

IN THE WORLD & NOT OF IT

Paul & Nuala O'Higgins

www.reconciliationoutreach.net

February 2023

World's In Collision

The secular order and the Kingdom of God are on a **collision course**.

In the 4th century, when the persecution of Christianity by the Roman Empire stopped, the meeting of Christianity and Empire produced fusion. *The Catholic Church arose from this fusion of church and empire.* The Emperor Constantine and his successor Theodosius first tolerated Christianity and then made it the religion of the Empire, though the unconverted were still considered citizens.

Later in the 16th century, the partial reform of the Protestant movement restored the authority of Scripture and the need for personal faith. However, Protestantism **also sought temporal power** (*and became as much a political movement as a spiritual one.*) European rulers exploited the Reformation to rebel against the Roman Empire and expand their personal dominions. Thus, nationalism was born and national churches emerged. People were declared Christian - in its various national forms - on the basis of their citizenship.

The era of Protestantism has been typified by this half-reformed Christianity. The energy of Christianity was sapped by the state, and the loyalty of the believers was yoked to the interests of the state rather than the interests of God's Kingdom.

We are now lurching into a new secular era that is post nationalist, post-colonial, post Catholic, post Protestant, and post denominational. In this new world order, Nationalism is being replaced by internationalism; colonialism by globalism; Catholicism and Protestantism by the declared equality of all religions; and racial distinction by multiculturalism.

Christianity is still respected, but like a doddering great-grandfather, is no longer listened to. Today the relationship between Christianity and the secular order is rapidly descending from patronage to respect, to toleration, to intolerance and increasingly to outright persecution.

As these developments take place, Christianity itself is moving in two *opposite* directions. **Nominal believers** are being drawn by the spirit of the age into the secular, values-and-distinction-free global agenda with its supposed equality of all religions. **Real disciples of Jesus**, on the other hand, are being

separated from the world by the Spirit of God. **The Kingdom of God** is the ruling principle in their lives and they render to Caesar only the things which are Caesar's.

Alternate Lifestyle

True Christianity recognizes the secular order's political freedom to make laws that reflect the fallen values of the age. It also recognizes that when the secular order chooses ways that are contrary to the eternal values of God it sows the seed of its own destruction.

We are coming to understand that true believers are a counter culture, or counter kingdom, with a different set of values from those of the world. Perhaps that is why we are called 'the church' – ekklesia – the called-out ones.

In the old era of Protestantism and Catholicism when '*church and Caesar were hand in glove*' the distinction between Christianity and the secular world could not be so clearly seen. Today however the masks are off!! Many believers are realizing that they are indeed IN the world but definitely NOT OF it.

Two Groups That Can't Fit In

Looking ahead, we can see, there are two communities that cannot fit in with the new secular order – **Christianity and Israel**. Both testify to a world order that has its origin not in man but in God, so both are on a collision course with the moral and political agenda of the powers that be.

Israel cannot fit in with the secular world order and remain faithful to its destiny. For all Israel's willingness to compromise, the Jewish people are destined by divine purpose to possess territory and follow God's ways. They bear witness to God as a Covenant Maker and Promise Keeper who has a plan for all men. This is an affront to the humanistic perspective of the world order.

Likewise true Christianity cannot fit in either with the secular world's ever-changing 'morality' and remain faithful to its calling to manifest Yeshua and His ways. Since it will not comply with the secular fashion that all religions are equal and no values are absolute. It will be parodied as bigoted and a threat to the unity of all men, all values, and all religions.

"Your Kingdom Come! Your will be done!"