

The Relationship between the Church and the State: A Study based on the French Revolution

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After the crucifixion of Jesus, the first Christian Community was persecuted by the Roman Empire for nearly three centuries. The Roman Emperor Constantine granted religious freedom to all religions in the Roman Empire through the Edict of Milan (313 CE). This is the beginning of Church-State relationship. When the emperor Theodosius acclaimed Christianity as the State Religion (381 CE) the Church-State relationship was further strengthened.

From Constantine to the 18th century French Revolution (1789), the power struggle between the Monarchy and the Pope continued in Europe in different historical circumstances and incidents like Barbarian Invasion and the process of secularization of the Western Church.

When examining the Church-State relationship, the French Revolution is unique mainly because of its impact on the Church. Before French Revolution the temporal and the spiritual powers of Pope which nourished the European feudal system of the medieval Church were challenged by the Humanist Movement (14thC.) and the Lutheran Reformation (16thC.). The power of the Pope and the Papal State were further weakened by the democratic ideals of the French Revolution namely Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Ironically they are the sacred values of God's Kingdom witnessed by Jesus of Nazareth who suffered a violent death and the First Christian Community bore witness while being persecuted by the Roman Empire.

As for methodology of this research I intend to use two methods, namely historical criticism and source criticism to identify the dynamics of Church-State relationship.

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