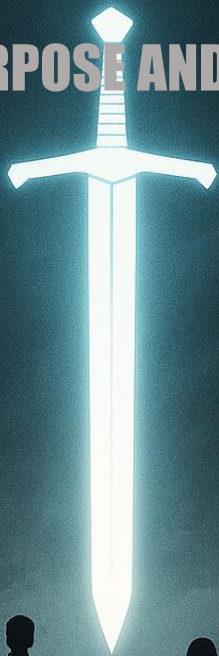


THE SWORD ORDAINED OF GOD

ITS PURPOSE AND LIMITS



David Barron

ROMANS 13 AND THE FINAL TEST OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION: THE SWORD AND THE CONSCIENCE

The Great Question of Authority

Every generation faces a defining question: **Who has the right to rule the conscience of man?**

This question lies at the heart of all history—whether in the thrones of empires, the decrees of priests, or the laws of nations. Behind every political struggle is a spiritual controversy: Does man’s duty to God belong under the jurisdiction of the state, or under the direct authority of Heaven alone?

The apostle Paul, writing from pagan Rome—the very symbol of imperial authority—addressed this eternal conflict in the thirteenth chapter of his epistle to the Romans. For nearly two millennia, **Romans 13** has been misunderstood, twisted to justify monarchy, papal absolutism, and even religious persecution. Kings have wielded it to demand unquestioning obedience; popes have used it to sanctify tyranny. Yet when rightly understood, it is the clearest defense of liberty of conscience in all of Scripture.

A.T. Jones, during the 1889 U.S. Senate hearings on national Sunday legislation, captured the essence of Paul’s argument when he declared:

“the powers that be, although ordained of God, have nothing whatever to do with the relations which men bear toward God.” — *A.T. Jones, The National Sunday Law*, p. 5

That single statement sums up the divine constitution of liberty. God Himself ordained civil authority for the preservation of order and justice, life, property, liberty and the pursuit of happiness among men—but the conscience remains subject to God alone. This distinction is the foundation of all free government and all genuine religion.

The Two Kingdoms: Civil and Moral

Paul’s teaching divides all authority into **two realms**: the temporal and the spiritual.

In the civil realm, rulers are ordained “for good,” bearing the sword to

restrain evil and protect peace (Romans 13:1-4).

“...the powers that be **are ordained of God**. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for **he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.**”

In the moral realm, Christ reigns by persuasion and love, ruling over hearts by the truth of His Word.

Confusion of these two kingdoms—when men imagine that the gospel must be upheld by law, or that conscience must be subject to Caesar, or that Caesar must enforce the moral law of God—has produced every form of tyranny from Babylon to the Papacy.

The Reformation rediscovered this principle. Luther stood before princes and prelates and declared, *“My conscience is captive to the Word of God.”* That statement shattered the medieval illusion that faith could be commanded by decree. The founders of the United States, inheriting this Reformation light, enshrined it in their first amendment of the constitution:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Thus, the doctrine of Paul became the cornerstone of both a Protestant and republican government.

The Battle Between Two Theories of Justice

Behind every system of law is a theology. At the root of the world’s conflict stands **two competing theories of justice**:

1. **Divine Justice** — grounded in love, freedom, and individual accountability to God.
It protects **civil** peace but never invades the conscience.
It punishes outward crime but leaves belief free.
This is the justice of God’s kingdom.
2. **Human (or Religious) Justice (Papal)** — grounded in coercion and collective control.
It seeks to make men righteous by law and force.
It punishes unbelief, enforces ritual, and compels worship.

This is the justice of Babylon, the beast and the image as described in Revelation 13.

These two principles have met in every age—in Eden’s deception, in Daniel’s Babylon, in the time of Esther, in the trial of Christ before Pilate, and in every attempt of church and state to unite. The final conflict of Revelation 13 and 14 is but the climax of this same controversy over the rightful limits of human authority and the sovereignty of divine conscience.

The Sword and the Gospel

In Romans 13:4 Paul calls the civil ruler “the minister of God,” bearing “not the sword in vain.”

That sword symbolizes the **power of compulsion**, the enforcement of law against civil wrong.

It is God’s instrument for the protection of the innocent, the punishment of violence, and the preservation of order in a fallen world.



But the same sword, when lifted against conscience, becomes blasphemy. The hand that guards liberty becomes the hand that crucifies truth. This transformation—from minister of God to enemy of God—is the tragedy repeated in every age when religion demands the sword of Caesar.

The gospel, by contrast, conquers not by compulsion, but by conviction. Not by an iron blade, but by the “sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).

Civil power may restrain crime, but only the Spirit of God can restrain sin.

The Purpose of This Study

This book is written to recover Paul’s true meaning in Romans 13 and to expose the false theology that has perverted it.

It aims to show that **God’s ordination of civil authority** in Scripture was NEVER intended to govern worship, legislate morality, or compel faith. Its divine purpose was always protective—to guard peace, uphold justice, and ENSURE the freedom necessary for the gospel to reach every heart.

We will explore:

How Genesis 9 first instituted civil government after the Flood.
How Daniel, Christ, and the apostles demonstrated lawful disobedience to unlawful laws.

How Revelation 13 and 17 warn of a final global confederacy of church and state.

How A.T. Jones and the American founders upheld biblical separation of church and state against papal theories of “moral government.”

How modern movements—both religious and political—are reviving the same errors under new names.

The question is not merely political; it is prophetic.

The crisis that looms before the world is one of conscience and authority—between those who seek to enforce virtue by law, and those who uphold the gospel of freedom under God.

The Call to Conscience

In the end, every nation and every soul must answer a single question:

Shall man rule the conscience, or shall God?

If Caesar commands what God forbids, or forbids what God commands, then the words of the apostles must be our creed:

“We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)

The “true political economy” is not the fusion of church and state, but their harmony in divine order—each fulfilling its ordained purpose under Heaven’s moral law. Civil power protects; divine truth persuades. The sword keeps peace; the Spirit brings conversion.

This is the balance of eternal justice and the foundation of all enduring liberty.

CHAPTER II – EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 13:1–7

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers” (Romans 13:1)

Paul’s command begins with **submission**—not because every ruler is righteous, but because authority itself is a divine institution. Government, in its true sense, exists by God’s design to preserve peace and restrain evil among fallen men.

“For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”

This ordination is not unconditional. It does not make every decree sacred or every ruler divine. God ordains *the office*, not the abuse of power. When rulers act within the sphere of civil justice, they are God’s servants; when they cross that boundary to command conscience or compel worship, they cease to be His ministers and become usurpers.

A.T. Jones clearly drew this line in *The National Sunday Law*:

“...that the powers that be, although ordained of God,, are not ordained of God in anything pertaining to a single duty enjoined in any one of the first four of the ten commandments. These are duties that men owe to God, and with those the powers that be can of right have nothing to do, because Christ has commanded to render unto God.” — *A.T. Jones, The National Sunday Law*, p. 5.

Submission, therefore, is not servitude. The Christian honors government as far as it honors God’s purpose. But conscience remains free, because it belongs to a higher throne.

“Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God” (Romans 13:2)

To resist lawful authority is to resist God’s order; but to resist tyranny is to uphold God’s order.

Paul’s words were written while Nero sat on the throne — one of the most brutal of emperors — yet the apostle did not incite rebellion. He called for

peaceful obedience in all *lawful* things, but not blind allegiance in *spiritual* things.

When rulers become oppressors, they resist the ordinance of God themselves.

Daniel obeyed Babylon in civil matters but refused to defile his conscience (Daniel 1).

The apostles submitted to arrest but proclaimed, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Thus Paul’s counsel establishes order, not bondage. God is not the author of anarchy, but neither is He the author of tyranny.

“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil” (Romans 13:3)

Here Paul defines the **purpose** of government.

Civil power exists to restrain outward evil — violence, theft, and fraud, murder, assault — not to dictate inward faith. The “evil” he speaks of is incivility, not spiritual. When government punishes crime, it fulfills God’s will, since God ordained it. When it punishes conscience, in attempting to enforce morality it defies Him and usurps Him.

This distinction reflects the very structure of the Ten Commandments:

- The **first four** govern man’s duty to God — worship, reverence, and the Sabbath.
- The **last six** govern man’s duty to man — life, property, truth, and purity.

However, God has not granted civil government the authority to regulate spiritual matters, even those reflected in the last six commandments, such as coveting. Civil law may address the outward acts of murder or adultery, but it cannot reach their spiritual roots—hatred and lust. Only God can rightly judge and enforce the inner principles of the law.

A.T. Jones summarized it perfectly:

“As morality is the conformity of an act to the divine law, it is plain that morality pertains solely to God, and with that, civil government can have nothing to do.— A.T. Jones, *National Sunday Law*, p. 61.

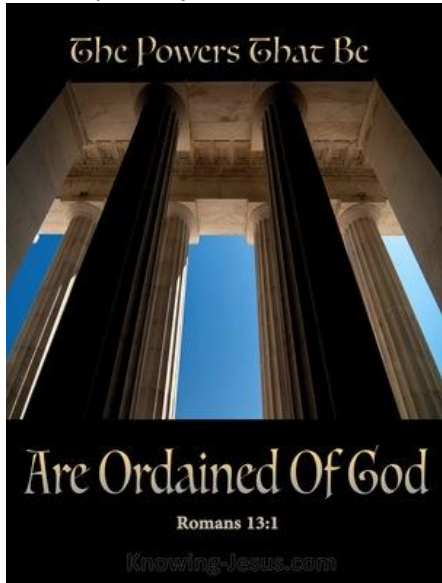
This principle is the foundation of all liberty: the sword of Caesar may restrain crime but never compel faith. (Romans 13:4)

“Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same” (Romans 13:3)

The righteous citizen has nothing to fear from just laws. True civil authority praises those who do well and punishes only the injurious. But when rulers persecute the righteous, they invert their purpose and bring judgment upon themselves.

The Christian is the model citizen — honest, peaceful, industrious, and loyal. Yet his loyalty has limits. When civil power commands what God forbids, or forbids what God commands, obedience to God becomes the highest form of loyalty to Heaven’s constitution.

Christ Himself set this boundary: “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” (Matthew 22:21).



“For he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” (Romans 13:4)

The **sword** represents the state’s power—the authority to enforce civil justice. Caesar.

Paul calls this sword a “minister of God.” It is a divine instrument when used to restrain violence, punish injustice, and protect the innocent.

But that same sword becomes blasphemy when it is used to enforce religion.

The sword that guards liberty can destroy it. The magistrate who punishes crime is God’s servant; the one who punishes conscience becomes the enemy of both God and man.

This principle reaches back to **Genesis 9:5–6**, when God said to Noah:

“Surely your blood of your lives will I require... Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”

Here, civil justice was ordained as a moral restraint against violence. The sword is therefore **protective**, not persecuting — a minister of love through law.

Not only is the sword of Caesar ordained by God to protect the innocent, but it also serves to instill the fear of God in the evildoer.

“Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.” (Romans 13:5)

Paul now raises submission from fear to conscience. **Civil government is not ordained only to instill fear in the evildoer. We obey lawful authority not merely to avoid punishment, but because order itself is good.** The Christian’s loyalty to civil law springs from his loyalty to divine law and the one who ordained civil government.

But conscience cannot submit to what God condemns.

True submission, then, has two boundaries:

1. **In all things lawful**, we obey.
2. **In all things moral**, we answer to God alone.

Thus, when civil rulers act within their sphere, they command conscience to obedience. When they transgress that sphere, conscience commands resistance — peaceable, respectful, but unyielding.

Summary of Paul’s Political Theology

When the state confines itself to its proper calling — protection of civil peace — it is “the minister of God for good.”

When it presumes to command faith or punish unbelief, it becomes **the image of the beast** (Revelation 13:15).

CHAPTER III – THE SWORD OF PROTECTION AND LOVE

“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man.” — Genesis 9 : 6

The Divine Origin of Civil Authority

Civil government began not with man’s ambition, but with God’s mercy. When the world before the Flood filled itself with violence (Genesis 6 : 11), human life lost its sacredness. After the Flood, God renewed creation under Noah and placed into man’s hands the solemn charge of justice:

“Surely your blood of your lives will I require... at the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man.” (Genesis 9 : 5)

This was the divine establishment of the **civil sword** — not a license for vengeance, but a restraint against violence. The earth before the flood was filled with violence, and the world being unsafe, God in order to prevent this in the new world, civil government was ordained of God to protect the innocent and preserve peace, not to enforce belief or administer conversion.

Thus from the very beginning, God separated the **moral realm**, which He alone governs, from the **civil realm**, which **He entrusted to human stewardship**. The state’s sword serves love when it shields the weak; it betrays love when it coerces conscience.

The Sword as an Instrument of Love

When rightly used, the sword is an act of mercy. It guards the boundaries of peace, much as a shepherd’s rod protects his flock. The civil magistrate “is the minister of God to thee for good” (Romans 13 : 4).

The sword of justice, therefore, is not contrary to love — it is love applied to society’s preservation.

Where there is no restraint upon evil, the innocent suffer; where justice is executed in righteousness, the community lives in safety.

The Good Samaritan reveals the same spirit. He did not use force to compel the wounded man's belief; he used strength to shield his life. True government is Samaritan in nature — protecting, healing, securing, but never controlling faith.

Christ's Confirmation of Civil Order

Christ affirmed the legitimacy of civil authority when He said,

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.” (Matthew 22 : 21)

By acknowledging Caesar's coin, Christ acknowledged the legitimacy of human government. By withholding worship, He set the limit of that government's power.

Jesus did not abolish civil authority; He placed it in its proper service — to maintain peace, **not to make converts.**

The Place of the Sword

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter drew a literal sword and struck the high priest's servant (John 18 : 10). Jesus replied,

“Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” (Matthew 26 : 52)

Notice carefully — Christ did not say, *Cast it away.*
He said, *Put it into its place.*

Earlier, He had told His disciples,

“He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.” (Luke 22 : 36)

Thus the sword has a lawful purpose. It was never forbidden, but ordered. The problem is not the possession of the sword, but its **misplacement.** Peter used the sword to advance religion, to defend the kingdom of God by violence. Christ restored it to its rightful use — defense of life, not defense of doctrine.

When the Church later took up Peter's sword to establish Christ's kingdom on earth, it repeated his error on a global scale. (Rev 13:10) The Papacy's crusades, inquisitions, and persecutions were Peter's rash blow multiplied

through the centuries to advance religion, and force worship. Every government that enforces religion does the same.

The Sword and the Law of Love

The moral law of God demands justice, but justice itself is rooted in love. Divine wrath is never revenge; it is protection of righteousness. So too, civil penalties exist not to destroy, but to preserve peace.

Paul declares,

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13 : 10)

A government truly founded upon Christian principle acts from love of neighbor. It restrains the violent, guards the innocent, and leaves conscience free. The sword is never an enemy of love until it becomes a weapon of creed.

*The Waldenses stand as one of the clearest historical witnesses that **true religion never uses violence to compel worship**. Their resistance was not about forcing belief—it was about **defending their families, their liberty, and their faith from destruction**.*

J.H. Wylie records:

*“The spirit of the people woke up. **Rather than thus disgrace their ancestors, imperil their own souls, and entail a heritage of slavery on their children, they would die a thousand times. ... They had found their arms.**” (History of the Waldenses, HOW 88.2)*

*They consciously chose **death over submission** to Rome’s tyranny. They openly **took up arms for defense**. Their faith was inseparably tied to **protecting their children** and passing on the truth.*

Their oath declared:

“...we here promise, our hands on our Bibles, and in the presence of God, that all our Valleys shall courageously sustain each other in matters of religion... persevering in this holy religion, though it be at the peril of our life, in order that we may transmit it to our children, intact and pure, as we received it from our fathers.” (HOW 91.1–91.2)

This was not revenge. This was a **holy determination** to guard truth and freedom for their children.

Their defensive actions are undeniable:

- *“They erected barricades; they planted ambushes... every house became a manufactory of pikes, bullets, and other weapons.”* (HOW 93.1)
- *“Six brave Waldensian youths strode down the valley, to stop the way against La Trinita’s soldiers. **Immovable as their own Alps**, they not only checked the advance of the host, but drove it back in a panic-stricken mass.”* (HOW 94.3–95.1)
- *“The Vaudois sent great stones rolling down upon the host... the soldiers were crushed in dozens by the falling rocks.”* (HOW 100.1)

These were **acts of protection**, not aggression. They defended their wives, children, and pastors from annihilation. **Never once did they use the sword to compel worship or force the conscience.** NEVER ONCE DID THEY VIOLATE THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

God has made men free. Civil government was ordained of God to protect that freedom in things civil; and religion, as between man and God, is left entirely to man’s own choice.



When the sword protects freedom, it fulfills the law of love. When it compels belief, it violates both law and love together.

We have seen that the sword was divinely given to defend, not to dominate — to restrain outward evil, not to regulate inward faith.

The next chapter will trace the **historical misuse** of this sword — from Babylon’s furnace and Persia’s lions’ den to the apostolic persecutions and the prophecy of Revelation 13 and 17 — showing how every empire that joined religion to the sword repeated the same fatal pattern.

CHAPTER IV – WHEN THE SWORD STEPS OUT OF LINE

“We ought to obey God rather than men.” — *Acts 5 : 29*

The Pattern of Apostasy: When the State Touches Conscience

Every era of sacred history shows a moment when rulers, stepping beyond their civil bounds, reached into the realm of worship. From Babylon’s golden image to Rome’s crucifixion of Christ, each attempt to sanctify political power by divine authority has ended in persecution.

God ordained civil government to keep order among men, but whenever the magistrate presumes to command the soul, the sword becomes the enemy of Heaven. The moment the law of man encroaches upon the law of God, faithful believers are compelled to stand as witnesses for a higher throne.

Daniel 1 – The Test of Education and Appetite

Babylon sought not only to conquer Jerusalem but to **re-educate** its youth, molding them in the image of the empire. Daniel and his friends were commanded to eat the king’s meat and drink the king’s drink. Yet Scripture records:

“Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.” (Daniel 1 : 8)

Here, conscience quietly resisted the first intrusion of state authority into moral obedience. Daniel’s protest was courteous yet firm. He obeyed in all civil matters, but when the command touched worship and purity, obedience to God came first.

The lesson is timeless: the faithful may cooperate with the state in civic duty, but never in conscience. Liberty begins when one man dares to say “no” to an unlawful decree in the name of God.

Daniel 3 – The Fiery Furnace: Enforced Worship

“At what time ye hear the sound of the cornet... ye fall down and worship the golden image.” (Daniel 3 : 5)

In this decree, Nebuchadnezzar fused religion and politics. He demanded public worship as proof of loyalty. Those who refused were condemned to the furnace. The three Hebrews replied,

“Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods.” (Daniel 3 : 18)

Their defiance was not rebellion but fidelity. They obeyed every civil law until obedience required apostasy. Their witness in



the flames declared to all ages that conscience cannot bow to the state. God Himself vindicated them by deliverance, proving that faithfulness to conscience is the highest patriotism.

Daniel 6 – The Lion’s Den: Forbidden Worship

In Medo-Persia the temptation was reversed. Instead of commanding worship, Darius’s decree **forbade** it:

“Whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.” (Daniel 6 : 7)

Daniel made no protest march, no revolt. He simply **kept praying**. His open window toward Jerusalem testified that loyalty to God must remain public even under penalty of death. Both enforced and forbidden worship are violations of the same principle: they dethrone God from the conscience.

The Apostles and the Civil Power

When the rulers of Jerusalem commanded the disciples “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4 :18), the apostles answered,

“Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” (v. 19)

This was the New Testament counterpart of Daniel’s courage. Civil disobedience, when conscience is at stake, is not treason but sanctification.

The early church honored every law except those that trespassed on the throne of Christ.

The Crucifixion: Church and State United

When the Sanhedrin condemned Christ, they lacked authority to kill. They therefore delivered Him to Pilate, saying,

“We have a law, and by our law He ought to die.” (John 19 : 7)

Religion made the charge; government executed the sentence. The cross thus stands as history’s clearest warning: the union of church and state always crucifies Christ afresh.

“And as for the church “making use of the power of the State for the furtherance of her aims,” ... by this slimy, serpentine, trick there was accomplished by the church her “aim” at the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory, this is sufficient demonstration... that such combination and the procedure under it is supremely and satanically wrong.” AT Jones—*Individuality in Religion*, p. 66

Revelation 13 and 17 – The Prophetic Pattern Re-Emerging

The book of Revelation gathers all these precedents into one final prophecy. The **first beast** (Revelation 13 : 1-10) represents the Papacy — a religious power wielding civil authority. The **second beast**, rising from the earth (verses 11-17), symbolizes a new nation with lamb-like principles — freedom of conscience and equality — yet speaking “as a dragon.” And eventually exercising all the same civil power as the first beast. (Rev 13:12)

The **woman riding the beast** in Revelation 17 portrays the same union: the church enthroned upon political power. John saw her “drunken with the blood of the saints,” a vivid symbol of persecution born from this unholy alliance.

Every time the state enforces religion, the image of the beast is formed anew. The dragon’s breath animates it whenever law replaces love as the motive for worship.

Historical Lessons: The Sword Misused Through Time

From Constantine's edict of Sunday rest in A.D. 321 to the medieval Inquisition, the story repeats: the sword meant to defend becomes a weapon of coercion.

A.T. Jones warned Congress in 1889:

"Civil government has nothing to do with a man's personal relation of faith and obedience to God. If he has no faith at all, and makes no pretensions to obedience to God, that is nothing to the civil government, so long as the man conducts himself civilly.." — *National Sunday Law*, p. 71

History proves that every "holy empire" has ended in unholy bloodshed. Whether it wears Babylon's crown or Rome's tiara, its sin is the same — the sword stepped out of line.

Summary: When the Sword Transgresses Its Place

1. **Civil law** is righteous only while protecting life, liberty, and property.
2. **Religious law** belongs solely to God; it cannot be legislated.
3. **Forced worship or forbidden worship** are equal violations of conscience.
4. **Church–state alliances** always lead to persecution.
5. **The true Christian**, like Daniel and the apostles, honors the state until it intrudes upon the soul — then he obeys God rather than men.

The liberty of conscience is the first of all liberties; and he who strikes at this strikes at the foundation of all government.

CHAPTER V – THE FOUNDING OF AMERICA AND THE BIBLICAL MODEL

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” — *2 Corinthians 3:17*

The Protestant Birth of Liberty

The Protestant Reformation did more than reform theology — it reformed government.

Before Luther and the Reformers, the Papacy ruled both altar and throne. The conscience was chained to the decrees of priests, and kings enforced spiritual obedience at the cost of life itself. But the gospel’s rediscovery of justification by faith restored the principle that **man is accountable to God alone in religion**.

A.T. Jones wrote:

“Our national Constitution embodies the very principle announced by Jesus Christ, that the civil government shall have nothing to do with religion, or with what pertains to God; but shall leave that to every man's conscience and his God.” — *National Sunday Law*, p. 15

This principle — that the soul answers to God, not Caesar — crossed the Atlantic with the Puritans and later formed the moral foundation of the United States.

The Founders and the Light of Scripture



When the American colonies declared independence from Britain, they also broke from Europe’s old alliance of church and state. The Founders were students of history and Scripture. They knew that whenever government assumes divine authority, liberty dies.

Thomas Jefferson, in his famous *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* (1786), declared:

“Almighty God hath created the mind free... that to compel a man to furnish

contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical.”

James Madison, known as the “Father of the Constitution,” wrote: “The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate.” — *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* (1785).

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution influenced by these two men enshrines this very principle:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

These words are the direct political echo of Christ’s declaration, “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” (Matthew 22:21)

Here, the founders of a republic aligned with the gospel itself — liberty of conscience under God, civil liberty under just law.

Roger Williams: The Wall of Separation

The clearest early American voice echoing Paul’s theology of government was **Roger Williams**, founder of Rhode Island. Banished from Massachusetts for defending liberty of conscience, Williams argued that the state must never wield the sword in religion:

“The sword may make a nation of hypocrites and anti-Christians, but it can never make one true Christian.” — *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution* (1644)

Williams compared the Church to a “garden” and the State to the “wilderness” — warning that when the wilderness enters the garden, corruption begins. This image was later taken up by Jefferson, who spoke of a “wall of separation between Church and State.”

A Biblical Model of Government

The founders were not secularists; they were men who believed in divine accountability. They saw in Scripture the framework for civil liberty:

- **Romans 13** — government as God’s minister for civil good.

- **Matthew 22:21** — the division between Caesar and God.
- **Genesis 9:6** — the divine ordination of civil justice after the Flood.

They understood that true freedom does not exist without moral restraint — yet that restraint must be voluntary, not coerced. Civil government and law can restrain violence; only the gospel can change hearts.

Thus, America’s government was designed as a *civil republic* under divine moral order, not as a theocracy. The founders’ genius was that they built a system acknowledging God’s sovereignty while denying to rulers the right to play God.

The American Ideal vs. Papal Theory

The Papacy’s claim — echoed in modern “integralism” also called neo-integralism, is a Catholic political movement that seeks to return to a pre-Vatican II model of church-state relations. Integralists argue that political authority should be subordinated to the spiritual authority of the Catholic Church in service of a Catholic vision of the "common good". These ideas are promoted by legal theorists like John Finnis —that moral law and civil law are one and the same, and that rulers are bound to enforce virtue by law.

In contrast, the American ideal, born of Protestant truth, separates them.

Civil government deals with man’s relation to man; religion deals with man’s relation to God. Between the two there must be an eternal distinction.

John Finnis, a modern Catholic philosopher, teaches that government must direct society toward “the common good,” which includes promoting true religion. This is simply the philosophy of Rome reborn — a denial of Christ’s kingdom “not of this world.”

The founders, by contrast, established a **political economy of freedom**, not coercion. They made the State the protector of rights, not the teacher of morals.

The Scriptural Witness to Liberty

Scripture never commands the use of the sword to convert or compel. Instead, it recognizes the diversity of conviction within a fallen world.

“Let both grow together until the harvest.” (Matthew 13:30)

The parable of the wheat and the tares forbid premature judgment. The harvest belongs to God alone.

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.” (Romans 14:4)

This is the divine principle upon which America was founded — a government protecting the freedom to err, so that all may freely seek truth.

The Constitution and the Gospel

The U.S. Constitution was not inspired like Scripture, but it reflects its moral order. Its guarantees of freedom echo heaven’s law of love. The Bill of Rights secures outward liberty; the gospel secures inward liberty. Both are gifts of God. When religion is left free, the government is strongest; when religion is enforced, the government is weakest. The gospel makes men free, and free men make the best government.

The founders knew this truth: liberty and righteousness cannot be joined by force; they are united only by conscience enlightened by the Spirit.

When morality is legislated by force, Christ is crucified afresh in the person of His people. When conscience is free, the gospel flourishes, and justice walks hand in hand with mercy.

The sword is ordained of God for protection, not persecution.
The cross is ordained for redemption, not compulsion.

CHAPTER VI – THE AMERICAN APOSTASY AND PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT

(When the Lamb Speaks as a Dragon)

America in Prophecy — The Lamb-Like Beast

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.” — *Revelation 13:11*

The prophecy of Revelation 13 portrays a new power arising not from “the sea” of nations and wars (Revelation 17:15) but from the earth — a relatively unpopulated region. It appears gentle, youthful, and free: “*two horns like a lamb.*” The horns symbolize **Republicanism** (civil liberty) and **Protestantism** (religious liberty).

Yet this same nation “speaks as a dragon.” A nation speaks through its laws and executive acts. The dragon’s voice, which once persecuted the saints through Rome, will again be heard when America denies the principles of its own Constitution and enforces religious observance by law.

The prophecy foretells not merely an apostasy of government, but an apostasy of **Protestantism itself** — a betrayal of the liberty for which the Reformers died and the founders bled.

The Repetition of History

In the Dark Ages, the Church, claiming to guide moral law, persuaded the kings of Europe to enforce her decrees. Thus, the beast of Revelation 13:1–7 received its power, seat, and authority from the dragon — Pagan Rome — and ruled for 1,260 years. When the Reformation broke those chains, liberty was born.

But prophecy shows that a second beast — America — will give life again to that first system. History will repeat itself, only under a new name: *Christian Nationalism*.

The Modern Revival of Religious Legislation

In our own generation, voices once again call for moral reform through legislation. Some seek to reimpose religious rest days; others to fuse church morality with civil law in the name of “the common good.”

In 2023, **Jonathan Berry**, now appointed as head of the U.S. Department of Labor, publicly stated in a recorded interview when asked what he would like to do on day one said: “I’d like to reinstate Sabbath laws.”

As solicitor of labor under a previous administration, Berry had already revised sections of the Fair Labor Standards Act dealing with “Sabbath observance,” advocating for renewed Sunday rest provisions.

Such intentions, however well-meant, strike at the very foundation of the First Amendment, which declares:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

The irony is tragic. Those who claim to restore morality by enforcing worship are, in fact, denying the very principle upon which morality itself depends — **freedom of conscience**.

The Sabbath Question and the Mark of Authority

Millions of Christians around the world keep the seventh-day Sabbath — the day sanctified by God in creation (Genesis 2:3), affirmed in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8–11), and honored by Christ and the apostles (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2).

The **Catholic Church** openly acknowledges that it changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday by ecclesiastical authority:

“**Sunday is our mark** of authority... The Church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact.” — *The Catholic Record*, Sept. 1, 1923

“Of course, the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act... and the act is a **mark** of her ecclesiastical power and authority in religious matters.” — *Letter from C.F. Thomas, Chancellor of Cardinal Gibbons*, 1895

To enforce Sunday by law, therefore, is not merely a civil measure — it is the enforcement of a church ordinance by state power. It is the very “**mark of the beast**” — the mark of human authority placed where only God’s command should stand.

Even those who worship on the seventh day reject coercion. True Sabbath-keepers know that worship demanded by law ceases to be worship. The Creator’s rest is entered by faith, not by statute.

The observance of Sunday, or of the Sabbath, must ever be voluntary, else it is sin. Religion cannot be legislated. Conscience cannot be compelled.

The Return of Papal Political Theory

The modern push for “common good constitutionalism,” led by Catholic legal thinkers such as John Finnis and Adrian Vermeule, seeks to reinterpret the American Constitution in terms of “moral order” rather than individual liberty.

Finnis writes:

“The function of government is to lead its citizens toward virtue, friendship, and true religion.”

— *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, p. 276

Vermeule goes further, calling for a “moral constitutional order under public authority,” in which the state promotes religion as a public good.

This is the **very philosophy of Rome revived** — the belief that government must direct the soul toward its ultimate good. It is the doctrine that produced the Inquisition, justified the burning of heretics, and sanctified coercion in the name of unity.

America’s Founders and the Wall of Separation

Long before these modern theorists, the founders of the United States built a wall between church and state, not out of hostility to religion but out of reverence for it.

Thomas Jefferson wrote:

“I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus

building a wall of separation between Church and State.”
— *Letter to the Danbury Baptists*, 1802

James Madison affirmed:

“The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries.”

These men were not atheists; they were guardians of conscience. They understood that faith compelled by law is the seed of tyranny. Their model echoed the gospel itself — Caesar’s realm limited to the civil, and God’s reserved for the moral.

But now, that wall is being torn down brick by brick under the banner of patriotism and moral revival.

The Final Crisis: The Lamb Speaks as a Dragon

“He causeth all... to receive a mark... and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark.” (vv. 16–17)

Economic pressure — “that no man might buy or sell” — will be used to enforce religious conformity. The digital economy, already capable of controlling access to commerce, will become the machinery of coercion.



Thus, prophecy unites:

- *A religious law* (enforcing worship).
- *A civil power* (the U.S. government).
- *An economic penalty* (buying and selling).

The result is the final image of the beast — the complete merger of church, state, and commerce under a false system of worship.

The Call to Repentance and Faithfulness

The issue before the nation is not merely political — it is moral and spiritual. Will we return to Rome’s model, where morality is enforced by law? Or will we stand with Christ, who declared, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself” — a voluntary act of faith?

The Third Angel’s Message of Revelation 14 is heaven’s answer:

“If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark... the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God... Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” (Revelation 14:9–12)

This message is not merely about a day — it is about allegiance. It is the final test between the commandments of God and the commandments of men.

To the legislators and ministers of this land, the call is clear:

- **Defend liberty, do not legislate worship.**
- **Protect conscience, do not compel it.**
- **Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.**

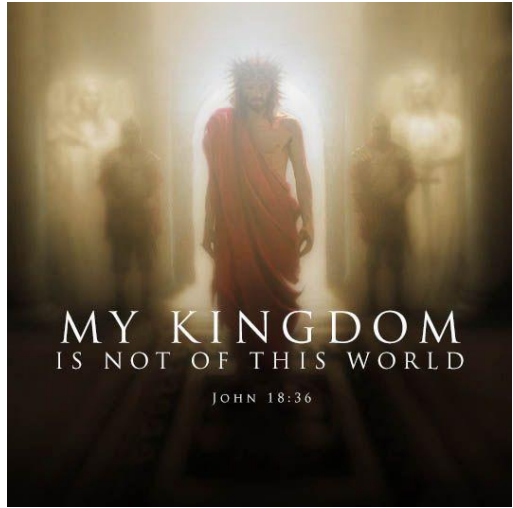
The true Sabbath will never need the State’s sword to defend it; truth stands by its own power.

CHAPTER VII – THE TRUE KINGDOM OF GOD

“My kingdom is not of this world.” — John 18:36

Christ’s Rejection of Temporal Dominion

In the wilderness, Satan offered Christ “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them” (Matthew 4:8–9). The offer was not empty — for “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) truly possessed dominion over fallen humanity. Yet Christ refused: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” (v. 10)



Here lies the eternal distinction between divine and human government. Christ did not dispute Satan’s claim of earthly power but denied his *authority to unite it with worship*. The temptation was political — to gain moral influence through civil power, to make men righteous by legislation. To accept it would have been to find a theocracy of force rather than a kingdom of faith.

Thus, the true King of heaven refused the scepter of the world. His kingdom would not be advanced by decrees or armies, but by the cross.

The Nature of Christ’s Kingdom

When Christ stood before Pilate, accused of sedition, He said plainly, “My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight” (John 18:36).

His government operates by truth, not by threat; by love, not by law. Every kingdom of this world is built on force of conscience— every false religion seeks to compel.

The Moral Foundation of Liberty

True liberty rests upon this moral order of heaven. God alone has jurisdiction over the heart, for He alone can read it. Civil rulers may regulate conduct, but they cannot govern motive. Hence, Paul distinguished the two spheres in Romans 13: Caesar may punish the thief, but not the heretic; protect the neighbor’s life, but not dictate his worship.

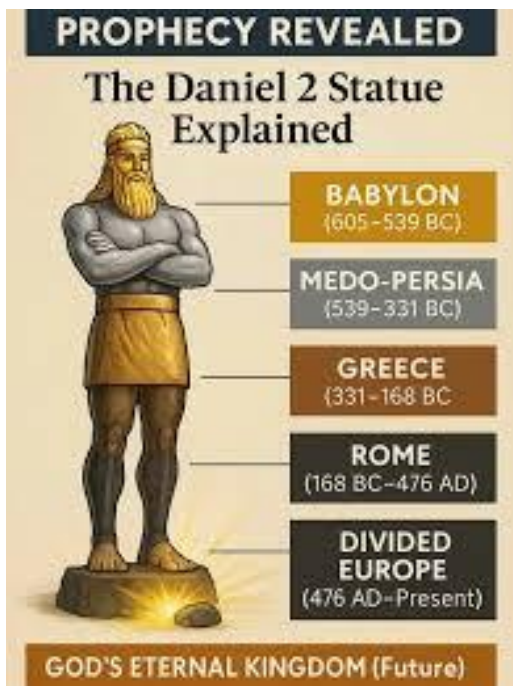
Every attempt to merge these realms — whether Papal or Protestant — is rebellion against the divine constitution. To enforce the law of God by the law of man is to dethrone the Creator and enthrone the creature.

The Sword of the Spirit vs. the Sword of Steel

The apostle Paul contrasted the weapons of both kingdoms: “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (2 Corinthians 10:4). The sword of the Spirit transforms men; the sword of the State restrains men. The first is moral, the second civil. Each has its place, but only the first belongs in the pulpit.

When the church takes up the carnal sword, it ceases to be Christ’s church. When the magistrate enforces worship, he ceases to be God’s minister.

Together they form the image of the beast — the old Roman union revived.



The Kingdom That Cannot Be Moved

Earthly powers rise and fall — Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome — but Christ’s kingdom “is not of this world” and “cannot be moved” (Hebrews 12:28). Its citizens are those who “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).

This kingdom conquers through sacrifice. The Lamb’s victory is moral, not military; voluntary, not coerced. “If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in” (Revelation 3:20). The King of kings knocks — He does not break down the door.

Reflection and Appeal

1. If Christ refused Satan’s kingdoms, should His church seek them through legislation?
2. If His kingdom is not of this world, should His ministers seek power within it?
3. If the gospel persuades by truth, what need has it of force?
4. If conscience belongs to God, why should Caesar claim it?

Christ’s example is the pattern for nations as well as believers. He placed the sword in its rightful place — not abolished, but sanctified for protection, never for persecution. When the nations honor this boundary, liberty flourishes. When they cross it, the dragon speaks again.

The government of God is moral, founded upon love; the government of Satan is coercive, founded upon force. Between the two there can be no harmony.

CHAPTER VIII – THE CALL TO MODERN STATESMEN

“He is the minister of God to thee for good.” — Romans 13:4

The Divine Calling of Civil Rulers

Every ruler, legislator, and judge holds an office originally ordained by God Himself. From Genesis 9 onward, the sword of civil authority was entrusted to humanity as a safeguard against violence and injustice. It was not given to rule faith or worship, but to defend life and liberty.

Paul’s words in Romans 13 are not a blanket endorsement of tyranny; they are a solemn charge. “He is the minister of God to thee for good.” The magistrate’s authority is conditional upon this purpose — the promotion of good, the restraint of evil, and the protection of the innocent. When that purpose is reversed, when the sword becomes a tool to compel worship or punish belief, it ceases to be “God’s minister” and becomes the dragon’s image.

A.T. Jones summarized it plainly before the United States Senate in 1889:

“We stand to-day just where the Christians did at that time; we come to the root of the whole matter, and deny the right of the civil government to legislate on anything that pertains to our duties to God under the first four commandments...” — *A.T. Jones, National Sunday Law*, p. 24

Thus, the divine call to every ruler is both a privilege and a warning: use the sword to preserve peace — not to enforce religiousness.

The Two Functions of Law

Law has two realms: the **civil** and the **moral**. The civil law governs outward acts; the moral law governs inward motives. The confusion of these two has been the root of every tyranny from Pharaoh to the Papacy.

Paul defines civil law as the protector of life and property:

“Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.” — Romans 13:3

But moral law belongs to God alone: “The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” — 1 Samuel 16:7.



The Papacy has “the eyes of a man” (Dan 7:8) and these eyes have misjudged on many occasions.

Civil government must guard the neighbor’s right, not the worshiper’s creed. Its justice stops at the boundary of conscience. Only God can enter there.

John Finnis, in his modern Catholic theory of “natural law,” blurs this distinction — arguing that the purpose of law is to lead men to virtue. But civil government is not a teacher of morality. The gospel alone is the power of God unto salvation. The State protects from crime; the gospel saves from sin.

This is the essence of true political economy: Caesar protects the citizen; Christ redeems the sinner.

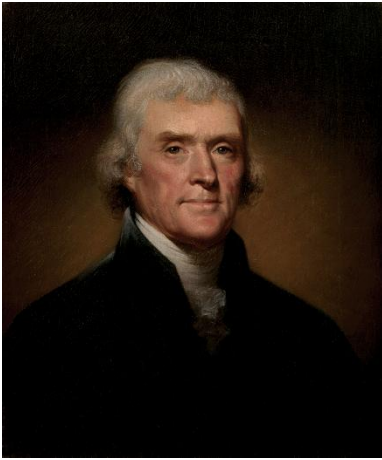
The Warning to Modern Legislators

In our own time, the temptation to legislate morality returns under new forms — “family restoration,” “moral renewal,” “national Sabbath rest.” Such movements echo the very reasoning used in Rome and medieval Europe: that a moral nation must enforce moral law.

But morality cannot be coerced. As soon as religion leans on civil power, it loses the spirit of Christ. The gospel appeals to love; the state enforces by fear. One converts, the other compels.

James Madison warned:

“The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries.”



And Thomas Jefferson added:
“No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever.” — *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* (1786)

To legislate religious observance, whether Sunday or Sabbath, is to undo the First Amendment and repeat the crimes of the Inquisition in democratic form.

The Coming Test of Liberty

The prophecy of Revelation 13 declares that a power with lamb-like horns — symbolizing innocence and liberty — will “speak as a dragon.” Its speech is its legislation. When America enforces worship by law, she will form an image to the beast.

This warning is not against religion, but against *religious compulsion*. The state must protect all — Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant, believer and skeptic — in equal liberty before the law. To grant power to one church’s dogma is to enslave every conscience that differs.

Ellen White foresaw this crisis:

“When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image to the Roman hierarchy.” — *The Great Controversy*, p. 445



A Call to Courage and Repentance

Civil authority must be humble before divine law, recognizing its bounds. Like Nebuchadnezzar, who lifted up his heart in pride, nations that exalt

themselves as moral arbiters will be humbled. God still calls rulers to repentance, as He did through Daniel:

“Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor.” — Daniel 4:27

The sword of the state can defend liberty; it cannot create virtue. True moral reform begins in the heart — not in the halls of Congress.

To modern lawmakers the appeal is clear:

- Protect conscience; do not prescribe it.
- Uphold law; do not legislate faith.
- Be ministers of God for good; not tools of the dragon’s image.

Reflection and Appeal

1. Can faith be genuine if compelled by law?
2. Should the magistrate punish unbelief as crime, or only injustice as crime?
3. What happens to liberty when the state claims to define morality?
4. Are we safer when conscience is free or when creed is enforced?

Liberty of conscience is the very foundation of human government ordained of God. Without it, government becomes despotism; with it, society becomes the dwelling place of righteousness.



CHAPTER IX – THE FINAL APPEAL: AMERICA’S LAST TEST OF LIBERTY

“The sword ordained of God protects liberty — it does not compel it.”

The Final Conflict Foretold

The prophecies of Revelation 13 and 14 foretell a time when every principle of freedom will be repudiated in the land once known for liberty of conscience. The lamb-like nation, representing the United States, will “speak as a dragon,” combining civil and ecclesiastical power to enforce religious observance.

“He causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.” — *Revelation 13:16*

This “mark” is not a visible brand, but the symbol of allegiance — submission to human authority in place of divine. The crisis will not come suddenly, but gradually, through the merging of moral rhetoric with political policy. As the Papacy once united throne and altar, so modern movements seek to legislate virtue and restore “national morality.”

The same cry will rise again: *“It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people.”* (John 11:50). Religious majorities will claim that conscience must yield to social peace. But God’s Word declares otherwise: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)

The Great American Apostasy

The founders of this nation built upon the granite of religious liberty. Jefferson’s “wall of separation between church and state” was not hostility to religion, but protection for it. Madison warned that the “union of religion and government” was “a political experiment which in every age has produced oppression and hypocrisy.”

Yet today, a subtle change has entered public discourse. Lawmakers and scholars, under the influence of “common good” ideology, teach that civil

government must restore moral order by enforcing religious principles. This is the old Roman theory under a new name.

When government assumes power to direct worship, whether by Sunday rest mandates or “Christian Nationalist” reforms, it repeats the dragon’s speech in a lamb’s voice. America will then give life to the image of the beast — a union of church and state enforcing worship in the name of morality.

The True Foundation of Liberty

The foundation of freedom is found in the words of Christ:

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” — *John 8:36*

Liberty of conscience is not a privilege granted by the state; it is a gift of the Creator. The government’s duty is not to give freedom, but to protect it. When civil rulers legislate in religion, they invade the sanctuary of the soul — the domain of God alone. **The powers that be, although ordained of God, have nothing whatever to do with the relations which men bear toward God.**

The law of God — summarized in the Ten Commandments — is spiritual and cannot be enforced by the sword. The law of man is civil and cannot reach the heart. Each must remain within its divine bounds.



The Sword and the Gospel

The sword of Caesar is material; the sword of the Spirit is moral. The two are never to be confused. The former restrains violence; the latter convict’s sin. The first preserves justice; the second creates righteousness.

When the sword defends liberty, it is the minister of God. When it enforces worship, it becomes the arm of the beast. The state is God’s servant when it protects — Satan’s instrument when it compels.

Christ did not abolish the sword; He put it in its place. “Put up again thy sword into his place,” He told Peter. There is a lawful place — to defend life, not to destroy conscience. Governments that forget this distinction will drink from the same cup of wrath as Babylon the Great.

The Warning of Prophecy and the Witness of History

The alliance of church and state always ends the same way — in persecution. Babylon burned the faithful; Persia outlawed prayer; Rome crucified the Son of God; medieval Europe drowned reformers in blood.

The beast of Revelation 13 is not merely a power of the past; it is a principle — the exaltation of human authority above divine command. Its image arises whenever religion wields the sword of the state to compel the conscience of man.

The Last Message to the World

The Third Angel’s Message of Revelation 14 is Heaven’s protest against this final apostasy:

“If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark... the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.” — *Revelation 14:9–10*

This solemn warning is not against worship, but against *compelled* worship — worship directed by human law rather than divine command. The “faith of Jesus” and “the commandments of God” (v. 12) stand as the twin pillars of true religion: faith freely given, obedience freely chosen.

In contrast, the mark of the beast symbolizes submission to the authority of man in matters of faith. The Sabbath test — obedience to God’s commandment versus man’s decree — will once again divide the world.

A Call to Lawmakers and Leaders

To the legislators of every land, the call of conscience is clear:

“Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” — *Matthew 22:21*

Caesar’s duty is to protect civil rights — property, liberty, life. God alone governs worship, faith, and conscience. When the State invades that sacred realm, it rebels against its Creator.



America’s founders placed this very principle in the First Amendment:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

This is not merely political philosophy — it is the voice of prophecy. The final test will come when civil rulers are tempted to “make an image to the beast.” That moment will measure the moral courage of our leaders. Will they uphold liberty of conscience, or yield to popular pressure for religious legislation?

A Call to the Church

The church too must repent of her worldly ambition. When Christians seek the arm of the state to accomplish spiritual ends, they repeat Peter’s error — striking with the sword to defend the Prince of Peace and enforce morality by might and power.

Christ’s kingdom conquers not by decrees, but by the cross. The gospel triumphs through the Spirit, not the legislature. The church’s power is moral persuasion, not political enforcement.

Every appeal for state-enforced “Christian laws” is a confession of spiritual weakness — an admission that truth alone no longer convinces. The church that calls for the sword has lost faith in the Spirit.

The Final Choice

Every soul will soon be called to decide between two allegiances:

- To God, who rules by love and freedom.
- Or to man, who rules by law and coercion.

“Choose you this day whom ye will serve.” — *Joshua 24:15*

Closing Exhortation

To rulers, ministers, and citizens alike:

The time is at hand. The nations are preparing for the final union of politics and religion. The image of the beast is forming in law and public policy. Only those whose allegiance is to Christ’s kingdom will stand unmoved.

Let every state remember that its legitimacy depends on protecting, not violating, the liberty of conscience. Let every church remember that its power lies not in compulsion, but in the truth of the gospel.

The sword ordained of God defends life, liberty, and peace. When it enforces worship, it becomes the weapon of the dragon.

Let America, and every nation under heaven, remember that the greatest evidence of divine rule is freedom. For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is LIBERTY.

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