

## WORSHIP NOTES BY PASTOR JME

### RELATIONSHIP OF CHURCH AND STATE: FROM THE ROMAN EMPIRE TO THE "HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE"

During the first three centuries of the spread of Christianity, people who claimed to be followers of Jesus experienced persecution from the imperial government of the Roman Empire. This oppressive rule came to an end when Roman Emperor Constantine, who came into power in 306 A.D., converted to the Christian Faith. Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. in an effort to bring both religious and political unity to the empire. An important result of this council was the development of a creedal statement that defined the Christian doctrine of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This creed became known as the *Nicene Creed*.

Constantine and his successors continued to rule the Catholic Church of the eastern part of the empire as emperor-popes for hundreds of years. The power of the eastern church in the secular realm ended when the intertwined relationship of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the state was destroyed by the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 in Russia.

The Western, or "Roman," Catholic Church was ruled by popes, who claimed supreme religious and secular authority. This authority was often contested by secular princes who wanted to have control of the church in their individual realms.

In 800 A.D., Pope Leo III crowned the Frankish king, Charlemagne, as "Holy Roman" emperor. The European kingdoms that came under his rule were later referred to as the "Holy Roman Empire." Throughout the centuries, the empire was beset by civil wars, and the kingdoms and their boundaries changed. The kingdom that remained the longest and the largest was Germany.

By the time Martin Luther was born (1483), German prince-electors had become the highest-ranking noblemen of the empire, and they typically elected one of their peers as "king of the Romans." The "king" would later be crowned emperor by the pope. Papal coronations of emperors continued until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Holy Roman Empire was dissolved by Emperor Francis II on August 6, 1806 after Napoleon created the Confederation of the Rhine.

References used:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy\\_Roman\\_Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire)

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