

Trump and the Church: Hidden Danger

I applaud Donald Trump for his pro-Christian policies. His first Cabinet meeting was opened with prayer in the name of Jesus. He has banned biological men from participating in women's sports and using women's restrooms and locker rooms. He has instituted the Office of Faith at the White House "to assist faith-based entities and houses of worship in their efforts to strengthen American families and protect religious liberty."

This is a great relief after the anti-Christian policies of the Biden administration. However, amid all this there is a hidden danger for the church against which we must guard. In essence, the danger is that we as Christians become dependent on politics, politicians and government legislation—rather than the power of the gospel—to change society.

The government can change laws, but only God—through the preaching of the gospel—can change hearts. If hearts are not changed, then society and culture are not changed. If culture is not changed, then a new and hostile government will soon come along, and we will be worse off than we were before.

A Lesson From the Past

Winston Churchill said, "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it." A lesson of which America's founders were very aware was what happened when the Roman emperor Constantine was converted and began providing pastors and bishops with comfortable salaries, building beautiful

cathedrals for them and granting all sorts of social perks.

Christian leaders became compromised in their newfound political acceptance. Maintaining acceptance and favor with the emperor was now more important than being a bold prophetic voice to the emperor and empire. As a result, both the church and the empire became spiritually dead and morally corrupt. The famous church father, John Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407), wrote:

If anyone is trying or intending to corrupt a woman, there is no place that seems more suitable, I suppose, than the Church. And if anything is to be sold or bought, the Church appears more convenient than the market. Or if any wish to hear or say any scandal, you will find this to be had here more than the forum without (Hyatt, "2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity," 34-35).

All this happened after Christianity became the official religion of the empire. It is from the time of Constantine, and his merger of the church with the state, that we find both the fruit and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit disappearing from the church. A.J. Gordon, the Baptist pastor and founder of Gordon College in Boston, was correct when he wrote, "It is not altogether strange that when the Church forgot her citizenship in heaven and began to establish herself in splendor and luxury on earth, she should cease to exhibit the supernatural gifts of heaven" (Hyatt, 36).

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America's founders wanted Christian influence in every area of the nation they were founding. They did not, however, want a Constantinian-type church that is a ward of the state and lacking in spiritual and moral strength.

This is why the early Puritans in America would not allow

their pastors to hold political office. It was not to keep them out of politics; it was to keep politics out of them. They were aware of what happened to the church historically when it became dependent on the state for its existence and welfare. This is why James Madison, the chief architect of the U.S. Constitution, wrote,

“We are teaching the world a great truth, that governments do better without kings and nobles than with them. The merit will be doubled by the other lesson: that Religion flourishes in greater purity without, than with the aid of government” (Hyatt, “1726:The Year that Defined America,” 146).

The First Amendment was not written to keep Christian influence out of politics; it was written to keep political influence out of Christianity. The founders wanted a church that is free to be a prophetic voice, able to bring both encouragement and correction to the state and society.

I Saw This Danger Manifest on a Local Scale

One of the greatest revivals I ever saw and experienced was with a church that did not have a pastor. Sadly, the revival ended after the first pastor was installed. Their story is a stark example of the danger I am warning about in this article.

It was the first year of our marriage, and Sue and I traveled from Texas to her home province of New Brunswick, Canada. The church she had attended before moving to Texas to attend Bible school had split, and about 150 people had left and were having services in a vacated Anglican Church building.

We visited both churches, and it was obvious that God was powerfully at work among the “rebels” who had left. None of them felt adequate to preach or pastor, and so there was much desperate prayer throughout the week. The men would have a

prayer gathering at the church on Saturday night, and I remember joining them in walking the floors, calling out to God and even anointing the seats with oil.

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The women were also having prayer meetings through the week, and when they would all meet on Sunday and Wednesday nights, there would be great outpourings of the Holy Spirit. There were genuine manifestations of the Holy Spirit I had not seen before and have not seen since. It was wonderful!

The revival came to an end, however, when they found a pastor. It was not the pastor's fault, for he was a good and godly man. The problem was the attitude change that occurred in the people—from one of desperation toward God to an unhealthy dependence on the pastor. Their attitude seemed to be "We now have a pastor who will do the praying and preaching, so we can relax and return to a 'normal' life."

They stopped having those prayer meetings that were born of desperation, and those wonderful outpourings of the Spirit soon ceased. Before long, they were another typical Pentecostal church going through the external programs and rituals. Not long thereafter, a squabble broke out, and they had a church split. Eventually, they shut down and closed their doors.

The hidden danger—which they did not recognize—destroyed them. They ceased their desperate seeking after God and placed all the responsibility and an unhealthy reliance on the new pastor to make everything happen.

I thank God for Donald Trump, but we must guard against an unhealthy reliance on him and his administration to make America what it ought to be. We must not repeat that mistake.

We Must Seize the Moment

The next four years represent a window of golden opportunity for the American church that we must not squander. We must not forget that this window could close four years from now. As Jesus once said, "I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; *the night is coming when no one can work*" (John 9:4, NKJV). In other words, "I must seize this moment!"

We too must seize this moment. Now that we have celebrated our victory at the polls, there must be a new consecration and commitment to make the most of these next four years by preaching and teaching the unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere and at every opportunity.

If we truly see another Great Awakening, then American society and culture will be changed, and that will chart America's future for another generation—no matter which political party comes to power.

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Dr. Eddie L. Hyatt is a historian, Bible teacher, and revivalist. This article is derived from his books, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity* (Charisma House) and *1726: The Year that Defined America*, both available from Amazon and his website at .