

With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. (Psa 119:10)

Here we are at the close of 2023, a most interesting and event-filled year, preparing to turn another page in human history. It is good for us all to take a minute to give thanks to God for all that He has done for us and consider how we might serve more perfectly in this coming year. I heartily encourage such reflection.

Today we will begin examination of the so-called Christian denominations to better understand their origins and beliefs looking to avoid errors and heresy.

Recapping my position – The church is an institution of God, not an institution of man, and must be regarded as such. These denominations are all institutions of men which treat the church not as the Bride of Christ, but an organization sustained by the strength of willful men. That is a grave error.

I'm not saying there haven't been men associated with these denominations over the ages that have spoken truth. I am not going to shorten the arm of the Lord here. He has had great truths spoken by men like Balaam, and He can call out from any part of mankind His messengers. I think it is important to remember that speaking some truth on a matter doesn't always equate to being one of His sheep, and if you're going to hold onto some denominational loyalty rather than the whole Truth of God, it isn't a great look for you

“And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (2Co 6:15-16)

These questions shed a great deal of light on the popular constructs of inter-denominational thinking, the whole “agreeing to disagree as long as we all say Christ” mentality. These aren't lightweight issues when you connect this dot to that of not conforming to the world. This “go along to get along” mantra is how the world thinks. Compromise and conformity to the world is not the way of Christ. That's important.

Though I could spend months dissecting Roman Catholicism, we're going to just spend a little bit on it to start things off.

History

The history that Catholics tell regarding their organization will depend upon what sect, branch, order or group you have telling the tale. The most widely told story is that Christ personally established the Catholic church here

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mat 16:17-19)

They claim that Peter, by the command of Christ is ordained the first Pope, and every Pope from that point forward has been a spiritual “successor” of Peter’s, with some mystical passing down of Peter’s apostolic faith and power.

It depends on which of their sects, bodies, or orders’ version of history you read on how this fairy tale shifts and changes, including what it is precisely that gets passed down from one Pope to another. The fact that there is no unity on such a seemingly crucial point should be an obvious indicator this is not Christ’s church.

Key Beliefs

The billion or so Catholics in the world claim to be believers in Christ, but exactly what they believe about Christ is rather difficult to pin down, because it changes based on the whims of men and the age in which their “councils” meet. While our understanding of Christ and doctrine certainly grows with more spiritual maturity and light, there is a fundamental truth that must be respected

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” (Heb 13:8)

If your explanation of Christ requires Him to change, it’s a bad explanation. For a most recent example, consider the declaration, called a “doctrinal dicastery” that Pope Francis just made, declaring that same-sex couples can be “blessed” by a priest, because that’s not really marriage. This example on its own should loudly scream to you that this is not Christianity. How as “Vicar of Christ” can you **ble**ss sin?

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa 5:20)

WOE unto them! There is no compromise, no middle ground to be searched out here. This is in my mind one of the key things to look at – is there right and wrong in the church or is everything malleable. From the actual beginning of the Catholic church, when Constantine joined church and state, this organization has held that God’s doctrines are malleable and can be manipulated at the desire of men.

There are so many doctrines that have been made up over the centuries by Catholic leadership which are totally void of any Biblical foundation. The declarations of holy days (think Xmas), the naming of people as saints (as though that can accomplish something in Heaven or helps men still on earth), the destruction of the ordinances, selling of indulgences, purgatory, Mary worship, infant baptism, human intercession, etc. I could quite literally go on for days.

Perhaps the grandest fairy tale Catholics rely on is this invention of the Pope, the so-called Vicar of Christ, Successor to Peter. There is absolutely no establishment of this in Scripture. Remember, Christ exhorted against hierarchy when the Apostles sought His declaration of who was the greatest among them, which is a very simple repudiation of Peter's pre-eminence (see Matthew 18 and Luke 9)!

To see the ridiculousness of this, consider this quote from CNewsLive a Catholic periodical, in their article titled "*Successors of Peter: A journey into the History of the Popes*":

"In the outskirts of the city of Rome, in the Appian way, stands the pilgrimage site, the Church named 'Domine Qua Vadis'. An ancient tradition exists behind its construction that has a strong connection to the History of Papacy. During Emperor Nero's religious persecution, the Apostle St. Peter was on his way trying to flee the city of Rome fearing death. Approaching the Appian Way, he came across a man carrying a cross. Recognizing the man as his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, the Apostle asked, "Where are you going with the cross?" Jesus replied, "I am going to Rome to be crucified again." His Master's words gave St. Peter a new understanding of his position, duty, and the necessity to bear witness to Christ. The realization that his duty was with his people to whom he had been entrusted, that he must sacrifice his life for them in their time of suffering and persecution, urged St. Peter to turn back and embrace Martyrdom. Although it is hard to establish evidence to this tradition, the history of the popes who succeeded St. Peter in the Church is apparent in the Apostle's response to Christ's invitation in the Appian way and his willingness to lay down his life for his people."

Do you see the work of Satan here? A made-up story that drips of heresy gains legitimacy by being a "tradition". Imagine Neil Degrasse-Tyson in a documentary explaining nuclear fusion by saying "it's hard to establish that the atoms actually smash together, but the history of the monkeys on Mars is apparent in the way that the bananas are positioned on the table" and doing it with a serious face and nodding like he didn't just speak nonsense – so you're the idiot when you are confused. Catholics base the core authority of their entire religion on a fairy tale about a clear lie!!

The Catholic monstrosity has never been about worshiping Christ. It has always been about will worship, re-establishing the Jewish burdens of worship with some new labels and rites to make it "Christ-ish". The evidence is all around to see. From the attempt at making Romanism a theocracy under Constantine to their gawdy church buildings seeking to recreate the temple of Solomon. You can see it in their poor attempt at faking the Levitical priesthood, the types of which were fulfilled by Christ and not carried forward. They try to emulate the singers of Solomon's temple with their ostentatious "choirs", rejecting the simple Psalms God has provided as inadequate and

“too simple” to properly praise Him. Literally nothing in the Bible is sufficient for Roman Catholics, it must all be augmented and “improved”.

Objectively, Catholicism is about separating men from God and injecting many mediators and “solutions” to sin, because the single mediator and grace of God is insufficient in their economy. Men must augment what God has made. Why else would you need to pray to Mary if Christ was sufficient? It is the embodiment of “ye shall not surely die” (Gen 3:4).

So many things could be pointed at as examples of how this cannot be Christianity. I haven’t even touched on their multitude of idols, their murder of maybe hundreds of millions of people over the course of the “Holy” Roman Empire, the Spanish Inquisition, and their militaristic “conversion of savage nations”. Do I need to say anything about the enabling and hiding of the pedophile machine that has consumed their priesthood for decades? We could consume months of time tearing down all the small and large heresies of what is marketed as the “Mother Church”.

The false nature of Catholicism matters so much because of this “Mother Church” view the world has. This false view is the source of the many comments about how we don’t “represent Christianity”. The world’s view of what Christianity is has been perverted by Satan, largely by Catholicism! Our *ecclesia* is no descendant of any human organization. It is an iteration of the mystery Paul speaks of – the Bride of Christ – which has been sustained miraculously since His ascension. Here’s a news flash – we **don’t** represent what the world sees as Christianity. We represent Christ.

Each of these off-shoots, or denominations, is tainted by these origins because none of them put off the bondage of one falsehood or the other, whether it is a massive hierarchy and fleshly governance structures, mishandling the ordinances or something else. As I intend to hit in the future, even the “reformationists” and “protestants” have vestiges of this man-made religious system intertwined into them, and as we well know

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Gal 5:9)

Time would fail and patience would be exhausted with tearing this great whore down any further today, so we will move on.

The next supposed Christian denomination is the first divergence from Catholicism – Eastern Orthodoxy. The Eastern Orthodox church has many branches, including the Greek, Russian, Serbian, UK, and American Orthodox “churches”. Where Roman Catholicism claims roughly 1 billion members, Eastern Orthodoxy claims somewhere in the neighborhood of 220 million across all its various groups.

There is no pope of the Eastern church. Instead they call themselves a “communion of autocephalous churches”, and each of these is headed by a bishop overseeing a synod, which is made of up of lots of other regional churches. Their leader is called an

“ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople” who is regarded as “*primus inter pares*” or “first among equals”. This individual seems to me to make all the calls, so in essence, is a pope of sorts, though not claiming exclusive authority.

History

Eastern Orthodoxy is so named to distinguish it from the western, or Rome-led churches. It is sometimes called the Orthodox Catholic Church as opposed to the Roman Catholic Church.

In the fairy tale told by “church historians”, up until 1054, Christianity was one big religion, encompassing the entirety of the Roman Empire. The church was growing by leaps and bounds across all of Europe and Asia, and down into Africa; everywhere the Roman Empire went, Christianity went with it and overcame paganism. Of course, we know it “overcame” paganism by incorporating and rebranding it. Everything was supposedly grand and glorious until 1054, when the Eastern churches split off from Roman Catholicism to go their own way.

By the time this split happened in 1054, the massive organizational structure we see in these churches had more than taken root, and there were layers upon layers of bureaucracy that separated the people in the pews from the leadership, with all the arrogance, greed and power-seeking that normally entails; these layers brought about inter-office politics and disagreements. One major area of disagreement came as the “patriarchs” of the Eastern churches recognized Constantinople (now Istanbul) as the seat of authority, where the western churches were declaring it to be Rome, and the Bishop of Rome (i.e., the pope) as its titular head.

In reality, there wasn’t one single big split. The “Great Schism” of 1054 was the culmination of a number of smaller schisms that ended with everyone taking their toys and going home in a great and undeniable display of Christian unity. The schisms that brought about the Eastern Orthodox church were all fleshly, ridiculous arguments over things that are easily discernable from Scripture – if you bother to use it as your source, which they didn’t.

I’ll give you one example of these schisms, one so important it has its own name – the Filioque schism. It supposedly centers around the nature of the Holy Spirit and is central to the theology of the trinity (according to “scholars” on both sides of the argument). So you might want to know what scriptural understanding they were trying to come to a consensus on? What key point that one of the divinely inspired authors made was confusing and leading to the contention? What verse were they hung up on? It was none of these things.

They were arguing about something called the Nicene Creed. In a blazing example of just how insufficient God and His scriptures are to these supposed believers, they were arguing over whether the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father” (what the Eastern

churches declare) or “proceeds from the Father and the Son” (what the Western churches declare).

I want you to wrap your minds around this fully. These guys are arguing over a rote chant made up at the councils of Nicea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD) that contains not one iota of Bible in it. This wasn't about actual doctrinal understanding, not about how to help the body more perfectly seek out holiness, not about how to properly address the fiery darts of the adversary. No, this was an argument about how to wordsmith the rote “declaration of faith” used in their liturgical services (and later forced upon their members in lieu of the Bible). Instead of teaching people what the Scripture actually says, these supposed leaders are busy making war over something they made up and rather than seeking unity, they violently split, each “excommunicating” the leader of the other group. This is complete confusion. This is what the world holds up as Christianity!

It would be like this group of people getting so worked up over how we word something on the website that we splintered because of it. I'm not ruling out that is possible in the flesh, but at some point, if the Holy Spirit is with you, which is always the case for the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ, this simply isn't going to be the result of any issue. I point out again that this is the great error of these denominations – they are built by, for and of men with no regard to the sustaining power of the Holy Ghost to keep Christ's church alive and in unity in the earth.

Key Beliefs

Even within Orthodoxy the various churches have differences in behavior, doctrine and practice, but for these purposes we will treat them as one group. They are more honest than Roman Catholics in that they right up front admit that Scripture isn't sufficient to understand the will of God. They instead hold that

“The Holy Scriptures (as interpreted and defined by church teaching in the first seven ecumenical councils) along with Holy Tradition are of equal value and importance.”

Holy Tradition? Equal value? It's like they never read this

“Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.” (Mar 7:7-8)

The Eastern Orthodox churches also believe in transubstantiation, infant baptism, idolatry (they call it “veneration of icons”), saint worship and they say this very telling thing about salvation:

“Salvation is a gradual, life-long process by which Christians become more and more like Christ. This requires faith in Jesus Christ, working through love.”

So basically, you can save yourself if you try to become like Christ. Apparently, their version of the Bible doesn't have this verse

*“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus **before the world began,**” (2Ti 1:9)*

I hope you can see that there is nothing “orthodox” or “catholic” about either the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox churches; nor is there anything Christian. They are inventions of men, sustained by men, malleable and shaped by fleshly lusts.

Which brings me to my last feature denomination of the day, one that it should be blatantly obvious is not Christianity – the Anglican Church, a/k/a the Church of England, a/k/a the Episcopal Church. For the purposes of this discussion, I'm going to consider Episcopalians and Anglicans as one in the same. For purposes of doctrinal and structural discussion, they are. There are some structural differences since there is no state church in America, but for these purposes they are the same.

History

The history of the Anglicans is blessedly simple. England was an officially Catholic state for most of its political history, having been part of the Roman Empire. Like most nations springing from the Roman Empire, there was a deep intertwining of church and state. That intermingling is what drives the creation of the Church of England.

In 1533 King Henry VIII wanted Pope Clement VII to annul his 23-year marriage to Catherine of Aragon, because as a good Catholic he could not divorce her and she'd produced no heir. When Clement refused – not for reasons of righteousness, but because Charles V of Spain who was the so-called “Holy Roman Emperor” and Catherine's nephew, had laid siege to Rome and put Clement in a political pickle – Henry simply disconnected the state religious machinery from Rome and declared himself the “Supreme Head of the Church of England”, creating a new religion.

Upon this declaration, he divorced Catherine and married Anne Boleyn. There are a lot of machinations and much chicanery involved in all the details that are not important to the outcome, though perhaps interesting. The simple truth on its face is enough to discredit this 110-120 million member “church” as being Christian.

When the English colonized parts of what is now the United States, they brought with them their official religion, of course, and that is what became known as the Episcopal Church of the United States after the Revolutionary War. There are historically interesting details in the drama of this split and the attempt to name a state religion for the new United States, but they aren't important for these purposes.

So how can Episcopalians claim to worship Christ if their church was founded in 100% rebellion against these words **of Christ**.

“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Mat 19:6)

I think it's clear that the claim to be Christian is a lie. That's really all there is to it. This can't possibly be Christianity. Anglicanism is a “church” that started in the fairy tale of Roman Catholicism and splintered off to enable sinful behavior.

“And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” (2Co 6:15)

I know this might seem a bit repetitive already, but I have to keep coming back to the point of this – looking at what is marketed to **be** Christianity can be instructive for us when compared to what the Bible says. The form of the Bride must increasingly matter to us, because “the bridegroom cometh” (Matt 25:6).

Key Beliefs

Many Anglican beliefs align to those of Roman Catholicism, though they tend to use different terms and labels. They hold that the Bible is the inspired word of God, but don't put much store in the actual inspiration of it and lean more toward writings of the “church fathers” – whomever they decide to declare them to be in each generation. Much like the Roman Catholics, they tend to push people away from the Bible but toward their “Book of Common Prayer”. Like Catholicism (both types) the sufficiency of Christ and His Word is severely lacking in their estimation, and it must therefore be augmented and explained to the general idiots in the pews incapable of reading and discerning it for themselves, thus the Book of Common Prayer. Setting aside the Bible of course leads to this doctrinal statement, taken from the Episcopal Church's website:

“We believe that God loves you – no exceptions.”

I found this short article from Premiere Christian News in 2017 to be very, very telling as to how this might come to be the prime Episcopalian doctrine:

“Most people who call themselves Church of England Christians never read the Bible. That is one of the findings of a survey commissioned by the Church of England. Figures show that 60 per cent of self-declared followers of the Church admit they never read the Bible. Meanwhile, 36 per cent say they never attend church and one in three says they never pray. The figures from the ComRes survey show that many who claim to be Christian do not actually take part in many of the activities normally associated with the faith.”

Another of their core beliefs explains on its face that they are not actually Christian:

“It is a most invaluable part of that blessed ‘liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,’ that in his worship different forms and usages may without offense be allowed, provided the substance of the Faith be kept entire (Book of Common Prayer, p. 9)”

The liberty of Christ is not to do whatever you want and call it good; it does not give you liberty to **ignore His words and replace them**. Paul explicitly exhorts against taking this sort of undue liberty in Christ

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” (Gal 5:13)

I could go on and on with examples of their beliefs, but I’m not sure that it is fundamentally edifying to go much deeper, especially in the case of a religion founded to empower and enable adultery. It’s just too simple. Episcopalians and Anglicans are not Christians.

Besides not following the flesh, there are two significant risks these denominations show us. There are serious issues of what I’ll call entitlement and succession that permeate these organizations and represent significant danger to any body that believes they are part of the Bride of Christ.

What I mean by succession is the desire and drive to create “legacy”, “permanency of place” or “historical longevity”. One of the arguments I’ve read many times from Roman Catholics defending the claim of being Christ’s true church is that they have been around for so long, known on a global scale and had so many members. They argue that they haven’t been prevailed against by the gates of hell and disappeared, where so many others have, so they **must** be the one true church. Eastern Orthodoxy and interestingly Anglicans make similar claims. Essentially longevity equals truth.

I don’t believe that Christ’s church focuses on the question of **how** the church will be preserved. Christ’s church knows it will be preserved by the Holy Ghost! Prayerfully entreating the Lord for the continued holding of a candlestick is not the same thing as trying to manage or force it. Just like we cannot manage our children’s salvation, we cannot manage future generations of this body’s existence.

While we exhort each other to follow Christ, we aren’t doing it with the idea we are maintaining the organization for the future. When Christ told Peter that the gates of hell will not prevail against His church, the important point was **His church, not one group of people**. Our responsibility and our obligation to our Lord is to follow Him, to submit to His will and to broadcast His message as far and wide as we can. Spending one second of time on what is going to happen years from now is a waste of precious energy.

I am not concerned with tomorrow. I am concerned with today. I don’t know if this body will exist in 50 years should the Lord tarry. I cannot do anything about that except ask the Lord to be merciful to these loved ones I see before me and to continue with all of us.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Mat 6:33-34)

Seek first the kingdom and His righteousness, not your own longevity. The job of the current generation isn't to establish and attempt to somehow preserve things for future generations. The job of the current generation is to teach the next to keep God's law. To put His truth in front of your eyes and keep it there. What God does with any given body of believers over the course of generations is strictly His business. I hope this idea doesn't distress anyone, because it shouldn't. It is not by the will of men or their strength but by the grace of God that any flock is maintained over the course of generations.

Which leads to the danger of entitlement – the other side of the same coin.

These denominations believe they are entitled to call themselves Christians because they've sustained their lie for centuries. They don't profess any need for obedience, and show no evidence or works that actually show their faith objectively, as measured against the plumb line that Christ gave us

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (Joh 14:15)

Can anyone objectively argue that these denominations can lay claim to the keeping of His commandments – not their traditions or interpretations, but His words?

We must not become puffed up in our analysis of these things or so isolated in our world view that we allow ourselves to hold a sense of entitlement to a candlestick. We don't deserve it any more than any other fallen men. We should feel deeply privileged to carry the standard of the Lord of Eternity, but not behave as if we cannot lose it.

We must never approach this life with an “if not us, there's no one else” or an “I, even I only am left” attitude. This is a constant danger for us to face down. As soon as our thinking becomes about how long we're going to keep this running or how we've earned this place in the pantheon of God's jewels, we're on the way out – where is Corinth or Antioch or Ephesus today? This is one of the key reasons why watching for each other is so important. If we're all vigilant in our view of what this church is – and we've spent some time recently with good focus on the Bride of Christ – and we help each other to keep a right perspective, you don't end up in lala-land like we see with these denominations basing their entire belief system on lies. If we walk in the confidence – not arrogance – that Christ **will** have His church living and breathing in the earth no matter what men do, if we heed the warnings of Revelation 2 and 3, and if we pray without ceasing, there is good reason to believe the candlestick will continue to shine brightly from this place.

If, however, we sidetrack ourselves with thoughts of how wonderfully we've served all these years, how good our works are and make what we think are clever arrangements and plans to ensure things are set for the future we're in trouble. Consider how David numbered the people to see his strength and I think you get a sense of what we want to avoid here. Strength, perseverance and longevity comes from God not our works, plans and machinations.

This is why it is vital to understand what Christianity is and is not. We must constantly assess ourselves and our activity in ministering to each other and the world to gauge our alignment. As the Day of the Lord approaches, do we line up with what the word tells us? We must walk with meekness and humility, adjusting to the standard where adjustments are needful, carrying on where believe we align, and constantly encouraging and rejuvenating each other to persevere. We must stay the course with joy and thanksgiving. If we don't, what kind of service do we do our fellow man if we just let them wander around in the delusion they serve our King? What service have we done our King if we don't properly represent Him?

Let us consider and speak often one to another on these things.