

Pastor Diane's Sermon on REPENTANCE, Turning Around, got me thinking. I learned to Drive in Michigan, when turning Left, you simply put on your turn-signal and turned right or left. Going away to College, then first Jobs and Seminary out of State, I returned to Michigan in the 1980s where they had enacted "Michigan Left Turns." Because oncoming traffic had grown so busy, Michigan Lefts required that to turn left drive a block beyond your turn, make a U Turn, then move to the Right-lane to make a Right turn. Circumstances changed, Traffic and Accidents increased so based on a REALITY CHECK rules changed.

In response to the Protestant Reformations of the 1500s, the 1600-1700s were an era of Cultural Change and Revolt against Colonialism and State Religion, a REALITY CHECK not only in the American Colonies, but Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Without a separation of Church & State: Challenges to Religion were considered Treason against the Empire, and challenges to the Empire were Heresy against the Church, meaning you could not be buried in the Churchyard and by implication never be admitted to Heaven.

Every cook develops their favorite recipes. Knitters develop favorite patterns. One of my favorites has been to knit what are called Fishermen's Knit Sweaters, which originally identified your Family by pattern. In Scotland, notable families developed their own colors, pattern and weave on the loom, recognized as their Clan Tartan. Both because weaving works in straight lines on Web and Warf, and because Scotland had been a Christian Country since the year 563, Tartans regularly have a CROSS woven into the pattern. On High Holy days: Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Epiphany, your family would wear their best Tartan to worship, as a way of wearing your Sunday best and taking pride in family.

King James had signed a Covenant, that while England's Religion was Anglican, the Church of Scotland would be Presbyterian, but the King violated that Covenant. Presbyterian COVENANTORS were forced to worship in secret, with Sentries posted at all entrances to worship, as the Government's Dragoons sought to break up Non-Anglican Worship. Rather than starting worship with a Musical Prelude, Passing the PEACE, or the Choir OOOZING IN, the Pastor was not allowed to begin Worship until the Sentries called out "ALL CLEAR". Reportedly in 1679, Dragoons surprised a worshipping congregation of Covenanters, BUT the Covenanters outnumbered the Dragoons, and the Preacher ended the day's Sermon calling out: "YE HAVE GOT THE THEORY, NOW GO PRACTICE YOUR FAITH!" and the Dragoons were routed.

From 1746 - 1782 British Parliament adopted THE ACT OF PROSCRIPTION making it illegal to play the Bagpipes that were an Instrument of War, or to wear Clan Tartans like the Kilt, as these had become the Scots Military Uniform fighting against the King. TRADITION holds that in defiance at Kirking of the Tartans, believers wore the Kilt, or even a scrap of Tartan hidden under their clothes or in their boot, and at a point in worship, you would clutch that scrap of heritage as the Pastor Blessed Home and Family and Freedom.

The Protestant Reformation became a REALITY CHECK, questioning all traditions and practices. Peeling away the layers of religion, mysticism and church tradition, to try to get back to what the original practices had been in the Early Church before adoption by the Roman Empire, before Religion.

Do we adhere to what institutions or authorities tell you, what your Political Party says?

Do we go along with the majority, what our parents thought?

OR, Are you antidisestablishmentarian, choosing to follow the beat of your own drum?

Much of what cultures around the world have debated throughout the last 60 years have been over which authority to listen to and what to believe.

Are we so many different Individuals, States, or one Nation, even one World?

Years ago, I took a class in Philosophy that required reading RENE DESCARTES Metaphysics rejecting the absolutes of Aristotelian Logic, in favor of DUALISM: that we experience Reality through our senses, &

differently through THOUGHT. So “How do you know WHAT IS REAL? WHAT IS TRUTH?” Are Facts, what we Prove by experience: sight, touch, taste, feel and hearing; or by what we perceive in imagination? Is all of life a DREAM, a construct of our Imagination?

How do we prove we exist? finally arriving at the conclusion that “Because I Think, therefore I know I AM.

Our Scripture passage from EPHESIANS poetically describes what became DOUBLE PREDESTINATION.

In our Original State, human beings were created by GOD as Good.

But, whether by our own sins, lusts and desires; following the ways of the world; OR by a Spirit in the Air, All Humanity sinned.

Everyone at some time or another has considered gratification in our cravings, thoughts and desires.

However, rather than condemn us; because of GOD’s Grace and Mercy, GOD chose to love us.

Our Sins are forgiven, Not because of anything we have done, or believed,

Not because of our good works, but because in CHRIST JESUS, God died for us.

Years ago, as a Presbyterian Pastor I was summoned by the High School Western Civilizations Class.

When I got there, the students were outraged because their interpretation of Presbyterianism was that they were being JUDGED, when Mommy and Daddy and Coaches had always told them they were perfect. Their emphasis was on being called SINNERS, on being Judged and Condemned, but I believe what the Letter to the Ephesians is naming is the GRACE OF GOD, that is not an absolute: to Accept or Reject. Instead GOD’s GRACE washes over us again and again, as Reality Checks: our sense of the world changes.

The REALITY CHECK, is that there is no evidence a regular “Kirking of the Tartans” happened prior to 1941. But an even better story, on April 27th, 1941, the Pastor of New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington DC was Rev. Peter Marshall, who had immigrated to America from Scotland; and in addition to serving as Pastor of a congregation, was Chaplain of the United States Senate. He preached a series of sermons on The Kirking of the Tartans during WWII, as an image for standing up for our heritage and family against an Oppressor, comparing the outlawing of Tartans to fighting the Evil of Hitler’s Naziism. Over time, New York Avenue Presbyterian became National Presbyterian Church of Washington, DC and Kirking of the Tartans became an Annual tradition in Presbyterian, Episcopal and Methodist Churches. BUT ALSO, throughout the War, Peter Marshall’s Sermons on Kirking of the Tartans raised funds for Food and War-Relief from America for people in Scotland and Ireland and Wales.

What we do in our Annual Congregational Meeting is a Reality Check. Transparently revealing what has our Church, our Session and Committee, what have our Pastors done in the last year? What do we want to do? Who are we, and what do we believe?