

Reflection on the Role of the Church on the Present Philippine Society

Excelyn C. Landero

I. Introduction

On January 19, 2000, College of Theology Students and Faculty/Staff members participated in the Central Philippine University Indignation Rally; and in the afternoon, they marched from Central Philippine University to Amphitheater, Iloilo City to force President Estrada to resign. Along the way they shouted: “*Sobra na ang Pahirap – Palitan si Erap.*” “*Singgit sang Central Philippine University – Erap Resign!*” “*Pastor ng Bayan Lumalaban.*” The Convention Baptist Bible College (CBBC) teachers and students also participated in the March-Rally of January 19 at Bacolod City. The Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC) officials issued statements encouraging Baptist Churches to pray and rally against President Estrada. These events seem to signal a shift in the level of understanding among the Baptists. In contrast to the Martial Law struggles that led to “People Power II,” the struggle and protest against President Estrada became institutional. In a great sense, there is a shift of understanding among Baptists on the Separation of Church and State and religious liberty among others. Obviously, “People Power II” signals that the church will be there to criticize, protest, and force

corrupt government officials to perform well otherwise they will be forced to resign or to be ousted by the people including the church.

This paper will attempt to find out the Role of the Church in the present Philippine Society specifically on the concept of the church, on the principles relating to the separation of the Church and society on the response of church's own understanding of its existence, and the writer's Theological Reflection.

II. Definition of Terms

1. The Meaning of the Church

The Greek New Testament word for church (*ekklesia*) literally meant “those called out.” It was borrowed from the language of the Greek city state, in which the voting citizens who had the privilege of participating in civic debate were called the *ekklesia* – they were “called out” from the rest of the populace to decide matters affecting them all.¹

The church is like a precious jewel with many complex faces.² Yet it has two distinct characters –divine and human. It is a *divine institution* because it is mandated by Christ, the Logos, sent by God to participate in history (John 1:14). The church is likened to “the bride of Christ” (II Cor. 11:2); it is also compared to a body in which Christ is the head (Eph. 5:23). It is a *human institution* representing Christ in the world. It is likened to the *salt of the earth* (Matt. 5:13). It is a visible structure in this world “to represent *meaning* where there is no meaning, to represent *order* where there is chaos, to represent *hope* where there is despair, to represent *peace* where there is destructive conflict, to represent *life*

¹ Robert E. Webber, *The Church in the World* (Grand Rapids Michigan:Zondervan Publishing House, 1986, p. 283.

² Elza M. Hawkins, *A Many Faceted Jewel* (New York: Carlton Press Inc., 1978), p. 9f.

where there is death. In the neighborhood, in business, in the arts, in social relations, in the state, in international affairs, the church's presence witnesses to the challenge of what God intended for the world. Living in the world under the Lordship of Christ beckons those about it to recognize His Lordship over the world, over all creation.¹ The church is a *koinonia of the Spirit*.² It is a fellowship of all members of the community in which the Spirit dwells. It is sharing life together in Christ. It is participation together in the life of the Spirit. It is investment of self in the life of the community of faith in the enterprise of fulfilling the will of God. The church is the instrument of God's universal purpose and the focus of history.³

The ultimate goal of the church in this world is to follow the mission of Jesus Christ, i.e., Luke 4:18- "*... to preach good news to the poor ... proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*" The mission of the church therefore is to participate in the quest for a meaningful and abundant life (John 10:10). Christ's mission is not a quest for the "ideal" but for the "real. It can be fulfilled, as Jesus himself had fulfilled it: "*The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them,*"(Matthew 11:5).

2. The Meaning of Society

Society is people living together in an organized manner. Society maintains peace and order along its varied and complex features. The significant aspects of society include political, economic, social, cultural and

¹ E. Hawkins, p. 17-18.

² E. Hawkins, p.15.

³ R. Webber, p. 130.

religious. In this study, these aspects are generally defined as follows:

2.1 Political – a question of decision making – a society through its leaders and/or with participation of its citizens makes decision for the benefit of its constituents.

2.2 Economic – a society maintains productivity and production. Products are supposed to be equally distributed to its constituents.

2.3 Social – a society develops its social norms for collective and individual benefits.

2.4 Cultural – a society develops a way of life which is preserved and propagated by its constituents.

2.5 Religious – a society develops its own religiosity and forms of religion.

The ultimate goal of society is to provide a better life or abundant life of its citizens.

Societies are less concerned with the “heavenly aspects of life.” Societies are more concerned with the material well being of the citizens. In some cases, however, the society is formed in the context of the religious belief of its people like in Islam and Judaism. A society, therefore, is composed of people within a certain territory and who share a common culture and history.¹

To summarize, the *church* in general is concerned with human and divine aspect of collective and individual life, while the *society* is concerned mainly with the human aspect of life. The goals of both, however, are quite similar. They aspire to achieve a meaningful and abundant life for their constituents.

¹ cf. John J. Macionis, *Sociology*, 2nd ed., 1989, p. 91f.; Venancio B. Ardales, *Introductory Text to Philosophy*, 1987, p. 6f; 111.

III. Development of the Church and State Relationship

1. Historical Background

Throughout the two thousand years of the history of Christianity, the church and state were one. Starting from Constantine until the eve of the reformation, the church and the Western Empire shaped the organizational forms of Christianity. In fact, the church was called the “Imperial Church.”¹ It was admitted by competent Catholic historians that the epoch-making conflict between the Pope and the Emperor between the 11th and 13th century was followed by untoward and unholy consequences. The papacy became involved in the highly volatile arena of power politics. There was excessive claims for absolute control in both the spiritual and temporal realms by the ruling pontiffs. However, shortly before the Reformation, the prestige of the papacy sank to its lowest. Voices all over Christendom were clamoring for a universal council to set the church in order. It was only after the Reformation led by Luther and Calvin that the separation of the church and the state started to take its shape.²

The Reformation Era finally led to the emergence of the modern idea of democracy in which U.S. Americans adhere so much. There is now that “clear” and “finally realized” dream of full religious liberty and the separation of Church and State.

This is also true in the history of Philippine Christianity. Spanish colonialism (1521-1898) insured the “marriage” of the Catholic Church and Spanish colonial rulers. It was the coming of the American Protestantism that broke the unity of the church and state.³

¹ Justo L. Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 1. (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1984), p. 113f.

² William A. Mueller, *Church and State in Luther and Calvin*, Vol. 1 (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1954), p. 9.

³ Nestor D. Bunda, *A Mission History of the Philippine Baptist Churches 1898-1998 from a Philippine Perspective* (Germany:

2. The Principle of Separation of Church and State

The text of the provision of the separation of Church and State was affirmed in the 1935 Philippine Constitution (Art. IV, Section 7), and reaffirmed in the 1973 Constitution (Art. IV, Sec. 8). It is retained in the “Freedom Constitution” of 1986, Article III – Bill of Rights, Section 5: “No Law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship without discrimination or preference shall forever be allowed. No religious test shall be required for the exercise of civil or political rights.”¹

The separation of the Church and State historically emerged as a corrective of two general tendencies which in the experience of democratically conceived societies have been destructive to the maintenance of a democratic social order. The first tendency is the dominance of one religious tradition over the political order and the processes of political and decision making. The second tendency is the dominance of the established political order over the religious bodies and organizations of society. Both tendencies lead inevitably to authoritarianism. First to a “*religious*” authoritarianism, and second, to a “*secular*” authoritarianism. Both are anti-democratic.

The provision on the Separation of Church and State affirms the following basic principles:

1. The inviolability of the separation of Church and State and of the freedom of religious belief.
2. The non-support and non-preferential treatment of any religious group by the state.

University of Hamburg, 1999), p. 42f.

¹ NBSI Editorial Staff, *The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines* (Philippines: National Book Store, 1986), p.5.

3. The non-compulsory and non-discriminatory character of the state or any public organization or individual with regard to religious belief or to people of religious faith or no faith.
4. The freedom of religious activity and the expression of religious faith in social and political life.
5. The freedom of religious organizations and bodies from foreign control and domination.¹

The National Council of Churches in the Philippines upholds the separation principle based on the following reasons:

First, Church and State are distinct institutions, Each has its own basic reason for being. Each has its own goals to achieve. Each is organized on the basis of its nature and role. Each may express its reason for being and pursue its own objectives according to methods consonant with its own nature and authority without infringing upon or injuring the other. This distinction must be given legal recognition and status, and this is achieved by maintaining them as legally separate.

Second, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines believes that the separation is for the mutual benefit of both Church and State. Where there is mutual recognition of, and respect for each other's integrity, prerogatives, and limitations, there are less possibilities of conflict and more opportunities for cooperating together.

Third, both Church and State can serve the human community in the Philippines if each is allowed to contribute its distinctive service to the human community out of its own unique traditions and resources. The NCCP believes that its member-churches can be of best service to the human community in the Philippines by

¹ Liberato C. Bautista, ed., *Church and State & Other Public Issues and Concerns*, (Quezon City, Philippines: Phil. Graphic Arts, Inc., 1986), p. 19.

bringing to bear the resources of faith and love and hope upon the problems of the nation, for they exist as churches precisely for the sharing of these resources. And the human community in the Philippines has need of these resources.

Fourth, the principle of separation of Church and State acknowledges the fact of religious pluralism in the Philippines.

Having affirmed the rightness of the separation, it is believed that NCCP's member-churches are not prohibited from some measure of involvement in matters affecting the life of the community in the Philippines, especially if that involvement is for the benefit of the community like promoting the worship of God, practice of freedom, peace, love, justice and brotherhood. In view of their conviction that no form and initiative of the State is so perfect as to be beyond criticism and improvement, they may express their cooperation with the State through rational criticism and prophetic judgment.¹

The Roman Catholic Church advocates also the separation principle. Cardinal Sin himself in his address before the Integrated Bar of the Philippines on 11 November 1978 said:

“Union of the Church and State invariably ends in the church being absorbed, manipulated or dominated by the State, or in the State being dominated by the Church. Both alternatives, it is obvious are undesirable. When the Church is dominated by the State, she becomes a tool for the furtherance of worldly aims. And when the State is dominated by the Church then the Church tends to get confused as to her nature, identity, role and mission.”²

¹ L. Bautista, p.21f.

² L. Bautista, p. 23.

The American Baptists and Philippine Baptists believe in the principle of the separation of Church and State. For them this principle stresses that the allegiance of the church is only to God through Jesus Christ. The state should not give favor to any religion or church bodies. The state is supposed to rule only the political affairs of the country and not the church. Similarly, the church should not meddle in politics and run the government.¹

However, the separation of Church and State is often misunderstood by many. There is a growing tension when the church participates or gets involved in the affairs of the government for they immediately think of the word “separation.” When the church denounces the evils of society or speaks against the government’s leadership, surely some would react especially Baptist congregations. They would say such matters are of the state and for the state to resolve. It must be noted very well that to a large extent the separation principle has emerged or was created in a *legal sense*² for the church and the state to work harmoniously and perform tasks according to their own interests. There can be *no absolute separation* between the two since the members of the church are also citizens of the state. The legal basis was created to keep the church from the control or rule of the state and the state from the control or rule of the church. Involvement or participation of the church in the government does not mean leading, controlling, and ruling the government; nor the government’s involvement in the church.

¹ N. Bunda, p. 99.

² L. Bautista, p. 28.

IV. The Role of the Church in the Society

1. Present Philippine Situation

The colonial history of the Philippines has formed a kind of society where the few elite runs the country and the majority people, who are poor, are the subjects of the few elite. In such a situation, the elite controls the political and economic life of the population. Yet the outcome of such an unjust system is detrimental. The present majority of the people are suffering from the crisis brought about by the oppressive system. Symptoms of the crisis include mass poverty, mass unemployment, criminality, prostitution, drug abuse, migration and environmental degradation.

It cannot be denied that even if the corrupt President Estrada left his office recently, economic, political and social dislocations among our people remain. A rapidly growing globalization had the effect of increasing the cost of living while at the same time decreasing the value of human labor. Few are only able to amass large fortunes while the masses are burdened with an increasing poverty.

The past leadership economically over-empowered business interest milking the life of the Filipino people by unjust methods. President Estrada made life even more miserable for the already impoverished people.¹ There was an installation of his cronies, relatives and wives to positions of power and influence and allowed them to plunder the resources of the country. There was a series of oil price made by callused and greedy oil cartels who indiscriminately raised oil prices seventeen times during the year 2000 alone. Estrada drained the moral and spiritual fiber of the Filipino people, sold the country to gambling syndicates and lords, and established a gambling culture in our land. Thus, he was called the

¹ Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes, *National Council of Churches in the Philippines Letter to the President*, Issued Nov. 9, 2000.

“lord of all gambling lords” and most powerful protector of illegal gambling syndicates who amassed millions of pesos every month for such purpose. He carelessly declared a “total war policy against MILF rebel forces and the bandit Abu Sayaff spending billions of pesos for air and naval bombings and ground attacks which barely touched the rebel forces and bandits, but displaced hundreds of thousands of poor Christians, Muslims and Lumads in those areas, including the loss of lives.¹ The weakening of Philippine peso brought discomfort and made life more difficult to our people.

Moreover, we face a crisis of power politically. Just like what happened last January 20, 2001. Negotiations to install Vice President Gloria Macapagal -Arroyo to Presidency had already been done even though decision has not been confirmed regarding the resignation of President Joseph Estrada. Seen among the people is the thirst of power. Many are interested to become leaders based on their vested interests. We have a newly installed President in our Republic brought about by “People Power 2” in Edsa, however, tensions are still going on because of the reactions made by the Estrada’s supporters. Senators, Congressmen and many other political leaders were divided in their convictions to support the new leadership.

Releasing government leaders from their positions and appointing new ones has always been problematic. In our lifetime we have repeatedly seen excessive power which was used only for insignificant and questionable ends. There was no collective effort to protect human life. Our government officials misuse power.

Our country is not only expressing political and economic crisis but also a crisis of morals or the lack of it. The past womanizing presidency displayed unashamedly a moral laxity. Perhaps Estrada is a womanizer. But

¹ Rudy Bernal, *Statement to the President*, CPBC Committee on Social Issues and Environmental Concerns.

many of our leaders are womanizers, too, although it is not much revealing and scandalous.

Today, we are still faced with a battle – for the souls of our nation and the spirit of the church. We are still struggling. We stand not only to be free but to be. As created being of God, we may be asking who we are, what we stand for, what we believe in as Christians, and as a church people - both *citizen of the State and of the Kingdom of God*.

2. Response of the Church

Various churches are responding or even forced to respond to the crisis situation in the Philippines. Church responses vary according to a church's understanding of its existence.

2.1. From the Enlightened Catholicism

The Roman Catholic Church is actively involved in political and social issues obtaining in the Philippine society. Vatican II was convened by Pope John XXIII to enable the church to “update” with the rapid pace of development in the modern world. The church, Pope John said, should not remain relegated to its sanctuaries and isolated from the affairs of everyday life. This concern colored the teachings of the council and continue to influence Catholic thinking on the church's relation with politics and society 35 years later. Vatican II sought to open the doors of the church once again to society. During the close of the Middle Ages, the church was badly bruised and beaten. Criticized by modern thinkers, the church closed itself from the world. This completed the separation of the spiritual and temporal domains. Yet there is also a conviction that the church should be in the middle ground. While involvement in society and politics could threaten its integrity, non-involvement would just be as damaging to its evangelizing work. Basic to its self-understanding is its belief to be commissioned by Christ to transform the world through its values. Vatican Council

II stressed that none of the concerns of the modern world must be regarded as alien to the life of the church. What is wrong is not the simple involvement of the church in politics but the way the involvement in the society is being carried out. Where the church went wrong in ages past was not the church's involvement in temporal powers but in the way it pursued particular aspects of relationship as well as forgetting the moral purpose of its political movement to the life of the church. The bottom line of the "updating" process of Vatican II is that the church cannot but involve itself deeply in the life of the society. This requires caution that while the church is not strictly political, its concern is within people who are both members of the church and civil society. This idea must never be overlooked. To do so would be to misunderstand much of the perceived church involvement in politics and to keep harping on the idea of the 'separation of Church and State' every time the church says something about politics or the life of society.

The enlarge idea of the church has resulted in three developments that are important in comprehending the church's political activism such as, lay empowerment within the church, lay movements in politics and a shift from the limited view of religion as worship, to the idea of religion including a moral code. There was a time when the priest was at the top of the parish ladder and the most educated one while the members were treated as sheep. Vatican II reformed this and what exists today is the active collaboration between laity and clergy in matters concerning church and society.

In the area of social consciousness brought about by the Vatican Council II, a fundamental tenet of the new tradition of social teaching in the church is that *"spirituality and charity are not enough. Justice and concern for the disadvantaged are the hallmarks of authentic religion..."* It is said that the very vehemence of those who insist that the church should leave temporal affairs alone betrays an outmoded view that isolates the

spiritual dimension of religion from its more concrete moral demands. For the church to pray and provide spiritual guidance alone as some would insist is not enough. There is no need then to justify the church's moral pronouncements on society and politics. There is only a need for the church to be moral itself.¹ It is clear that the Catholic Church has an obligation in the society rooted in the covenant love of God for all persons and in the fulfillment of this love is the death and resurrection of Christ..."²

2.2. From the Baptists Perspectives

In the world today, 37 million Baptists are generally divided into three kinds of orientation in responding to the situation; namely,

a. Ecumenical Baptist Churches are open to cooperation with other churches. It is participating in the struggle for justice and peace and involve themselves in social issues.³ For them sin is not only personal but also structural. WCC leader W. Ariarajah said that:

“Ecumenism is at its best when it brings healing, reconciliation, justice, peace, and wholeness into the lives of people and communities. Therefore, the search for peace with justice, the struggle to uphold the rights and dignity of people, the concern for the oppressed, marginalized and rejected as well as the search for a just and righteous ordering of social, economic, and political life of communities and nations has also been at the center of theological understanding of what ecumenism is all about.”⁴

¹ Ideas of Dr. Santos published in PDI, “Vatican II and the Church in Politics”, December 24, 2000, p.8.

² Wilfredo Fabros, *The Church and its Social Involvement in the Philippines.*, 1930-1972, 1988, p. 2.

³ Elbert W. Wardin, editor, *Baptist Around the World*, 1995, p. 1f.

⁴ Ronald Paz Caraig, ed., *NCCP Newsmagazine*, Jan- April 2000, p. 27.

b. Conservative Evangelical Churches contain the main bulk of Baptists. They operate within a conservative theological framework, maintain confessional norms, advocate traditional personal morality in both private and public sphere, and tend to be conservative on social issues. They look at sin as very personal and not structural compared to Ecumenical Baptists.

c. Fundamental Separatist Baptists are closing their doors to any cooperation or ecumenical endeavor with other churches. The emphasis is more on the “heavenly Life.” They pray and just wait for the Kingdom of God to come.¹

CPBC churches in particular are divided in their understanding of the relationship between the church and society. There are those who believe that Baptist churches should not be concerned with the “*secular*” or “*worldly*” matters including the state. They are more concerned with personal salvation and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Pre-Millennial thinkers). However, there are those whose concerns go beyond personal salvation. Sin is structural and personal. Therefore salvation should be personal and structural taking into consideration the realities obtained in the Bible and the context today. Context here includes the situation in the church and society.²

V. Theological Reflection

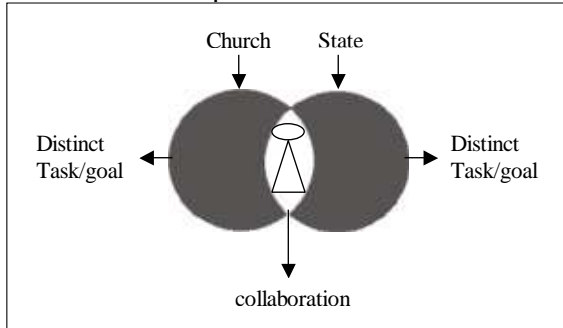
The discussant believes in the separation of the church and state principle. However, this separation should not be totally absolute since the members of the church are also citizens of the state and many state members are church people, too! This is to advocate Rev. Cirilo A. Rigos’ message when he said that: “Our

¹ E. Wardin, p. 3.

² N. Bunda, p. 361f.

religious beliefs do influence our political activities and our political convictions can grow out of our theological convictions.”¹

The figure illustrates how the writer perceives the church-state relationship:



The figure above shows that both the church and state have their own distinct task to perform and goal to accomplish. The shaded part are areas of both the church and state concerns and basic reason for being. It is from those areas where both may express and pursue their own objectives in consonance with their own nature and authority without intervening each other. The church and state serve the citizens according to their own basic functions. In their boundaries, both gained status that they are legally separated.

The concept that both the church and state are not totally separated is the area represented at the center. The church and state collaborate with each other. Both aspire that every citizen will achieve a meaningful and abundant life expressed in Jesus' mission. The center area represents the church and state working relationship. Both will work interdependently like that of a brother and sister relationship helping each other for the common good of their constituents. Both acknowledge the presence of each other.

¹ L. Bautista, p. 28.

The figure also reflects that man has a double citizenship and a double duty: citizen of the church/kingdom of God and citizen of the state, and has an obligation to render services to both. Matthew 22:21 says, “Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give back to God what belongs to God.” This principle of Jesus believes that man has a duty to serve both the church and the state. There are matters and principle in which the responsibility of man is to God and there are also matters that he can be accountable to the state.

The collaboration area expresses greatly the church involvement and participation in the society: First, the church people should respect and obey leaders of the state. It is said that, “No plea of religion can hold good against obedience to lawful authority.”¹ It is affirmed in the Bible that leaders of our country are ordained and commissioned by God. They are accountable for their deeds and are expected to act what is proper and right. Second, the church has the right to subdue whenever the state misleads. According to Bautista,² when the state overstepped its limitations and ceases to be the servant of God and no longer serves the common good, the church has the right and the duty to do something about the situation. If the state performs beyond the will of God then the church must take its part. There are times when Christians have the right and duty to resist the state. Whenever the state demands something that opposes the will of God, the church has the right to resist compliance. In Revelation 13 there is a picture of the state that misuses its power. The state becomes totalitarian and claims unreserved loyalty. It discredits the Sovereignty and honor of God. The state described in Romans 13 as a servant of God and instruments of

¹ H.D.M. Spence and Joseph Exell, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 15 (Grand Rapids Michigan: WMB Eerdsmans Publishing Company, 1958), p. 361.

² L. Bautista, p.28.

justice has in Revelation gone beyond its proper bounds. When they cry to God for deliverance God did not hear them.

Third, the church must serve as a model to the state. It means that the church must transcend truth, love, holiness that provide meaning in the society. It is the church that should provide sphere of values to the community. The state on the other hand must recognize the values that the church bears. Fourth, the state must acknowledge the presence of God in the world. The best citizen acknowledges God and bring his whole life unto his presence.

Lastly, the collaboration would mean that the church and state's reason for being are under God's Almighty hands. God preserves the church and state's working relationship. They are all subject to the Sovereign will of God. If God is Sovereign over His entire creation, then there can be no absolute separation of religion from the state's affairs. As what Mawe de la Fuente said: "Our secular life is not separate from our religious life."¹ All of life and human actions bear a religious character because God is sovereign in every aspect of life. The authority of the church and state inheres in the will and purpose of the living God who decreeds them into existence. According to Webber there are three earthly reasons for state's existence: First, *is the fact of sin*. Because sin expresses itself in a human's desire to develop culture away from the will of God, the state as an institution that holds the sin in check has been instituted by God. Second, *the goodness of God*. The creation of the state may be seen as an act of God's goodness toward people. Sin unchecked by some external restraint would destroy humanity. Hence, the third reason, *the preservation of human life*. Therefore the purpose of the state in this thought points to the necessity of church

¹ Mawe de la Fuente, Centralian on the Web, College of Theology, November 10, 2000.

involvement in the affairs of the state. The effect of the involvement of the church in the government is obvious. If the church submits to what he or she understands the will of God to be in the state, the order of society will be stable and sin will be held in check.¹

This is to quote Atty. Perfecto Yasay when he said that:

“Christianity is never a way of life for the fence sitters or of the uncommitted spectator. God’s call toward discipleship is a call for involvement and a summon for engagement in a world of choices that demand a decision. In a period of tension or division, God’s people are called upon to follow Jesus and what he stands for. Since Jesus stands for justice, his disciples should choose to be just and oppose everything that is unjust. Since Jesus stands for righteousness, his disciples should choose to be true to the prophetic role of Christianity – to oppose evil and immorality, denounce corruption, and fight dishonesty wherever it rears its ugly head.”²

In order that the relation between the church and state may work properly, Christians must be obedient to the state. Obedience to the rulers is willed by God, for God has instituted the state. Furthermore, obedience is pleasing to God and maintains the order of society which brings glory to God. The Kingdom of Society should provide an atmosphere of peace in which the Kingdom of Church is able to carry out its function. The preaching of the gospel results in good works, and this helps to stabilize society and reduce evil in the world. The Kingdom of God outlasts the Kingdom of the World. Secular government serves only the world which passes away, but the spiritual government of God serves eternal life and God’s ultimate purpose.

¹ R. Webber, p. 133.

² R. Caraig, p. 29.

VI. Conclusion

This paper attempts to find out the Role of the Church in the present Philippine Society focusing on the separation of Church and State. At the onset, definitions of the Church and State were laid down. The Church concerns itself with the spiritual and temporal, while the state concerns itself mainly with temporal. It is in the temporal aspect that the Church and State have either united or separated throughout the history of Christendom.

A special focus on the relation between Church and State in the Philippine setting was discussed. The Roman Catholic Church, the NCCP and CPBC have different conceptions on the role of the Church in the Philippine Society. Yet there seems to be a common understanding that the Christian Churches cannot neglect their responsibility in the society. This is theologically and biblically sound. In the theological reflection, it was affirmed that the separation of church and state was not totally absolute. Both can function separately and on the other hand, can work interdependently.

The Role of the Church in the present Society is to initiate developmental change in line with its goal of participating in the realization of the Kingdom of God (abundant life) on Earth.