

ROMANISM

In the Light of Scripture

by

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CHAPTER ONE

IS ROME A CHURCH OR A STATE?

LEO XIII, in his encyclical letter entitled “The Reunion of Christendom” said, “We [the Roman Catholic Church] hold upon this earth, the place of Almighty God.” How could an individual make such a claim for that system of which he is the titular head?

We would like to ask an important question, “Is Rome a Church or a State?” Because of Romanism’s relevance to the political situation in which we find ourselves, we may be accused of perverting the pulpit or the pen when we speak of it, and there are not a few who may say that it demeans the ministry of the Word of God to discuss such issues. There are those who may raise the cry of bigotry, of narrowness, of exclusivism, or of pride; of smugness or conceit in one’s own convictions. However, the issues must be faced, for plans are being developed to capture the minds of men that rise above political issues in any one nation. There is a system which seeks to subjugate the whole earth to its authority. Its goal is to bring every individual into submission to itself as the sole political and religious power in the world.

There are three systems which are competing for control over men today.

- First, there is *atheistic Russian communism* that has been engulfing individuals and states in unprecedented numbers and with unequaled rapidity, which recognizes only political power and denies any authority other than the state.
- Second, there is *the democratic system*, which, as we enjoy it today in our country, affirms the separation of church and state, recognizing the validity of both church and state, but with different spheres of authority.
- Third, there is *the Roman Catholic system*, which believes that it is the kingdom of God on earth and unites both political and religious authority in one system under one head and consequently claims a God-given right to rule in both political and religious realms.

Because of these conflicting ideologies it is necessary to look into the Word of God to see the divine purpose in human government. Government began at the time of creation when God said in Genesis 1:26, “**Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness: and let him have dominion.**” This dominion was to be exercised over the earth and over everything that was created upon the earth, both in the human race and in the animal kingdom.

It was God's purpose to subject the earth to the authority of an appointed ruler so that the world should be ordered according to the plan and purpose of God and so that the world should recognize the sovereign authority of God, who has the right to rule.

How long man stayed in this estate in which all creation was subject to the authority of Adam, and consequently to the authority of God, we do not know. We do not go beyond the third chapter of the book of Genesis before we find that there was rebellion against the constituted authority of God. The creature threw off the reins of government that had been imposed upon him and refused to acknowledge the sovereign right of the Creator to rule in His own creation. Man by that rebellion became a fallen, sinful being and under the curse and wrath of God.

After the Flood, in which God dealt in judgment with a corrupt civilization, God said to Noah, **"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered"** (Genesis 9:1-2).

God appointed Noah as the head of a newly formed government. God said, **"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man"** (Genesis 9:6). Authority was given to human government so that sinful men might be controlled in their wickedness and lawlessness.

The purpose for the institution of human government is outlined by the Apostle Paul in Romans 13. Speaking of one of the most ruthless, wicked, godless rulers this world has ever seen, Paul said, **"He is the minister of God to thee for good."** This meant that the Roman emperor was upon his throne because God had placed him there. The power to maintain good and law and order, and the authority to punish the lawless and the evildoer should be wielded by the government.

"He is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

We could add the testimony of Peter in I Peter 2:14 to establish the fact that when God instituted human government it was instituted to preserve law and order. It was instituted to curb the unrighteousness, rebelliousness and lawlessness of the human heart. Government had a God-given responsibility to pass such legislation with its accompanying punishment that would control wickedness and lawlessness.

As God continued the revelation of His purpose in Genesis 17:6 He said to Abraham, **"I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee."** God indicated that He purposed to centralize human government for the controlling of the human race in the hands of a king, who would have authority as God's minister to rule in this realm.

In Genesis 49:9-10, God again gave a revelation through Jacob who makes a prophecy concerning his son: **“Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art come up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion, who shall rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”**

Shiloh here is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the King promised to Abraham, who would bring the world under subjection to the authority of Himself so that He should reign as the King for God. This lawgiver, who would reign, was to have divine authority as a minister of God in the political and the social and economic as well as the religious realm. Thus we find that God instituted government and then made promises that the power was to be placed in one who would sit on a throne, who would reign as a king, with the authority of the king and the kingdom coming from God, Himself.

In Genesis 14 there is an individual who briefly passes across the pathway of Abraham. The man is Melchizedek. We read in verse 18, **“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.”**

Melchizedek is interesting because he is the only man in all the Word of God, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, who united in his person the office of a king and a priest at the same time. Both Melchizedek’s person and work are explained in the Book of Hebrews. He is God’s picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will unite the office of priest and king in His own Person and reign forever as God’s King-Priest from the throne of David.

God promised David (II Samuel 7:16) that one of his sons should reign upon his throne, and that there should be no end of his kingdom and of his house. The king who is to have authority over all the earth is to come of the line of David, of the tribe of Judah, within the nation Israel.

Here we see the principle of separation of church and state in the economy of God.

When God raised up priests in the nation Israel, who were to exercise religious authority, they could come only from the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron. God made no provision in the Old Testament for any other priestly line than the Levitical priest. No Levitical priest could ever be the king promised to David because the king could only come from the family of David and the tribe of Judah.

All through the Old Testament, king and priest were to work together in harmony and unity; but they must be two separate individuals, for in no human being could the office of king and priest unite. The political and religious spheres were separated. The Lord Jesus Christ gave us His statement of the separate spheres of church and state: **“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God, the things that are God’s.”**

The Lord is recognizing these two divinely established spheres: the state was to maintain law and order in this natural world; the priest was to bring God to men as he ministered the things of God to them, and to bring men to God through the sacrifice which God had ordained.

In a brief survey of the Word of God we can establish these basic principles.

- Human government was of divine origin, ordained to preserve law and order because of the moral corruption of the human race.
- Human government was to center in a king. God's King, God's Vicar, must come from the line of David and the tribe of Judah.
- God revealed that men needed a way of access to Him; He provided the access through the ministry of these Levitical priests in the Old Testament. They were God's representatives that they might be mediators to bring men to God.

The Lord Jesus Christ was promised a kingdom, a kingdom to be fulfilled at the Second Advent when Christ will sit upon David's throne and He will reign upon this earth for a thousand years. He will sit upon that throne as a king, and all glory, power, dominion and majesty are to be ascribed to Him as He takes up the scepter of David's throne and reigns as God's divinely appointed and sovereign ruler. But the Lord Jesus Christ will also reign as a priest upon His throne. He was once sacrificed to bear the sins of the world; He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

After His death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father, He was greeted by the Father, **"Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool . . . Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"** (Psalm 110).

The Father was affirming to the Son the divine purpose that a Priest of God and a Prince of God would sit upon a throne, bringing righteousness, peace, and salvation to the ends of the earth.

Because of this revealed program of God we are in conflict with Romanism.

Wrongly interpreting the Word of God and making claims and assumptions that no organization or individual has any right to make, the Roman system claims that they fulfill, in themselves and in the head of their church, the prerogatives that Scripture says belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Roman system is amillennial in its doctrine. They do not acknowledge the teachings of the Word of God that Jesus Christ will return to this earth a second time, to set up a government over the earth, and that He will reign as a King-Priest. Their doctrine holds that the Kingdom of God is on the earth now and it includes only those who are in the Roman system.

The Roman Church claims to be the kingdom of God on earth: hence, the head of the church is the sole political ruler with the right to exercise governmental authority in that kingdom. The Roman system says that they and they alone are the church on earth—because they are the only church, the head of the church is also head of state.

They claim that the head of the Roman system is the divinely appointed ruler who exercises God's power and authority to reign over this earth in Christ's place. Because of their claim to be the kingdom of God on earth and the church, no other authority in the political or religious realm has any right to exist.

By these two basic concepts they can claim full authority in both the religious and the political realm.

They affirm that God promised a king, but hold that that promise is fulfilled in the authority in the Roman system as a political system which has the right to rule over all the earth. It is their inevitable conclusion that any other government is a false one and is to be destroyed by any and all means possible. Since they are the only church, all men who would call themselves Christian must submit to their authority, for they alone have the right to exist.

To show how these two basic theses work out, let us trace their development through history.

The New Testament teaches that all believers are kings and priests before God. Every believer stands before God on the same plane, with the same prerogatives, for they are all brethren in Christ, members of the Body of which Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is the Head. Not in the New Testament do we find the doctrine of the primacy of the Holy See, the pre-eminence of the Bishop of Rome, or the authorization to call one man "father" or "papa" or "pope." This doctrine has arisen outside the Word of God.

The first claim of pre-eminence for the church of Rome over other churches was by Victor I, Bishop of Rome from 193-202.

There was a debate going on throughout the visible church over the date on which to observe Easter. The Eastern section of the church in Asia Minor and Palestine said that the celebration of Easter should fall on the date of the Passover new moon, regardless of what day of the week it fell. The Western church, or the Roman church, said Easter must always be observed on the first day of the week, never during the week. In the conflict, Victor I, on the authority of the church in Rome, declared that Easter must always be observed on a Sunday. Immediately there was a rebellion on the part of Irenaeus and others who rejected the right of the church of Rome to decide for the other churches.

Callistus, Bishop of Rome 217-232, issued an edict in which he said, "He whom the Bishop recognizes belongs to the Church. The Bishop is lord over the faith and life of the Christian world by virtue of the absolute supremacy divinely bestowed upon him."

Here we find an attempt on the part of a bishop to legislate who will be included in the fellowship of Christian believers.

Because of dissension among the Christians in the East, Jerome of Damascus said, "I think it is my duty to consult the chair of Peter and to turn to a church whose faith has been praised by Paul."

Because Paul's Epistle to the Romans applauded the faith of the church at Rome, Jerome felt, nearly three hundred years later, that he had a responsibility to look to Rome because of what those earlier believers were.

Following this, Ignatius at the end of the third century was the first to declare the bishop to be the Vicar of Christ. He did not limit this to the Vicar at Rome, but to all of the bishops. It was not until Cyprian (200-258) that the primacy of the bishop at Rome was recognized over other bishops. It was Siricius (384-398) and Zozimus (417-418) who first used the term *papa* or pope in reference to the Bishop of Rome. Pope Leo the Great (440-461) claimed that Peter had spoken through Leo. It was in 503 that Ennodius, secretary to Pope Symmachus, promulgated the teaching that the pope received personal sanctity, inheriting that sanctity from Peter.

Thus it was approximately five hundred years after the institution of the church before anyone held that a pope had special sanctity in his office and in his ministry, and before those who called themselves Christians recognized the Bishop of Rome as having special authority, or gave any primacy to the church in Rome. Beginning in the third century and extending to the sixth century there was a movement to consolidate power and authority in the Bishop of Rome. Against this gradual process many in the church rebelled, but in the sixth century the primacy of the bishop and church of Rome was established.

We can trace the rise of a second great movement in the union of church and state under the pope. Gregory VII in 1075 claimed sovereign authority in political affairs by holding that a king was not properly enthroned until he was crowned by a pope, and that he lost his throne until the king submitted to the authority of the pope. Students of history will remember the great conflict between Henry IV and Gregory VII as to whether secular power or the church was supreme in the political realm. The victory of Gregory VII established the supreme power of the church in the political realm. The Holy Roman Empire, born on Christmas Day, A.D. 800, now witnessed the union of church and state under one head.

In the thirteenth century, Innocent III spoke of himself as “The Vice-Regent of Christ, the successor of Peter, below God, above men, less than God, more than man, he judges all—is judged by none.”

By that decree Innocent proclaimed that he as Bishop of Rome had sole authority over any area of the world where there was an adherent to the Roman church. By virtue of his authority, he claimed absolute power in the secular realm as well as the sacred realm.

Boniface VIII, in his official encyclical, *Unum Sanctum Ecclesium*, or “The One Holy Church,” said, “Being set above kings and princes by a divine pre-eminence of power, we dispose of them as we think fit.” Boniface openly declared that he had sovereign authority in the political and the religious realm. Thus, during the Middle Ages church and state came under the authority of the Roman system, and kings received their thrones by permission of the pope.

Coming to a more recent day, Pius IX, in 1864, in the encyclical *Quanta Cura*, proclaimed the Pope’s infallibility in all matters of church and state when he was exercising a divine authority, ex cathedra, or from the throne or the chair. He claimed “the right to be recognized universally as sovereign in every realm, whether religious or political.” A few years later, the Vatican Council of 1869-70 proclaimed the infallibility of the pope as a dogma of the Roman church, declaring that the pope had absolute authority in the political as well as the religious realm.

It was to support this very thesis and to propagate the authority of the pope in the religious and the political realm that the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, had been formed. It was through their machinations that this dogma of the infallibility of the pope was openly espoused and made an official dogma of the church.

According to this concept of the church of Rome, the pope has the right to rule over any nation that has even one adherent to the Catholic system within it. Therefore the Roman Church claims that it and it alone has the right to direct in religious, political, and civil affairs in the United States to-day. Catholic theologians claim that Rome is a sovereign power, and they claim for it three prerogatives of a political state: legislative power, executive power, and judicial power. This power is absolute.

Lest you think I have erred in stating this concept, I want to give you some quotations taken from Catholic sources.

On March 12, 1940, when President Roosevelt was considering the appointment of Myron C. Taylor as personal representative to the Vatican, Cardinal Spellman said, "The holy father is not alone the supreme head of the Catholics, he is also the head of a sovereign state. Thirty-eight countries have representatives at the Holy See."

One of the leading Romanists of our own nation publicly declared that the pope claimed absolute rights as a sovereign head of state. The Catholic church, he went on to say, "is a supernatural institution with complete territorial jurisdiction everywhere there are Catholics. The Vatican State has its own civil government, a flag, police force, its courts, its postage stamps, currency, passports, armed guards, a diplomatic corps with ambassadors called nuncios. It performs all of the activities of state."

It is interesting to observe that the Vatican expects and demands that its ambassadors will take precedence over any other ambassador in any given court. In some capitals the papal nuncios outrank the representatives of the United States Government; in Berlin an American bishop who is Papal Nuncio, outranks the United States Ambassador in affairs of state. That reveals the relative position of the papal state in reference to the United States in Germany.

Father D. S. Phelan, who was dean of papal editors in the United States, wrote in the *St. Louis Western Watchman*:

"Why is it that the church is so strong? Why is it everybody is afraid of the Catholic church? The American people are more afraid of her than any people in the world. Why are they afraid of the Catholic church? They know what the Catholic church means. Tell us that we think more of the church than we do of the United States. Of course we do! Tell us we are Catholics first and Americans afterwards. Of course we are! Tell us in the conflict between the church and the civil government, we take the side of the church. Of course we do! Why, if the government of the United States were at war with the church, we would say tomorrow—To Hell with the Government of the United States! They say we are Catholics first and Americans decidedly afterwards.

“There is no doubt about it. We are Catholics first and we love the church more than we love our children! Let the governments of the world steer clear of the Catholic church. Let the emperors and the kings and the presidents not come into conflict with the head of the church because the Catholic church is everything to all the Catholics of the world. They renounce all nationalities where there is a question of loyalty to her. Why is the pope so strong? Why is it the pope is such a tremendous power? Why, the pope is the ruler of the world. All the emperors, all the kings, all the princes, all the presidents of the world today are as those altar boys of mine. The pope is the ruler of the world.”

Now what authority do the Romanists themselves claim for the pope in affairs of both church and state, not only in Vatican City but in the United States? The senior cardinal deacon who puts the triple-tiered tiara on the new pope’s head, makes this pronouncement, “Receive the threefold crown of kings, the ruler of the round earth and here below, the Viceroy of Jesus Christ, to whom be honor and glory forever!”

The tiara which the pope wears on state occasions has been placed upon him with the declaration that he is the sole ruler of the world. According to this, any president of the United States, any governor of our state, any mayor of our city who does not acknowledge the pope’s authority is a usurper.

Bishop James H. Ryan of Omaha, Nebraska, a member of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, wrote in the New York Times of May 12, 1940,

“Though conscious of the religious power of the pope, we have chosen to remain blind to the political power of the pope, who is king.”

Pope Pius IX, in his *Syllabus*, wrote, “The church has the power of employing force and of exercising direct and indirect temporal power. In legal conflicts between both powers (civil and ecclesiastical) the ecclesiastical law always prevails. Kings and princes are not only not exempt from the jurisdiction of the church, but are subordinate to the church in litigated questions of jurisdiction.”

May I repeat that statement of Pius IX, because it is stated today that an American Catholic need not be subservient to the dictates of Rome: “Kings and princes are not only not exempt from the jurisdiction of the church but are subordinate to the church . . . The church ought to be in union with the state and the state with the church. It is necessary even in the present day that the Catholic religion shall be held as the only religion of the state to the exclusion of all other forms of worship.”

Writing in the *Religious Herald*, January 14, 1960, Reuben E. Alley, the editor, gives a word concerning the Catholics responsibility to the Roman hierarchy.

“Unlike Protestants, the Catholic believes that the church has authority over the political state and that this super-national authority resides in a religio-political institution that is ruled over by a man who is infallible.

“A faithful Catholic in the United States must give first allegiance to a foreign ruler as the supreme head of the church from which he receives salvation. Since this is so, it is futile to plague a Catholic candidate on what he would do on specific occasions if elected to office. Like Protestant candidates, he would act in the light of his conscience which for the faithful Catholic is determined for him by the Roman hierarchy. It is likewise futile to assume that Catholics in the United States are different. The pope is supreme and final authority.”

An article by Atwater in the *Catholic Dictionary* says, “The church as a perfect society, sovereign and independent, has supreme spiritual authority over her members, legislative, judicial, and executive, by divine law. Her authority is independent of the civil authority of the state and is of a higher order. Though instituted for a spiritual end, the church has the right to use material and temporal means to secure that end. In the use of such means as are necessary, she has exclusive authority.”

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* in the article on “The Authority of the Church,” says, “In the case of direct contradiction, making it impossible for both jurisdictions to be exercised, the jurisdiction of the church prevails and that of the state is excluded.”

Can there be doubt that the Church of Rome claims absolute and supreme religious and civil authority?

Read a letter written by Father Patrick Henry O’Brien of Rochester, New York, to a former Catholic priest, A. Di Dominica. (He wrote February 11, 1937; soon after Franklin Roosevelt’s election to the presidency).

“We, the Hierarchy of the Holy Catholic church, expect all loyal children of the church to assist the President, with all our strength, to see that individuals comprising the United States Supreme Court shall obey the President’s injunctions and, if necessary, we shall change a man or blot out the present Constitution so that the President may enforce his, or rather, our humanitarian program in all phases of human rights as laid down by all of our saintly popes and the holy mother church. We elected our worthy President by the greatest majority ever recorded in history. We are going to have our laws made and enforced according to the Holy See and the popes and the canon law of the papal throne. Our entire social structure must be built on that basis. Our education laws must be so construed that atheism and the red peril of all the blathering -isms, Protestantism and all of their ilk and stamp, be driven from this fair land. We want, as Cabinet Members, children of the Holy Mother Church holding important positions in the entire structure of our government. We control America and we do not propose to stop until America or Americans are genuinely Roman Catholic and remain so, God help us.”

In *L’Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper, on May 18, 1960, said: “There is a tendency to separate Catholics from the church’s Hierarchy, restricting the relationship between them to the sphere of a simple sacred ministry and proclaiming full autonomy of the faithful in the civic sphere. An absurd distinction is made between a man’s conscience as a Catholic and his conscience as a citizen as though the Catholic religion were a special and occasional phase of the life of the spirit and not the driving idea that binds and guides the whole of man’s existence.

“The church, constituted with its Hierarchy by Jesus Christ as a perfect society, has full powers of real jurisdiction over all the faithful and thus has the right and the duty to guide, direct and correct them on the plane of ideas and of action in conformity with the dictates of the gospel in what is necessary to attain the supreme end of man.

“A Catholic can never depart from the teachings and directions of the church. In every sector of activity, his conduct, both private and public, must be motivated by the laws, orientation and instructions of the Hierarchy. Consequently, the church cannot remain indifferent, particularly when politics touches the altar. As Pope Pius XI said, the church has the right and the duty to enter all of this field to enlighten and aid the consciences to make the best choice according to moral principles and those of Christian sociology.

“It is highly deplorable that some persons, though professing to be Catholics, not only dare to conduct their political and social activities in a way which is at variance with the teachings of the church, but also take upon themselves the right to submit its norms and precepts to their own judgment, interpretation and evaluation, with obvious superficiality and temerity.”

On the basis of their thesis that they are the state, the kingdom of God on earth, and the church, the way of access to God, it should be very evident that the Roman Church logically not only can but must demand that their head be recognized as head of the church and also the unrivaled head of the state.

They are only being consistent with their basic thesis when they demand that every other power in the political and social sphere should be swept away, that the one whom they call “God on earth,” the “Vice-Regent” or the “Vicar of Christ,” should have authority to rule in government as well as in church.”

The issue is not a question of bigotry. It is an issue as to whether the United States will open the tent door to the camel’s nose that will eventually bring the camel into the tent. It is the question as to whether we will permit a wedge to be driven in that will eventually bring us into subservience to a foreign power.

The issue is bigger than political considerations. It is the issue of the purpose of God to put Jesus Christ on the throne of David as a King-Priest in conflict with the purpose of Satan to put his appointed ruler on a substitute throne and give to his appointee sovereign authority in church and state.

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