual activities if there is no personal conviction of the truth and power of these elements in one's life. Faith is a matter of conviction, not merely association or ascent to power.

The Secular State and prophetic witness. There is no doubt that Religious States, and Anti-religious States, have led to the rise of strong prophets who have spoken out against evil, corruption, and sin from a religious perspective. In South Africa, persons such as Albert Luthuli, Desmond Tutu and Beyers Naude are prime examples. In El Salvador, Oscar Romero is another well-known example of a brave Christian prophet who stood for the truth of the Christian faith in face of the State's injustice. With a fair measure of certainty, however, such persons face rejection and alienation at best, and persecution and death at worst. Such brave prophets are wonderful and brave. However, as Prozesky rightly points out, "Society needs more than these rare, magnificent moral and spiritual heroes; it needs plenty of prophets. When a religion allies itself too closely with the State and enjoys constitutional superiority, the prophetic voice weakens because pressure rises"¹⁰.

⁹ Prozesky, *Is the secular state the root of our moral problems in South Africa?*, 249.

¹⁰ Prozesky, *Is the secular state the root of our moral problems in South Africa?*, 249.

Christians have a God-given responsibility to engage any power, whether an individual or an institution, that acts contrary to the principles of the Kingdom of God and the Gospel of Christ. Every believer is to be a prophet, listening for the will of God in society and living to see *that* will enacted. This is best done where the State affords religious freedom to its citizens – creating sufficient space for them to express their convictions. An Anti-religious State does not allow such freedom., whereas a Religious State will frequently silence those who do not express the ideals of the State (either through abuse, or through coopting them into the State system). In South Africa, since the end of Apartheid rule, we have seen many former ‘prophets’ being silenced by being offered high paying and powerful positions in the State.

The Secular State and the character of God. Prozesky’s third argument is based on the Christian understanding that God seeks justice and mercy for all persons – see as an example Luke 15.4ff¹¹. If this is God’s character, then Christians should share God’s desire for their fellow citizens, regardless of their religious perspectives. Christians should have the mission of working for the transformation of the whole of society for the good of all citizens. Of the three kinds of State discussed above, the Secular State is the only one that allows for such activity.

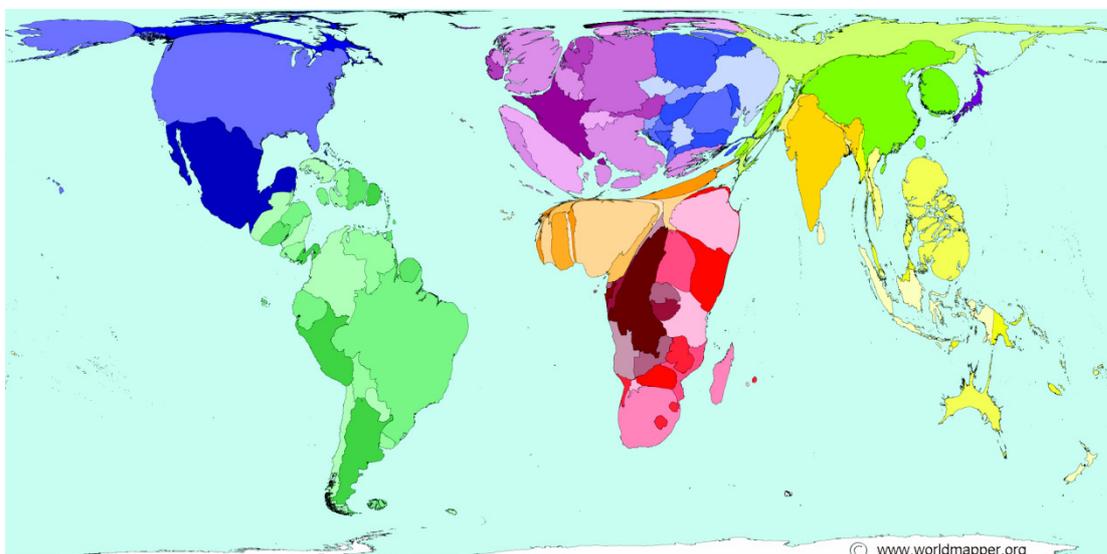
The Secular State and equality before the law. The Secular State ensures that there is no discrimination based on religion. It ensures that all citizens have equal access to the law, even if there is a particular religious group that dominates the country numerically. Fairness and non-discrimination are core values in the Christian faith, most clearly and succinctly expressed in the ‘Golden Rule’ of Luke 6.31 that says, “Do to others as you would have them do to you”. Religious and political alliances can be fickle. The only assurance that one has of such fairness in society is not to create unhealthy alliances between religion and the State.

These three points make good theological sense in the light of the mission and identity of the Christian faith. It is for this reason that I argue that Christians should encourage and support the notion of a Secular State.

¹¹ Prozesky, *Is the secular state the root of our moral problems in South Africa?*, 250.

My argument relies on two important considerations. First, that the State in question should be just, seeking the good of its citizens. Second, that the Church, and not the State, has responsibility for religious matters in society. It is not the responsibility of the State to further the aims of any religion – evangelism and mission are functions of the Church. One of the great hindrances to the proper functioning of the Secular State is a weak and ineffective Church. Where the Church fulfills its mission effectively and consistently it will not only evangelize the population of the nation, thus bringing about spiritual and moral transformation, it will also hold the state accountable for just and ethical governance for the good of all of the citizens of the nation.

In one of my previous books, “Christian and positive: Reflections on Christianity in an HIV+ world”, I showed how an ineffective and apathetic Church contributed towards suffering in society by not fulfilling its mandate, and not holding the State accountable for its task. In short I showed that a weak and ineffective Church does a disservice to the world that it is sent to love and transform¹². Consider the following map of the world¹³, where instead of indicating the size of a nation by its geographical land mass its size is proportional to the number of Christians that live within it.

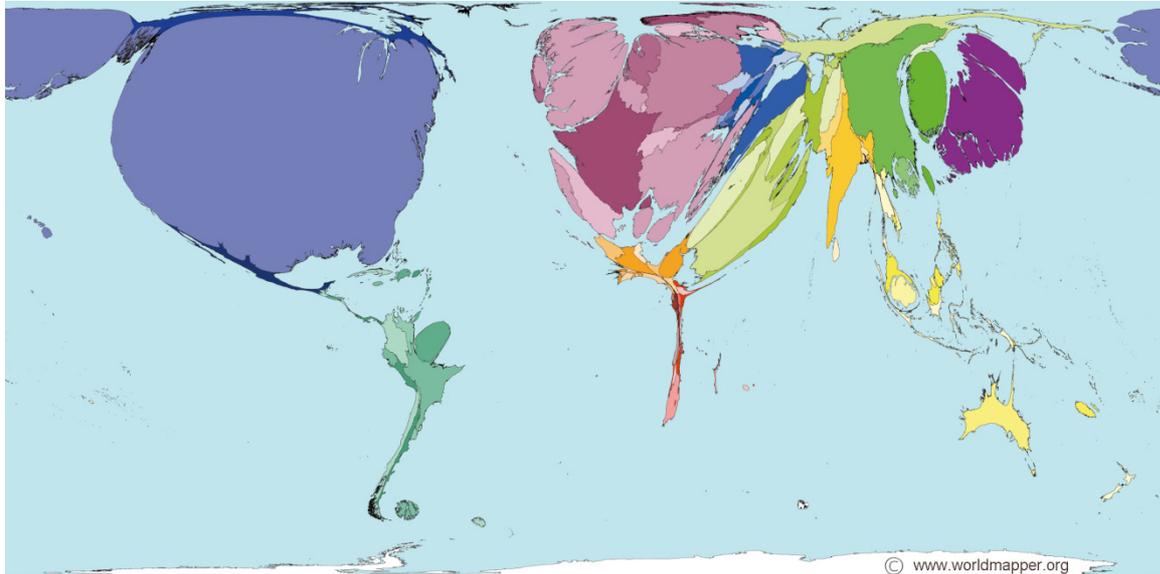


As Christians we would like to believe that those areas of the world in which our faith is most prevalent will be free from some of the ills and evils of society, such as greed, disease,

¹² Dion A. Forster, *Christian and positive: Reflections on Christianity in an HIV+ world*. (Cape Town: MMA Publishers, 2010), 22-29.

¹³ “Christians” Accessed 19 May 2011. http://www.worldmapper.org/display_religion.php?selected=554

poverty and war. However, the maps that follow tell a different story. Consider the map below that shows military spending in the world.¹⁴ This does not look like the work of ‘peacemakers’ (Matt 5.9) in some of the most densely populated Christian countries in the world.

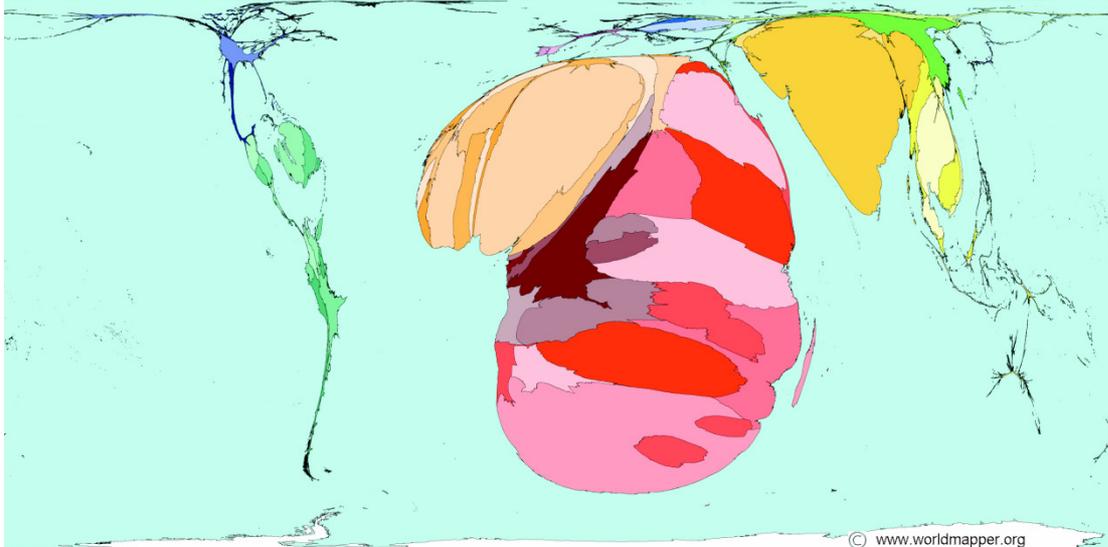


Next take a look at this map¹⁵ that shows HIV infections in the world. What makes this map so striking is that 79.8% of South Africans indicated that they are Christian in the last national census. How could such an overwhelmingly Christian population allow such a tragedy to take place?

¹⁴ “Military Spending 2002” Accessed 13 February 2012.

<http://www.worldmapper.org/display.php?selected=279>.

¹⁵ “HIV Prevalence” Accessed 13 February 2012. <http://www.worldmapper.org/display.php?selected=227>.



There is little doubt that many of the problems illustrated above could be dealt with far more effectively by the States concerned. However, one must ask, what percentage of those persons in America who send troops to war are Christians? What percentage of persons who are infected with HIV through extramarital sexual relationships in Southern Africa are members of the Christian faith? The core of the Gospel is about social and moral transformation. The Kingdom of God, as expressed in both the Old and New Testaments of the Christian scriptures, espouses social justice, economic responsibility, peace for all people and stewardship of the earth's resources. Indeed, the Church has a critical role to play in the spiritual and moral formation of the nation. However it must guard against simply being co-opted by the State. What models are there for functional and effective Church-State relationships?

3. An overview of the models of Church and State in contemporary Christianity

The question at hand is: what kind of relationship between the Church and the State would best facilitate transformation in society? This far I have made an argument in favour of the kind of State that would best facilitate transformation, namely a Secular State. I have also argued that the transformation of society requires an active, engaged and prophetic Church since it is the function of the Church, and not the State, to enact the will of the Kingdom of God. However, with this in mind what should the relationship be between the Church and the

State? At the height of the Apartheid era in South Africa, Jaap Durand, a South African theologian, did a great deal of work in answering this question. Durand suggests that there are four primary models of relationship that exist between the Church and the State in contemporary society¹⁶.

3.1 Durand's four models of relationship between the Church and the State

The first model is what Durand calls the *Roman Catholic Nature Grace Model* - this model came into being during the period of the *Corpus Christianum* i.e., the period of global Christendom¹⁷. The Roman emperor Constantine was the first to establish Christianity as the official State religion of the Holy Roman Empire. Society was viewed as a *congregation fidelium* – a mystical body that was governed by a combination of ecclesiastical canon law (under the Pope) and Roman civil law (under the emperor).

This joint government was seen as an ontological alliance between ecclesial and civil governance that represented Christ who is the invisible Chief, or King of society. In this alliance the Church enjoyed priority over the State. Koopman explains, “The church served as institute of salvation and mediator of the grace of God, which does not nullify nature, but perfects it – *gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit*”¹⁸. However, as secularization grew in Europe this relationship to the State changed somewhat, in *Gaudium et Spes*¹⁹ the Church is described as *sacramentum mundi*, a “sacrament to the world”. As a sacrament to the world, the Church fully embodied the redemptive purpose that God has for the world and is working out in and through the Church in society. Thus, as the representative of Christ in the world,

¹⁶ Jaap Durand, "Kontemporêre modelle vir die verhouding van kerk en samelewing." In *Versamelde opstelle oor kerk en politiek*, ed. Jaap Durand. (Bellville: University of the Western Cape, 1986), 14-19. Please also see the unpublished summary of Durand's work by Nico Koopman, "Classical models of church and state engagement". (University of Stellenbosch, 2010), 1-5. This unpublished article is based in large part on Nico Koopman, "Public Theology in South Africa: Lessons from the theology of Jaap Durand." In *Discerning God's justice in Church, Society and Academy: Festschrift for Jaap Durand*, eds. Ernst Conradie and Christo Lombard. (Cape Town: African Sun Media, 2009) 69-80.

¹⁷ Durand, "Kontemporêre modelle", 14.

¹⁸ Koopman, *Classical models*, 1.

¹⁹ *Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World — Gaudium et Spes* Promulgated by Pope Paul VI. (Vatican City, 1965).

the Church had the particular role of serving the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed in society, redeeming and transforming the world as a humble servant.

Durand points to the Liberation theologians within the Catholic tradition as a prime example of this understanding of the relationship between Church and State²⁰. Gustavo Gutierrez, for example, understood that the Church as *sacramentum mundi* means that the Church must function as an active agent working for the liberation of oppressed persons in society. There is a clear eschatological link between the redemptive work of the Church in the present time, and the anticipated return of Christ who will end all oppression and establish His Kingdom of justice and grace. Johan Baptist Metz is another Catholic liberation theologian who fits into this tradition, although with a slight variation. He feels that it is not enough that the Church merely penetrates the world through its exemplary Kingdom living, modeling the Kingdom of God in a fallen world. Rather he believes that the Church needs to take a further step of being a subversive, disturbing and critical force in the current world order²¹. Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of El Salvador, who was mentioned previously embodied this understanding of the relationship between the Church and the State.

In this model, the Church takes responsibility for the establishment of God's Kingdom in society. While the State is responsible for enacting and upholding the social structures that make justice, equity and freedom a reality. It is the Church that exemplifies these realities within its own structures and living. Furthermore where the State does not facilitate or uphold these common values the Church has the responsibility to penetrate society in order to establish them, sometimes even disturbing the unjust or ineffective State in the process. The Church is to "...have a sacramental, exemplary, penetrating, elevating, transformative, liberating, critical, subversive and disturbing function in the world"²².

Of course, when one considers this model of Church and State relationship, one can see that far too frequently the Church is passive, inward looking, and disengaged from this task. Consider for a moment the evangelical Christian Church in the United States. In large measure, this powerful community of Christian believers has been silent on issues of economic justice, foreign economic and political policy and the military action that the

²⁰ Durand, *Kontemporêre modelle vir die verhouding van kerk en samelewing*, 14.

²¹ Koopman, *Classical models*, 2.

²² Koopman, *Classical models*, 2.

United States is involved in on foreign soil. In fact, we need to admit that it is Christians who are upholding and perpetrating these injustices in the world.

The second model that Durand discusses is the *Lutheran two Kingdoms model*²³. The reformer, Martin Luther, believed that Church governance, family life, work life and government and politics all fall under the sovereign rule of God. The Gospel and the law, respectively govern these areas of life. Since Christians live their lives within both of these governmental spheres (the altar and the throne), there should be, theoretically, harmony between the two Kingdoms.

Lutheran theologian, Helmuth Thielicke suggests that there is an eschatological element to this relationship²⁴. Christians, who live in both of these Kingdoms, also live in tension between the old aeon and the new aeon. The Christian must make compromises to live within the world. In this sense, a political party or regime could never be called Christian. Rather, it may have Christians within it who live for the ideals and values of God's Kingdom within the Kingdom of the world. Koopman summarises this by writing that through "...individual Christians the church engages in the infiltration (*Unterwanderung*) of the world. This infiltration has as purpose the conversion of persons and through them the transformation of social structures"²⁵. In some senses the Church, through individual Christians, infiltrates every organ of the world, almost like white blood cells would go throughout the body bringing healing and renewal.

This view of the Church has a great deal to offer our understanding of how Christians can transform society from within. Devout teachers, law makers, politicians, police personnel, economists, home makers, artists, and persons in every sphere of society can be agents of transformation carefully and powerfully redeeming individuals and structures in society to transform them to the ideals of the Kingdom of God.

The next model that Durand discusses is called the *Reformed Christocratic Model*²⁶. John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper and Karl Barth are among the best known reformed theologians who uphold this model. In this model it is understood that Christ rules over both the spiritual

²³ Durand, *Kontemporêre modelle vir die verhouding van kerk en samelewing*, 20.

²⁴ Helmuth Thielicke, *Theological Ethics – Volume 2: Politics*.(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 565-597.

²⁵ Koopman, *Classical models*, 3.

²⁶ Durand, *Kontemporêre modelle vir die verhouding van kerk en samelewing*, 24.

and earthly kingdoms and that law and Gospel must be present in both. The function of the Church is to govern itself under the Spirit and the Word and to proclaim prophetically from the inner circle of the spiritual Kingdom to the outer circle of the earthly Kingdom the reign of Christ in that sphere²⁷. The rule of Christ from the inner to the outer sphere (from the spiritual Kingdom to the earthly Kingdom) is known as Christocracy and it was first discussed in detail by John Calvin. Kuyper took this notion further by distinguishing between the specific grace of God and the general grace of God²⁸. The specific grace of God is at work in the Church to bring persons to salvation and transformation, whereas the general grace of God works through these transformed individuals to bring transformation and redemption to the structures of society. He, however, felt that it was not the role of the Church to operate beyond its own boundaries. The Church was not to be a prophetic voice to society, rather it had the responsibility of working rigorously with its members who would then go into all spheres of society, like an organism, bringing transformation and the establishment of God's prophetic will that is proclaimed in the Church.

Karl Barth understood the rule of Christ in the Kingdoms differently. He did not believe that there is an ontological separation between the spiritual and earthly Kingdoms, but rather that "All spheres of life should be understood in terms of the central confession of Christian faith: Christ the Crucified and Resurrected is Lord and King of God's kingdom and of all kingdoms of this world"²⁹. Both the Church and the State are thus within the salvific will of God and wait upon the perfection and fulfillment of God's eschatological plan of transformation, renewal and healing under Christ. The State as the outer circle, is expected to give expression to the social and political aspects of the Kingdom of God (justice, safety, health, education etc.) while the Church, as the inner circle of the two Kingdoms, is not to isolate itself from the State and the rest of the world. The Church is rather to be an *analogous* example of the Kingdom of God in Christ, exemplifying the principles and precepts of God's Kingdom to the world, although in imperfect ways. The Church must therefore reject all tyranny in society and work for the establishment of human rights, which are central to God's will for both Kingdoms. Barth encouraged the Church to be active in the establishment of God's will in political life and the transformation of political reality in the State. This is done within the Church through teaching and preaching among Church members, as well as

²⁷ Koopman, *Classical models*, 3.

²⁸ Abraham Kuyper, *Wisdom and wonder: Common grace in science & art*. (Grand Rapids: Christians Library Press, 2011), 33-36.

²⁹ Koopman, *Classical models*, 3.

proclamations from the Church to the State. Moreover, he encouraged individual Christians to seek and take up office in politics in order to be salt and light. Barth opposed the idea of a Christian political party since he believed that such a party could never be perfect and would inadvertently compromise the message of the Gospel and Christian witness.

The fourth model is the *Revolutionary-Eschatological Model*³⁰. This model was developed mainly in the two thirds world among liberation, political and revolution theologians. Simply put, the theologians who developed this model had become increasingly dissatisfied with the manner in which the Church actualised and enacted their insights and beliefs about society. These theologians, such as Gustavo Gutierrez and John Baptist Metz, mentioned earlier, felt that the Church was being compromised in its relationship with the State. They felt that the State needs to find opposition where it is unjust, that conformity was a denial of the values of the Gospel and that negation and rejection of corrupt and oppressive political and economic systems is the mission of the Church in the world³¹. In many instances the Church was organized as a revolutionary counter-structure to the political organs of the State. This was particularly necessary where the State had shown disdain for the Church and would not heed its prophetic warnings for transformation and change. In general terms this model of engagement had an eschatological intent – to establish the Kingdom of God in spite of the State.

In conclusion one can see how each of the four models presented above offers some critical insights into the relationship between the Church and the State. What is clear to me is that regardless of the model of relationship that is prevalent in your context, the Church has a God-given mandate to engage both the State and the members of the Church to work for the transformation of society and the establishment of God's Kingdom of justice and grace.

4. Conclusion

This essay considered what kind of relationship between the Church and the State would be most beneficial for the transformation of society. The argument was made that the Church should advocate and work for the establishment of a just Secular State since this form of government will best suit the principles of equality, freedom and social justice that are central

³⁰ Durand, *Kontemporêre modelle vir die verhouding van kerk en samelewing*, 34.

³¹ Koopman, *Classical models*, 4.

to the Gospel of Christ. Next it was argued that for transformation to take place in society the Church will need to take up its role of establishing God's Kingdom in society. Establishing the principles of God's Kingdom in society is the ultimate responsibility of the Christian Church. Four models of relationship between the Church and State were considered, each proposing a different kind of engagement between the Church and the State. It was concluded that what is common to all of these models is that God is sovereign over all creation, including the Church and the State. Christians have a place within society and should not withdraw from their responsibility to be agents of God's healing and transformation. What the world requires is a Church that can exercise its responsibility to bring about personal spiritual and moral transformation through evangelism, as well as social and structural transformation through effective mission in the world.

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565-597.

the 'kingdom of God' brought by "soul-controlled men" on earth. all men being at different stages in this evolution towards the goal of "godness". some beings having achieved soul-control already, approaching perfection or godhood. these god-beings having a Plan to get all men to their level if we will cooperate. 1a. Introductory Encounters: Unlike the East, where these pagan teachings are familiar, in Western society there is a need to break down traditional monotheistic (and/or atheistic) resistance to them. To ease penetration, NA encourages "light encount I am an evangelical Christian, but the Bible is clear that one needs to be changed by the Spirit of God to enter the Kingdom. Though we do not merit a place in heaven by our works our changed life and attitude is a sign that one has eternal life dwelling in them.Â We can do so on earth when it extends its rule over the entire earth. What is needed in this transformation is what the Bible tells us. "22 that YOU should put away the old personality which conforms to YOUR former course of conduct and which is being corrupted according to his deceptive desires; 23 but that YOU should be made new in the force actuating YOUR mind, 24 and should put on the new personality which was created according to Godâ€™s will in true righteousness and loyalty."