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CHRISTIAN THOUGHT.

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CHRISTIAN THOUGHT.

EVILS ARISING FROM THE CHURCH BEING CONTROLLED BY THE STATE.

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PILATE asked our Lord, "Art Thou a King?" to which Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am," meaning, I am as thou sayest. But Jesus explained, "My kingdom is not of this world." He thus asserted two great truths, first, that He was a King and had a kingdom; and, secondly, that His kingdom was to be distinguished from the kingdoms of this world. Said Andrew Melville, one of Scotland's heroes, to King James VI. of Scotland (James I. of England), "I must tell you there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland. There is King James, the head of the commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church." It is to be understood of these two kingdoms they are both of God. But they have different provinces and jurisdictions and are not to be confounded. One of these is of this world, is set up for the protection of life and property, and uses for this end temporal rewards, pains and penalties. The other is spiritual, and contemplates the spread of the knowledge of God, the promotion of morality, and the production of such graces as faith, and hope and charity. Its rewards and penalties stretch beyond this world into the other.

I hold that these two kingdoms may form a friendly alliance to accomplish great ends which they have in common. They have to foster, each by its own instrumentality, the improvement of the minds of men, women and children and to promote social order and morality. The two formed an alliance of Church and

State, some think too close, in the reign of Constantine, and this has been continued in European countries down to the present day when, however, it is keenly contested whether the State should continue to offer an endowment to the Church and whether the Church should accept such an endowment if offered. In the early ages of the United States Republic there were endowments provided for the Church, or rather for some particular Church, say the Church of England, but for the past century and more the States have been freeing themselves from all such entanglements.

Still there are government acts which seem to imply, which I believe do really imply, an alliance between Church and State; as, for example, the prayers offered in the Senate and House of Representatives and in the opening of courts of justice; in the appointment of chaplains in the army and navy and in prisons; in the laws enacted for the preservation of the Sabbath, and above all, in the Bible being read in our national schools, and religion being taught in our State colleges. In these and in some other things there is an alliance between Church and State for good ends, which seem to me legitimate and highly commendable. Some, indeed, argue that these acts are all in the interest of civil law for the protection of life and property; but the people in enacting and practising them mean them to be religious as well. There are signs of a contest arising, in which it will be insisted that all that is religious in these acts, be handed over to the Churches; which will have difficulties, not impossibilities however, in providing teachers and chaplains and in protecting the Sabbath.

While there may be profitable alliances between Church and State to accomplish ends which they have in common, great care must be taken that each is independent in its own sphere. Unless this is secured neither will be able to fulfil its proper office. The Church, being crippled, will not be able to do so much for the State as otherwise it might, and the State would ever be limiting the field and restraining the zeal and activity of the Church. A Church known to be the slave of the State would not have much influence with the mass of the people in restraining anarchy and making them good citizens, and politicians would ever be tempted to turn aside the Church from its proper

spiritual work. The heresy, for it is a heresy, of making the Church subservient to the State is called Erastianism because inculcated by Erastus, a learned physician in Heidelberg toward the end of the sixteenth century, who claimed for the civil magistrate the power of exercising discipline and of excommunication in the Church.

Erastian patronage is sure to call into the ministry young men who are not fit for the spiritual work, who seek the clerical office not because they have a burning desire to convert sinners and edify saints, but from very different motives. In all ages some have turned to the priesthood from mere laziness, from an aversion to bodily toil, and because they shrink from the anxieties of business life, and because they shrink from the anxieties of business life. Many have desired it as providing for them a good and honorable position. I am able to testify that this was the motive swaying many in my day in Scotland and England. Not a few promising young men look to it as furnishing a means of gratifying their taste for learning. These two last considerations have combined to draw to the ministry a large body of youths in Great Britain, in Germany and in many other countries including America. I confess that I was to some extent swayed by these two last mentioned ends in choosing my life profession, though I claim to have been far more powerfully swayed by higher and spiritual motives. No doubt these same inferior aims may and do operate in non-endowed Churches, but they are counteracted by the spiritual discernment and the watchfulness of the Church members who refuse to elect and promote ministers of a worldly spirit.

In most of the European countries the Church has been greatly hindered in its life and activity by dependence on the State. In Scotland the Act of 1711, giving the power of electing ministers to Patrons, produced what is called Moderatism, which lay as an incubus for a long period on the freedom and spirituality of the Church. In consequence, first the Secession Church in 1733, then the Relief Church in 1739, and then the more powerful Free Church in 1843, left the Church of Scotland established by law and formed churches to preserve the liberty which Christ had conferred on His people. Much the same considerations led the Americans to give up the State-endowed Churches which

they temporarily established and allow the Churches to provide for their own wants and follow the laws appointed by Christ.

Erastianism is still universally prevalent in Germany. The people, though they may be allowed at times to express their preferences, have no positive or direct power in the choice of their ministers. The civil authorities with whom the power of appointment and management lies, are not necessarily professing much less living Christians, or possessed of any spiritual discernment. Not unfrequently pastors are placed over parishes who are known to have no belief in the inspiration of Scripture or, indeed, in the truth of Christianity. The consequence is that the people in the cities, and to some extent in the rural districts, perceiving how little faith the pastors have, cease to attend on their ministry and their large churches are on ordinary occasions half empty. In many cases the pastors are regarded as a mere police force of a higher sort appointed to promote social order.

The worst of all is that the professors of theology who prepare young men for the ministry are all appointed by the civil authorities and are subjected to no test of doctrine. The wildest pantheism, the barest agnosticism may be taught without any restriction being laid on them or any penalty being imposed.

Conceive that in this country the election of pastors and the election of professors in our theological seminaries were handed over to our politicians. Every one sees what would be the consequence. The choice of professors would be made on far different grounds than the advancement of true religion in the world, and of spiritual life in the Church. Persons would be appointed to the offices from personal friendship, from political and party expediency. In many cases the teachers would mislead the people by withholding the truth, or inculcating error. The Christian people of America would not tolerate such a system, even in thought, for a moment.

Yet the people have to submit to it in Germany, greatly to the injury of pure religion. There is a difference, however, between the kind of appointments that would be made by politicians in Germany and in this country. I am not sure that on such a system in the democratic United States much regard would be paid to scholarship or indeed to any excellence beyond

that of a loose oratory. In the more aristocratic Germany great encouragement is given to erudition, which, however, may only exercise a more pernicious influence when employed to defend unchristian doctrine or utter unbelief.

Every one knows that Bismarck used the churches of Germany, Protestant and Catholic, as political instruments to promote the ends which he had in view, which were commonly for the good of Europe but not for the good of the churches which were thereby secularized. Some of us were hoping that the young emperor, following his free impulses, might give greater freedom to the churches. I am sorry to find that this is not likely to be realized. The emperor seems to aim instead at making himself the head of the Church in Germany as Queen Victoria is the head of the Episcopal Church of England. So our students who go to Germany for erudition are still liable to be carried away by the aberrations of Erastian teachers.

Happily in this country we are absolutely free from government control in all religious matters. The Christian people choose their rulers, and the rulers choose their teachers. Nevertheless America is liable to be swayed indirectly but most powerfully by the Erastianism of Germany. I believe that in that country there is more learning than in any other country, more than even in Great Britain, and certainly more than in this country. The consequence is that a vast number of American youths go to Germany to complete their education. They come back to this country full of the notions entertained by the great teachers of Deutschland. Probably they are first indoctrinated in a philosophy which proceeds in a critical and not an inductive manner which carries them away from reality and lands in an unsubstantial idealism. Then they are instructed in a theology equally ideal and not founded on Scripture. They come back to this country and are regarded as having a superior scholarship to those trained in America. As a consequence they come to occupy the higher positions in our colleges and upper schools, even in our pulpits and theological seminaries. As the result of the whole our religious beliefs founded on the belief in Word of God are being seriously affected.

Some practical conclusions seem to follow :

1. We cannot hinder young men from studying for a time in a German university. Any attempt to prevent this would probably lead to a keen resentment on the part of our young men, and would certainly be a failure. They will insist on getting scholarship wherever they can, and maintain that they can obtain in Germany knowledge which they can find nowhere else.

2. Our theological professors should be contented with nothing less than an erudition equal to that of the Germans. Surely they have as good means as the teachers of any other country to obtain the highest knowledge. Unless they seek and obtain this they will not secure the confidence of their higher pupils.

3. Our young men should be thoroughly trained in the truth before they go to Germany. I have found that my pupils trained in a realistic philosophy have profited by the erudition of Germany.