

Prologue: Christendom

Contrary to what a great many people think, contrary to what a *growing* number of people think,¹ the time of the Fathers (men who lived, mainly, in the 2nd – 5th centuries, AD), by and large proved to be a time of disaster for the church² of Jesus Christ. While not all that they did was bad, nevertheless the Fathers took a series of steps which inflicted massive and lasting damage on the church. But one of their innovations stands head and shoulders above all the rest in terms of the devastating effect it has had on the gospel and the church of Jesus Christ. Another way of looking at this is to think of it as an envelope holding all the other innovations. So serious was this step, that some discerning believers down the centuries have given it a name: ‘The Fall of the Church’.

I am talking about the invention of Christendom. I fix no precise date to this. This is not possible. It didn’t happen overnight. It was a process. But in broad outline, within a few years of the so-called conversion of the Roman Emperor, Constantine, he and the Fathers invented (or did a great deal towards inventing) the monstrosity.³

¹ Witness the number of publications, articles and glowing reviews promoting the Fathers which are issued by Reformed and evangelical (some, to my amazement, baptistic) publishing houses and magazines.

² The word ‘church’ is fraught with difficulty. The New Testament word is *ekklēsia*, assembly; literally, ‘called-out ones’. Christendom has ruined this concept. To cope with Christendom’s ruination of *ekklēsia*, many talk of the ‘visible church’. This phrase is unbiblical and serves only to further confuse the issue. See my *Infant* pp118-119,237-263,297. Similarly, in my works I have had trouble with ‘church’ and ‘Church’. I admit a measure of inconsistency in all this.

³ Constantine’s Edict of Milan (AD313) officially ended the Roman Empire’s persecution of believers, and Christianity, receiving State recognition and acceptance, became its official

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What is Christendom? It is that grotesque, Satanic invention – that conglomeration of Church and State, in which citizenship and Church membership are one and the same – in which millions of unregenerate babies are ‘made’ ‘Christians’ by ‘priests’ or ‘ministers’ who exercise sacramental powers through baptism, these babies then being called ‘Christians’ and Church members, and treated as such at birth, throughout life, and at death.

Christendom has proved Satan’s master-stroke. By it, the arch-enemy of souls has deluded millions of men and women for 1800 years, even to their eternal ruin. He is making use of it to this very hour.

According to the new covenant, the church is confined to believers. The church exists for believers. For believers, I repeat.⁴ Of course, believers want to see sinners saved, but the notion that this means ‘churchifying the unchurched’ is utterly foreign to the New Testament. The first believers simply would not recognise the concept. The notion only came into existence with Constantine and Theodosius and the invention of Christendom. In the New Testament, evangelism – defining that as ‘gospelling the ungodly, unbelievers, pagans, the lost, the unconverted’ – is something done outside the ‘church’. ‘Church’ is for saints, and for saints only. Christendom has well-nigh ruined gospelling the lost, making it practically impossible.

Let me list some of the consequences of Christendom: veneration for buildings, priestcraft, pastorcrafft, clergy and laity, sacerdotalism, sacramentalism, vestments, ordination,

religion in AD380 under Theodosius I. The union of Church and State, coupled with infant baptism, produced Christendom, which, in turn, produced – and continues to produce – hordes of nominal but unregenerate ‘Christians’; that is, to coin a phrase, ‘Christendom Christians’. See my *Battle*. This is ‘the Fall’ in question.

⁴ I am not saying that no unbelievers ever get into churches, that churches are perfect. But the new-covenant position is that unbelievers, if they get in, sneak in, creep in by deception and delusion (Gal. 2:4; Jude 4). See my *Battle; Infant*.

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apostolic succession, the mixture of the regenerate and unregenerate in so-called visible churches, the idea of ‘attending church’, ‘public worship’. In short, Churchianity, institutionalised religion in the name of Christ.⁵

Let me say a little more about a couple of these things. Sacramentalism is the idea that certain men can convey grace to others by their actions, by their observance of rites and ceremonies. Sacerdotalists delegate their worship into the hands of others, who they feel are better able, more qualified, to carry it out for them. In such a system, worship is a specialised task best left to a special class – priests. Hence has arisen the unbiblical notion of the clergy and the laity. But in the new covenant there is no justification for sacerdotalism, or any notion of clergy and laity. The priesthood of all believers, as interpreted by the New Testament, certainly gives no warrant for sacerdotalism or its twin sister, sacramentalism.

Do not run away with the idea that sacramentalism and sacerdotalism are confined to Romanists. Far from it! The Reformers went badly astray at this point. Grievously clinging to the sacramental doctrine and practice they inherited from the Fathers and the medieval Church, time and again they had their backs to the wall, trying to fend off Roman taunts and challenges over the issue. Unsurprisingly, they were not always successful; unsurprisingly, since both sides were so strongly wedded to the Fathers and the medieval. And all this applies to more than the Reformed! Many evangelicals, dissenters, nonconformists, Baptists... like their bit of sacerdotalism.⁶

Having, in other works, dealt with Christendom’s ruination of ‘rites of passage’ at birth,⁷ I now turn my attention to the end of life. What disastrous role does Christendom play in death?

⁵ See my *The Pastor; Gadfly*.

⁶ Oh yes they do! As I have shown in my *Baptist Sacramentalism*, in recent years the weeds of sacramentalism and sacerdotalism have taken root and are growing vigorously, alas, among Baptists.

⁷ See, for instance, my *Infant; Battle; Conversion; Hinge; Luther*.