

Christendom in the Ukraine, January 2019: A Wake-Up Call

As I write, January 2019, the BBC reports that the Orthodox Church of the Ukraine has separated from the Russian Orthodox Church. In its commentary – vividly illustrated with enlightening photographs and videos – the BBC raises the political and military consequences of the move, not only for the two nations involved – Russia and the Ukraine – but for the Balkans in general.

I want to comment very briefly.

In this article, I am not interested in the political or the military. I am concerned with the spiritual. But even here, I am not going to write about the plethora of priestly gold, gems, vestments and such like on display, nor the brazen idolatry evident in the garish, iconic apparatus of sacramental sacerdotalism. No! What strikes me – and what I want to draw attention to – is the way this event sheds light yet again on what happens when men follow the Fathers, Constantine and Theodosius, and not Scripture – even when they don't have a clue about the history!

Let me explain.

In the 4th century, these two Roman Emperors – Constantine and Theodosius – in league with the bishops of the Catholic Church, invented Christendom. The seeds of this cockatrice had been sown by the Fathers in the previous centuries with their many departures from the new covenant, and their increasing return to the old covenant.¹ These two Emperors simply nationalised – indeed, they ‘empire-ised’ – the monstrosity, and gave it legal and political status. Once established, however, Christendom proved to have a powerful life of its own, and it wasn't long before its tentacles were

¹ See my *The Pastor: Does He Exist?*

spreading far, wide and deep, grasping to itself more and more of Western culture.

Contrary to what a great many people think, contrary to what a *growing* number of people think,² the time of the Fathers (men who lived, mainly, in the 2nd – 5th centuries, AD), by and large proved to be a time of disaster for the church³ of Jesus Christ. While not all that they did was bad, nevertheless the Fathers took a series of steps which inflicted massive and lasting damage on the church. But this innovation – Christendom – stands head and shoulders above all the rest in terms of the devastating effect it has had on the gospel and the church of Jesus Christ, to say nothing of the eternal consequences for the millions reared in it. Another way of looking at this is to think of Christendom as an envelope holding all the other innovations. So serious was this invention of Christendom, some discerning believers down the centuries have given it a name: ‘The Fall of the Church’.

I fix no precise date to the invention of Christendom. This is not possible. It didn’t happen overnight. It was a process. But in broad outline, within a few years of the so-called conversion of the Roman Emperor, Constantine, he and the Fathers had put in place (or did a great deal towards putting in place) the monstrosity.⁴

² Witness the number of publications, articles and glowing reviews promoting the Fathers which are issued by Reformed and evangelical (some, to my amazement, baptistic) publishing houses and magazines.

³ The word ‘church’ is fraught with difficulty. The New Testament word is *ekklesia*, assembly; literally, ‘called-out ones’. Christendom has ruined this concept. To cope with Christendom’s ruination of *ekklesia*, many talk of the ‘visible church’. This phrase is unbiblical and serves only to further confuse the issue. See my *Infant Baptism Tested* pp118-119,237-263,297. Similarly, in my works I have had trouble with ‘church’ and ‘Church’. I admit a measure of inconsistency in all this.

⁴ Constantine’s Edict of Milan (AD313) officially ended the Roman Empire’s persecution of believers, and Christianity, receiving State recognition and acceptance, became its official religion in AD380

What is Christendom? It is that grotesque, Satanic system – that conglomeration of Church and State, in which citizenship and Church membership are one and the same – in which millions of unregenerate babies are ‘made’ ‘Christians’ by ‘priests’ or ‘ministers’ who exercise sacramental powers through baby-sprinkling, these babies then being called ‘Christians’ and Church members, and treated as such at birth, throughout life, and at death.⁵

Christendom has proved Satan’s master-stroke. By it, the arch-enemy of souls has deluded millions of men and women for 1800 years, even to their eternal ruin. He is making use of it to this very hour.

Contemporary evangelicals have (to a certain extent) dispensed with one of the curses of Christendom⁶ – national Church/State corruption, enforced by the magistrate (that is, government edict, the law, enforced by the police) – only to replace it with another. Many of them have devised or adopted a replacement; namely, a Church/Community system – Church/Social instead of Church/State. They have done this in order to attract pagans into church attendance in order to evangelise them. And so we now find ourselves being advised

under Theodosius I. The union of Church and State, coupled with infant baptism, produced Christendom, which, in turn, produced – and continues to produce – hordes of nominal but unregenerate ‘Christians’; that is, to coin a phrase, ‘Christendom Christians’. This is ‘the Fall’ in question. See my *Battle for the Church: 1517-1644*.

⁵ As for that last, see my *Deceit in Death: Christendom in the Raw: ‘Christian’ Last Rites for Unbelievers*.

⁶ Let me list some of the consequences of Christendom: veneration for buildings, priestcraft, pastorcraft, the clergy and laity split, sacerdotalism, sacramentalism, vestments, ordination, apostolic succession, the mixture of the regenerate and unregenerate in so-called visible churches, the idea of ‘attending church’, ‘public worship’; in short, Churchianity, institutionalised religion in the name of Christ. While none of it is far beneath the surface, it goes without saying that not all Christendom devotees adopt all its corruptions.

– urged – to adopt this latest development of Christendom thinking. Consequently, we find ourselves at the opening of a new chapter in the dismal history of Christendom, with men like Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, Timothy Keller⁷ and Ray Evans (*et al*) in the van of this latest extension of Constantinian practice.⁸

But accommodation of the church to and with the world – and, at bottom, this is what it is – always leads to the world’s assimilation of the church. Let me repeat that by re-stating it. The church might like to think it can cherry-pick from the world, but the world is all the while swallowing the church.

Well, recent happenings in the Ukraine – the grotesque scenes of politicians and priests, particularly the Heads of State and the Orthodox Church, hand in hand – have exhibited, for all who have eyes to see, one of the appalling consequences of Christendom. It has put it on the giant screen in the public square, splashing it across the world’s media. And the sight of the Head of the Ukrainian State and the Head of the Orthodox Church living in each other’s pocket is sickening; sickening, that is, to anyone who longs for the scriptural simplicity of the *ekklēsia*.

⁷ The first reference in Evans’ book is to one of Keller’s books: ‘A brilliant insight into the issues shaping church life and growth. It is a must-read’. That was not the last of it by a long chalk: see Ray Evans: *Ready, Steady, Grow: Equipping Today’s Gospel Churches*, Inter-Varsity Press, Nottingham, 2014, pp9,220-235.

⁸ The subtitle of Evans’ book is *Equipping Today’s Gospel Churches*. Allowing the use of the adjective ‘gospel’ in this connection – but I strongly object to it since it is a hangover from Reformed covenant-theology, and ‘gospel church’ should not figure in a believer’s phrase-book (see my *Infant* and my *Christ Is All: No Sanctification by the Law*; ‘*A Gospel Church*’: *A Warning*; ‘*A Gospel Church*’: *A Warning*) – Evans’ book would be more accurately described as *Equipping Today’s Christendom Churches*; that is, equipping them to adopt and exploit the culture of the age. For my response, see my *Relationship Evangelism Exposed: A Blight on the Churches and the Ungodly*.

Not that they will pay any attention to me, of course, but let me advise both men (and their successors): history shows us that there cannot be two top dogs. As I say, this monstrosity – Christendom – has been ruling the roost for millions for the best part of 1800 years, and history has a habit of repeating itself. These two ‘friends’ will soon fall out – if they haven’t begun to do so already, behind the scenes. They will struggle for dominance. Historically, the State has sometimes ruled the Church; at other times, the Church has ruled the State. It will happen again.

So what has all this to do with us?

In my title, I spoke of ‘A Wake-Up Call’: a wake-up call for whom? For all evangelical believers! The fact is, all these Ukrainian shenanigans are much closer to home, and are far more serious and pertinent, than a mere historical quirk taking place in a faraway country of which (to accommodate Neville Chamberlain’s infamous words in the late 1930s) most of us (in the UK in his day, he meant) ‘know nothing’.⁹ State Churches, National Churches, denominations, associations, and all such federations, are inventions of men, and have been foisted upon Scripture. Every sight of the church turning to the world and fawning upon it is appalling. Christendom is Satan’s tool. Away with the abomination! Back to Scripture! Back to the new covenant! We shouldn’t touch the beast with a barge pole. This should be the response of evangelicals.

Alas, it is not! At least, not for a growing number.

In particular, I deplore the present fraternisation between many evangelical churches and the world. I deplore the way many believers look to the State to pass laws to bolster a decaying Christendom. I abominate the way evangelicals are seeking the world’s advice, and adopting the world’s methods,

⁹ In 1938, Chamberlain spoke of Czechoslovakia (under threat from Hitler) as ‘a far away country of which we know nothing’. By this, he hoped to keep Britain out of the looming war – a typical head-in-the-sand approach. If not that, he was naïve in the extreme. This warning applies to the matter in hand.

in order to try to reach sinners. All such goings-on are playing with fire, and he who plays with fire is liable to get his fingers – and more – burnt! And it won't be the world that has to be taken to the casualty ward!