

ABSTRACT

From Aristotle to Jefferson: Christianity and the Separation of Church and State.

by James Leon Holmes and Jeremy Holmes

Classical political philosophy saw politics as the architectonic art, the master art, to which all other activities, including religion, are subordinate. Christianity cannot accommodate itself to this view, because Christianity transcends the political order in origin, in goal, and in constituency, and the effort to place it beneath politics has been disastrous at every turn. On the other hand, every effort to subordinate politics to Christianity encounters similar difficulties, both because the coercive power proper to government is too blunt an instrument for the work of converting the heart, and because the Church is inevitably identified with and treated as the merely earthly power she has chosen to use. There are problems inherent in the separation of Church and State given the impossibility of separating the two in the individual man. There are four possibilities for relating Church and State, and each is problematic in its own way.