



REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE RECHERCHE EN COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION ET DEVELOPPEMENT (RIRCED)

Revue annuelle, publiée par :
L'INSTITUT UNIVERSITAIRE PANAFRICAIN (IUP),
Autorisation : Arrêté N° 2011 - 008/MESRS/CAB/DC/SGM/DPP/DEPES/SP
Modifiée par l'Arrêté N° 2013-044/MESRS/CAB/DC/SGM/DPP/DEPES/SP

Sous la direction du :
Pr Gabriel C. BOKO &
Dr (MC) Innocent C. DATONDJI



Editions Africatex Médias,
01 BP 3950 Porto-Novo, Bénin.

Vol 1, N°10 – NOVEMBRE 2020, ISSN 1840 - 6874



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Site web : www.iup-universite.com

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ISSN 1840 – 6874

**Bibliothèque Nationale,
Porto-Novo, République du Bénin.**

Impression

**Imprimerie Les Cinq Talents Sarl,
03 BP 3689, Cotonou République du Bénin
Tél. (+229) 21 05 33 16 / 97 98 19 23.**



**Editions Africatex Médias,
01 BP 3950 Porto-Novo, Bénin.
Novembre 2020**

RIRCED

**REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE
RECHERCHE EN COMMUNICATION,
EDUCATION ET DEVELOPPEMENT**

Vol. 1, N° 10, Novembre 2020, ISSN 1840 – 6874

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La Revue Internationale de Recherche en Communication, Education et Développement (RIRCED), publiée par l'Institut Universitaire Panafricain (IUP), est une revue ouverte aux enseignants et chercheurs des universités, instituts, centres universitaires et grandes écoles.

L'objectif visé par la publication de cette revue dont nous sommes à la dixième publication est de permettre aux collègues Enseignants-Chercheurs et Chercheurs de disposer une tribune pour faire connaître leurs travaux de recherche. Cette édition a connu une légère modification au niveau du comité de rédaction où le Professeur Titulaire Gabriel C. BOKO, devient le Directeur de Publication et le Professeur (Maître de Conférences), Innocent C. DATONDJI est le Rédacteur en Chef.

Le comité scientifique de lecture de la RIRCED est désormais présidé par le Professeur Médard Dominique BADA. Ce comité compte désormais huit membres qui sont tous des Professeurs Titulaires.

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2	Dr Théophile G. KODJO SONOU	Apport de la maîtrise de l'anglais dans l'obtention et la sécurisation d'un emploi au Bénin 65 – 96	Département d'Anglais, Institut Universitaire Panafricain (IUP), Porto-Novo, Bénin presidentsonou@yahoo.com
3	Dr Evariste Assogba KOTTIN	Article de Recherche Place de la littérature orale francophone dans l'enseignement de l'anglais aux cours secondaires béninois 97 – 123	Département d'anglais, Faculté des Lettres, Langues, Arts et Communication (FLLAC), Université d'Abomey-Calavi (UAC), Bénin kottinevariste@yahoo.fr
4	Dr Yaknambé WASSITE	Enjeux et perceptions de la mission de l'ONU par les casques bleus en côte d'ivoire 124 – 167	Université de Lomé, Togo yakwassite@gmail.com

5	Dr Sourou NOUATIN	(In) sécurité foncière et production d'anacarde dans la commune de Tchaourou au Bénin 168 – 203	Faculté d'Agronomie, Université de Parakou guy.nouatin@fa-up.bj
6	Dr Adeniyi Olanipekun ADEFALA	Effect of leadership qualities of secondary school principal on the tone of schools 204 – 246	Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. adefalao@tasued.edu.ng
7	Dr Olaniran O. E. BALOGUN	Church and state: from sociology of religion perspective 247 – 267	Department of Religious Studies, College of Humanities, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria olaniranbalogun56@gmail.com
8	Dr Oladiran AFOLABI, Dr O. A. Onasoga- MOLAKE & Ishola AJIBOLA A.	Pre- retirement attitudes of police personnel and the implications for national security in Nigeria 268 – 310	Bowen University, Iwo, Nigeria. E-mail: oladiran.afolabi@bowen.edu.ng & University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. ajibola_ishola@yahoo.co.uk

9	Dr Yunus Oladejo TIJANI	La théorie de l'interlangue et l'interprétation de quelques stratégies d'apprentissage du français chez des étudiants en année préliminaire 311-330	Département de français, Faculté des Arts, Université d'Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.
10	Dr DA MATHA Adéola Raymond	La « science économique » et ces effets sur les mathématiques 331-366	Département des Sciences de Gestion et de Management, Institut Universitaire Panafricain (IUP), Benin; Courriel : damathar2005@yahoo.fr
11	DOSSOU Achille ¹ & Dr (MC) Arnauld GBAGUIDI ²	Le paradoxe de la participation citoyenne des fidèles de l'église catholique romaine dans le 13 ^{ème} arrondissement de la commune de cotonou au Bénin 367-390	^{1 & 2} Laboratoire d'Analyse et de Recherche : Religions, Espaces et Développement (LARRED), Ecole Doctorale Pluridisciplinaire (EDP), Faculté des Sciences Humaines et Sociales (FASHS), Université d'Abomey-Calavi, Bénin; Email : achdossou@gmail.com ; argbagui@yahoo.fr

CHURCH AND STATE: FROM SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The relation between Church and State may be seen as an institutional phenomenon, but also, and more fundamentally, as the rapport that exists within the human species between the spiritual or inner life and the social and collective life. Modern theologians tend to agree that religion can be explicable in both the mystical and the scientific modes of expression. Scientists such as the late Alastair Hardy have also attempted to account for the spiritual dimension of human beings in terms that do not need to conflict with scientific hypotheses such as the theory of evolution. Anthropologists who study primitive peoples conclude with a similar certainty that where there is a human community there will be some form of

expressed conviction that there are inner and higher form of experience which, when shared, link members of a given community in a social relationship.

INTRODUCTION

In practice, references to 'church and state' tend to denote the relationships that exist between the Christian religion and governments. The concept has a long history and a unique importance in the political thought developed under Christianity in the western world. The distinction between church and state was not a pronounced feature of pre-Christian civilization. On the contrary, until the adoption of Christianity by the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the secular rulers_ including the Roman emperors, were accorded a supreme religious function. The ruler might be seen as the representative of the people to the gods, or he might himself be regarded as divine. In the ancient civilizations of China, Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria. Persia, and South and Central America, the combination of priest and ruler seems to have been a consistent feature.

Judaism offers the first example of a society which, in the face of submission to a conqueror (Jerusalem fell in 586 BC), insisted on retaining a religious identity separate from its rulers. Christianity, as an offshoot of Judaism and also subject to the Roman Empire, found no difficulty in conceiving similarly of its own religious fellowship. The words of the Gospel that were used to express this differentiated loyalty were (Matt. 22:21): 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are Gods.' Persecution of Christians followed precisely because the imperial authorities feared those who refused to worship the divinity of the state in favour of a non-nationalistic and higher divinity which lacked geographical (and cultural) boundaries. The word *ecclesia* which the Greeks gave to their legislative meetings was used by Christians to describe their religious meetings. For the Christians *ecclesia* was a translation from the Hebrew *gahal*, which had a specifically religious significance implying the spiritual fellowship of the Chosen People.

Within the Roman Empire, Christianity spread rapidly. Its leaders sought acceptance of their claim that

their religion, though inwardly transforming, in no way affected their political loyalties, to which they would testify with martyrdom rather than violent rebellion. Even after Constantine (306 - 37) had embraced the Christian faith, and after Christianity had been declared first a legal religion (313) and then the official religion, the Fathers of the Church - such as AUGUSTINE (354 -430) and Pope Gelasius I (492-7) - continued to affirm the *duality* of civil and religious authority. That these two powers should be balanced within the state remained a key tenet of Christian thought, though one subject to a wide range of interpretations.

With the rise of a Christian church within a Christian empire began a unique era in political thought and organisation. In spite of the decline of the Roman Empire, the institution of the Roman church was to last from the Council of Nicaea, presided over by Emperor Constantine in 325, until Luther unleashed the Protestant Reformation in 1518 — more than a thousand years: later. It included for many centuries the Eastern Empire centred on Constantinople until the great Schism of 1054.

It can be misleading to say that the political theory promoted by the apologists for this political system was a theory of church and state. Christian writers believed that the church hierarchy and the imperial or civil hierarchy were sharers of power in a jointly directed Christian condominium. The Anglican historian John Neville Figgis has clarified this - potential misinterpretation by the twentieth century student, when he observes that in the Middle Ages 'the Church was not a State, it was the State; the state or rather the civil authority (for a separate society was not recognized) was merely the police department of the Church' (*Political Thought*, p. 5).

Historians of political thought often retain the Latin vocabulary of the Christian writers themselves as a way of stressing that to translate can be to mislead. By *sacerdotium* is meant both the institution of the church and also, its higher, or longer term, moral responsibility. By *imperium*, or *regnum* (according to whether one is referring to an empire or a kingdom), is meant both the institution of the civil authority and its particular functions, which were to keep order within and protect society generally from external forces bent perhaps on its

destruction. The two powers in partnership convey the sense of Christian theorists conceived the nature of good government. Because modern political thought does not use the same imagery we are prone to misunderstand Christian theory. Sometimes their vision was referred to by use of the metaphor of the Two Swords expounded as early as 494 by Pope Gelasius I. The right balance had to be struck, according to time and place, between the exigencies of this world and the imperatives of the next. Theoretically, the symbolism represented the Christian preoccupation with the inner life, and the quest for its fulfillment, a consideration that called for an intertwining of society's moral concerns and its agency of physical law enforcement.

By the end of the fourth century, the church was using the secular arm of *imperium* to bring pagans and Christian sectarians into the organized church. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo was and remains the giant of Christian political thought. In his defense of Christianity, *The City of God* (413-25), he merged the Roman legal scholarship in which he had received his initial training and Christian theology to which he had been converted, to provide the

definitive justification of the Christian Republic. Augustine distinguished between the worldly state and the city of God: others interpreted him as identifying the city of God with the church. Hence the church was supreme over all the nations of the earth. This was in later centuries accepted everywhere in the West. Thus it was that the church of the Middle Ages came to regard itself through its hierarchy and ecumenical councils as a divinely inspired authority,; moral, intellectual, and political.

Once the Roman Empire had receded and its power had been taken back by its former subject peoples, the church became the main repository. Of educated thought and opinion at every level of society (see MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THOUGHT). Inevitably, ecclesiastics penetrated the administration of the kingdoms and other feudal entities. Often they were the only competent administrators available to carry out secular commissions. By the same token. Entry into the church was an important avenue of social advancement: The use of Latin as the lingua .francs o Christendom and the pivotal position of the church in determining who might acquire competence in its use provide both an

indicator and an explanation of the power which the church was to acquire.

Emperor Charlernagne (800-14), however, challenged the authority of the sacerdotium. He claimed the status of direct appointment by God-, without need of endorsement by the pope. He appointed bishops by his, rather than papal, authority and required these bishops to take on the sorts of duties that were demanded of secular vassals. Churchmen themselves were confronted by circumstances in which they might choose whether to support the secular ruler within whose territory they were located geographically, or the authority of the pontiff, who claimed their spiritual allegiance.

The accession to the papal throne in 1073 of Gregon VII swung the pendulum the other way. Specifically, Gregory prohibited the lay investiture of bishops (see INVESTITURE CONTROVERSY). His ruling was immediately challenged by Emperor Henry IV with an attempt to secure the deposition of the pope, who in turn responded by excommunicating the emperor, absolving the emperor's vassals from their feudal oath of loyalty.

The notable feature is that though the antagonists and the political commentators disagreed over the issues, and over the extent to which the parties were exceeding their powers, the doctrine of the two powers as such was never questioned. Like the modern constitutional beliefs in CHECKS AND BALANCES or the 'swing of the pendulum' in the two-party system, the notion that there should be two swords was accepted, and provided the framework for debate.

From the eleventh century, there was a slow trend in Europe towards the strengthening of the feudal states, and the development within them of independent elites. Trained in both civil and canon law, they drew confidence from their classical and humanistic studies to challenge the papal claims to pronounce in the sphere of temporal jurisdiction.

The intermeshing of the powers of the regnum and the powers of the sacerdotium in any given European society remained 'Unchanged for ordinary' subjects. There was additionally a complicated relationship between the local ecclesiastical authorities and the 'central' emissaries of the pope in Rome. The setting up-

of the inquisition illustrates this. Departures from ecclesiastically sanctioned orthodoxy brought about in the twelfth century the notion that the matter needed certain uniformity of approach. Pope Gregory IX, in 1233, therefore Commissioned orders of friars to travel from place to place to investigate those who were thought to be deviant or heretical. If found guilty, they would then be punished by the local; secular authorities. Horror of the activities of the Inquisition among contemporary critics seems to have been evoked as much by the consideration that the inquisitors were not locally directed as by the nature of their policies.

Only by slow degrees did Christian subjects lose their sense of a dual allegiance and then civil rulers found, by the same token, that they could keep power without having to defer to papal authority. Thus when Henry VIII of England, by his Act of Supremacy of 1534, established a state church, he was giving formal expression to a changed balance of power between civil and ecclesiastical authority that already existed in practice.

The sensational subject matter of some of the disputes between regnum and sacerdotium

especially those which led to the casting down of the mighty from on high - attracted more attention than the finely poised balance of power within feudal Christendom which gave rise to them. From the point of view of political theory, there was an astonishing energy and vitality within this complex system of checks and balances which ensured that abuse of power- to which rulers are always susceptible was subject to a non-violent form of public challenge in the widest possible international context. As we shall see, it was the church's claim to exercise infallible judgment rather than its duty to exert moral leadership that was to be contested. In the challenge to papal infallibility many forces were united: theological, scientific, and philosophical movements, and above all the political ambitions of secular rulers wishing to assert national autonomy.

The Protestant Reformation marks the period in which the doctrine of the Two Swords was replaced by the doctrine of the Sovereign State (see REFORMATION POLITICAL THOUGHT). Acknowledging the absolute, secular sovereignty of the ruler was initially seen as an expedient, a means of bringing

to a halt the shocking carnage unexpectedly released by the clashes between orthodox theologians and their zealous critics. Faced in 1520 with LUTHER'S provocative attack on conventional theology on grace, on free interpretation of Holy Writ, on clerical celibacy, on the sale of indulgences, and on payment of taxes - the papal authorities, presuming their ability to call on the secular arm of the emperor to bring Luther in person to Rome, found themselves resisted. Luther could command unexpected support, including the protection of his Prince. In other parts of Christendom, such as France, England and the Low Countries, demands for theological reform spread rapidly, and attempts to suppress them brought not a return to orthodoxy, but even greater civil discord.

Given that no military parry could prevail, various truces reflected the desire for peace. But there was no clear theory to match the practice. A slow change in thinking seems to have come about between the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 and the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The compromise that was never expected to become a theory was contained in the formula *cuius regio eius*

religion — 'to each prince his own religion'. The practical consequences entailed were, first. That religious doctrine and organization should, for the time being, accord with the religion of the secular ruler. Second, there should be no intervention by one sovereign state in the religious affairs of another.

CONCLUSION

Two unanswered questions about church and state were implicit in these practical rules. The first centred on the meaning and application of 'sovereign' (see SOVEREIGNTY).- This superficially legal question was addressed by the French jurist Jean BODIN. How- should the civil authority in sixteenth-Century Europe distinguish between a sovereign state and a state that was merely a vassal state? Bodin judged that the sovereign state could be identified by certain marks which included inter alia the powers to make law and to be subject to none made by another, to appoint magistrates, prefects and military commanders, to make war, and to be the highest body of appeal. Other attributes of the sovereign state should include the sole power of taxation, the right to determine

what language was to be used, and the power to collect the revenues from vacant bishoprics. In short, to be acknowledged as a 'sovereign' state held consequences important for the physical security of political communities, including the right to be exempt from religious persecution.

The second question concerned the moral justification of secular sovereignty. Could a Christian justify a state at all in which a secular sovereign rather than a religious leader decided what was right or wrong? This was the issue that caused the greatest difficulty for the Reformers. Luther and Zwingli decided affirmatively, but on condition that religious leaders like the Prophets of the Old Testament were closely consulted. CALVIN held a more theocratic view whereby the leaders of the church community decided matters reinforcing it by admonition and punishment where necessary. In short, rationalist and humanist critics of the orthodox Church might well expect more enlightenment to come from laymen than from either orthodox or reforming theologians.

Thomas HOBBS provided the most original and coherent theory of the secular, sovereign state in his

classic work, *Leviathan* (1651). He wrote only as a philosopher and classical scholar but also as a Protestant with an intense commitment to the English Reformation. He made a clear distinction between religion when it serves the inner life and religion when it serves the state, believing that Christianity in essence should do the former, but that under a reformed Christian Commonwealth it might do both. Hobbes was passionately antagonistic towards the authoritarianism of the Roman Curia which he judged to have defined Christian doctrine falsely, contrary to truth and reason, to promote its own worldly power.

The foundation of all states, in Hobbes's theory, lay in the maintenance of public order. Only when order had been retrieved from chaos was public morality possible, allowing individuals to engage in collective activities, including religious worship. Christians in the contemporary world, as in the pie-Christian Roman era, were required 'to render to Caesar what is Caesar's', and Caesar was the sovereign; who could keep order not the sovereign who was sanctioned by a prophet - who might be true or false - to promote a particular doctrine or ritual.

To believers in the false political authority claimed by the pope, Hobbes offered the counsel that they had been grotesquely deceived. Christian individuals should interpret Holy Writ for themselves, not rely on the interpretations of others.

Among writing on church and state, *Leviathan* marks an utter break with the Augustinian and medieval tradition. Not only does Hobbes refuse altogether the metaphor of the Two Swords, he substitutes for it the mighty *Leviathan* - the secular ruler who holds in one hand the weapon of the sovereign state and in the other the pastoral crook of the national church.

The nation-state's independence from external religious authority was thus confirmed by the doctrine of sovereignty. What had still to be determined was the place within the state of organized religion. There were many possible relationships, ranging from the church as a constitutionally established branch of the national administration to the church as one of a myriad of groups of co-religionaries, united in pursuit of inner spirituality according to their own doctrines.

To most minds of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries an established church reflected the proper relationship between the post-Reformation church and government. Its task was to provide a uniform ceremony for public occasions, and to teach - not dogma or irrational or superstitious doctrine, but the use of Reason itself. Hobbes stated that the pastor's teaching should be conveyed by means not of 'power over the consciences of men' but through 'wisdom humility, clearness of doctrine, and sincerity of conversation, and not by suppression of the natural sciences, and the morality of natural reason' (p; 711). A national civic church was supported by other Protestants, including GROTIUS, SPINOZA, and, much later COLERIDGE. Who would have transformed the Established Church into a national agency for education and culture.

By contrast, those who saw Christianity being concerned first and foremost with the individual's inner holiness - especially the Puritan sects — dissociated Christianity from the state. Their path was towards voluntarism, fundamentalism, and the free interpretation of the Scriptures. John LOCKE, whose writings on the

subject included *The Reasonableness, of Christianity* (1696) and *Letters on Toleration* (1689, 1690, 1692), hyped for a-reconciliation of these extremes. He supported a Broad or Latitudinarian Church of England as well as legal toleration- for the Dissenters who could not accommodate themselves within even a Latitudinarian formula.

In modern times, the plural or heterodox state has become the positive, alternative model to mere TOLERATION. Pierre BAYLE proposed it in the 1680s, but even the French Huguenots, who would have gained freedom from persecution thereby, tended to agree that disunity in religion was unseemly in a nation. The United States Bill of Rights (1791) seems to have been the first constitutional recognition that pluralism in religion might be, positively justifiable in its own. Right; it asserts firmly that no law concerning 'the establishment of a religion' or 'prohibiting the free exercise thereof should be made by Congress (see Brownlie, p. 11), and thereby provides a working example of a secular administration presiding over a religiously plural society.

The toleration of sects by an established church led, as the orthodox theologians feared and predicted, in the long run to a separation of church and state, and the disestablishment in many countries, such as France, of formerly established churches. From being conceived of first as a partner with government, then, as an agency of administration, some churches now see themselves as a voluntary group in society whose political role — if any -- is that of moral educator and pressure group. How this development should be evaluated depends on the extent to which it is thought that Christianity, in its essence, serves society or the individual's inner life. The range of positions on the continuum between these poles is of immense importance for political analysis.

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