

Part 6: The Church is Not the Kingdom of God

The idea that God's kingdom is presently on earth is foundational to everything stated thus far. The church's view of the kingdom is a geyser spewing out a constant flow of falsehood and confusion. If God's kingdom is presently on earth, that speaks to authority. Like all kingdoms, we expect to see its infrastructure and institutions. This one idea produces the vast majority of rational inconsistency in the church which itself gets a pass due to authority as truth.

Unfortunately, this one idea makes Christianity just another political group among many. The world is a divided kingdom by nature. The world is defined by division, and the church has chosen to enter itself into the fray. In this age, God's kingdom is not on earth, and the ekklesia's mission is narrowly defined as opposed to the church which must stick its nose in every human affair and issue.

There's battle lines being drawn
Nobody's right if everybody's wrong
Young people speaking their minds
Getting so much resistance from behind
It's time we stop, hey, what's that sound
Everybody look what's going down
What a field-day for the heat
A thousand people in the street
Singing songs and carrying signs
Mostly say, hooray for our side¹

Due to the church's kingdom theology, it is just another group in the worldly fray saying, "hooray for our side." Its endeavor is worldly and all over the map as the world finds a controversy and argument in every element of reality. But before we examine why the church insists on entering the fray, and how they choose to do it, or the means thereof, a word must be said on whether or not true Christians should be involved in world politics.

They should. God's creation drives all reality and that is unavoidable. It can be argued that the first religion presented in the garden by the serpent is the foundation for all religions and politics. This shouldn't surprise us; if this ruse fooled a being of superior intelligence such as Eve, why would the kingdom of darkness reinvent the wheel? All religions and politics find their least common denominator in the garden idea presented to Eve. That is, the knowledge of good and evil; that which can be surmised with the five senses is evil, viz, the material, and only the invisible is good. And, those who understand this should rule over those who cannot get past interpreting reality by what they experience in the earthy, corrupted, material world. They are "worldly minded" and not "spiritually minded."

This dichotomy, known primarily as Dualism, is the core element of religion and politics. It is the core value of all caste systems applied through elitism, expertism, and priests who portend to speak on God's behalf. It is fair to say that Dualism attempts to distort and reconfigure God's order of things. God's creation and order of things are good, and any distortion of those things, even outside of religious considerations, makes God angry. Regardless of what happened in the garden, God still values his creation. This is what redemption is all about; redemption is NOT salvation, it is the restoration of things that the garden deception made weak, but not "sinful." God still values His creation which of course includes humans.

¹ Buffalo Springfield: "Stop, Hey What's That Sound" circa 1967

Here, we will discuss a good example of things that transcend the secular and religious. That discussion concerns JUSTICE. Justice is very important to God because it speaks to creation's value. Indifference to justice outside of religious concerns does not reflect God's mentality. The Bible is replete with statements that demand justice for all humanity. What then, is the point to the discussion at hand? Politics involves the subject and execution of justice, or fairness, if you will, to a significant degree. And, it does behoove Christians for many, many reasons to facilitate a government that is God's kind of government. And what kind of government is that?

Romans 13:1 - Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. 4 For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. 6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor (NIV).

A government ordained by God is marked by those who reward "good" and punish "evil." Obviously, humanity is not obligated to obey a government such as the Nazi regime during WWII. However, governments that rule for the common good and uphold justice should be supported by Christians and the secular alike. It is interesting to note that during the New Testament era, Rome, for the most part, was such a government that brought about "pax romana" or "Roman peace." In addition, the New Testament is ripe with historical instances where Roman rulers showed forth equity and commonsense when faced with issues created by religionists. The lion's share of persecution against God's ekklesia during the New Testament era came at the hands of religious institutions. At any rate, Christians should participate in supporting governments that rule by good commonsense or what is "self-evident" to all people.

But this world is full of competing kingdoms. Considering the kind of kingdoms that were prevalent during ancient times, Rome was a blessing. Yet, Rome had to constantly contend with insurrections from political and religious concerns. This is the context from which the apostle Paul instructs the ekklesia of that day to not rebel against the government. Paul instructed the ekklesia of that day to not follow the habit of religion in being a thorn in the side of government as another competing interest among many.

1Thessalonians 4:9 - Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, 10 for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, 11 and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, 12 so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

1Timothy 2:2 - First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that

we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

2 Timothy 2:1 - You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. 3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. 5 An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 6 It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. 7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Before we move on to the church's kingdom theology as opposed to the true role of God's ekklesia in the world, what causes this world to be defined by division and a historical conquest mentality? Though the answer seems overly simplistic, it is, "sin." We observe something very interesting in the first gospel presentation recorded in the Bible, and that presentation was by God Himself:

Genesis 4:1 - Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man." 2 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. 4 And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. 6 Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it" (NIV).

This dynamic remains unchanged in the New Testament. Sin is presented as a slave master driven by a desire to control others. Sin uses wrongdoing to gain a foothold in a person's life and therefore crouches like a predator waiting for opportunity to pounce. Regarding sin's desire to control others, we have a like phrase in Genesis:

3:16 - To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."

This is the source dynamic that sends the kingdom of this world into a downward spiral of divisions upon divisions and divisions within divisions. The kingdom of this world is in a perpetual chaotic flux accordingly. Within every human being that makes up every element of society, to some degree, is a desire to have power over others. The excuses for this desire are myriad and the list increases with every year of human existence. Dualism insists that authority is the key to peace; if everybody would just submit to those who are able to grasp reality (those able to see beyond the material and are not enslaved to the five senses), there would be peace. The agenda itself set by the seers is irrelevant, just so everybody submits to it resulting in peace. The only problem follows: the seers disagree and fundamental

disagreement in number equals the number of the seers themselves; they disagree on almost everything.

Since peace or utopia is only possible if the great unwashed submit to the elitists, those not of the seer class of humanity who think they can know reality are a threat to humanity itself. Hence, for the most part, the state has condoned the suppression of free thinkers throughout history. In addition, many are taught to buy into this caste system and become state lackeys while applying their personal control-lust to their own limited world.

Humanity in general is susceptible to this submission ruse because the kingdom of this world made up of kingdoms all vying for control is endowed with fear. While sin drives control-lust in every human being walking upon the earth, BECAUSE of sin, mankind is dominated by fear. Why? Because intuitively, man knows that God's judgment for sin is imminent, and the violating of conscience because of the law written on the hearts of every individual can and does destroy many. Among the more than 200 diagnoses of mental illness, EVERY single one includes an element of fear. People are given to fear and have a propensity towards lack in self-confidence. Low self-esteem among the masses is critical for effective state control of the masses. This makes the sole purpose of the individual, and their value, dependent on their ability to contribute to the state. Authoritarians, tyrants, despots, or whatever nomenclature you prefer, play on the fear that humanity is inclined towards. Sin uses the fear that it is responsible for to control people. It is the source of its own supply and demand, and business has never been better.

It is interesting to note that the true gospel that transports us out of the world kingdom into God's kingdom cancels all judgement that condemns. True Christians should not be controlled by fear because we are not under judgement. The Bible informs us regarding existing desires which are "the law of sin and death," or "the law of the Spirit of life." The latter has "set us free" from fear (Romans 8:2) and to love aggressively with no fear of condemnation. It is also interesting to note that authentic Protestant orthodoxy, in its endeavor to deny the new birth, points to fear as a primary (and healthy) motivator for continuing one's faithfulness to the church to secure their election by God. The so-called Christian, who is still under condemnation, finds sanction in the church until the judgment day. This is definitive church orthodoxy so stated in its creeds and confessions.²

The kingdom of this world made up of competing kingdoms is driven primarily by control-lust necessitating authority with caste as its application. This system stands or falls on the total inability of mankind. The nanny state mentality did not come from nowhere. And the church is just another competing kingdom, made up of its own many kingdoms (denominations) in the worldly kingdom morass. As the philosophy author John Immel notes, church history is defined by political intrigue. Those executed for treason are relabeled as martyrs, and the Pilgrims were political refugees who came to America to do church-state better. Colonial America was a European style church-state in the strictest definition of the term. Most of the founding fathers of Americanism grew up under Puritan rule which did more than anything to incite the American Revolution.

This brings us to another blatant truth sunning itself in broad daylight: Protestantism was initiated in a church-state, and for the express purpose of being a church-state. Catholicism hasn't ever been shy about openly admitting its church-state status, and neither was its stepchild, that is, Protestantism, until Americanism confused the issue. With Protestantism's gleeful contemporary return to its "confessional roots," the church conveniently leaves out its church-state legacy. Returning the church to authentic Protestant orthodoxy, which is a present trend, necessarily includes the endorsement of a church-state. Official Protestant creeds and confessions that Protestantism was founded on include specific articles calling for the enforcement of church orthodoxy by the state. Aside from the John Calvin Institutes of the Christian Religion being written specifically to and for Frances I, King of France (1636), William

² Paul M. Dohse: "It's Not About Election" chapter 4; TANC Publishing, 2013.

Marshall's "The Principles of the Westminster Standards Persecuting"³ is most valuable in making the point. The book's inside cover quotes contemporaries of the Reformation to frame the thesis of the book:

Persecution is the deadly sin of the Reformed churches, that which cools every honest man's zeal for their cause, in proportion as his reading becomes more extensive—Hallam.

Regarding this thesis, every holocaust has had its cowardly bystanders wearing the uniform of the prosecutors while raising a safe objection. The following statement by John Owen exemplifies such:

I know the usual pretenses for persecution. "Such a thing is blasphemy," but search the Scriptures, look at the definitions of divines, and you will find heresy, in what head of religion soever be, and blasphemy very different. "To spread such errors will be destructive to souls." So are many things which yet are not punishable with death. Let him who thinks so go kill Pagans and Mahometans. "Such a heresy is a canker," but is a spiritual one, let it be prevented by spiritual means; cutting off men's heads is no proper remedy for it. If state physicians think otherwise, I say no more, but I am not of that college—Owen.

Restated another way, "I disagree, but if the state agrees with the church, well, then I must bow to their authority, but I disagree." And such will be the commentary of some contemporary Protestants if they ever obtain force from the state which apparently makes the sin sanctified—the fact that there are some goodhearted souls within the denomination. Good men should keep their peace while heads roll because to label the church as tyrannical would be a "generalization" and "guilt by association." The ideology is not to blame, only the men who do not see things exactly the way others within the religion see it. As mentioned earlier in this work, diversity of opinion is used to license any and all absurdities that defy commonsense.

In regard to the Scottish Reformers, Marshall stated the following:

The Protestant Reformers in leaving Rome did not leave all Romanism behind them. In particular, they brought with them the prosecuting principles of Rome, and worked them freely and vigorously in support of the Reformed faith. They changed the Pope but not the popedom,

And....

Rightfully and nobly did the Protestant Reformers claim religious liberty for themselves; but they resolutely refused to concede it to others.

John Knox, the vaunted Scottish Reformer, made it clear that no aberration of Reformed doctrine should be tolerated by the state. According to Marshall:

Knox, the father of the Scottish Reformation, and the presiding genius of it, brought with him to his native country the Geneva theocracy; and it was copied as closely as the differences between the Swiss republic and the Scottish monarchy would permit....Such was the Church and State system of the Scottish Reformers in those days; and hence the melancholy selections from their history which I have now to offer.

The first Parliament, in which the Reformers became ascendant, was held in 1560. It adopted a Protestant Confession; a "summary of tenets constituting the essence of the Reformed religion;" one of the "tenets" being the theocratic one, "that to kings and rulers it belongs to reform and purify religion."

Marshall continued to state that the same Confession prohibited the practice of Catholicism or any other

³ William Marshall, D.D., *Coupar – Angus*. Edinburgh: William Oliphant & Co. 1873

aberration of the Reformed gospel, and such violations would entail confiscation of goods for the first offence, “suffering” and “banishment” for the second, and “death” for the third violation. Marshall then concludes:

Thus the very first legislation of the Scottish Reformers was deeply tainted with persecution.

Marshall continues:

The same year [1561] the First Book of Discipline was framed by a Committee of the Kirk, of which John Knox was a leading member....”Seeing that Christ Jesus is He whom God the Father hath commanded onely to be heard and followed of His sheepe, we judge it necessary that His gospell be truly and openly preached in every church and assembly of this realme; and that all doctrine repugnant to the same be utterly repressed, as damnable to men’s salvation....that the obstinate maintainers and teachers of such abominations ought not to escape the punishment of the civill magistrate....We dare not prescribe unto you what penalties shall be required of such, but this we fear not to affirm, that the one and the other deserve death.”

Apart from this committee, according to Marshall, Knox stated the following in a public sermon:

None provoking the people to idolatry ought to be exempted from the punishment of death.

Marshall also included an assessment of how the Scottish Reformers took control of the Scottish press:

Our early Reformers claimed like control over the press. “Immediately after the Reformation, the General Assembly took particular notice of the four printing presses then in Scotland, and they were careful that nothing should be published, at least by ministers, till it was communicated to the brethren, and revised by persons appointed by them.”

The Westminster Confession itself was, according to its 1647 published cover, "by authority of Parliament" and presented to "both houses" thereof. Again, the typical slight of hand used by church is to point to the division it creates to be accountable to no objective truth. Many will quickly point out that the Baptist Confession of 1689 ratcheted back the language concerning state enforcement of church orthodoxy, but nevertheless changed nothing because state laws regulating matters of religion was still the norm. In other words, church confessions were not the final word on what was actually lawful. Various toleration movements changed the tone of many confessions but changed very little until after the American Revolution which completely dismantled the Colonial church-state. In the final analysis, the spirit of church-state is still deeply ingrained in the church psyche.

Former Governor and presidential candidate Mike Huckabee once said, "God's law is higher than man's law." Indeed, there is a very fine line between a Representative Republic and a church-state; all that is required is a majority of legislators who ape Huckabee's mentality. The problem is, God's law is then determined by what the legislators say it means which brings us back to square one: authority as truth. As it is, the clear majority of church parishioners think it would be wonderful if every sitting U.S. Congressman and Senator were professing Christians. This is because churchgoing professing Christians think the church is God's preordained representation of His kingdom on earth. James Madison, in his Memorial in Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments (1786), stated the following:

Because experience witnesseth that ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of Religion, have had a contrary operation. During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution.

Because...what influence in fact have ecclesiastical establishments had on civil society? In some instances they have been seen to erect a spiritual tyranny on the ruins of civil authority; in many instances they have been seen upholding the thrones of political tyranny; and in no instance have they been seen as the guardians of the liberties of the people.

The idea that God's kingdom is presently on earth, aside from what we just finished observing, creates much confusion among those considering God. While the church scholars wax eloquent about God being all powerful, and sovereign, and His kingdom this, and His kingdom that, and regarding God being in total control, it begs the question among reasonable thinkers, "Where is it?" Where is God's power? Where is His control? There is, perhaps, no other idea propagated by the church that alienates people from God more than its kingdom theology. The idea is the root cause of the question, "Why did God allow"...fill in the blank. The doctrine invokes anger towards God and lowers Him to just another competitor among earthly sovereigns.

Worse yet, God's kingdom does not seem to fare well in respect to the other kingdoms. And apparently, He is a poor judge of men considering who He has preordained to manage His earthly kingdom over the years. Not only is the vaunted Puritan theocracy out of business, but John Calvin's Geneva which afforded its citizens few liberties coupled with harsh sentences that didn't come close to fitting the crimes. Those who disagreed with Calvin were fortunate to escape severe punishments in exchange for merely having their tongues impaled with spikes. Supposed leaders of God's kingdom had a particular intolerance for women who didn't know their place. Witch mania resulted in the entire population of women being wiped out in some European towns, and this was a practice that the Puritans brought with them over the pond as well. Historically, church has always been a hot mess.

In contrast, when God's kingdom truly comes, it is what we would expect from an all-powerful sovereign God. The present world, and its kingdom made up of competing kingdoms, is a hot mess because God's kingdom is not presently on earth; if it was, new and powerful meaning would be attributed to, "There's a new sheriff in town." When God comes to establish His kingdom on earth, it will be a quick and efficient apocalypse that will cause people's hearts to fail, and many others begging to be buried alive to hide them from "the Lamb's wrath." When Christ reigns in our kingdom from David's throne in Jerusalem, the Bible states that He will rule the world with a "rod of iron." That probably refers to a shepherd's staff that was normally made of wood. Justice and fairness will rule, and political correctness will find no refuge anywhere.

If the eschatology of God's kingdom is studied, we find a progression of God's restoral; Christ came first to conquer sin, sickness will be conquered in the Millennial Kingdom, and death will be conquered in the new heavens and new earth. In the Bible death is referred to as God's "last enemy." And, the dominant theme of God's restoral is unity and oneness. This is the contrast between the two kingdoms: one is predicated on unity and oneness while the other is predicated on division. One is bent on controlling others through authority condoned by condemnation and low self-esteem while the other is bent on mutual submission through love.

The church, as just another competing kingdom in the world morass of kingdoms, and just another divider accordingly, distinguishes itself as the only worldly kingdom that actually wages war against the Holy Spirit that it claims to love. One of the most dominant themes of the Bible is the following centerpiece: making the Jews and Gentiles one body in Christ through the baptism of the Spirit. Therefore, our kingdom, that is, God's kingdom, is future, and Jewish. Herein is the crux of election: it involves things predetermined by God that are unchangeable as opposed to the traditions of men. The church makes that fact a matter of individual preselection for salvation or damnation and then goes about voiding the word of God with its traditions.

And, Israel was elected as God's future kingdom. As the world's resident kingdom divider specializing in obstructing the work of the Spirit, the founding fathers of the church set out to do just the opposite; to divide Jew and Gentile and join in with the world for purposes of wiping Israel off the face of the earth. The church can run from this documented history, but it cannot hide from it. And as a consummate divider using division as an excuse for its rotten fruit, this wasn't just a Catholic thing, it was every bit Protestant as well. A tree is known by its fruit, and no fruit is indicative of an evil tree more than anti-Semitism. The church should be summarily rejected on this fact alone.

Two primary theologians of the Roman church, that is, the selected epicenter for authority over the ekklesia shortly after the departing of Paul and Peter, emerge and seek to demonize the people of God making a strong distinction between the Jews and Christianity. Remember, one of the primary objectives of the Holy Spirit was to make Jew and Gentile ONE body in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:11-22). This is/was one of the primary objectives of the Holy Spirit. The church's two foundational theologians in its 4th century infancy were St. Augustine of Hippo, and St. Jerome. Both are Saints and Doctors of the Roman Catholic Church. However, Protestant scholars lay claim to these same men as their foundational Doctors of Grace as well.

“Church Fathers like St John Chrysostom, St Ambrose, St Jerome and St Augustine (second only to St Paul as a Christian authority for the Western world) had by the end of the fourth century AD crystallised a demonic image of the Jew who combined superhuman malevolence with total spiritual blindness...The monkish, ascetic St Jerome, embittered by the spectacle of successful missionizing in Antioch by the large Jewish population, denounced the synagogue in these terms: ‘If you call it a brothel, a den of vice, the Devil’s refuge, Satan’s fortress, a place to deprave the soul...you are still saying less than it deserves.’”⁴

“This theology is for the first time institutionalized in the fourth century AD, when Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire.”⁵

Author John Immel, in his conference presentation⁶ regarding the use of Martin Luther's theology by the Nazis, cites quotations from Luther's publication, *The Jews and Their Lies*:

Shame on you, you damned Jews, that you dare to apply this earnest, glorious, comforting word of God so despicably on your mortal greedy belly and that you are not ashamed to display your greed so openly. You are not worthy of looking at the outside of the Bible, much less of reading it. You should read only the Bible that is found under the sow’s tail, and eat and drink the letters that drop from there.

They curse us goyim (literally means ‘nations’ but is used as a pejorative for all non-Jews). In their synagogues and in their prayers, they wish us every misfortune. They rob us of our money and goods through their usury, and they play on us every wicked trick they can. And the worst of it is that they still claim to have done right and well, that is, to have done God a service. And they teach the doing of such things. No pagan ever acted thus. In fact, no one acts thus except the devil himself, or whomever he possesses, as he has possessed the Jews.

To divide Jews from the body of Christ is an audacious throwing down of the gauntlet against the Holy Spirit. But Jerome and company were far from going to war with the Holy Spirit on that front alone.

⁴ Robert S. Wistrich: *Anti-Semitism|The Longest Hatred*; Pantheon Books 1992, p. 17

⁵ *Ibid* p. 19

⁶ <https://paulspassingthoughts.com/2017/03/13/from-the-reformation-to-the-third-reich-protestantisms-impact-on-western-culture-part-6/>

Though an aside from the kingdom subject, and a risk of suggesting that the church only wages war against the Spirit on a handful of fronts, Jerome set out to translate the Bible in the bureaucratic language of the empire and make it inaccessible to the laity and common people via the Latin Vulgate. Eventually, Rome made it against the law to translate the Bible or even teach from it unless accredited by the church upon pain of death. This was Rome's mandate for about 1000 years:

Decree of the Council of Toulouse (1229 C.E.): "We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old or New Testament; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books."

Ruling of the Council of Tarragona of 1234 C.E.: "No one may possess the books of the Old and New Testaments in the Romance language, and if anyone possesses them he must turn them over to the local bishop within eight days after promulgation of this decree, so that they may be burned..."

Proclamations at the Ecumenical Council of Constance in 1415 C.E.: Oxford professor, and theologian John Wycliffe, was the first (1380 C.E.) to translate the New Testament into English to "...helpeth Christian men to study the Gospel in that tongue in which they know best Christ's sentence." For this "heresy" Wycliffe was posthumously condemned by Arundel, the archbishop of Canterbury. By the Council's decree "Wycliffe's bones were exhumed and publicly burned and the ashes were thrown into the Swift River."

Fate of William Tyndale in 1536 C.E.: William Tyndale was burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English. According to Tyndale, the Church forbid owning or reading the Bible to control and restrict the teachings and to enhance their own power and importance.⁷

The church also took it upon itself to establish the formal canon of the New Testament which was only in the form of letters written by the apostles and others. There were many copies of these letters circulated among the laity and commonly accepted as Scripture:

2 Peter 3:15 – And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Colossians 4:15 – Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16 And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. 17 And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 14:37 – If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. 38 If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

Therefore, the idea that there was no agreed upon collective Scripture for New Testament era believers is unfounded, and the body of Christ hardly needed Gnostic academics to tell them what was inspired and not inspired. Nevertheless...

The Council of Nicaea called by the Emperor Constantine met in 325 C.E. to establish a unified Catholic Church. At that point no universally sanctioned Scriptures or Christian

⁷ Huffington Post .com: Why Christians Were Denied Access to Their Bible for 1,000 Years; Bernard Starr, Ph.D. 5/20/2013.

Bible existed. Various churches and officials adopted different texts and gospels. That's why the Council of Hippo sanctioned 27 books for the New Testament in 393 C.E. Four years later the Council of Carthage confirmed the same 27 books as the authoritative Scriptures of the Church.⁸

And...

In 382, Pope Damasus therefore commissioned Jerome (c. 347-420) to translate the Bible into Latin, a task which took him twenty years to complete. This Bible came to be known as the *versio vulgata* (common translation) and became standard for the Western Church.⁹

Attempting to obstruct the Spirit's work in baptizing the Jews and Gentiles into one body and confiscating the sword of the Spirit from the laity (remember, the word is the "sword of the Spirit" [Eph 6:17] and what the Spirit uses to sanctify [John 17:17]) are two examples among many, but we will conclude this line of thought with the church's foundational attempt to divide genders. It is to be expected that gender equality is a huge issue in the church today giving rise to so-called Christian Feminism because like all worldly kingdoms, it's all about the divisiveness. There is only one group of people that the church fathers hated more than the Jews; women. In the same way hatred for the Jews began with the church fathers and manifested in the Protestant Reformation 1500 years later, the same can be said for the church's hatred for women.

Many avenues regarding church hatred towards women could be explored, but we will begin with what is sometimes referred to as the "witch wars." The war declared on witches by the Catholic Church and the Reformers resulted in casualties that surpass many, many wars waged throughout history. And, to say the least, the due process of law that determined who was a witch was, well, shall we say, a little lean. Since it was thought that 90% of all witches were women, if you were a woman, and dragged into court, actually, the "Kirk" from which we get the word, "church," your gender was a bad start to the process.

The climate of fear created by churchmen of the Reformation led to countless deaths of accused witches quite independently of inquisitional courts or procedure. For example, in England where there were no inquisitional courts and where witch-hunting offered little or no financial reward, many women were killed for witchcraft by mobs. Instead of following any judicial procedure, these mobs used methods to ascertain guilt of witchcraft such as "swimming a witch," where a woman would be bound and thrown into water to see if she floated. The water, as the medium of baptism, would either reject her and prove her guilty of witchcraft, or the woman would sink and be proven innocent, albeit also dead from drowning.¹⁰

It all started with the Catholics first, and the Reformers later joined the campaign that supplemented the inquisition:

Pope John XXII formalized the persecution of witchcraft in 1320 when he authorized the Inquisition to prosecute sorcery..." Thereafter papal bulls and declarations grew increasingly vehement in their condemnation of witchcraft and of all those who "made a pact with hell." In 1484 Pope Innocent VIII issued the bull *Summis desiderantes* authorizing two inquisitors, Kramer and Sprenger, to systematize the persecution of witches. Two years later their manual, *Malleus Maleficarum*, was published with 14

⁸ Huffington Post .com: Why Christians Were Denied Access to Their Bible for 1,000 Years; Bernard Starr, Ph.D. 5/20/2013.

⁹ gbgm-umc.org: Three Early Biblical Translations.

¹⁰ Helen Ellerbe: The Dark Side of Christian History, Chapter Eight: 1450 – 1750 C.E.

editions following between 1487-1520 and at least 16 editions between 1574-1669. A papal bull in 1488 called upon the nations of Europe to rescue the Church of Christ which was “imperiled by the arts of Satan.” The papacy and the Inquisition had successfully transformed the witch from a phenomenon whose existence the Church had previously rigorously denied into a phenomenon that was deemed very real, very frightening, the antithesis of Christianity, and absolutely deserving of persecution.

It was now heresy not to believe in the existence of witches. As the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum* noted, “A belief that there are such things as witches is so essential a part of Catholic faith that obstinately to maintain the opposite opinion savors of heresy.” Passages in the Bible such as “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” were cited to justify the persecution of witches (Ibid.).

The following gives us an idea as to the extent that this was going on:

Contemporary accounts hint at the extent of the holocaust. Barbara Walker writes that “the chronicler of Treves reported that in the year 1586, the entire female population of two villages was wiped out by the inquisitors, except for only two women left alive.” Around 1600 a man wrote:

Germany is almost entirely occupied with building fires for the witches... Switzerland has been compelled to wipe out many of her villages on their account. Travelers in Lorraine may see thousands and thousands of the stakes to which witches are bound (Ibid.).

The general mentality of the Eve motif was part and parcel with the war on witches:

The witch hunts were an eruption of orthodox Christianity’s vilification of women, “the weaker vessel,” in St. Peter’s words. The second century St. Clement of Alexandria wrote: “Every woman should be filled with shame by the thought that she is a woman.” The Church father Tertullian explained why women deserve their status as despised and inferior human beings:

“And do you not know that you are an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil’s gateway: you are the unsealer of that tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God’s image, man. On account of your desert that is, death even the Son of God had to die.”

Others expressed the view more bluntly. The sixth century Christian philosopher, Boethius, wrote in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, “Woman is a temple built upon a sewer.” Bishops at the sixth century Council of Macon voted as to whether or not women had souls. In the tenth century Odo of Cluny declared, “To embrace a woman is to embrace a sack of manure...” The thirteenth century St. Thomas Aquinas suggested that God had made a mistake in creating woman: “nothing [deficient] or defective should have been produced in the first establishment of things; so woman ought not to have been produced then.” And Lutherans at Wittenberg debated whether women were really human beings at all. Orthodox Christians held women responsible for all sin. As the Bible’s Apocrypha states, “Of woman came the beginning of sin/ And thanks to her, we all must die” (Ibid.).

And the Reformers were completely onboard with the Eve rage of that Day:

St. Augustine of Hippo (354 to 430 CE). He wrote to a friend:

“What is the difference whether it is in a wife or a mother, it is still Eve the temptress that we must beware of in any woman.....I fail to see what use woman can be to man, if one

excludes the function of bearing children.”

Martin Luther (1483 to 1546):

“If they [women] become tired or even die, that does not matter. Let them die in childbirth, that’s why they are there.”

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 to 1274 CE):

“As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from a defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence.”

But the Reformers did more than stand on the sidelines and cheer. While doing a pdf document search on Witch Hunts In Europe And America, An Encyclopedia by William Burns, “Calvin” got 32 hits including the following:

There are about five hundred recorded witch trials in the 150 years after Calvin’s arrival in Geneva. Given the high rate of survival of Genevan records, this probably represents the majority of cases that occurred. The witch-hunt in Geneva peaked relatively early, in the 1560s and early 1570s. The records show that, outside the witch-hunt of 1571, Geneva had one of the lowest rates of execution in Europe, about 20%. Geneva magistrates seem to have used banishment as an alternative to execution in cases where the guilt or innocence of the subject was in doubt, rather than following the practice of other areas which simply tortured until a confession was obtained. The relatively mild torture practiced by the Genevans kept individual witch cases from developing into large hunts, and in some cases the magistrates were uninterested in following up accusations even when an accused witch named others...

The comparatively small kingdom of Scotland, whose legal system blended English and Continental elements, had from the mid-sixteenth century on a zealous Calvinist clergy intent on creating a godly society. It executed the most witches of any British region. The other British area of high witch-hunting activity was the legally anomalous Channel islands....

William Perkins was Elizabethan England’s leading Calvinist theologian, and his posthumously published *A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608) had an unrivalled influence on subsequent Puritan demonologists in old and New England. Perkins’s approach was intellectually austere. He shunned reference to previous demonologists or actual cases of witchcraft, and based his argument almost entirely on the Bible, particularly Exodus 22.18, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” Perkins saw the essential nature of witchcraft as the making of the satanic pact, or “covenant,” which inverted the covenant relation between God and his elect that was basic to Puritan Calvinist theology. So closely does Perkins relate the witch’s contact with the Devil to the good Christian’s contact with God that he claims that to deny the possibility of physical contact with devils would be to deny the possibility of covenant with God. Perkins describes the making of the covenant as a simple agreement, without the necessity for the witch to sign in blood or kiss or have sex with the Devil. Other central aspects to the witch stereotype as the sabbat or the Devil’s mark he also ignored. Even maleficia played a minor role. Perkins’s principal target was not the maleficent witch, but the “good witch,” whom he described over and over as even more worthy of death than the evil witch. Perkins believed that all power to perform “magic” could only come from Satan.

William Perkins was the elder statesman of the very same Calvinist Puritans that boarded the Mayflower and landed on Plymouth Rock. John Robinson, their pastor and follower of Perkins, gave an impassioned speech to them before they boarded the ship. The Pilgrims, who were really political refugees, set up a Geneva style Calvinistic theocracy known as the American Colonies and was the spawning grounds for colonial Calvinism.

Not long after, in Salem Town and Salem Village, the infamous Salem witch trials occurred. The Puritan Cotton Mather was heavily involved and attended the execution of Salem Town's pastor, George Burroughs, who was accused of aiding and abetting a covenant of witches. An actual account of the sad proceedings follow:

George Burroughs was executed on Witches Hill, Salem, on the 19th of August, the only minister who suffered this extreme fate.

Though the jury found no witches' marks on his body he was convicted of witchcraft and conspiracy with the Devil. While standing on a ladder before the crowd, waiting to be hanged, he successfully recited the Lord's Prayer, something that was generally considered by the Court of Oyer and Terminer to be impossible for a witch to do. After he was hung, Cotton Mather, a minister from Boston, reminded the crowd from atop his horse that Burroughs had been convicted in a court of law, and spoke convincingly enough that four more were executed after Burroughs. Below is the original account as first compiled and published in 1700 by Robert Calef in *More Wonders of The Invisible World*, pages 103-104, and later reprinted or relied upon by others including Charles Wentworth Upham and George Lincoln Burr,

Mr. Burroughs was carried in a Cart with others, through the streets of Salem, to Execution. When he was upon the Ladder, he made a speech for the clearing of his Innocency, with such Solemn and Serious Expressions as were to the Admiration of all present; his Prayer (which he concluded by repeating the Lord's Prayer) was so well worded, and uttered with such composedness as such fervency of spirit, as was very Affecting, and drew Tears from many, so that it seemed to some that the spectators would hinder the execution. The accusers said the black Man [Devil] stood and dictated to him. As soon as he was turned off [hung], Mr. Cotton Mather, being mounted upon a Horse, addressed himself to the People, partly to declare that he [Mr. Burroughs] was no ordained Minister, partly to possess the People of his guilt, saying that the devil often had been transformed into the Angel of Light. And this did somewhat appease the People, and the Executions went on; when he [Mr. Burroughs] was cut down, he was dragged by a Halter to a Hole, or Grave, between the Rocks, about two feet deep; his Shirt and Breeches being pulled off, and an old pair of Trousers of one Executed put on his lower parts: he was so put in, together with Willard and Carrier, that one of his Hands, and his Chin, and a Foot of one of them, was left uncovered.

—Robert Calef

Now, in our day, and unbelievably, the proud children of this Calvinist legacy pronounce themselves the experts on "biblical manhood and womanhood." Specifically, an organization was formed in 1987 called "The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood." It is funded, organized, maintained, and directed by the who's who of the American Neo-Calvinist movement including, Ligon Duncan, Wayne Grudem, John Piper, and Al Mohler. They formed a statement/declaration on this subject that was so well attended by their forefathers called the "Danvers Statement." It is called the Danvers Statement because their declaration was finalized in—get this— Danvers, Massachusetts.

So, what is relevant about that? Well, Danvers is the modern-day location of Salem Town, the location

of the Salem witch trials. In fact, these men made it a point to have the meetings there that finalized the document.

Furthermore, the Reformers didn't get up one morning and decide to start burning witches—it all began with their Eve doctrine. And the proponents of the Danvers statement not only swear by the theological genius of Calvin, but what they teach about the fall and Eve's participation is word for word. Also, regarding treatment of women presently in the church, all that is missing is the gallows. Whether it be¹¹ women locked in basements as punishment, being spanked by their husbands, deprived of education, or their children being held hostage through manipulation of relatives by church elders—it is at least Witch Hunt Light.

The church is just another worldly kingdom saturated with division, closets full of skeletons, and political intrigue. The ekklesia has no fellowship with it, but what is our status here on earth if our kingdom awaits in heaven? The point is almost too simple: the Bible calls us "ambassadors" (2Corinthians 5:20). What is an ambassador?

An accredited diplomat sent by a country as its official representative to a foreign country.

An official envoy; especially: a diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government or sovereign as the resident representative of his or her own government or sovereign or appointed for a special and often temporary diplomatic assignment. An authorized representative or messenger. An unofficial representative traveling abroad as ambassadors of goodwill.¹²

The Bible uses other designations that demonstrate the following: the church is not our kingdom. We represent our own kingdom in heaven, and in our kingdom, we are all individual priests of a "holy nation."

1Peter 2:9 - But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once again, notice the group designation is chosen, or the means is chosen, and not individuals. We are His elect priests of a holy nation because we accepted the invitation to the wedding feast. Our priesthood refers to our bodies now being the temple of God, more accurately the Holy of Holies referring to being born anew. Hence, we are also...

1Peter 2:11 - Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

What is a "sojourner"? It refers to a temporary stay someplace. An exile is someone displaced from their homeland. Christ Himself said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world" (John 18:36). Regarding the so-called "Lord's Table," Christ said, "I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29). Our very breaking of bread and raising of the cup testifies that we are not of this kingdom or the church kingdom founded in the 4th century and married to the governments of this world.

By its own admission via its Dominion theology, the church is here as a kingdom among many to take over the world for God. Part and parcel with this will be an investment in infrastructure that competes with other worldly institutions. This whole idea that God's kingdom is here presently drives the church to ape the world in everything while labeling every assimilation as "Christian." Apart from innumerable

¹¹ Accounts found on various discernment blogs dealing with spiritual abuse in the church.

¹² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ambassador>

religious political parties, we seek to Christianize "every corner of the earth and human existence for God's kingdom"¹³

Instead of being goodwill ambassadors who represent God's kingdom and strive to adorn it with our love and good works, the church is here claiming to represent God as just another kingdom among many with a conquest mentality. Its goal, as stated orthodoxy, is to take over every vestige of culture, whether art, education, or government. Yet, Christians are dismayed at the persecution they endure in countries like China.

Has anyone ever given thought to the idea that competing kingdoms don't have a problem with God per se, but are leery of people who come as conquistadors and not ambassadors? How often is openness to the gospel shut down by the fear that the church simply wants to gain control of people's lives? And unfortunately, the fear is most likely valid.

¹³ Paraphrased statement by well-known pastor Doug Wilson.