

WHEN CHRISTENDOM REIGNED AS A QUEEN — LESSONS FROM HISTORY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY —

Pure religion and undefiled before God is this — to keep unspotted from the world. — James 1:27

In A.D. 800 Charlemagne was crowned by Pope Leo III, becoming the first emperor to rule over the *Holy Roman Empire*. It was Charlemagne who first formally recognized the *temporal dominion* of the Pope. Thus began the official reign of Christendom as a queen with the kingdoms of this world.

Romantic images in movies and paintings depict this time as one of pageantry, gallantry and earthly glory for both church and state. But, in reality, it was a time of intellectual darkness, treacherous intrigue and bitter persecution. The most horrific persecutions upon sincere Christians by earthly governments was at the dictate of the papal throne. None dared to challenge the pope's authority!



Knowing this, our early government established laws which prohibit favoritism toward one religious sect — laws designed to prevent oppression and tyranny against faiths in the minority. Why then do some Christian organizations today press for greater influence in the affairs of government? Have they forgotten the Biblical Christian principles which admonish a protective “*wall of separation*” between church and state?

**ANCIENT BABYLON:
A PROPHETIC PICTURE**

Babylon is first noted in Old Testament Scripture as a great and powerful pagan city. The Hebrew prophets warned God's people of the consequence of living carelessly and forgetting their covenant to serve God alone and

A WARNING FROM AMERICA'S FOREFATHERS

The founders of the United States of America were Christian men and women who wished to have Christian principles apply, but knew well, from these lessons of the past, that abuses arise when religion and politics mix. History has well documented the oppressive power of the *Holy Roman Empire* when the popes crowned the kings of Europe.

In 1787, with these fresh lessons of history in mind, Thomas Jefferson wrote in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*: “Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burned, tortured, fined and imprisoned. What has been the effect of this coercion? To make half the world fools and half hypocrites; to support roguery and error all over the world...” Again, in 1802, Jefferson wrote a letter that clarified his views: “I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between church & state.”

keep His righteous commandments. Because they did not heed their prophets, they fell into idolatry, and God allowed Israel to be taken captive by this great power — Babylon.

Babylon appears again in the Book of Revelation — this time in symbol as an oppressive force which would quickly arise and persecute the true disciples of Christ. (Revelation 17:2-6) Why is this ancient pagan city used as a symbol?

As natural Israel of old is a picture of *spiritual* Israel during the Gospel era, so ancient Babylon is a picture that foretold of the powerful papal system which took Christians — *spiritual* Israel — captive. Just as many *natural* Israelites compromised with their captors by mixing their true religion with pagan practices, so too, many *spiritual* Israelites quickly became careless — mixing true Christianity with the false practices of *Babylon the Great*. Thus, the Babylon of Revelation has become a symbol of confusion — a mixture of truth and error — a mixture of Christianity with the kingdoms of this world.

In the ancient picture, the treasures of the Temple, which had been given by Jehovah to natural Israel as a sacred trust, were taken captive to Babylon: “*And all the vessels of the*

house of God, great and small, and the **treasures** of the house of the LORD, and the **treasures** of the king... all these he [Nebuchadnezzar] brought to Babylon." (2 Chronicles 36:18) The **treasures** of the Lord were those sacred items used in the Temple — the meeting place between God and Israel. (Exodus 25:22) Similarly, the beautiful truths — **treasures** — that were entrusted to the early followers of Christ would soon become adulterated with the practices and doctrines of this world.

The Apostle Paul referred to this careless condition which would arise in the early Church. He said this would lead the disciples of Christ captive to a worldly, compromising spirit. "...that day [the second coming of Christ] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself... so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God..." (2 Thessalonians 2:1-8) Has this prophecy been fulfilled? Was there a time when the church was dominated by one who exalted himself in the temple? Yes! This was that great *falling away* where the church mingled with the world and caused *spiritual* Israel to compromise its truth and purity.

RISE OF THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

How could Christians have so quickly forgotten the warnings of the Apostles to set themselves apart from the world? (James 4:4) Roman persecution of the early Church over the first two centuries weakened the resolve of many Christians, and when Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in A.D. 312, *ambitious* church leaders saw this as an opportunity to gain a partnership with their former persecutors. After two centuries of heavy persecutions upon Christians, providence seemed to open a door of relief when Constantine proclaimed the Edict of Milan (A.D. 313), and Christians were brought into favor with the Emperor. The great Roman Empire first *courted* an alliance with Christians to keep the Empire stable, but, shortly after, *compelled* adherence to church directives.

After only three centuries of waiting for the return of Christ and his promised Kingdom, many church leaders were willing to accept this union of church and state. But, an earthly kingdom under man's control was not authorized by Scripture — Jehovah's Word. *Fisher's Universal History*, page 262, describes it thus: "*In theory it was the union of the world-state and the world-church — an undivided community under Emperor and Pope...*"

Thus began a *marriage* between church and state. By A.D. 800 the church was fully *married* to the Roman Empire. Jesus' message to John the Revelator called this Babylonish mixture *harlotry and adultery*. (Revelation 2:2-6, 22; 17:5) The once pure Church betrothed to Christ, her heavenly Bridegroom, began to reign as a queen without him, setting up her own kingdom and uniting with the kingdoms of this world. How

quickly the admonition of James to the Church was disavowed. She did not keep herself "*unspotted from the world.*" James 1:27

THE HUNTED THEN BECAME THE HUNTER

Within a few hundred years after Christ's death, everything had changed. Instead of suffering, came honor; instead of humility, came pride; instead of truth, came error; and instead of being persecuted, the church became the persecutor of all who did not adhere to her dictates. Soon she began to invent new doctrines to justify her course, declaring that the promised millennial reign of Christ *had come*, and that Christ the King was represented by her popes, who reigned over the kings of the earth as the *vicegerents* of Christ. Her claims were successful in deceiving the whole world. *She made all nations drunk with her erroneous doctrines — teaching that eternal torment awaited all who resisted her demands. "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously... she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow."* Revelation 14:8; 18:3



Papacy Condemned Jews & Christians to be Burned at the Stake

Thus, the kingdoms of Europe claimed to be Christian kingdoms — *Christendom* — and announced that their kings reigned "*by the grace of God*" through appointment of the church. This claim has been a gross libel upon the true Kingdom of Christ, for

Jesus said of his disciples, "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" And Paul exhorted the true Church, saying, "*Be not conformed to this world.*" John 17:16; Romans 12:2

Serious injury has come to the children of God as a result of the *church nominal* (in name only) and her illicit affair with the world. Throughout the Gospel Age, unstudied followers of Christ have been led to an improper recognition of and intimacy with earthly kingdoms, to the neglect of the Gospel concerning the true Kingdom and the hopes centered in it. Indeed, the best and the worst of earth's nations are but "*kingdoms of this world*" whose lease of power from God has expired so that they may give place to the *rightful* successor, the Kingdom of Christ, ordained by Jehovah. Isaiah 32:1; Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 17, 27

RESTRAINT OF LIBERTY A WARNING SIGN

Today, the fear of financial and physical disaster from Covid-19, Muslim extremism, declining morals, etc., all cause Christian denominations to promote solidarity together. These groups seem to be courting the politicians as never before to lock in support for their own religious agenda. Many hope that a Christian united front can stay the rising tide of perceived religious threats and brace up the declining moral infrastructure of the United States. What will be the cost of such pressure upon government by a coalition of churches?

In our recent past, our nation has reacted to terrorism by curtailing civil liberties in order to insure our safety. Congress passed the Patriot Anti-Terrorism Act in response

to the 9/11 attacks, which gave the government extraordinary authority to secretly spy on and *indefinitely detain* suspected terrorists without trial or council for the accused. Concerning the Military Tribunal Act of 2008, Michael Tigar, American University Professor of Law, wrote, “*Never in American history has such a sweeping suspension of civil rights been attempted.*” Rutgers University Professor Jonathan Lurie alluded to the similar precedent used by the government to intern Japanese civilians in WWII: “*These are not normal times, and we do things that we would not ordinarily do.*”

Drastic measures are thus often deemed necessary by the general public to protect their safety — even at the sacrifice of their personal liberties. But if narrow-minded ideologies gain prominence in our government, diversity in religious thought could be labeled as subversive, and all not in harmony with main-line Christian theology could see their teachings and activities seriously curtailed. This scenario is currently being played out in countries such as Russia, Iran and Pakistan where the *state approved* religion is the only one granted the right to worship openly. All others often suffer persecution.

CHURCHES IN POLITICS

Thus history has shown that there is a danger when churches exert pressure upon government policy and only support specific candidates in line with their ideas. How convinced are these churches of the convictions espoused by their candidates? Do their candidates uphold righteous principles of behavior and genuinely caring attitudes toward others? Matthew 22:35-40

Well-meaning Christians misinterpreting God’s will have stained the pages of history with innocent blood. It was not that long ago, at the height of World War I, that Lutheran Pastor Zoebel, speaking in Leipzig, Germany said, “*It is this deep consciousness of our mission that permits us to... beat down the children of Satan [England], and when our marvelous submarines—instruments to execute the Divine vengeance—send to the bottom of the sea thousands of the non-elect... There ought to be... no pity for the English, French, and Russians... They have all been condemned to death by a Divine decree.*” Also, at this time in history, Fritz Philippi, Protestant Pastor of Berlin, said, “*Germany has been chosen by the Almighty as His instrument to punish... and to slay with the sword sinful nations. Satan himself, who has come into the world in the form of a great Power [England], must be crushed.*”

Statements such as these seem too extreme to be professed today, but consider the words of a current popular politician who told ministry students that the United States sent troops to fight in the Iraqi war on a “*task that is from God!*” Fear of the unknown has caused a radical mind-set among many evangelical groups wishing to pressure Washington. James Kennedy, a prominent advocate of the *Dominionism Doctrine*, stated in

2005, “*Our job is to reclaim America for Christ, whatever the cost. As the vice-regents of God, we are to exercise godly dominion and influence... over every aspect of society.*”

Currently, in this land of religious freedom, all have the right to worship as their conscience before God directs, and this will continue to be true as long as church and state remain separate. But as history illustrates, with any church and state alliance, no matter how noble the motivation, there will always be a tendency to overstep the bounds of freedom and to bring partisan pressure to bear for selfish gain.

CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN

The prophecies of Revelation state that during Christ’s

second advent, the seventh trumpet would sound, and *then* the kingdoms of this world would begin to be affected by his reign. (Revelation 11:15) Until that time, the Apostle Paul states that Christians are to be subject to, but not involved in, earthly governments. “*Let every person be in*

subjection to the governing authorities...” and pray for those “*that are in authority; that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life...*” 1 Timothy 2:1, 2

Jesus was not a political reformer at his first advent. He said, “*My Kingdom is not of this world.*” (John 18:36) The Apostle Paul confirmed this teaching: “*Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for... the Lord Jesus Christ...*” (Philippians 3:20 NAS) Jesus taught that the *new wine* of his Father’s Kingdom could never be poured into the *old wineskins* of worldly systems. (Luke 5:37, 38) These could never be reformed but must make way for the new government under Christ.

Originally, all Christians knew their lot was not to try to reform the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of God. They knew they were not to enter the world’s politics, nor to enter its wars. They knew that the selfish nature of mankind would prevent a truly righteous and equitable government. They knew their allegiance was to Christ and his *coming* Kingdom. They gave heed to the Apostle Peter who encouraged them to live as *aliens and strangers* in this world. (1 Peter 2:10, 11) Until Jesus returned, they were to *wait as espoused virgins*, not married to this world, but faithful only to their heavenly Bridegroom. Revelation 21:2

The prophetic fact is that the present oppressive systems of earth will soon be replaced — there will be a *new heavens* from which Christ and the true Church will reign and a *new earth* prepared for the billions of resurrected mankind. Then will come the proclamation: “*the spirit [Christ] and the Bride say, Come... and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*” Faithful Christians still cling to and wait for this beautiful prospect. Revelation 22:17; 2 Timothy 2:12



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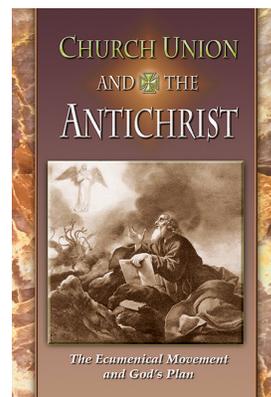
CHURCH UNION AND THE ANTICHRIST

An ecumenical spirit is growing among various Christian denominations — a spirit of unity among Protestants, Anglicans and the Catholic Church. Fifty years ago, this would have been impossible, but fear of a global financial collapse from Covid-19, Muslim extremism, and declining morals, all cause Christian denominations to promote solidarity together. Their focus is on courting politicians to lock-in support for their religious agenda. Their hope is that a Christian united front exerting pressure on Washington will stabilize the economy, stay the rising tide of Islam and shore up the declining moral infrastructure of the United States. But pressure from the alliance of the church with the state will come at what cost?

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