

## Discovering Directions for Future Christian Flourishing

*For Preserving and Advancing Christianity and Encouraging Interposition.*

Dick Pence – Coordinator, Big Sky Worldview Forum [rapence45@gmail.com](mailto:rapence45@gmail.com) 406-672-9207

### Introduction – A Call to Engagers

#### Situational Statement – Five Premises:

**#1.** Many Christians and others who value virtue realize that **America, as we have known it, is on a collision course with extinction.**

**#2.** **We are observing the collapse of a large portion of the previously orthodox church.** The long-coming split in the Evangelical and conservative Catholic churches is becoming visible as Progressive ideologies becomes more dominant.

**#3.** **The church is the institution charged with being salt and light** to the culture – preserving and illuminating its godly course. It is reasonable to conclude that the **demise of America is largely due to the failure of the churches** to influence the culture.

**#4.** **Without divine intervention,** our Representative Republic will disintegrate in the next few years.

**#5.** **These threats only increase our obligation to be diligent influencers in the culture while planning well now** for a different future. That future will demand total commitment. This will separate what [Rod Dreher](#) calls “*admirers*” from “*followers*” of the Christian faith.

#### The purpose of this invitation:

**The intent here is to foster a discussion to discover** how to live and thrive in a post-Christian America while remaining engaged – and - resisting tyranny when necessary.

**What will this require of those who make this choice?** What will the [Ecclesia](#) (Greek for church) – **the called-out-ones look like** under more difficult times? The web site GotQuestions.org makes an important point about this Ecclesia.

“It is important that the church today understand the definition of *ecclesia*. The church needs to see itself as **being “called out” by God.** If the church

wants to make a difference in the world, it must be **different from the world**. **Salt is different from the food it flavors**. God has called the church to be separate from sin ([1 Peter 1:16](#)), to embrace fellowship with other believers ([Acts 2:42](#)), and to be a light to the world ([Matthew 5:14](#)). God has graciously called us unto Himself: “‘**Come out from them and be separate,**’ says the Lord. ‘Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you’” ([2 Corinthians 6:17](#)).

Those who embrace this challenge simply can’t afford to take the summer off, as has been our custom. We may return to find much more ground has been lost.

**The Founders** clearly said that our **constitution was satisfactory only for a moral people** – a country where virtue is celebrated. Over the last century, forces have been at work to destroy virtue. **Virtually all of our “institutions”** – public education, universities, [corporations \[see ESG Scores\]](#) (virtually every decision by [major corporations](#) is evaluated by WOKE principles), media, [Progressive churches](#) and the Democratic Party - are now controlled by the far Left. This is an ideology dominated by Marxist-atheism. It is worth your time to consider what is called the [Long March Through the Institutions](#), a review of a Marxist invasion that has been very focused and intentional.

**The elitists in the Academy** led the charge to secularize our education system with this philosophy. It is a wonder that people of virtue still hold any positions of significance considering the indoctrination that has been in place for a century. This indoctrination has **spilled out of the academy** and now controls virtually all institutions. Most alarming is the reality that segments of this worldview **have now invaded large segments of what we would have labeled the Orthodox Church** even a few years ago.

### **Losing the Influence of Salt and Light – how Did We Get Here?**

**Finding fellowship that adheres to Orthodox Christianity** is becoming more difficult - at warp speed. In the last century, the *Pietist Movement* contended that the church had better avoid issues - especially [ones that are also in the political arena](#). The mantra has been “just preach the gospel.” The understanding of what “the Gospel” is also continues to be diluted and without questions; the **percentage of people in these churches that are *true followers* is plunging**. This mentality has led to most of the church avoiding teaching on or engaging in social

issues. Recent shifts have resulted in significant percentages of Evangelicals and [Catholics](#) see nothing wrong with embracing secularism – even Postmodernism.

In Ephesian chapter four, **Paul clearly defines a key function of the church.** He says **leadership is given “for the equipping of the people for the work of the ministry.”**

**Any particular fellowship is either a center for equipping or, by default, becomes a center for deception** – allowing the culture to be the ambassadors – the teachers of truth. Dietrich Bonhoeffer rightly said “*Silence in the face of evil is itself evil, not to speak is to speak*” – Isaiah 5:20 backs this up. There is an old saying that hits this right in the face, ***If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.*** If the church isn’t instructing (and preserving) the culture, secularist will - and they have.

**Realistically there appears to be little hope that the church as we now recognize it, will survive.** The Reformers spoke of a visible church and an invisible or real church. Charlie Kirk talks about the [Future of America and the church](#) pointing out that our failure begins because we don’t see church as “the called-out ones.”

**The current trajectory would suggest that much of the visible church will continue to capitulate to the Left’s dictates.** Orthodoxy may only survive in something akin to the underground church, house churches, and other venues committed to developing ***followers*** – not catering to ***admirers.***

**Let me be very clear.** Again, of all the institutions mentioned above – education, media, business etc. - **only one is tasked with being the light and salt to the world.** Only the church was assigned the task of *preserving* a culture influenced by virtue. That happens by it being light – by speaking truth to a deceived world.

Most of the church as we have known it has not done well at that. That may seem like a harsh accusation, but the important issue going forward is, is it accurate? While casting blame at this point is not constructive, it is constructive to consider how we got here. The points I will make below are very revealing of where the church – and most of the pastorate – have been for decades.

**My purpose is not to win them over; it is to help those who would consider a different path deal with reality.** Remember that old saying about doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result? Well, aren’t we supposed to

balance truth with grace? My sincere question back to those who would ask is this. **How far do we have to lower the bar of virtue and truth to get the support of those who have refused to speak in the past?** Maybe another 20 million babies? Or maybe punt on the institution of marriage and let the LGBTQ+ crowd who has set out to destroy it, have their way? [Throuples are already on the horizon](#) – will pastors speak out then or continue their battle cry “it’s all politics?”

**Attempting to change their minds - no matter how low we set the bar – will only cause strife.** This effort must focus on the future. To do that well, however, we must consider our past and learn from it. Let’s take a moment and look at how we have done and it’s not a pretty picture.

### **The Shape of the Past - Influence of the Church in American Culture:**

In most of the issues below, **individual Christians and Para church organizations** have been very influential. Sadly, most of the church leadership has not engaged. Most of the leadership has **refused to teach** and lead on these issues. Rarely would you encounter a thoughtful teaching (i.e., history, logic, scripture, reason, conclusions) on these subjects from the pulpit on Sunday morning.

**A fuller development** of this issue is in the **appendix** below. If you are serious about these issues, I would ask that you read it thoughtfully. Here we will only list the issues where the **voices and influencers of the light and salt have been absent** – with few exceptions.

**Slavery.** \*\*\*The **Civil Rights Movement**\*\*\***The Sexual Revolution** of the [60’s](#)\*\*\***Abortion** – Roe v. Wade of 1973\*\*\***No-Fault Divorce** of the 70’s\*\*\*The **Homosexual Movement**\*\*\*The **Cohabitation** dilemma now rampant in the church\*\*\*The **Pornography** dilution now affecting over 60% of the pastorate\*\*\***Same-sex marriage**\*\*\*the [Transgender Movement](#) that has become the *tip of the radical Left’s spear*. This is [totally incompatible](#) with Christianity. \*\*\* [The COVID agenda](#) largely spawned compromise with little push back. \*\*\*The **Election of 2020** when the silent shepherds said nothing about a **Marxist-Atheist party seeking complete control of America**. At what was obviously a critical moment in our country’s destiny, spiritual leadership was silent. Here is a question for you, **“Who would be President of the United States if pastors had exposed the Democratic Party for what it is?”** \*\*\* [The Critical Race Theory](#) debate. Few pastors spoke

against it, many joined it. \*\*\*And now, the [COVID Passport Power Grab](#) that threatens millions of believers whose research is leading them to question the vaccine. Will they be able to travel? Will they lose their jobs? Pastor Jack Hibbs said in a recent sermon that he believes the [COVID-19 vaccine is a social control tactic that is conditioning](#) people to **accept the mark** of the beast. Will these shepherds remain silent on this issue also that will impact the church?

Brushing these issues off as too harsh is blatant irresponsibility.

**Other Biblical issues**, not labeled as culture war issues have also encountered silence.

**Rebellion** – is seldom discussed and is the fountainhead of all of the sexual issues. \*\*\* **Sin** is a word not compatible with wooing seekers.

\*\*\***Repentance** – is seldom elaborated upon. \*\*\***Demonic influence** – has not been spoken of since the 70's in most congregations. You know, they are common in Africa but not in America. \*\*\* **Dennis Prager** writes of the [Current War on Judeo-Christian Values](#) – basic doctrines of our faith that we are not defending either.\*\*\*and many, many more.

A friend who is reading Erwin Lutzer's book [We Will Not be Silenced](#) points to a definition he suggests about moral courage.

*“Boldness is seen most clearly when you have burned the bridge that would have enabled you to retreat to safety.”*

Cast these concerns off as radical if you will – they are part of godly shepherding and discipleship. When one in four Christian women will have (or has had, or will [have another](#)) abortion, ignoring the issue is not shepherding them well. When the majority of Gen Z and Millennials embrace same-sex marriage because *the culture has instructed them* and the church has been silent, [the family](#) will be impacted. When [nearly half of our youth look to Marxism as a better answer](#) than free markets and Christianity, it matters because you [cannot be a Marxist and a Christian](#).

**As we look to the future, we must be crystal clear about the past. The pattern of shepherding has been to look at EVIL – several evil issues have here been considered above – and either fail to discern it, not care, or both and did not**

**protect their flocks from this danger. If this doesn't bother you, where is your moral compass? We must ask ourselves, where will we invest our resources – which include our kids – going forward?**

Christianity must do better in the future. This track record is shameful, to survive and thrive in the future and be salt and light we must unassumingly seek higher ground.

### **What Will Moving Forward Look Like?**

**“Moral fortitude”** will be an even larger challenge for the church of influence in the future. The aforementioned issues are reflective of a serious lack of moral courage in leadership. But keep in mind that these leaders have been under immense pressure from what we have labeled *admirers* – so-called Christians who really admire *the good life* and will not tolerate anything, but what they define as “preaching the gospel.”

Literature that will be suggested will look at the life of Christians living under forms of persecution. While we like to think we're ready for that, a serious look in the mirror tells me I have a way to go.

#### **Three Tools for Our Discussion:**

**Tool One:** To those who embrace this journey, reading will no longer be a **luxury**. The old saying “*if you're not reading, you're not leading*” is spot on. The brain is like a muscle, if we don't use it, it shrinks, but it can recover.

Amazingly, there is one book that seems to be emerging among many of those who have this interest. It is a book Dr. Glenn Sunshine recommended in our [March Worldview Forum](#).

[\*Live Not by Lies – a Manual for Christian Dissidents\*](#) by Rod Dreher is a book we will suggest to be a roadmap for our discussion – also available on Audible. This is not a step-by-step tutor, but contains many relevant ideas for those considering preparing for a new way of living. **Please consider putting this book at the top of your reading stack and read it ASAP.**

Dreher touches upon many of the issues we are currently facing. In chapter three, he outlines *Progressivism as a Religion*. This is the best development of **the Mind of the American Left** I have seen anywhere. Not only will you find it

sobering, you will be challenged to ask yourself about *what you have accepted as a life style* – it may well challenge *where you go to church*.

**A robust discussion about forming coalitions will be our goal.** Forming alliances, fellowship groups, teaching connections etc. will be necessary. A uniting **across denominational lines** that will help us survive, thrive, and be an influence in the difficult times - that most surely lie in our immediate future - will be necessary.

- ✚ **In Part I.**, part one, Dreyer discusses the ***Soft Totalitarianism*** now being promoted by the American Left and the Progressive church. His discussion is so right-now-relevant that it is spooky.
- ✚ **In Part II.**, he discusses **how-to-live in truth** with examples of how people in Communist countries, living under **hard totalitarianism**, built their lives as *committed followers*.
- ✚ He also discusses **how they practiced resistance** – the subject of our next tool.

We have ordered a number of these books and will have them available – free of charge if you wish for those who live in our area.

**Tool Two: Resistance and the Responsibility of Lesser Magistrates.** If this group is going to do anything to benefit the culture (other than run and hide and wait for the Rapture) we will become involved in resistance to tyranny. Virtually every effective group that did not join the forces of tyranny became resisters and have made large contributions. Resisting the temptation to cave to totalitarian demands will require backbone.

**How did the leaders of the Reformation see their responsibility when government violated the rule of God?** What was the Christian justification for the war of independence? This doctrine is outlined [here](#) in short form, [here](#) in a longer form and in book form here -[The Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates](#) by Matthew Trehwella. This book will also be useful to help us understand the calling to resist government overreach and other tyrannies. **The Reformed doctrine of resistance stated, in a nutshell, is this:**

*The King was in covenant with God and the people to do God's will. When the King seriously broke that covenant, the people were obliged, even commanded to resist the King.*

John Knox made it clear that *“it is the duty of lesser-magistrates to resist the tyranny of chief magistrates when the chief magistrate exceeds his God-given authority or actually makes declarations which are in rebellion to the law of God.”*

**There is an order to how this is to be done** that we need to understand. When the Higher Magistrates goes rogue, the Lesser Magistrates – those in lower positions – were to work with the upper governors to fix this. If this was not fruitful, resistance became the next move.

You will find Trewhella’s book practical. For example, he talks about Obamacare and how it should have been resisted as unconstitutional – even suggesting that the Courts should have been resisted.

This flies in the face of most teaching on Romans 13 that we hear today - we just lie down and comply with evil governors. Luther, Calvin, Knox, Lock and many others rejected this idea, but we have lost that instruction. This doctrine has been lost because of *lazy scholarship* and *lack of moral fortitude*.

**We want you to have the confidence that godly resistance is biblical** and part of our responsibility as disciples. We need to do our homework well.

**Tool Three:** [The Doctrine of Interposition in Theology](#). How do we deal with resistance in **practical terms**? Here we turn to our friend and former Forum Speaker John Eidsmoe Esquire, a teacher of constitutional law, informed theologian, and pastor. In the article linked to above, John lays out some practical examples of how this is done, case studies, the history of this doctrine, its use by the Church Fathers, and American Founding Fathers etc.

**Interposition thinking relates to the proper application of resistance** and the lesser magistrates’ actions. John uses a ton of scripture in his explanations.

**He asks good questions:** - **What should be the Christian attitude and response when government rewards evil and punishes good?**... The Christian concludes that governmental authority deserves high respect and obedience, but not absolute obedience... **All sovereign governmental authority rests with God.** He delegates a portion of that authority to human rulers, but that **authority is always limited in nature and scope.** **What is the Christian to do when rulers exceed the**

authority God has given them, or when they misuse that authority to promote evil and punish good?

**Black's Law Dictionary. Fourth Edition (1951- 1967)** offers an expanded definition:

**Interposition.** The doctrine that a state, in the exercise of its sovereignty, may reject a mandate of the federal government deemed to be unconstitutional or to exceed the powers delegated to the federal government. The concept is based on the 10th Amendment of the Constitution of the United States reserving to the states powers not delegated to the United States... Implementation of the doctrine may be peaceable, as by resolution, remonstrance or legislation, or may proceed ultimately to nullification with forcible resistance.

**And One More Tool:** Because the whole **issue of Justice**, Social Justice etc. is so integrated into the issues of our day, I strongly suggest Dr. Thaddeus Williams, professor at Biola University, book [Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth](#). He addresses 12 questions - it is very thorough and fair minded. An excellent help and is also available on Audible. This issue is at the center of the debate in Christianity's future, it can't be ignored.

Nobody said this was going to be easy or without study. If we are going to do this, we want to do it in a right and godly manner.

### **What is our mission?**

Again, we want to begin a discussion now – before there is further deterioration of the culture. **We will work to form coalitions of like-minded Christians who are interested in promoting Kingdom of God thinking** and engaging four basic issues:

- 1) **Discovering sound scriptural approaches to providing fellowship** groups for those looking for places for prayer, teaching, and relationships as alternatives and/or supplements to current church possibilities.
- 2) **Committing to being students** and readers who equip themselves for the coming challenges.
- 3) **Leading and/or facilitating the equipping** of Christians to focus on and promote life in the Kingdom of God.

4) Being open to consider *the doctrine of the lesser magistrates* and resistance that was common in the early reformation.

**We do not claim** to have the plan or outline for how all of this should be done. We are committed to working together **to discover a plan** as the Holy Spirit would lead us.

### Who are we looking for?

At this point in time, we are not seeking a crowd. **We see the next step as finding a few good people who are readers and critical thinkers – willing to roll up their sleeves and work together across denominational lines.** We are hoping to bring together Kingdom followers who are willing to work and pray and discover godly alternatives without being divisive.

**This group must guard against attitudes of superiority** that are not godly. This is not a mission for everyone and not being included – at this point – is not intended to be disparaging.

**If this endeavor interests you or you know someone who you think it would fit, please contact me.**

### Appendix:

#### Elaboration of Inadequacies of the Influence of the Church in American Culture

- ✚ **Slavery:** Most of the church was silent on the issue. Many even supported it. Christian abolition organizations did lead the effort to abolish this evil. This lack of engagement prolonged slavery in America and opened the door for valid criticism. With that said, the idea that America was one of the worst players in this issue is historical ignorance. Slavery was an issue in most countries. Africans (on Africans) was the worst as Thaddeus Williams discusses (see suggested resources below).
- ✚ **The Civil Rights Movement:** Most of the church was un-involved. This opened the door for Marxist ideology to invade much of the Black community. Marxist advocates are skilled at finding opportunities like this to promote their [Liberation Theology doctrines](#).
- ✚ **The [Sexual Revolution](#) of the 60's:** This movement has a foundation of **rebellion**. While there are valid LGBT concerns that the church needs to

address, the LGBTQ+ Activists are immersed in rebellion. These movements always capitalize on shortcomings within institutions - be it the church or corporations. When the church failed to teach ethics well, it opened a door. In the early days of the industrial revolution when workers were being exploited by industrial barrens, Marxists infiltrated the union movements and are still there today. The sexual revolution evil continues to this day, but the church did very little teaching to resist it and still doesn't.

- ✚ **Roe v. Wade and Abortion:** Many para-church organizations have been influential in the Pro-Life movement. But, in 47 years since Roe, and 62 million dead babies, you have to look long and hard to find a church where the **pastor did a full teaching** on abortion even once.
- ✚ **No-Fault Divorce - 1970s:** Few legislative moves have done more harm to the family than this. Ronald Reagan publicly apologized for his influence in this. Again, the pulpits were quiet. How wonderful it is that you can [now do this on line](#) without a lawyer. Sic!
- ✚ **The Homosexual Movement:** While homosexuality is not new, its efforts to transform societies have grown since the 60's. In their 1987 Manifesto, [The Overhauling of Straight – A Blueprint for Transforming Social Values](#), these activists told us exactly how they would transform America and - without any resistance from the church – they have completed their mission. This tiny fraction LGBTQ group now OWNS America – corporations, media, athletic organization and ALL branches of the Christian church. Again, lots of organizations are promoting truth on this issue except teaching from the church.
- ✚ **Cohabitation** has become common, even acceptable in many Evangelical churches. Those doing pre-marital council testify that many of their counselees are living together and Pastors will marry them anyway. This establishes a very unstable beginning for these family units.
- ✚ **Pornography.** Again, a subject NEVER addressed from the pulpit in teaching. Josh McDowell maintains that this factor alone is and will continue to destroy the church. Nearly 70% of pastors regularly view porn. For men the figure is higher, and the figures for women are climbing. The guilt from this *dulls the senses and the shame is like a cloak* of capitulation.

- ✚ **Same-Sex Marriage:** Why are young adults OK with this? In the last decade, the culture has informed our youth that this is good while the church has been silent - failing to preserve marriage, the foundation of Christian culture. Five years since the Supreme Court decision and not a peep from the pulpit.
- ✚ **The TRANS Movement:** In the last year, this idea has exploded, become “the tip of the spear” of not just the LGBTQ activists but for all of the Left. Less than ½ of 1% experience actual Gender Dysphoria. Nevertheless, even conservatives are bowing to the cultural demands of this tiny group with no voice from the church.
- ✚ **The COVID Agenda.** When COVID hit and churches were shut down, what did leadership do? Whatever government says, we will obey. Even today (04/01/2021), months after Montana was opened up, evangelical and reformed churches are submitting to California-like standards. Leadership has – again - failed to discern that there are evil forces at work on this that intend to destroy us.
- ✚ **And then came the 2020 Election: Who would be president of the United States if pastors had exposed the Democratic Party for what it is?** For many this was the last straw. Even the most politically un-astute spiritual leader had to know that the **Democrats had become solidly a Marxist-Atheist Religion intent on destroying America** as we know it AND especially Orthodox Christianity. The vast majority of the Evangelical and Catholic churches said nothing in terms of direction... just love each other.
- ✚ **Critical Theory, [Critical Race Theory](#), [Black Lives Matter](#)** etc. catapulted on the scene threatening everything orthodox Christianity holds dear. And what did the Pastors do – if they even knew what it was? Many embraced it. Most didn’t take the trouble to find out what it was. Prominent youth leaders were observed on Facebook defending BLM – one of the most evil groups on the planet.
- ✚ The **[COVID Passport Power Grab](#)** that now threatens millions of believers whose research is leading them to question the vaccine. Will they be able to travel? Will they lose their jobs? Jack Hibbs, a pastor, and supporter of former President Donald Trump, said in a sermon that he believes the **[COVID-19 vaccine is a social control tactic that is conditioning](#)** people to accept the mark of the beast. Will these feminized shepherds remain silent

on this issue also, that will impact the church? Even the Pre-Tribulation Rapture group – usually a-hunt for anything suggesting Jesus is coming back tomorrow – has been silent.

✚ **The Great Reset - a compilation of Factors:** For many, the last straw that made us realize that we needed to begin to form coalitions to preserve the faith was the election of 2020 – yes, politics. [For a century, the Democratic Party](#) has been moving Left. During 2020, enhanced by the COVID agenda, this party fully embraced atheistic Marxism categorizing itself not as a political party anymore, but as a religion. The evil now being openly promoted by this religion is not hidden and it is not isolated. Nevertheless, in the face of open attacks on Christianity, **the vast majority of Christian leadership lacked either the *discernment* or the *courage* to identify this evil and speak of it.** They failed to equip the saints (Eph. 4:12) to vote constructively – or at all. Instead of warning the *sheep* of the danger of this election, the majority of the *Shepherds* caved and spoke of unity and being kind. One wise [pastor creatively compared the platforms](#) of the two parties. In spite of this YouTube going viral in the Christian community, it did not move the leadership.

**The words of Isaiah are ringing in our ears** “*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.*” (Isa. 5:20)

#### **Suggested reading and resources:**

1. . [Live Not by Lies – a Manual for Christian Dissidents](#) by Rod Dreher
2. *The Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates – A Proper Resistance to Tyranny and a Repudiation of Unlimited Obedience to Civil Government* by Matthew Trewhella.
3. *Slaying Leviathan: Limited Government and Resistance in the Christian Tradition* by Glenn S. Sunshine.
4. [The Doctrine of Interposition in Theology](#). How do we deal with resistance in practical terms? John Eidsmoe Esquire.
5. [A Christian Manifesto](#) by Francis Schaeffer
6. *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth* by Dr. Thaddeus Williams.

7. Big Sky Worldview Forum's web page has many relevant articles. Go to [bigskyworldview.org](http://bigskyworldview.org) – Resources – Library.