

# CHURCHES TINKER WITH GOVERNMENT

## CHURCH & STATE MERGING INTEREST

Religious tentacles from Catholic and Protestant denominations are reaching into the halls and offices of government throughout the United States and Europe. These are more than casual encounters. It is a subtle strategy to wield growing power in the name of "values" and "common good." This "religious lobbying" is being accompanied by manipulative pressure: "Do it our way, we control the votes." It is true that society is giving unlimited excuses for *moral leaders* to demand changes. "Christian countries" have reached new lows in corrupt and reprehensible behavior. But the manipulation being used by the church-related agencies suggests a disturbing trend.

Notice the tone and rhetoric by a newspaper sympathetic towards evangelicals subverting the Bush administration:

"President Bush left several million evangelical voters on the table four years ago and again is having trouble energizing Christian conservatives [and] prominent leaders on the religious right....

"Their list of grievances is long, but right now social conservatives are mad over what many consider the president's failure to strongly condemn illegal homosexual 'marriages' being performed in San Francisco under the authority of Mayor Gavin Newsom.

"They can't possibly guarantee a large turnout of evangelical Christian voters if he does not do what is morally right and take leadership on this issue as he did on the war in Iraq," said CWA President Sandy Rios.

"The strength of this president is in his convictions, but our people do not admire his indecision and lack of leadership on an issue so basic as the sanctity of marriage, Mrs. Rios said.

"Religious conservatives helped Ronald Reagan win the presidency in the 1980s and helped Republicans retake the House and Senate in 1994, but complain that they have little to show for their loyalty to the GOP."<sup>[1]</sup> This is raw arrogance and is of the "look at all we've done for you" mentality.

Then the "list" of grievances follows regarding the gay rights, the economy, "Leave No Child Behind" education bill, National Endowment for the Arts, abortion, judicial appointments and "Stop trying to impress the elites" message. What is all this saying? "We want a part in policy decisions. We want to *influence* how the government is run. We want things done our way."

This "controlling" – perhaps abusive – spirit was also recently exhibited from within the Vatican. Andrea Kirk, a Journalism Fellow at the Phillips Foundation will soon publish a book on "Where Bush and the Pope Agree and Disagree." She is a free-lance writer for *UPI* and two Catholic publications, *Our Sunday Visitor* and *Inside the Vatican*. She fiercely represents Vatican thinking. She compares the pope with Bush.

"Generally speaking, the Pope and the president have a great deal of convergence in the area of social policy but quite significant divergence in foreign policy.

"There is a running theme of behavioral change not unlike conversion in many of his social policies, which he has dubbed 'compassionate conservatism.'

"But some analysts argue that Bush's approach to social policy is a distinctly Protestant one, and would not find much resonance with the Vatican. This theory has yet to be tested, however, because following September 11, President Bush became a self-declared 'war president' and the war on terrorism took precedent over these social policy initiatives....

"One policy in particular set the two at odds. In the time from the terrorist attacks on the United States to the war in Iraq, the Bush administration adopted a new foreign policy that most Vatican officials found they could not agree with on principle. Cardinal Ratzinger bluntly stated that preventative war was incompatible with the Catechism, with many Vatican officials, suggesting that waging such a war with Iraq would then be illegal."[2]

A suffocating history of repression, persecution and death has always accompanied every period when religious powers controlled civil government. No greater example can be given than the treachery of the Roman Catholic Church during the Dark Ages. The "strong arm" tone coming out of churches is new to this age. There is a growing sentiment, especially among Evangelicals that "If you don't start to deal with these issues, we just won't vote!" That thinking is regressive and is not Spirit-led.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith noted recently that Vatican II intended to renew the role of Christianity as the motor of history. "Once the working sessions of the Council ended, it had to be made clear again that the Christian faith encompasses the whole existence, it is the central pivot of history and time and is not destined to limit its realm of influence to the subjective."[3]

What is that "motor" power? How does Christianity "encompass the whole existence"? In what way will its "influence" become *objective*? Cardinal Godfried Danneels answered that in a conference designed to inject Catholic influence into the European Unions constitution process (being put together now).

"'It is decisive to have an ethos, a common moral view, a certain sense of man and of the humanity that brings us together,' the cardinal added. If we do not rediscover that common ethical foundation which Guardini [another conference speaker] already referred to when speaking of European man, we have no objective reason to be together."[4]

Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said recently at a Congress of Catholic Jurists: International Law is an irreplaceable tool in defense of peace. The "growth of such law *requires* that states be willing to code ever larger shares of their sovereignty to achieve security and the universal *common good*."[5]

Do you sense how arrogant and controlling this man is? What is he saying? "Give up your sovereignty to our wise leadership. The laws of states, countries and kingdoms must be

subservient to a higher moral international law that only we can articulate for the masses." That philosophy creates tyranny and is precisely what drove millions to their graves by religious despots trying to overrule the conviction of people's hearts.

Those who adhere to those principles make an "image to the beast" (Revelation 13:15), which the Bible makes clear apostate Protestantism, the apocalyptic "false prophet," will do right at the end. The kings of the earth also "give their power and strength unto the beast" (Revelation 17:13) – the raw power of the papacy.

Christian activism is accelerating here in America within the "brought-back-to-life" Christian Coalition. They have launched a revitalized "Let's Take Back America" campaign by circulating petitions dealing with the protection of political activism inside churches and drives to amend the U.S. Constitution – bills now in committee or before congress. They are sponsoring a World Council on Families to be held shortly in Mexico City. President Bush has been invited to speak. The constitutional amendment has more than "marriage" on the agenda. We have been privately told that over a dozen items will be debated for inclusion, including a legislated Sunday rest day.

The Thomas Road Baptist Church, under the leadership of Jerry Falwell, is building one of the largest Christian centers in the nation with multiple worship, graduate, postgraduate schools and a nerve hub for politics. They, too, are gathering one million signatures to amend the U.S. Constitution to bring back our religious roots.

"Christian" activism has been given new life. Money and the evangelical masses are behind it. They have felt "left behind." Their voice and presence in the corridors of government are increasing. They want religious values legislated back into America's life.

Prophecy is unfolding. Clarity in sharing the *restoration* message of the cross must urgently go out. Those who wait until the apocalyptic prophecies are *fully* being completed will discover the hour is too late. We have approached the time Gabriel and Jesus told Daniel of: the *es qes* – the end of time when the wedding feast is about to commence.

The image of the beast is being formed. Soon his mark will be adopted.

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### **References:**

[1] Ralph Z. Hallow, *Washington Times*, 2/20/04.

[2] *ZENIT.*, 2/16/04.

[3] Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (just published and quoted in *ZENIT.* 2/4/04.

[4] *ZENIT.*, To Stay United, Europe Needs a Common Ethic (Milan, Italy), 2/3/04.

[5] *ZENIT.*, Irani, Italy, 2/11/04.