

The Relationship between State and Church: Classical Concepts Examined from a Baptist Perspective

Uwe Swarat

Baptists have long stood for freedom of religion and of conscience, and these two are inextricably bound together with the relationship between church and state. This paper examines the following church-state models: the Eastern Church model of the established church; the Roman Catholic model of political theocracy; the theology and praxis of Martin Luther's doctrine of the two regiments; the Reformed Christocratic mode; the Anabaptist model of strict separation of Christians from public affairs; and finally the Baptist model, which emphasises separation of church and state, but permits Christians to take on civil roles in society. The author concludes by pointing out the shortcomings of the state-church and theocratic models, preferring instead the Baptist model of state-church separation, which also attempts to implement Luther's doctrine of the two regiments.

Keywords

State church; theocracy; the doctrine of the two kingdoms; separation of church and state.

Introduction

One of the basic Baptist convictions from their beginnings at the start of the seventeenth century is that state and church must be separated. This has had effects in world history: the colony on Rhode Island, founded in 1636 in North America by the Baptist Roger Williams, was the first state in the modern era that guaranteed full religious freedom and freedom of conscience to all humans.¹ This direction was followed in 1791 by the United States of America in the First Amendment to the Constitution, which states amongst others: 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof'. President Thomas Jefferson interpreted this clause in a letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in Connecticut 1802 as building a wall of separation between Church and

¹ Cf. Uwe Swarat, 'Luther und Baptisten über Glaubensfreiheit', in *Religions- und Weltanschauungsfreiheit. Verfassungsrechtliche Grundlagen und konfessionelle Perspektiven*, ed. by Peter Antes and Heinrich de Wall (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2018), pp. 115-127.

State.² Since then this Baptist conviction has determined the relationship between state and church in the USA.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the expression *Baptist Principles* or *Baptist Distinctives* arose among Baptists. The advocacy of the separation of state and church and of freedom of religion and of conscience are almost always counted among these principles.³ Thereby, it is crucial for a correct understanding that freedom of religion and the separation of state and church be inextricably joined together. The primary desire of the Baptists was and is to defend freedom of religion and conscience. For the sake of this freedom, a separation of state and church is necessary. When the state and the church are linked together, in whatever form, the freedom to practice a faith other than that of the official Church will be limited or even rescinded. For the sake of the freedom of religion and conscience the state should keep out of religious affairs.

In the following, I argue that the subject of the freedom of religion and conscience must give way to a more fundamental consideration of the relationship between church and state. I shall treat the Baptist thought on the relationship between church and state by comparing it with other lines of thought represented in Christendom on this relationship. I shall therefore attempt a kind of denominational typology of the state-church relationship in order to draw out similarities with and differences from the Baptist position as clearly as possible. This will be done, of course, from my own perspective, but hopefully so that members of other denominations might not feel completely misunderstood. Furthermore, such a typology requires considerable restraints in its depiction, so I shall not go into the various

² Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists, <https://www.loc.gov/loc/icib/9806/danpre.html>

³ See Martin Rothkegel, 'Freiheit als Kennzeichen der wahren Kirche. Zum baptistischen Grundsatz der Religionsfreiheit und seinen historischen Ursprüngen', in *Baptismus. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. by A. Strübind and M. Rothkegel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), pp. 201-225.

A generally accepted listing of the *distinctive principles* of the Baptists does not exist; they basically serve as goals of communication, in order to demonstrate the historically grown profile of the Baptists among the plurality of Christian denominations. For a treatment of religious freedom and the separation of church and state as marks of Baptist identity see Study and Research Division, Baptist World Alliance, *We Baptists* (Franklin, Tennessee: Providence House Publishers, 1999), p. 31ff; and George H. Tooze, *Baptist Principles. With Practical Applications and Questions for Discussion* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2013), pp. 166-190; R. Stanton Norman, *The Baptist Way. Distinctives of a Baptist Church* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2005), pp. 163-183; Walter B. Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* (Macon, Georgia: Smith and Helwys, 1993), pp. 45-54; William Henry Brackney, *The Baptists, Denominations in America*, 2 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 87-107; W. R. White, *Baptist Distinctives* (Nashville, Tennessee: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1946), p. 289; James Madison Pendleton, *Distinctive Principles of Baptists* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1882), p. 185.

H. Wheeler Robinson, *Baptist Principles* (London: Carey Kingsgate, 1925) only counts among Baptist principles conversion out of conviction, faithfulness to Holy Scripture and to the risen Lord whom it reveals, and the spiritual constitution of the church. All three are implied in the baptism of believers.

branches of the current discussion, but will only paint in broad strokes the basic historical models, which, however, reach into the present day.⁴

The Eastern Church Model of the State-Church Relationship⁵

In the tradition of the Eastern Church the type of the state church or established church emerged. The term 'Caesaropapism' has been coined for this type. This means that the Caesar, the emperor, is at the same time the pope, the head of the Church. In the strictest sense this was only true in Russia. However, in Byzantium too, the Christian emperors understood themselves to be pre-eminent members of the church leadership and participated as such in the formulation of church doctrine and order as well as explicitly expressing themselves as theologians. This was most clear with Justinian (rule 527–565 CE), although Theodosius the Great (rule 379–394 CE) had already described himself as the bishop instituted by God for the external affairs of the church.⁶ Admittedly, the current self-conception of the Eastern Churches does not correspond to the term Caesaropapism. The orthodox churches themselves use the terms 'symphony', or the 'accord' of state and church. According to this understanding, state and church stand free and independently beside each other, have different purposes, and still work together towards a common goal.

The normative understanding of the state here is the Christian state, a state that consciously understands itself to be an instrument of God in the service of the Kingdom of God — including the destruction of all non-Christian religions and Christian heresies. The Christianisation of the state is seen as a consequence of the incarnation of the Son of God, through whom all of nature is being transformed into the divine life. For the salvation-historical future nothing fundamentally new is expected, but rather only the consummation of the reality that already is. The Christian state is thus the present form of the Kingdom of God. That is in principle the orthodox understanding of the state.

In the specific historical encounter between state and church, the power in the regions of the Eastern Church has strongly shifted towards the state, so that the intended symphony of two independent entities has become

⁴ For a more complete survey, see Reinhold Zippelius, *Staat und Kirche. Eine Geschichte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, 2nd edn, new and revised (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

⁵ Cf. *Das Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in der Orthodoxie*, Essener Gespräche zum Thema Staat und Kirche, 45, ed. by Burkhard Kämper and Hans W. Thönnies (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2011); Thomas Bremer, 'Geistliche Würdenträger und politische Macht. Orthodoxie in Russland', in *Die Ambivalenz des Religiösen: Religionen als Friedensstifter und Gewalterzeuger*, ed. by Bernd Oberdorfer and Peter Waldmann (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Druck- und Verlagshaus, 2008), pp. 247-265; Panagiotis Demetropoulos, 'Kirche und Staat in griechisch-orthodoxer Sicht', in *Kirche im Osten*, Band 10, ed. by Robert Stupperich (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), pp. 22-33.

⁶ For further discussion, see Demetropoulos, 'Kirche und Staat', p. 24ff.

a rarity. In the established church system of the Eastern Church, the state sets down the framework for the actions of the church. The state has a say in determining the order of the church, as well as the direction and extent of its actions. The church is definitely important for the state, partly for pragmatic-educative and partly for metaphysical reasons, because the state wants to ensure the receiving of heavenly assistance. Compared with other churches or religious organisations, the established church enjoys great privileges in order to render it as unrivalled as possible. In return, the church is expected to give a religious justification for the state and endorse the government's actions. Up to the present day this has been most obvious in Russia and in the Balkans. Religious freedom is understood by the Russian Orthodox Church to be the freedom of expression for Orthodox churches alone, and not the equal treatment by the state of all religious organisations and denominations.

The Roman Catholic Model⁷

In order to show the difference between the Byzantine-Orthodox and the Roman Catholic models we can broadly say the following: while the Eastern Churches have developed the type of state church culminating in Caesaropapism, that is, the rule of the state over the church, the Roman Catholic Church developed the type of the rule of the church over the state, that is, a political theocracy. A symbol of this is the fact that after the middle of the eighth century the pope was the ruler over a worldly realm, the Papal state. Also, the institution of the ecclesiastical princes, above all the prince-bishops and the prince-abbots, as territorial rulers in the Roman-German Empire until 1806 was an expression of this church-state principle.

The reasons for the transition from the model of the state-church to that of the church-state lie in the historical development. In the fourth century Eusebius of Caesarea declared it to be a sign of divine providence that the Christian church could spread out in a world united in peace by the Roman emperor. The Christian-Roman worldwide monarchy, founded by Constantine the Great, appeared to him to be an earthly depiction of the heavenly world dominion of God.⁸ However, the Christian worldwide

⁷ Cf. Hartmut Krefß, *Staat und Person. Politische Ethik im Umbruch des modernen Staates* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2018), pp. 17-22; Joseph Listl, *Die Aussagen des Codex Iuris Canonici vom 25. Januar 1983 zum Verhältnis von Kirche und Staat*, Essener Gespräche zum Thema Staat und Kirche, Band 19, ed. by Heiner Marré and Johannes Stütting (Münster: Aschendorff, 1985), pp. 9-37; the same in *Kirche im freiheitlichen Staat*, Essener Gespräche zum Thema Staat und Kirche, Band 15/2, ed. by Josef Isensee et al., (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1996), pp. 957-988; Paul Mikat, 'Kirche und Staat in nachkonziliarer Sicht', in *Kirche und Staat – Festschrift für Bischof D. Hermann Kunst zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by Kurt Aland and Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Berlin: De Gruyter 1967), pp. 105-125.

⁸ See Adolf Martin Ritter, 'Kirche und Staat' im Denken des frühen Christentums, *Traditio christiana*, 13, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), source no. 39; Hans Georg Thümmel, *Die Kirche des Ostens im 3. und 4.*

monarchy crumpled as a result of the migration of peoples that began in 375 CE. The Latin church father Augustine drew the conclusion that the Kingdom of God was no longer embodied in the state, but only in the church.⁹ The mediaeval church followed him in this and asserted the claim that it alone was a universal institution. It struggled correspondingly with the Roman-German Empire, which likewise conceived itself to be the universal ruler.

The basic pattern in the Roman Catholic conception of the relationship between state and church can be most easily explained using the general correlation of nature and grace, according to the motto: Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it.¹⁰ All natural circumstances, including the state, will be perfected by being aligned with supernatural grace. As grace does not destroy nature, the state has an independence with respect to the church. Its being and form are determined by natural law. The onset of sin damaged the natural law. For this reason, the state requires the instruction of the church in order to recognise its own being and achieve its specific commission in a correct manner. The superiority of the church over the state arises therefore out of nature's fundamental need for grace, and so out of the divine world order.

As for the practical consequences to which these principles lead, these have been evaluated varyingly by the Roman Catholic Church throughout history. Roughly speaking, we can ascertain two main lines: radical theocracy on the one hand and moderate theocracy on the other.

Radical theocratic thinking was at its height in the Middle Ages, as the papacy desired to make the emperor and the princes into vassals of the church. The most important document of this line of thinking is the Bull 'Unam Sanctam' by Pope Boniface VIII in 1302. It is written there that the Church, and at its head the pope, have been given by Christ two swords,¹¹ a spiritual as well as a temporal one. And it states further:

Moreover, it is necessary for one sword to be under the other, and the temporal authority to be subjected to the spiritual. [...] And we must necessarily admit that the spiritual power surpasses any earthly power in dignity and honor, because spiritual things surpass temporal things. [...] For the truth itself declares that the spiritual power must establish the temporal power and pass judgment on it if it is not good. [...] We therefore declare, say, and affirm that submission on the part of every man to the bishop of Rome is altogether necessary for his salvation.¹²

Jahrhundert, Kirchengeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen, I/4 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988), pp. 50-52; Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); Hendrikus Berkhof, *Kirche und Kaiser. Eine Untersuchung der Entstehung der byzantinischen und der theokratischen Staatsauffassung im vierten Jahrhundert* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1947).

⁹ Ritter, 'Kirche und Staat', source no 59.

¹⁰ 'Gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit', Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I. 1.8 ad 2.

¹¹ Following on from Luke 22: 38.

¹² <http://media.bloomsbury.com/rep/files/primary-source-39-boniface-unam-sanctam.pdf>

In the modern era the papacy has not repeated such statements. There have, in some cases, been attempts to establish a rigorous and unified 'Catholic state'. Examples of this are the Jesuit state in Paraguay from 1610–1767, or Spain under General Franco from 1936–1975. Even so, in modern times the moderate theocratic model is much more common than the radical theocratic model. According to this understanding, claims to temporal power do *not* belong to the essence of the Catholic church; the struggles of the mediaeval popes for political power must be understood in the context of their times and are not to be repeated. The church's commission consists in winning over the political and social bodies to the principles of natural law using powers of persuasion as the authorised voice of God in the world. An important document for this train of thought is the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII in 1885, 'Immortale Dei'.¹³ It states, among other things, that the church is responsible for everything that concerns the 'salvation of souls or the worship of God'. Everything else that includes the civil and political sphere has been subjected by God to the civil authorities. However, as the same people are concerned in civil society and in the church, and as it may happen that one and the same matter, for example marriage or schools, belongs to the jurisdiction of the state as well as to that of the church, it is necessary to have a 'certain orderly connection' between state and church. A separation of church and state is not appropriate in such matters, but rather, a 'harmony' (lat. *concordia*).

Thus, the moderate theocratic form does not strive for any political power for the church, it only expects that the church be allowed to be effective in a public manner in a religiously neutral state. This is to be ensured by means of treaties according to international law between the church and the state, so-called Concordats. The association of the natural orders of society and state with the supernatural orders of grace of the church ensues when the Catholic church exerts influence on society's thoughts and actions through educating and nurturing the people. For this reason, the proliferation of Catholic schools and universities is particularly dear to the church. Even this moderate approach is essentially theocratic, in as far as it has in mind as an ideal imposing a Catholic character on the whole of society, including the polity.

¹³ http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_01111885_immortale-dei.html

Martin Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms or Regiments and the Regional Ruler's Church Rule

Luther's Doctrine of the Two Regiments

Martin Luther's political ethics, and thereby also his determination of the relationship between state and church, is rooted in the differentiation of God's two kingdoms or regiments, that is, God's two ways of governing.¹⁴ The historical significance of this doctrine consists in its being the first time in history that the traditional identification of lordship and salvation was lifted. The government of the world could now be understood to be profane and desacralised, and the spheres of politics and religion, state and church could be kept apart — at least in principle. This is even more notable as Luther naturally could not imagine the modern secular state, but rather, in accordance with his time, assumed a Christian state. Nevertheless, he detached himself from the notion of a sacral dominion, divided accordingly between temporal and spiritual authority, and set the course for a secular state order and the state's neutrality in religious and ideological matters. In spite of certain similarities, we must not confuse Luther's doctrine with Augustine's distinction between the City of God and the City of the Devil, nor with the mediaeval two-swords theory. Luther's doctrine has another characteristic. He arrived at it himself from the Bible — read through the lens of the doctrine of justification.

In its final form the doctrine of the two regiments states that God governs the world in a two-fold manner: through His 'spiritual regiment' and through His 'temporal regiment'. God's temporal regiment serves this earthly, *temporal* life; the spiritual regiment serves *eternal* life. The temporal regiment is concerned with the *preservation* of this world, the spiritual regiment with its *redemption*. The temporal regiment produces earthly and temporal justice (justice before humans), the spiritual regiment produces eternal justice (righteousness before God). God extends His temporal regiment over all people, including heathens and blasphemers. The spiritual regiment is restricted to God's people, because the spiritual regiment signifies the lordship of Jesus Christ through His Spirit in the hearts of the faithful. The Kingdom of God is also being built by means of the temporal regiment — but not the Kingdom of grace and of Jesus Christ, but rather the temporal Kingdom of God. Luther counts as part of this temporal Kingdom

¹⁴ Luther spoke on this subject several times, especially in 'Von weltlicher Obrigkeit' (1523) and in his sermons on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (1530-1532). Summaries can be read in Reinhard Schwarz, *Martin Luther – Lehrer der christlichen Religion*, 2nd impression (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), pp. 162-173; Christiane Tietz, 'Die politische Aufgabe der Kirche im Anschluss an die Lutherische Zwei-Regimenten-Lehre', in *Die politische Aufgabe von Religion. Perspektiven der drei monotheistischen Religionen*, ed. by Irene Dingel and Christiane Tietz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), pp. 259-273; Eilert Herms, 'Leben in der Welt', in *Luther Handbuch*, ed. by Albrecht Beutel (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), pp. 423-435; Paul Althaus, *Die Ethik Martin Luthers* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlags Haus, 1965), pp. 49-87.

of God not just the state authorities, but also marriage and family, property, economy and occupations. The doctrine of the two regiments is therefore not only concerned with the relationship between church and state, but with the whole gamut of the institutions of life in society. These institutions are, according to Luther, founded in the will of God the creator, and were already there before Christ and are independent of Christ. In the spiritual regiment only the authority of love and willingness to make sacrifices count; in the temporal regiment, above all in the state, the law, which is enforced by instruments of power, reigns. In the spiritual regiment only voluntariness counts; in the temporal regiment, resisters may be coerced. In the spiritual kingdom of God Christ reigns by means of His Word and Spirit; in the temporal kingdom God reigns through human reason.¹⁵ The temporal orders should not be shaped by the gospel, but by the law, namely natural and historical law.

It is necessary, according to Luther, to distinguish carefully between God's two regiments, but not to divide them. It is one and the same God who reigns in goodness and mercy through both regiments. Nevertheless, the spiritual regiment achieves God's proper intention, namely eternal life, while the temporal regiment is merely a means to the end of achieving God's proper intention.

In his own time, Luther was most concerned that the two kingdoms and regiments should not be mixed with one another. For him, such a mixing occurred through the Roman papacy: the pope wants to make himself lord over the princes and the emperor, and earthly things like marriage laws should be regulated using canon law. However, on the other side, on the left-wing of the Reformation, Luther also saw a mixing of the two regiments. The enthusiasts, as he disparagingly called them, wanted to rule the world using the Sermon on the Mount and to forbid the swearing of oaths and military service, while the peasants drew political demands from the gospel. For Luther that is also impossible. One cannot rule the world with the gospel. One can only teach the conscience with the gospel, one may not interrupt the business of government with it. On the other hand, it is necessary to demand of the political rulers that they too do not mix the two regiments and intervene in the government of the church, or force their subjects to take up a particular faith. The authorities have no power over the faith and conscience of the people. Even their wars against the Turks were not to be led as holy wars in the name of Jesus Christ. So much, in all brevity, for Luther's doctrine of the two regiments.

¹⁵ Martin Luther: 'Man braucht keine Christen für die Obrigkeit. So ist es nicht nötig, dass der Kaiser ein Heiliger ist. Es ist nicht nötig für sein Regiment, dass er Christ ist. Es genügt für den Kaiser, dass er Vernunft hat' (Predigt am 23. Sonntag nach Trinitatis, 15.11. 1528, WA 27, 418, 2-4).

The Development of the Regional Ruler's Church Rule

We cannot examine Luther's teaching without looking into the actual historical development that concerns the relationship between church and state in the countries that adopted the Lutheran Reformation. There the so-called Regional Rulers' Church Rule emerged, that is, the leadership of the church through the regional rulers (princes or town councils), and thus through the temporal regiment.¹⁶ Such a constitutional structure is in tension with, or rather in contradiction to, the basic thinking of the doctrine of the two regiments. Nevertheless, Luther gave this development its decisive impetus.

In his tract 'To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation' of 1520 Luther called on the nobility, namely the German political élite, for aid in his Reformation enterprise. He differentiated between those reform propositions which the authorities could directly implement and others in which they could only indirectly be of help. For example, the worldly authorities have the right and the obligation to arrange for the termination of the various financial tributes to the Roman Curia. On the other hand, they were not responsible for such matters as the abolition of the demand for celibacy or the abolition of unspiritual rites such as having to kiss the pope's feet. According to Luther, such reforms may only be resolved by a church council. However, Luther called on the nobility for help in this case too, namely the convocation of such a church council, for Luther was faced with the problem that the pope and the bishops refused to do so. How might it nonetheless materialise? Luther pointed out that on the basis of the universal priesthood every Christian inherently has the right to convoke a council. In order to achieve this, those involved should have a position of authority within the Church. For this reason, Luther designates the regional prince as *praecipuum membrum ecclesiae*, a 'particular member of the Church'. As such — and not directly on account of his political authority — the prince should endeavour to convene a church council. On account of the particular historical situation Luther somewhat restricted his differentiation between worldly and ecclesiastical authority. He understood the state authorities' commitment, which he called for, to be an expression of a state of emergency, not a general rule.

The hopes Luther associated with this tract to the nobility soon came to nothing. The greater part of the German nobility did not endorse his reform

¹⁶ *Zwischen Ekklesiologie und Administration: Modelle territorialer Kirchenleitung und Religionsverwaltung im Jahrhundert der europäischen Reformationen*, ed. by Johannes Wischmeyer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013); Gunter Zimmermann, 'Die Einführung des landesherrlichen Kirchenregiments', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 76 (1985): 146-168; Wilhelm H. Neuser, 'Kirche und Staat in der Reformationszeit', in *Kirche und Staat*, ed. by Aland and Schneemelcher, pp. 50-78; Karl Holl, 'Luther und das landesherrliche Kirchenregiment', in Karl Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, Band 1: Luther, 7th impression (Tübingen: Mohr, 1948), pp. 326-380.

propositions, but rather sought to suppress them. In view of that, Luther postulated that every local congregation had the right to carry out a reformation, and that meant above all, abolishing the Roman Mass, setting up a protestant worship service and dismissing ministers who did not preach the protestant faith. Luther spoke in this instance for the intervention of the local authorities in favour of the Reformation, once again by differentiating between the direct and indirect authority of the rulers. Luther stated that the authorities had direct warrant to prohibit the Roman Mass, because this was a public blasphemy. Indirect authority, that is authority accruing from membership of the church, could be practised by the authorities in the appointing of new, protestant ministers.

After 1525 it appeared to Luther that in order to consolidate the Reformation movement, it was important that rather than leaving such matters in the hands of local congregations alone, there should be a valid system across the whole region in the form of a unified church order in keeping with the ideas of the Reformation. Therefore, Luther requested his territorial sovereign, the Elector Johann, to carry out a visitation of all the church congregations in his territory. This visitation took place between 1527 and 1530 and founded the protestant state church of the Electorate of Saxony. If we examine the corresponding instruction of the Elector in 1527, we can see that the prince's understanding of his authority in the matter differed to Luther's. While Luther basically saw the visitation as an act of 'self-help from the church',¹⁷ the prince wanted it to be understood as an expression of his fatherly care for his land. The prince saw himself as ruler not only for the earthly and physical well-being of his subjects, but also for their spiritual well-being.

Hence the instruction of the Elector of Saxony became the founding document of the regional ruler's church government, which would subsequently become determinant for the protestant regions in Germany. The regional governor is the *summus episcopus*, the 'supreme bishop' of the church in his region. What Luther had only considered as an emergency measure had become the normal occurrence and a principle of law. Here, as elsewhere in history, the power of events was stronger than the theory. Consequently, the Lutheran churches became more or less state churches. The appropriate juristic theory for this case, called the territorial theory, was later given at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Christian Thomasius (1655–1728) and Justus Henning Boehmer (1674–1749).¹⁸ They declared that the regional ruler has his power over the church not as a result of his position *in* the church, that is, not as *praecipuum*

¹⁷ Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Band 1: Luther, p. 374.

¹⁸ See Christoph Link, 'Territorialismus / Territorialsystem', in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 8, ed. by Hans Dieter Betz, 4th impression (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), pp. 165-166.

membrum ecclesiae, but as an outcome of his position *over* the church, namely in virtue of his authority over a particular territory. When not only protestants but also Catholics belong to this territory, then the protestant regional ruler is also the supreme bishop of the Catholics in that region. The practical management of the church was accomplished through consistories that had the legal structure of a government agency. This status was not changed until the overthrow of the rule of the nobles at the end of the First World War and the Weimar Constitution of 1918 and 1919.

The Understanding of the State-Church Relationship in the Reformed Tradition

In the course of the twentieth century it has become common to oppose the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms with the protestant-reformed model of the Kingdom of Christ.¹⁹ This did not occur completely without reason, even though the conceptional contrast in this form was first worked out by Karl Barth and his followers in the twentieth century. In the Reformed tradition there have indeed been tendencies towards theocracy or Christocracy. Ulrich Zwingli expressly advocated the right of the Christian government to reform the church. Luther's followers and the Anabaptists protested against this, stating that the Kingdom of Christ is not external. Zwingli opposed this, saying the Kingdom of Christ is also external and visible, particularly in the ordering of civil life through the government.²⁰ He personally conceived himself to be a prophet who dispensed divine commissions not only to the Christian congregation, but also to the civil community.²¹ In 1528 Zwingli even became the leader of the secret council of the city of Zurich, the real centre of power, thus making Zurich *de facto* a Christocracy under his leadership. Following this way, he sought to convert inner Switzerland to the protestant faith by military means in the second war at Kappel in 1531. Thus, he took up the sword and died by the sword (cf. Matt 26:52).

Martin Bucer, the Strasbourg reformer, did not fight like Zwingli as a soldier for the cause of Christ, but put forth his convictions about God's, or rather Christ's, sovereignty by literary means. When Christ says in Matthew

¹⁹ See Ernst Wolf, 'Die Königsheerrschaft Christi und der Staat', *Theologische Existenz heute*, 64 (1958): 20-61; cf. Martin Honecker, *Grundriss der Sozialethik* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1995), pp. 14-31.

²⁰ See Zwingli's letter of 4 May 1528 to Ambrosius Blarer in Konstanz. In the original Latin in *Huldreich Zwingli's Sämtliche Werke*, Band IX (Corpus Reformatorum, Band XXI, Leipzig 1925), pp. 451-467; in German translation with introduction and annotation: Hans Rudolf Lavater, 'Regnum Christi etiam externum', in *Zwingliana*, Band 15 (1981), pp. 338-381; cf. Alfred Farner, *Die Lehre von Kirche und Staat bei Zwingli* (Tübingen, 1930); Gottlob Schrenk, *Gottesreich und Bund im älteren Protestantismus vornehmlich bei Johannes Coccejus* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1923; reprint Gießen: Brunnen-Verlag, 1985), pp. 158ff.

²¹ See Neuser, 'Kirche und Staat'.

28:18 that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him, then, according to Bucer, that includes political power.²² This concept of 'Christ's kingdom' influenced Bucer's whole Reformation work and was summarised in his book 'De regno Christi', which he wrote in 1550 towards the end of his life. This book was addressed to the young English king Edward VI, the successor to Henry VIII, with the intention of inducing him to restructure the whole of society and the state in accordance with the ideas of the Reformation. 'A civil society, consecrated to Christ the Lord, (*republica Christo Domino sacra*)' should come into being, in which the biblical laws (including the Old Testament judicial laws) should frame the highest norms.²³ Bucer's work accordingly contains fourteen detailed recommendations for laws pertaining to the creation of a truly Christian society, which stretch from the religious education of children to the keeping of the sabbath, laws on marriage and the use of the death penalty for adultery. King Edward VI did not consider following these recommendations, but shortly afterwards the Puritans attempted to put them into practice, especially with regard to the keeping of the sabbath.

In his political ethics, John Calvin differentiated himself significantly from both Zwingli and Bucer, as he was closer to Luther than they were. In Geneva he encountered a protestant state church, which he affirmed, but did not transform into a theocracy.²⁴ Neither he nor any other minister ever belonged to the city council. Calvin fought instead for autonomy for the church in the face of the council by advocating an independent church discipline instead of the usual moral discipline that was exercised by the authorities. To this end he established a Consistorium, that comprised six church ministers alongside twelve elders from the ranks of the city council. The Consistorium had only a spiritual authority and not a worldly one. The elders often also wanted to exercise church discipline in a milder manner than that advocated by the ministers, resulting in a long tug-of-war until eventually Calvin's followers attained a majority in the council. From this time Calvin also had a decisive influence on the politics in Geneva, and therefore stood on the borderline of a theocracy — without however crossing it.

²² Martin Bucer Opera Omnia, Series I: Deutsche Schriften, Band 6.2 (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1984), pp. 96, 174.

²³ Martini Bucer Opera Latina, Vol. XV: De Regno Christi, Libri Duo, 1550, ed. by Francois Wendel (Paris: Presses Univ. de France, and Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1955), p. 289; English Translation in *Melanchthon and Bucer*, ed. by Wilhelm Pauck, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), p. 384. Cf. Eike Wolgast, 'Bucers Vorstellungen über die Einführung der Reformation', in Eike Wolgast, *Aufsätze zur Reformations- und Reichsgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), pp. 304-318; Andreas Gäumann, *Reich Christi und Obrigkeit. Eine Studie zum reformatorischen Denken und Handeln Martin Bucers* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001); Wilhelm Pauck, *Das Reich Gottes auf Erden. Utopie und Wirklichkeit. Eine Untersuchung zu Bucers 'De Regno Christi' und zur englischen Staatskirche des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1928).

²⁴ See Neuser, 'Kirche und Staat'.

In his opus magnum, the *Institutio christianae religionis*, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which appeared in its final form in 1559, Calvin broadly followed Luther with regard to the relationship between state and church. Calvin too summarised the relationship between church and state under the term two regiments (Inst. III.19,15; IV.20,1-3).²⁵ He saw the difference between the spiritual and the temporal regiments as being founded in the fact that spiritual freedom and temporal freedom are different from one another. It is possible to be enslaved in the civil realm and yet be free in Christ. The kingdom of Christ has just begun in this world and time. Until that time is fulfilled, the temporal regiment, with all its laws, is necessary, so that the evil of humans is kept within limits. Like Luther, Calvin distinguishes between the Kingdom of God, the Father, who rules the world in his omnipotence, and the Kingdom of Christ, which is neither worldly nor carnal, but rather spiritual and is accomplished through the preaching of the Gospel and through the Holy Spirit. Christ exercises his royal office only in the church with the aim 'that we may attain to the heavenly life'.²⁶ Calvin speaks nowhere about a sovereignty of Christ over the world outside the church.

The Anabaptist model of the State-Church Relationship

The Anabaptists of the sixteenth century formed a many-faceted, in no way uniform movement, which can only be cursorily sketched out here. I shall do this by first considering the Southern German Anabaptists whose views on the theme of church and state are relatively uniform,²⁷ and then I shall treat Balthasar Hubmaier as a special case.

According to the Southern German Anabaptists, the authorities have been installed by God and are to be respected as a good agency, no matter if they are devout or ungodly. Therefore, active resistance or revolution do not

²⁵ Cf. Judith Becker, 'Die Königsherrschaft Gottes bei Calvin und im frühen reformierten Protestantismus', in *Die politische Aufgabe der Religion*, ed. by Dingel and Tietz, pp. 277-297; Gunter Zimmermann, 'Die politische Bedeutung der Zwei-Reiche-Lehre', *ZEE*, 31 (1987): 392-410; Joachim Staedtke, 'Die Lehre von der Königsherrschaft Christi und den zwei Reichen bei Calvin', in *Reformation und Zeugnis der Kirche. Gesammelte Studien*, ed. by Dietrich Blaufuß, Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationsgeschichte, 9 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1978), pp. 101-113; Josef Bohatec, *Calvins Lehre von Staat und Kirche mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Organismusedankens* (Breslau: M. und H. Marcus, 1937); Karlfried Fröhlich, *Gottesreich, Welt und Kirche bei Calvin*, Aus der Welt christlicher Frömmigkeit, 11 (München: Reinhardt, 1930); Hans Baron, *Calvins Staatsanschauung und das konfessionelle Zeitalter*, Historische Zeitschrift, Beiheft 1/1 (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1924).

²⁶ Calvin, *Institutio* II.15.4.

²⁷ See Eike Wolgast, 'Stellung der Obrigkeit zum Täuferturn und Obrigkeitsverständnis der Täufer in der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts', in Wolgast, *Aufsätze zur Reformations- und Reichsgeschichte*, pp. 506-536; Hans Joachim Hillerbrand, *Die politische Ethik des oberdeutschen Täuferturns. Eine Untersuchung zur Religions- und Geistesgeschichte des Reformationszeitalters*, Beihefte der Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte, VII (Leiden: Brill, 1962); cf. Andrea Strübind, *Eifriger als Zwingli. Die frühe Täuferbewegung in der Schweiz* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003), pp. 456-462, 552-568.

come into the question. The installation of the authorities was necessary on account of sin. For that reason, the authorities are to pursue and punish evil-doers. In matters of the faith the authorities have no mandate. When they wish to rule over belief and conscience, they contravene the limits of their God-given offices. In this case no one is obliged to obey them, but is duty-bound to resist them, albeit only with passive, non-violent resistance. It is the authorities' remit, willed by God, to guarantee freedom of belief and conscience for their subjects. They never have the right to decide on matters of faith. Conversely, the Christian congregation has no authorisation in the political domain. These statements do not remind us by chance of Luther's doctrine of the two regiments; some Anabaptists expressly appealed to Luther. That state and church should be separated is something they learnt from the Bible under Luther's instruction.

Unlike Luther though, the Anabaptists were absolutely convinced that it was *not* appropriate for a Christian to serve as a magistrate.²⁸ The Anabaptists did not wish to participate in the defence of the land, nor in the court of lay assessors, and did not allow themselves to be elected to the town council. They justified this by pointing to the example of Jesus and his commandment that his disciples should not be like the rulers of the gentiles and the high officials (Matt 20: 25). True followers of Jesus should therefore exercise no office of authority, not even a legitimately organised one, but should allow themselves to be persecuted. In view of the fact that the Anabaptists recognised the authorities to be a good order of God, the refusal to participate in them seems inconsistent. It results, however, from the fact that the Anabaptists drew a sharp distinction between the church and the world as being two entities that had no common areas. This meant for church members the commandment to be segregated from the world.²⁹ In view of the needs in the world, the Anabaptists asked with Paul (1 Cor 5:12), 'What business do I have with those outside the church?' A follower of Jesus does not concern themselves with the world's problems. They consider themselves to have been sent into the world only for the sake of mission.

²⁸ 'Das Schwert ist eine Gottesordnung außerhalb der Vollkommenheit Christi', Schleitheimer Artikel von 1527, in *Die Kirche im Zeitalter der Reformation, Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte in Quellen*, Band III, ed. by Heiko A. Oberman, 3rd revised impression (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), p. 142. 'The sword is ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ' (Schleitheim Confession, https://anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Schleitheim_Confession (source); see also 'The Schleitheim Confession, 1527', in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. by William L. Lumpkin, 6th printing (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1989), p. 27).

²⁹ 'Nun gibt es nie etwas anderes in der Welt und in der ganzen Schöpfung als Gutes und Böses, gläubig und ungläubig, Finsternis und Licht, Welt und solche, die die Welt verlassen haben, Tempel Gottes und die Götzen, Christus und Belial, und keins kann mit dem anderen Gemeinschaft haben' (Schleitheimer Artikel von 1527, in: Oberman, p. 141f.) English translation: 'Now truly all creatures are in but two classes, good and bad, believing and unbelieving, darkness and light, the world and those who [have come] out of the world, God's temple and idols, Christ and Belial; and none can have part with the other.' (Schleitheim Confession, https://anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Schleitheim_Confession (source); see also 'The Schleitheim Confession, 1527', *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. by Lumpkin, p. 26

References to the Old Testament, where men of God brandished the sword and tendered oaths were not accepted by the Anabaptists. Since the coming of Christ there were different rules for the church and the world. Swearing an oath in court or taking a citizen's oath, as well as the exercise of power, were not permissible for a Christian.

The segregation from the world that the Anabaptists practised entails having another conception of 'world' and 'worldly' to Luther's. These terms do not in Luther's writing have the negative sense of the dominion of sin or of Satan, but rather denote the earthly temporal life of humankind. Christians too belong to the world in this neutral sense. The negative concept of 'world' as the realm from which Christians are saved is also known by Luther — but this concept fades into the background in the context of the doctrine of the two regiments.

The idea that a follower of Jesus should not exercise any office of authority was a majority view among the Anabaptists, but was not shared by one of the outstanding Anabaptist theologians, namely by Balthasar Hubmaier.³⁰ After his expulsion from Waldshut, he went to Nikolsburg in Moravia and in 1526 founded the first Moravian Anabaptist congregation. In questions of political ethics Hubmaier was close to Luther. Hence there soon arose disputes among the Anabaptists in Nikolsburg. Hubmaier saw it as possible for a Christian to carry the sword under orders from the authorities and to wage war, whereas Hans Hut stood for complete nonviolence.³¹ After two disputations, no agreement had been achieved; indeed the argument continued after Hut's death in 1527 and the burning at the stake of Hubmaier in 1528. Hubmaier's adherents were called 'sword-bearers', while Hut's were called 'cane-bearers', because the latter (according to Mark 6:8) did not carry a sword, but a staff. After 1529 nothing more is heard of the sword-bearers; the future in the Anabaptist movement belonged to the advocates of radical nonviolence.³²

The Baptist Model

The Baptists did not have their historical roots in the Anabaptist movement, but in the English Reformation. Since the kings and bishops rejected out of hand the Puritan demands for an extensive Reformation of the Church of

³⁰ See Torsten Bergsten, *Balthasar Hubmaier. Seine Stellung zu Reformation und Täuferum 1521-1528* (Kassel, 1961), pp. 451-475; Carl Sachsse, *D. Balthasar Hubmaier als Theologe* (Berlin, 1914).

³¹ In his writing 'Von dem Schwert' [On the Sword], in 1527, Hubmaier considers all the Bible verses with which his opponents argued their case, and sought to refute them (Balthasar Hubmaier, *Schriften, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte*, 29 (Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1962), pp. 434-457).

³² See Clarence Bauman, *Gewaltlosigkeit im Täuferum. Eine Untersuchung zur theologischen Ethik der oberdeutschen Täuferums der Reformationszeit*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought, III (Leiden: Brill, 1968), pp. 57-65.

England along Calvinist lines, several Puritan-influenced congregations split from the state church and fled abroad from the consequent persecution. Among others, the separatist congregation in Gainsborough (Lincolnshire) under the leadership of its pastor John Smyth decided to emigrate — not to North America, as did a little later the Pilgrim Fathers — but to Amsterdam. Out of this Puritan separatist church of English people in Dutch exile emerged in 1609 the first Baptist church.³³ Theological discussions among the English exiles had led Smyth to the particular insight that infant baptism did not conform to Scripture, but that people should only be baptised when they gave a personal confession of faith. Accordingly, his congregation were baptised (again) after giving their confession of faith. They had thus taken a position very close to that of the Dutch Mennonites, who as descendants of the early Anabaptists had also replaced infant baptism with the baptism of believers. One year later, Smyth and the greater part of his congregation decided to join the Amsterdam Mennonites. A minority, however, under the leadership of the lawyer Thomas Helwys, refused to take this step.

What factors kept the group around Helwys from becoming Mennonites, although they shared the same understanding of baptism? They were persuaded that the Mennonites had on some points a false doctrine, namely in their understanding of the incarnation of the Son of God, of the keeping of the sabbath, of the historical continuity of the true church, and of civil authorities. For us, only the last point is relevant here. In the confession of faith formulated by Helwys in 1611, 'A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam',³⁴ the position of the first Baptists concerning the civil authorities is formulated in three of the twenty-seven articles.

Article 9 explains the independence of the church from the state by saying that Jesus Christ is the only Lawgiver for the church. In the New Testament he has set down an absolute and perfect rule of direction, which no prince, nor any whosoever, 'may add to, or diminish from'. This was written in complete agreement with the ideas of the Anabaptists.

Article 24 treats the authorities explicitly and states among other things:

That magistracy is a holy ordinance of God; that every soul ought to be subject to it, not for fear only, but for conscience' sake. Magistrates are the ministers of God for our wealth, they bear not the sword for nought. They are the ministers of God, to take vengeance on them that do evil.

³³ See James R. Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation. English Separatism, Mennonite Influence and the Elect Nation*, Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, 32 (Waterloo, Ont.: Herald Press, 1991).

³⁴ Text with introduction in William L. Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd revised edn (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), pp. 106-114.

These statements too, closely aligned with Romans 13, could be made by both Anabaptists and Baptists. But the Baptist confession goes further, noting:

And therefore they may be members of the church of Christ, retaining their magistracy; for no ordinance of God debarreth any from being a member of Christ's church.

With this sentence the Baptists disassociate themselves from the Mennonites and all other Anabaptists. The Baptists state, in contradiction to the Anabaptists, that if the magistracy is an ordinance of God, then it cannot be a sin when Christians participate in the magistracy. As an explanation the confession continues as follows:

They bear the sword of God; which sword, in all lawful administrations, is to be defended and supported [...]. And whosoever holds otherwise, must hold, if they understand themselves, that they are the ministers of the devil, and therefore not to be prayed for, nor approved, in any of their administrations; seeing all things they do, as punishing offenders, and defending their countries, state, and persons by the sword, is unlawful.

The short Article 25 is also directed against the Anabaptists. This treats the swearing of oaths and declares:

That it is lawful in a just cause, for the deciding of strife, to take an oath by the name of the Lord.

The position taken up by the first Baptists concerning the relationship between state and church thus recognises that the authorities, who wield the sword, as per Romans 13 are a good ordinance of God. Taking up offices of government and exercising the powers pertaining to these offices by Christians, as well as the swearing of oaths, was correspondingly regarded as justified and necessary. A segregation of Christians from the world, as practised by the Anabaptists, was not seen by the early Baptists to be right.

That the separation of state and church was an important matter for Thomas Helwys and his small congregation is also shown in his writing *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*, which he addressed in 1612, on the occasion of the return of his congregation to England, to none other than King James I.³⁵ This is the first piece of writing in the English language that demands freedom of religion. The Presbyterian or congregationalist-minded Puritans, from whom the Baptists evolved, were not devotees of religious freedom, whereas the Baptists certainly were.³⁶ Helwys explained in his book that the king had received a temporal realm with temporal power from God, but also that Christ alone is entitled to have lordship over the church. The

³⁵ Thomas Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity (1611/1612)*, ed. by R. Groves (Macon, Georgia: Mercer, 1998). Cf. Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, pp. 105-107, 130-132.

³⁶ Cf. Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints. Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology, 1570-1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 230-267.

king can regulate the bodies, lives, and possessions of people, but not their immortal souls nor spiritual matters. Transgressions against the spiritual ordinances of the New Testament are not to be avenged by worldly punishments, but with the spiritual sword and reprimands. Thus, Helwys had formulated the basic ideas of Luther's doctrine of the two regiments, although, as far as we know, he was not acquainted with the pertinent texts of Luther. Obviously, he came to this differentiation through his own thinking. More clearly than Luther, he demanded religious freedom not only for his own church, but for all humans, also for the adherents of other religions:

For men's religion to God is between God and themselves. The king shall not answer for it. Neither may the king be judge between God and man. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews, or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.³⁷

King James did not take this admonishment to heart, but let Helwys be arrested immediately upon his return to England. Helwys died in 1616, probably without having been freed from imprisonment. His little congregation gained a foothold in England, won over many other groups and congregations for their cause and founded one of the main streams of the English Baptists.

According to the first Baptists, the authorities have no right to lord it over the souls of their citizens nor to enact directions for the practice of religion or church order. The church and its members' practice of the faith should be free from state interference, just as religious convictions of any shape or form should be tolerated by the state. The state is not entitled to pass judgement on religious matters. Inasmuch as the state is a good ordinance of God for the preservation of public peace and security, Baptists participate in everything necessary to accomplish this task. They are involved not only in the affairs of their church, but also in general affairs. This theological and political concept of Thomas Helwys was taken up in the following decades in England and North America and enjoys to the present-day wide consensus among Baptists throughout the world.

Critical Review

Our look at the historical-denominational typology of the church-state relationship has shown that we can distinguish between three main types: the state-church model; the theocratic model and the model of separation of church and state.

³⁷ Helwys, *A Short Declaration*, p. 53.

The state-church type developed out of the Eastern Church orthodoxy, the theocratic type from the Roman Catholic Church. Among the protestants, the Lutheran churches adopted the state-church type, and the Reformed churches to a large extent the theocratic or Christocratic type. The model of separation between state and church was developed theologically by Martin Luther, but was not put into practice by the Lutheran churches. It was however implemented by the Anabaptists and the Baptists — albeit in a different way in each case.

Common to the state-church and theocratic types is that both assume the internal unity of Christians and citizens, throne and altar, church and state, religion and law, salvation and sovereignty. This model of unity was designated in the middle ages by the term *respublica christiana*, the 'Christian state'. In German theology the term *Corpus Christianum* has been used for it in the last one hundred and thirty years.³⁸ It is obvious that the unity of political power and religion expressed here does not fit in with the New Testament understanding of the church. Whoever desires to follow the New Testament witness and differentiate theologically between salvation and sovereignty will find that both of these models of the relationship between church and state must be excluded, as they are not legitimate possibilities.

They are to be excluded for their own specific reasons as well. The state-church model is a serious threat to the church because it deprives the church of its freedom, which it needs in order to fulfill its remit towards the citizens and the state institutions. A church that gives up its freedom by allowing itself to be instrumentalised for worldly goals has ceased being a witness to Jesus Christ and his world-overcoming gospel. A state that makes use of the church in this manner has also stopped being a state according to the creation will of God. It does not content itself with regulating the temporal areas of life, but encroaches on the authority of the church and places itself thereby in the position of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

The theocratic or Christocratic model is no better. Here too, state and church relate to one another in such a manner that both are in contradiction to their remits. A church that sets itself up to be the supreme political judge of state and society and assumes leadership for the actions of state and society goes beyond the limits of its authority. It attempts thereby to arrange the temporal lives of humans according to precepts for which most people do not fulfill the necessary internal pre-conditions. The Kingdom of God, in which God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven, cannot be realised by political means; it will rather break in when Christ returns and history, as we

³⁸ See Heinrich de Wall, 'Corpus Christianum', *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. by Hans Dieter Betz, 4th impression, Band II (1999), pp. 466-468.

know it, will be culminated. Until then, this kingdom is being achieved in certain respects in advance through the Holy Spirit who is transforming the believers according to the likeness of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, this sanctifying work of the Spirit is limited to the believers and therefore cannot be used as a norm for political activity. A church that nevertheless makes this attempt is forgetting the fundamental difference between church and state and is trying to pre-empt the world-changing work of Christ by means of political action. That is nothing other than spiritual arrogance. This leads to the result that the church employs worldly categories and methods, when it speaks to and acts with respect to the world, so that the world is only seemingly made Christian, whereas in reality the church is made more worldly. Neither the state-church nor the theocratic models can be considered as an adequate concept for the relationship between state and church.

It is a different matter with Luther and Calvin's doctrine of the two kingdoms or the two regiments.³⁹ With this doctrine the unity of the so-called *Corpus Christianum* was dissolved; the state and the church were allocated different justifications and differing functions. Admittedly, Luther endorsed a state-church order for the Reformation, but he did this on the understanding that it was an emergency situation. The regional ruler's church rule, as was established in the Lutheran churches, is the opposite of what Luther's political ethic tried to achieve. With the doctrine of the two regiments the basic difference between state and church was clearly worked out and the way smoothed out for freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. This doctrine is not bound up with the state-church situation, in which it emerged, but can be helpful in situations where the church does not have any political power, and nevertheless does not wish to retreat from public life. We should pay attention to one of Luther's reasons why one cannot rule the world with the gospel: true Christians, who have not only been baptised but also believe and live as Christians, are so few, that the governments of the world cannot take their standards from the gospel.⁴⁰

The Anabaptists and the Baptists share the conviction that the state is an endowment of God for ordering external living conditions, but does not have power over the souls of humans and thus over their faith and consciences, and have thereby adopted Luther's basic differentiation between the two kingdoms or regiments. The Anabaptists and the Baptists differ from each other in the question of whether Christians can in good

³⁹ Cf. Uwe Swarat, 'Jenseits der Taufkontroverse – Wo sich Baptisten Luther anschließen könn(t)en', in *Luther und die Reformation aus freikirchlicher Sicht*, ed. by Volker Spangenberg (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), pp. 31-53.

⁴⁰ See Volker Leppin, 'Grenzen und Möglichkeiten der Obrigkeit – Zu Entstehung und Kontext von Luthers Zwei-Reiche-Lehre', in *Die politische Aufgabe der Religion*, ed. by Dingel and Tietz, pp. 247-258.

conscience involve themselves politically. Most Anabaptists gave the answer no, most Baptists said yes. The separation from the state as propagated by the Anabaptists did not comply with the Baptist view of the authorities as an ordinance of God. With this the Baptists were and are confronted with the question as to how they can involve themselves politically, without circumventing the separation of state and church, politics and religion. Not only is the separation from the world not an option for Baptists, but neither is Christocracy.

I am touching upon a theme here which deserves a longer treatment. I must however come to a close now, and shall therefore only hint at the fact that the doctrine of the two regiments can offer us orientation in this question. With this doctrine Luther has made it possible for Christians not to pull back from the world, in spite of their holding fast to the Sermon on the Mount and the discipleship teachings of Jesus, but to participate in the dealings of the state, which according to Romans 13 is an ordinance of God, a minister of God, and does not wield the sword in vain. Luther expressly challenges Christians to take up political office. The Christian does not only belong to the spiritual kingdom of God, but also to the earthly kingdom. Distinguishing between the two kingdoms or regiments goes through the heart of a Christian. Correspondingly the Christian must act in various manners, depending on the role they are playing — whether they are being required to act as a person of the world or as a Christian, as a public figure or as a private one.⁴¹ The two roles are linked by the loyalty to God's commandment and to love, which is lived out in both cases as the purpose of their actions and as an inward attitude of the agent. In this sense Christians can involve themselves politically, without authorising their politics religiously or politicising their faith. That too is separation of state and church in practice.

Prof. Dr. Uwe Swarat is Professor of Systematic Theology and the History of Dogma at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Elstal near Berlin (Theologische Hochschule Elstal).

⁴¹ Jürgen Habermas has likewise spoken about a 'necessary distinguishing between the roles of a church member and that of a civil citizen'. Conflicts of interest between religion and the secular state can only be avoided when this distinguishing of the role of religion is not enforced externally but is 'convincingly reasoned from the religious perspective itself'. This is precisely the case in Luther's doctrine of the two regiments. See Jürgen Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion. Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), p. 269.

NO. 01
SPRING 2020

JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN BAPTIST STUDIES

VOLUME
20



IBTS
CENTRE