I Pledge Allegiance…:
Examining The Doctrine of Discover
In Light of the Realm of God

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Northwest Association for Theological Discussion
February 1 - 3, 2016
Menucha Conference Center

INTRODUCTION

As you climb the steps to the main entrance to the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., you will find yourself entering through a set of tall and imposing doors often called The Columbus Doors. This bronze entrance stands almost 17 feet tall and weighs 20,000 pounds. Installed in 1863, the artist, Randolph Rogers, sought to honor Christopher Columbus and the role he played in the discovery of this continent.

Quoting from the official government web site, Architect of the Capitol, "At the pinnacle is a bust of Columbus, surrounded by rays and oak leaves, signifying the rising to glory. A running border is ornamented with Indian headdresses and emblems of conquest, navigation, the
arts and sciences, history, agriculture, and commerce. The four figures symbolizing the continents of Asia, Africa, Europe, and American indicate the entire world's acknowledgement of Columbus's accomplishment."¹

Just below the bust of Columbus and above the doors is the lunette showing Columbus "claiming the island now known as Sal Salvador for Spain. Columbus, in the center of the composition, rises his sword and the royal standard; a cross is raised behind him. The central group of Columbus and his men is balanced by another group of Columbus's men in a small boat at the left and by the natives hiding behind the tree at the right." ²

One of the eight panels depicts "the Spaniards taking possession by erecting a cross on the island of Hispaniola. One of the sailors is carrying an Indian girl he has taken prisoner on his shoulders, as Columbus shows his disapproval. The panel is flanked by statuettes of Pope Alexander VI, who supported Spain's claim to the new land, and explorer Francisco Pizarro. ³

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¹ Architect of the Capitol, www.aoc.gov/capitol-hill/doors/columbus-doors. The above pictures are also from this web site.
² Architect of the Capitol.
³ Architect of the Capitol.
The imagery chosen by the artist is intentional in depicting Columbus as a conquering Admiral and the Church's presence and blessing. The planting of the Spanish flag and the Christian cross symbolized the claiming the land for the conquering country. This visually depicts the relationship of Church and State that we will see in what is called The Doctrine of Discovery.

Recognizing that history is generally written by the victors, the minority voices seldom get heard. Steven Newcomb, a Native American attorney, writes in his book Pagans In the Promised Land, that those who recognize Columbus as one of the founding fathers of the United States must realize that Columbus used the Conqueror model of justice including "cutting off the hands of male Indians who did not obey him by bringing a requisite amount of gold" and that he "constructed over three hundred gallows on many different indigenous islands in order to hang Indians at the 'bar of justice,' thirteen at a time, the number corresponding to Jesus and the twelve Apostles." What does this say about not only Christopher Columbus but the political and theological mindset of Western Europe and the Church during this era that hailed him as a hero? The Doctrine of Discovery is about European countries claiming land to expand their holdings for the purpose of economic growth through new resources, including humans.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how the Church came to the position of pronouncing what we call The Doctrine of Discovery. We will examine our biblical and church history by looking at biblical texts, theological images and the cultural climate of the Old and New Testament era and how this position is counter to, what I believe, is the message and ministry of Jesus the Christ and how the Church moved away from the very heart of the Gospel that Christ proclaimed. Much has been written regarding the Doctrine and its impact on U. S. law and the treatment of Native Americans. Several scholars have written extensively on empire, in particular the Roman Empire. I will be reviewing this and presenting some biblical and theological materials and themes which I believe need to be brought into this discussion. This is in no way a thorough analysis of this topic, but only scratching the surface to help stimulate discussion.

To begin this discussion, we need to go back in history to the Age of Discovery, the 15th Century CE.

1452 CE

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

(Matthew 28:18-20)

The Doctrine of Discovery is not a single official document signed by a head of State to which we can refer, but rather three Papal Bull documents from the 15th century that clearly spell out the relationship of Church and State in the age of Christendom, in particular the Church's blessing and guidance on western European countries who were exploring and claiming new found lands for their supportive kings and countries.

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Dum Diversas, written June 18, 1452 by Pope Nicholas V to Alfonse, King of Portugal, begins the series. The entire Bull is interesting but a section of a sentence gives us the purpose of the first part of the letter. The word "Saracen" is the word used then for Muslims.

"(W)e grant to you full and free power, through the Apostolic authority by this edict, to invade, conquer, fight, subjugate the Saracens and pagans, and other infidels and other enemies of Christ, and wherever established their Kingdoms, Duchies, Royal Palaces, Principalities and other dominions, lands, places, estates, camps and any other possessions, mobile and immobile goods found in all these places and held in whatever name, and held and possessed by the same Saracens, Pagans, infidels, and the enemies of Christ,...

The text goes on to mention the purpose of the fight, from the Church's perspective, is for "the salvation of their souls." What was also of interest in this text was the granting of a "plenary forgiveness of all and individual sins, crimes, trespasses, and digressions which you and they have confessed with contrite heart and by mouth, to you and to those who accompany you, as often as you and they happen to go into any war against the mentioned infidels, and indeed to those who do not accompany you but are sending and contributing, as mentioned before, to those who persist in sincerity of faith, in the unity of the Holy Roman Church," In other words, they get full pardon in advance for any atrocities they may commit while invading, conquering, fighting, subjugating the pagans and infidels - "enemies of Christ" - the blessing of violence for the purpose of conquest.

The second Papal Bull, Romanus Pontifex, penned by the same Pope Nicholas V on January 8, 1455, was also written to the same King Alfonso. This Bull extended to Catholic nations of Europe dominion over discovered lands, sanctifying the seizure of these lands and encouraged enslavement of native and non-Christian peoples in these new found lands. "We [therefore] weighing all and singular the premises with due meditation, and noting that since we had formerly by other letters of ours granted among other things free and ample faculty to the aforesaid King Alfonso -- to invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit ... in order that King Alfonso himself and his successors and the infante may be able the more zealously to pursue and may pursue this most pious and noble work, and most worthy of perpetual remembrance (which, since the salvation of souls, increase of the faith, and overthrow of its enemies may be procured thereby, we regard as a work wherein the glory of God, and faith in Him, His commonwealth, the Universal Church, are concerned) in proportion as they, having been relieved of all the greater obstacles, shall find themselves supported by us and by the Apostolic See with favors and graces --

The third Papal Bull was Inter Caetera, written in 1493 by Pope Alexander VI. The main purpose of it was to insert the Church into the conflict between two Christian nations (Spain and Portugal) who were fighting over the same discovered land. The first Christian nation to claim dominion of newly discovered land (with flag and cross) held rights; subsequent Christian nations could not take away the rights of the first discovery (all seen from the perspective of the

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6 Morgan, The Text of Dum Diversas.
European nations). Included was the assumption that their task would be to convert people in these new land to the Catholic faith. Full claiming came with the settlement of the land.

Together, these three documents from the Pope gave voice and blessing to the searching out, conquest and subjugation of land and people already inhabited but not by European standards (civilized and Christian). The Pope's first concern was defeating enemies of the Church; we must remember that the Crusades of the Middle Ages was recent history at this time. The Pope's second interest was expanding the Church, making the people in these new found lands Christians. The means by which that was to be done must be seen through the image of domination - become Christian, or else.

The Doctrine of Discovery was not a fully developed doctrine or position paper, but rather the expression of the political mindset of Western Europeans and the Church's support of domination and it's theological attitude toward other people and lands who were not as "civilized" or Christian. Do I dare say, "least of these"?

1823 CE

"God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

(Genesis 1: 28)

We move forward a few centuries. Even the phrase, "Doctrine of Discovery" assumes a particular perspective - that of the European. The new continent was already occupied and had been for thousands of years. It was just "new" to the Europeans. From Newcomb's perspective, a better phrase would be the Doctrine of Christian Arrival, or even better, the Doctrine of Christian European Invasion. Newcomb quotes Anders Stephanson in his 1995 book, Manifest Destiny, "For Europeans, land not occupied by recognized members of Christendom was theoretically land free to be taken." Stephanson goes on to say that the New England Puritans took this all to a new level when they understand the land to be sacred, and in their claiming it, made it sacred.

The thinking behind this Doctrine was targeted not only on Native Americans, but also was the driving force behind the capturing of Africans and forcing them into slavery. Economic growth was central to empire building; "converting resources to profit."

A turning point in the development of the Doctrine of Discovery in the United States took place in 1823 when the Supreme Court ruled on a case where two parties had bought the same piece of land, one bought directly from the Native Americans who were living on that land, and the other from the U.S. government, or the recognized governmental authority.

In the ruling on Johnson v. M'Intosh, Chief Justice John Marshall presented the unanimous ruling that the plaintiff, Johnson, who bought the land from the Illinois tribe of Indians, did not have clear title to the land because the native tribes did not have the right to sell the land. "In the establishment of these relationship, the rights of the original inhabitants were, in no instance, entirely disregarded; but were necessarily, to be considered extent, impaired.

8 Newcomb, 94.
10 Stephanson, 6.
They were admitted to be the rightful occupants of the soil, with a legal as well as just claim to retain possession of it, and to use it according to their own discretion; but their rights to complete sovereignty, as independent nations, were necessarily diminished, and their power to dispose of the soil at their own will, to whomsoever they pleased, was denied by the original fundamental principle, that discovery gave exclusive title to those who made it.\textsuperscript{11}

What is unique to this ruling is that Marshall refers to the Doctrine of Discovery, not in those words but in the concept. "This principle was, that discovery gave title to the government by whose subjects, or by whose authority, it was made, against all other European governments, which title might be consummated by possession."\textsuperscript{12} Marshall stated just before this, "The potentates of the old world found no difficulty in convincing themselves that they made ample compensation to the inhabitants of the new, by bestowing on them civilization and Christianity, in exchange for unlimited independence."\textsuperscript{13}

Marshall's language moves during the argument from that of discovery to that of conquest. "When the conquest is complete, and the conquered inhabitants can be blended with the conquerors, or safely governed as a distinct people..."\textsuperscript{14} The U.S. Government's long term goal was to eliminate Indian tribes and reservations by making them civilized (by European standards) through teaching them the English language and customs, wearing European clothing and eliminating tribal customs and traditions, including native religions. The task was given to the churches to accomplish this; hence, the development of Christian boarding schools.

Another statement reveals the mindset of the Europeans who claimed this as their land, "But the tribes of Indians inhabiting this country were fierce savages, whose occupation was war, and whose subsistence was drawn chiefly from the forest. To leave them in possession of their country, was to leave the country a wilderness; to govern them as a distinct people, was impossible, because they were as brave and as high spirited as they were fierce, and were ready to repel by arms every attempt on their independence."\textsuperscript{15}

Joseph Story, who was an Associate Justice on Supreme Court at the time of the Johnson v. M'Intosh ruling, and a close friend of Chief Justice Marshall, gives us more insight into the conquering mindset. "The Indians were a savage race, sunk in the depths of ignorance and heathenism. If they might not be extirpated for their want of religion and just morals, they might be reclaimed from their errors. They were bound to yield to the superior genius of Europe, and in exchange their wild and debasing habits for civilization and Christianity they were deemed to gain more than an equivalent for every sacrifice and suffering. The Papal authority, too, was brought in aid of these great designs; and for the purpose of overthrowing heathenism, and propagating the Catholic religion. Alexander the Sixth, by a Bull issued in 1493, granted to the crown of Castile the whole of the immense territory then discovered, or to be discovered, between the poles, so far as it was not then possessed by any Christian prince."\textsuperscript{16} Justice Story reveals in these comments that the Papal Bulls of the 15th century were known among the rulers and courts of that time and were a part of their thinking regarding the laws that governed Europeans and their position toward the Native Americans.

\textsuperscript{11} Johnson v. M'Intosh, 574, https://scholar.google.com/scholar.
\textsuperscript{12} Johnson v. M'Intosh, 573.
\textsuperscript{13} Johnson v. M'Intosh, 573.
\textsuperscript{14} Johnson v. M'Intosh, 573.
\textsuperscript{15} Johnson v. M'Intosh, 590.
\textsuperscript{16} Story, Joseph, \textit{Commentaries on the Constitution}, bk. 1, chpt. 1, sec. 5, in Newcomb, 82.
The rules of discovery and conquest, which the Papal Bull's of the 15th century supported, claimed that the right of discovery by an European Christian nation did not recognize the new lands as being occupied or their forms of government as being valid. European rules determined the playing of the game. Originally Spain held authority over Florida and areas to the south; England held authority over land north of there; Portugal got much of S. America. England soon bought out Spain's interest. After the War of Independence, the authority moved to the government of the new United States.

The Johnson v. M'Intosh ruling opened the doors for the states to start actions toward native tribes in removing them from established lands to lands further west. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 led to the Trail of Tears and other actions. This also influenced the actions taken through treaties and the disregard for those treaties.

Steven Newcomb makes the case that the impetus behind the Doctrine of Discovery and the settling of North American, and other lands, by Europeans, is a direct outcome of Christian theology based in the Old Testament image of the Promised Land. "During the fifteenth, sixteenth, and later centuries, the monarchies and nations of Christendom lifted the Old Testament narrative of the chosen people and the promised land from the geographical context of the Middle East and began carrying it over to the rest of the globe." He goes on to say that, "The presumption by Christian potentates that they had the divine right to take possession of heathen lands (lands not possessed by any Christian prince or people) was a direct result of their belief that God had previously commanded the Hebrews to take possession of Canaan and that they, as Christians, had 'become' God's new chosen people."

He adds that Benjamin Franklin, in 1776, proposed to the Continental Congress that the Great Seal of the United States should have the image of Moses leading the Israelite children across the Red Sea. Thomas Jefferson suggested that the image should be that of the Israelites moving into the Promised Land led by the Pillar of Fire and Cloud of God's presence. This clearly indicates the thinking that our leaders had regarding the tie between the biblical images of God's chosen people and the founding of the United States.

It is now time to go back in time and look at our biblical roots.

1250 BCE

"On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.'" (Genesis 15: 18-21)

As we begin this discussion of biblical texts, I am aware that there could be a lot of discussion around this, regarding whether the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan by Joshua really took place, and if so, what dates. We know that these texts were not actually written down until a much later time, more likely around the time of Exile in the 6th century BCE. We are also aware of how the exegetical studies, such as JEPD, might influence our analysis. And the

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17 Newcomb, 43.
18 Newcomb, 43.
19 Newcomb, 53.
big question is: did Yahweh actually command these things? Or did the historians write God into the story to justify their behavior? Did it actually every happen at all?

1250 BCE is an approximate date for Joshua but we need to go back to Abraham and Sarah. Core to our Abrahamic tradition is Genesis: 12: 1-2, "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." In the great covenant ceremony of Genesis 15, God tells Abram, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgasites and the Jebusites." (Genesis 15:18-21) In a third covenant promise in Genesis 17:8 "I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God." Reading these texts in light of the Doctrine of Discovery causes one to rethink long held interpretations and beliefs.

We move to the time of Moses. Exodus 34: 11-16 puts it clearly, "Observe what I command you today. See, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Take care not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you are going, or it will become a snare among you. You shall tear down their altars, break their pillars, and cut down their sacred poles (for you shall worship no other god, because the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God). You shall not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to their gods, someone among them will invite you, and you will eat of the sacrifice. " It would be easy to take a passage like this and insert Seminole, Cherokee, Osage instead of Hivites, Hittites, Canaanites. The command to tear down their places of worship and not make covenants with them could easily be translated into treating Native Americans with contempt.

It is very easy to understand where Steven Newcomb is coming from when he determines "That from a biblical point of view, the Lord of the Bible gave Abram and his people the right to take possession of the land of Canaan, despite the fact that indigenous peoples were already living there." Were these texts influencing the mind of the Pope when he wrote those Papal Bulls in the 15th century CE?

We pick up the story in Deuteronomy 7, "When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you - the Hittites, the Girgasites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and more numerous than you - and when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy.... But this is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their sacred poles, and burn their idols with fire. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession." (Deuteronomy 7:1-6) Is this how God's chosen people are to act? Is this a command from God? Is this the type of God we worship? Or is this imposing on Yahweh the desire of a broken people who have been subjected to this hurt themselves and long to be the conquering ones?

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20 New Revised Standard Version,(Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A, 1989). Used by permission. All rights reserved. All biblical references are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.
21 Newcomb, 39.
Joshua was given instruction along the same line as he prepared to lead the people into the Promised Land after their 40 years of wandering. We could look at: Joshua 1:10-12; 3:9-13; 11:6-15; see also Exodus 33:2, Number 33:50-56; 1 Samuel 15:1-3; Joshua 24:11-14. Genesis 1:28, a key text for our Founding Fathers, tells us to "fill the earth and subdue it..." Subdue can be translated "dominate." Whether we like it or not, these texts are in our scriptures and the amount of them speaks clearly to how the people interpreted God in their midst. Did they actually kill all the people? Or did they kill any of them, but lived among them for centuries until the Hebrew children became dominant?

Then we have those texts that speak of residing among some of these tribes and treating them gently because Israel was once oppressed in Egypt. Deuteronomy 26:11, 12 and 13 speaks three times about treating the aliens among you with compassion; the third year tithe goes to "the aliens, the orphans, and the widows, so that they may eat their fill within your towns. (Deuteronomy 26:12) Exodus 22:21, "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." Deuteronomy 10:19, "You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Then we have Jeremiah 7:5-7, "For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever." (See also Jeremiah 22:3) How do we take these texts alongside earlier ones that said to shed innocent blood, to destroy the aliens among you? But they still speak from a position of domination and conquest.

960 BCE

"Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever. In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David." (2 Samuel 7:16-17)

There is another story in our Hebrew Scriptures that is often ignored or forgotten, yet is an important point of discussion when it comes to conquest and empire. It is the story of King Solomon, son of King David.

In some of King David's final words spoken to Solomon before his death, he charged Solomon to walk faithfully in the ways of God, to keep God's testimonies as written in the law of Moses, "so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn." He goes on to quote what was said to him, "if your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne if Israel." (1 Kings 2:3-4) Two other times in the story of Solomon the command is given to Solomon to walk in God's ways, keeping God's statutes then God will establish the promise made to David. (1 Kings 6:11; 9:4) We have a foreshadowing of what is to come. Yet, the story begins by saying that Solomon loved the Lord and walked in God's statues. (1 Kings 3:3) The first thing that Solomon does as king, however, is to have killed those who could very well be a threat to his throne. (1 Kings 2) Eliminate your opposition.

Solomon then enters a very intense building period. 1 Kings 7 lists the building projects: House of the Lord, House of the Forest, Hall of Pillars, Hall of the Throne, his own house, house for his wife, daughter of Egypt's Pharaoh. "King Solomon conscripted forced labor out of all Israel; the levy numbered thirty thousand men.... Solomon also had seventy thousand laborers
and eighty thousand stonemasons in the hill country, besides Solomon's three thousand three hundred supervisors who were over the work." (1 Kings 5:13-17) They were active all over the area cutting expensive stone, harvesting timber, transporting and building.

The writer of 1 Kings makes clear that none of the conscripted workers came from the Hebrew children. "All the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel - their descendants who were still left in the land, whom the Israelites were unable to destroy completely - these Solomon conscripted for slave labor, and so they are to this day." (1 Kings 9:20-21) In other words, Joshua's campaign in the conquest of the land of Canaan did not kill all of the people living there. Even though it had been approximately 300 years, the people of Israel still considered them less than equal, worthy of being forced into slave labor, "and so they are to this day." Conquest involves seeing the other person as less than you. And God is presented as blessing it, central to the action of conquest and the Doctrine of Discovery.

Solomon then went on to increase his military presence. He purchased chariots from Egypt to build a mobile force of 1,400 chariots with 12,000 horses. (1 Kings 10:26) He stationed them in chariot cities scattered at strategic military outposts around his empire. He also had cities for his cavalry and for storage. (1 Kings 9:19) He built a fleet of ships and had ports built at Ezion-geber and Tarshish. (1 Kings 9:26; 10:22) All are acts of empire building.

Somehow Solomon seemed to be able to amass tremendous amounts of gold from his people and neighboring nations with whom he built relationships, the queen of Sheba being one of them. Solomon had made "two hundred large shields of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of gold went into each large shield. He made three hundred shields of beaten gold; three minas of gold went into each shield." (1 Kings 10:16-17) His throne was made of ivory overlaid with gold. All his drinking vessels were of gold - "it was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon." (1 Kings 10:18-21) Solomon lived extravagantly, but you have to wonder about the lifestyle of the common people and the level of taxation. Prosperity was focused on the king and not on the people.

How often we have seen people in positions of power become so drunk with their own success and grandeur that they fall mightily. So was the case with Solomon. "King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women" (1 Kings 11:1) - all nations that God had said to Israel not to enter into marital relations. "Solomon clung to them in love." (1 Kings 11:2) Along with his wives he had seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines. "And his wives turned away his heart." (1 Kings 11:3) Solomon began to build altars for his wives and concubines to their gods and he began to worship at them as well. "So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not completely follow the Lord, as his father David had done." (1 Kings 11:6) This is the explanation that is given for the destruction of Solomon's reign and the division of the Kingdom at his death. The foreshadowing took place.

Solomon took over a strong nation from his father, David. He was granted great wisdom at the beginning of his reign, and he was held in awe by many. He went on an amazing building campaign that cost much money; conscripted thousands of people into slavery to do all the work. He build a large army and navy and enjoyed the good life as much as possible. We have no idea if the nation was in serious debt or not, but that didn't stop him. He used his position of power for sexual exploitation. His focus shifted; his faith shifted away from God. He built an empire. His realm crumbled.
"Once upon a time..."

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "'Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You shall not die; for God knows that when you eat of it you eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. (Genesis 3:1-7)

Marcus Borg was known for using the statement from a Native American story teller, "It may not have happened exactly this way, but I know it is true."

I insert this story here because I believe it is one of the key stories of the Bible that helps us get in touch with our humanity. It seeks to explain the brokenness we experience in our world, in contrast to the vision of God's paradise. Man and Woman are kicked out of the Garden of Eden, to live "east of Eden." The innocence of nakedness is gone. Patriarchy appears; brother killing brother appears; division of labor. Racism; sexism; domination; control; conquest; pollution; the list goes on. It goes back to our beginning.

"And you will become like God, knowing good and evil." That is the temptation - to become like God; the grasping for power; the grasping for control; the temptation of greed; the thinking that we know good from evil, right from wrong, and that we can keep our mind focused in such a way that we live that life fully. And we can't handle it; we live east of Eden.

It may not have happened this way, but I know it is true.

27 BCE

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God." (Romans 13:1)

"You will become like God, knowing good and evil." In 27 BCE Gaius Octavius defeated Anthony and Cleopatra to secure his position as leader of the Roman Empire. He had the only other legitimate successor to the throne, the son of Julius Caesar, killed to eliminate any other challenge. He changed his name to Augustus and was eventually given the title, "Imperātor Caesar Divi Filius Augustus", and reigned until his death in 14 CE. Augustus became a god for the Roman Empire; how did he define "good" and "evil"?

"Imperator" has to do with empire, of which Rome became one under his reign. The reason for examining Augustus and the Roman Empire are two: first, Jesus was born and lived during the time of Augustus in a country controlled by Rome. This shaped the thinking and

22 "Augustus", Wikipedia.
theology of Jesus, which we will explore later. Second is the fact that the United States has often been seen as an empire and compared to Rome. "(T)hat America is now - and may always have been - an empire and that, in fact, the virus of imperialism came - like so many others - on those first ships from Europe.... (and) that America is Nova Roma, the New Roman Empire, Rome on the Potomac."23 The issue of Empire is central to understanding the Doctrine of Discovery.

Rieger gives an extended comment on empire that is worth quoting in full. "Empire, in sum, has to do with massive concentrations of power that permeate all aspects of life and that cannot be controlled by anyone actor alone. This is one of the basic marks of empire throughout history. Empire seeks to extend its control as far as possible; not only geographically, politically, and economically - these factors are commonly recognized - but also intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, culturally, and religiously. The problem with empire is not primarily a moral one - it is not that all empires are necessarily equally evil and wrong. Some empires and certain modes of colonialism claim to promote benevolent causes,... The problem with empire has to do with forms of top-down control that are established on the back of the empire's subjects and that do not allow those within its reach to pursue alternative purposes. 24 Caesar Augustus was an imperator, one who extended his empire.

Rieger goes on to make this specific to Christianity and the central challenge of the Doctrine of Discovery. "The problem with this approach can be seen in Christology: in a situation of empire, Christ becomes part of the system to such a degree that little or no room exists for the pursuit of alternative realities of Christ. Empire displays strong tendencies to domesticate Christ and anything else that poses a challenge to its power."25 This is the challenge the church faces.

Also in his official title, Augustus was proclaimed "Dīvī Fīlius" - son of god, or son of a god. Augustus was not only seen as an emperor, but also as a divine emperor, one to be worshipped. The titles used by Augustus and later Caesars (in varying degrees) included: Divine, Son of God, God, God from God, Lord, Redeemer, Liberator, Savior of the World. 26 These titles were well established in the Roman world before Jesus came on the scene and before the early church chose them as titles for Jesus. Crossan and Jonathan Reed in their book, In Search of Paul, comment that "none of this was simple one-way propaganda enforced unilaterally. It was fully two-way ideology accepted multilaterally. It was Roman imperial theology, the ideological glue that held the empire dynamically together."27 To take these titles and proclaim them of Jesus, "was thereby to deny them of Caesar the Augustus. Christians were not simply using ordinary titles applied to all sorts of people at that time, or even extraordinary titles applied to special people in the East. They were taking the identity of the Roman emperor and giving it to a Jewish peasant. Either that was a peculiar joke and a very low lampoon, or it was what the Romans called majestas and we call high treason."28 "Of particular importance in

24 Rieger, 2-3.
25 Rieger, 3.
28 Crossan, 28.
this world that was so suffused by the reality of empire is what has become known as the emperor cult: the titles used for Christ must be understood on this backdrop.\(^{29}\)

Because Augustus was seen not only as an emperor but as a divine emperor who was worshipped, one cannot separate the political and religious implications; they are woven together in the heart and mind of the Roman Empire. "The Romans came to believe that the gods favored them because of their piety and justice and that empire based on those values could only be a good thing."\(^{30}\) The same could be said of the United States and other empires down through history.

John Dominic Crossan, who has studied and written on this topic in great depth, shares an adapted statement written about Augustus after his victory in 31 BCE that combines these themes:

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IMPERATOR CAESAR, SON OF GOD, FOLLOWING THE VICTORY IN THE WAR WHICH HE WAGED ON BEHALF OF THE REPUBLIC IN THE REGION, WHEN HE WAS CONSUL FOR THE FIFTH TIME AND IMPERATOR FOR THE SEVENTH TIME, AFTER PEACE HAD BEEN SECURED ON LAND AND SEA, CONSECRATED TO MARS AND NEPTUNE THE CAMP FROM WHICH HE SET FORTH TO ATTACK THE ENEMY NOW ORNAMENTED WITH NAVAL SPOILS.\(^{31}\)
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Crossan uses this to lift up the four key threads that define this Roman Imperial Theology. "(I)t indicates the practice of religion, worshiping the appropriate gods, to secure a blessing for a war that resulted in victory and secured peace on land and sea. And that gives us the sequential program of Rome's imperial theology: religion, war, victory, peace - or more briefly, peace through victory."\(^{32}\) But it begins with religion through which all actions are blessed and justified. This has some distinct parallels to the Pope's official statements giving blessing to conquest and subjugation we call the Doctrine of Discover. Can we not also see this in Joshua's conquest of Canaan?

At question is the definition of "peace." There was definitely pax romana in the first century CE, but it was a peace that was based on military domination, control and the threat of violence for those who stepped out of line. You were safe to travel the empire and enjoy life, just don't push any edges. Crossan warns, "Victory, by the way, does not bring peace but only a lull - whether short or long - and after each lull the violence required for the next victory escalates. Is there any possible alternative to 'peace through victory'?\(^{33}\) Richard Horsley would agree with that, "Pax Romana is based on conquest and war. Augustus was the prince of peace in foreign affairs, but it was pax in the Roman sense: making a pact after conquest.\(^{34}\) Peace is based on and continued through war and oppression.

It is here that Crossan presents the underlying theme of his book: that Jesus was about a different agenda - religion, nonviolence, justice, peace, or simply, first justice, then peace, or peace through justice.\(^{35}\) Jesus was about nonviolence instead of war, justice instead of victory.

Hear the words attributed to Jesus in his final discourse to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives." (John 14:27) Has the message of Jesus been co-opted by empire? Is there not a peace other than just the absence of war? Or the lack of rebellion out of fear of retaliation?

Crossan brings one more important element to this discussion. "It does not help us understand the Roman Empire, let alone America as the New Roman Empire, to think of it as the 'evil empire' of the first century or the 'axis of evil' in the Mediterranean. As the greatest pre-industrial and territorial empire - just as we [U.S.] are the greatest post-industrial and commercial empire - Rome was the expression, no more and no less, of the normalcy of civilization's violence, first century style." He goes on to explain that "imperialism is not just a here-and-there, now-and-then, sporadic event in human history, but that civilization itself, as I am using the term, has always been imperial - that is, empire is the normalcy of civilization's violence." Think of Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Greece. Consider how Japan treated Koreans. Consider what King Solomon was up to in his building chariot cities, walled cities and naval ports and how he used slave labor to do his work, even with their history of being slaves in Egypt. Consider the conquest of Canaan under Joshua. Consider the Papal Bulls that were written in the 1400s that gave the Church's blessing to conquest and invasion, killing and slavery. Remember Adam and Eve.

What Caesar Augustus and Rome were doing was normal, the norm in human history for societies. "From the beginning, then, civilization became imperial as it attempted to expand social power as mastery over other people through ever-widening circles of security." Crossan quotes Ronald Wright from his 2004 book A Short History of Progress, "All civilizations become hierarchical; the upward concentration of wealth ensures that there will never be enough to go around (p. 108)." Depressing, but probably very true, whether a democracy or a dictatorship or any other form of government. "Non-imperial civilization is something yet to be seen on our earth."

So, are we stuck with war and violence, abuse and domination as the way of life? "Is the normalcy of human civilization's violence our inevitable destiny?" As hinted at earlier, there is a different answer, an intentional way of living and being that comes from religion but sees a different path. It is intentionally counter to the normalcy of civilization.

30 CE

"My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." (John 18:36)

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." (Mark 1:15) These opening words of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel According to Mark set the tone for the life and witness of Jesus of Nazareth. And it was a clear message that

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36 Crossan, 29-30.
37 Crossan, 30.
38 Crossan, 32.
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40 Crossan, 36.
41 Crossan, 36.
spoke directly to the dominant kingdom of the day, Rome. Caesar considered himself a god and was lord over his own realm. But along comes Jesus announcing right off the top that there is a different Realm of God, one that is near, in our midst, but not Rome. Jesus is challenging Rome from the very first sentence.\footnote{I am aware of the discussion that could, and should, be had regarding what words put in the mouth of Jesus actually came from him or were placed there by the writers of the gospel accounts decades later. This does influence some of the outcome. However, we have the texts before us and in this section I will try to focus on a few of the themes that appear to be central to the ministry of Jesus. Many scholars have written on these subjects in great detail so this is just opening the door. I will probably have missed some key things from your perspective as well; I invite you to take this discussion and expand it and make it your own.}

Jesus spends more time talking about the Realm of God\footnote{I try to use "Realm" instead of "Kingdom" where I can to move us away from male oriented language in our image of God today.} than any other topic; it was central to his message. "The kingdom of heaven is like..." "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." "...your kingdom come, your will be done on earth..." Since the Roman empire was the all consuming air that everyone breathed in the Mediterranean Sea area, kingdom language would automatically be associated with Rome. When Jesus very intentionally used kingdom language to describe his vision of the Realm of God, he would have been raising eye brows very quickly.

I must admit that during my pastoral ministry I was aware of the emphasis on the Realm of God by Jesus but not in its larger sense. I thought of it in terms of Israel and their history, in particular the Hebrew scriptures. Not until the last fifteen years of my ministry did the full impact of Jesus' Realm of God as a political statement in contrast to Rome dawn on me. To that extent my ministry was hindered. What I have learned is that I must read Jesus and Paul not just as a story within the context of Israel, but within a different frame of reference, the Realm of Caesar.

John the Baptist is in prison and he sends a couple of his followers to Jesus with a pointed question, "Are the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" The context of this story tells of Jesus healing many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind. Jesus answers them, saying, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." (Luke 7:19-23)

With whom does Jesus spend his time? - the low income folk; the sick, the outcast, the lepers; he lets women of questionable reputation touch him; he is as comfortable having dinner with farmers and fishermen, housewives and children as he is with the religious leaders, in fact, maybe more so. He spends his time in the Galilee area, far away from Jerusalem; even that may be considered a statement in terms of hiding out in the back country developing a power base of common folk. Jesus is making a statement regarding his understanding of the Realm of God by where he spends his time and with whom he keeps company. He is not in the halls of power rubbing elbows with those who make important decisions for Israel or Rome. He is not in the Temple discussing the Torah with the scribes.

In the well used parable of Judgment Day found in Matthew 25: 31-46 we recall, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." (Matthew 25:34-36) This is an in-
your-face contrast to the Roman Empire and the normalcy of civilization. The Realm of God is about caring for those in need, those who are struggling in life precisely because of the oppression placed on them by those in power. The criteria for inheriting the Realm of God is not doctrine or theological correctness but compassion and grace for all, especially low income, outcast and marginalized. This is Jesus’ definition of justice.

Jesus' understanding of the Realm of God comes into focus very clearly with the three discipleship sayings in Mark 8:34-38; 9:33-37; and 10:35-45; I want to focus on the third of those statements.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, confront Jesus with a very interesting statement, "We want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." Jesus asks them to go on. They respond, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." Jesus replies, "You don't know what you are asking." How true. The two disciples were asking Jesus for the positions of Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense when he took over Jerusalem and set up his Realm. They were assuming a military/political revolt and takeover. Mark makes it very clear that the disciples really don't get what Jesus is saying; only the listeners to this story 40 years later get it at the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70CE. Consider the statement by the disciples to Jesus just before he ascends into heaven as reported in Acts 1:6, "Is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?"

The ten other disciples hear of this and they are enraged because they feel worthy of those positions as well. Jesus sits them down and says, "You know that among the Gentiles [Romans?] those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10: 35-45)

Jesus is clearly defining his understanding of the Realm of God in contrast to the normalcy of civilization - "lord it over them; tyrants over them." Greatness is redefined not in terms of a traditional sense of power, domination, control, but in terms of servant and slave. The Realm of God is about serving others, not being served. Jesus turns it all upside down. Society has its definitions of hierarchy, patronage and paternalism. The Realm of God messes that all up. We must remember that Jesus was a member of an oppressed people, dominated by an empire that had military control and demanded steep taxes to Caesar to pay for this privilege. We folk in the U.S. who have a heritage from Europe, have always lived as a part of the majority, dominant community, both politically and religiously.

Clark Williamson, a Disciples of Christ scholar, wrote a very interesting and stimulating article for the Chalice Introduction to Disciples Theology, edited by Peter Goodwin Heltzel. Williamson's article, "Confessing Christ in Empire and Colony" refers to two stories in Mark 6 that are placed back to back: Herod Antipas' birthday banquet (6:17-29) where John the Baptist is beheaded, immediately followed by Jesus feeding the 5,000 (6:30-44). His point is that the writer of Mark puts these two stories together to intentionally contrast the difference between the Realm of Caesar and the Realm of God. The first takes place in a Roman palace with a fortress and all that finery that was built on the backs of the Galilean peasants. The second banquet takes place out in the countryside among those same peasants on whose backs the Roman palace was built.

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A few points that Williamson mentions: Herod and his party are served by servants. When the disciples ask Jesus who is going to feed the multitude, he replies, "You give them something to eat." ("I came not to be served but to serve"). The disciples served the meal; they did the work of the slaves at Antipas' party. Williamson mentions the dining habits of the Romans. "Roman dining rooms were called \textit{triclinia}.\textsuperscript{45} A triclinium had three couches on which the host and his guests reclined (\textit{tri}-, 'three', \textit{clinium}, 'recline', says just this). Royalty and wealthy Romans reclined to eat. Roman dining emphasized the social standing of the host at the peak of a stratified pyramid of power and rank. Antipas brought this Roman emphasis on social and economic class and hierarchy to Galilee.\textsuperscript{45} Williamson later compares this to what Jesus instructed the 5,000, "Jesus instructed the poor, the hungry, and the mourners to lie down. The NRSV says 'sit down,' but the Greek \textit{anaklinai} means 'lie down.' Jesus treats the destitute and the hungry like royalty!\textsuperscript{46} Williamson puts it in the context of conquest and domination, "The purpose of empire was economic; wealth from the provinces flowed to the center of Rome to serve its well-being. The military saw to it that this system worked. The system created the 'glory that was Rome,' a glory built on the backs of provincial peasants. In Galilee and Judea, where one percent of the people owned fifty percent of the land, wealth existed in an upside-down pyramid mostly distributed at the top to the fewest people. The system profited local plantation owners, members of the court, military big shots, and the Temple oligarchy through whom Rome ruled. Jesus lived in a time of economic subjugation, military occupation, oppression, and the threat of idolatry.\textsuperscript{47} Empire works the same today - the use of military might in order to strengthen the economy, in particular, those in power. This is at the core of the Doctrine of Discovery.

We begin to see the picture that Jesus is painting of the Realm of God in contrast to the Realm of Caesar, the normalcy of empire violence. "So we have stories about two kinds of kings, two kinds of kingdoms, two kinds of meals, each the mirror image of the other. In that contrast and the way in which this movement called the 'kingdom of God' went about its task, we see Jesus of Nazareth, the wandering teacher in Israel, responding to the realities of Roman occupation and the real needs of hungry, destitute people. His response openly contradicts Roman ways in Galilee. His movement was in the service of the way of life and well-being instead of the way of death and curse, in an economy of scarcity. It was a movement in which whoever would be first of all must be servant of all - a point that the disciples act out in this story. It is a movement that proclaims that only God is King, contradicting the claim that the king (Caesar) is God... it is a revolt of the colonized."\textsuperscript{48} What does this say about the Church's role in the Doctrine of Discovery? What does this say to a people who proclaim to be Christian and are comfortable sitting at the table with those who hold power? Is the Church so filled with empire that we no longer hear or understand the radical message of Jesus? What happened with the Native Americans who challenged empire?

Returning to Crossan, the movement of the programmatic themes that demonstrate the thinking of Jesus are: 'religion, nonviolence, justice, peace' - or more succinctly, 'first justice, then peace,' or 'peace through justice'.\textsuperscript{49}"

"The Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news!"

\textsuperscript{45} Williamson, "Confessing Christ in Empire and Colony," 98
\textsuperscript{46} Williamson, 99.
\textsuperscript{47} Williamson, 98.
\textsuperscript{48} Williamson, 99.
\textsuperscript{49} Crossan, 29.
"You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."

(1 Corinthians 12: 2-3)

We now move from Jesus to the Apostle Paul and his message lived out in the middle of the first century CE. Paul's ministry was from the middle of the 40s CE up until his execution in Rome around 64 CE. So, 55 CE represents a year toward the middle of his ministry, about 25 years after the crucifixion of Jesus, enough time for the movement to begin to take traction in the Empire.

We tried to make the point earlier that the Roman Empire has to be understood in the context of theology - a theology in which Caesar is considered a god to be worshipped and that victory and peace come through war and domination blessed by god. One cannot separate politics from religion. Rieger makes the point that it is not just politics and religion, but politics, economic, cultural and religion are all intertwined in the Roman Empire. "...(S)eaprating the realms of politics, economics, culture, and religion is a modern idea, which would have been foreign to inhabitants of the ancient world. A sense of this integration is only now returning to our understanding in the context of cultural studies."50 "If the ethos of the Roman Empire thus includes all of life - this is one of the basic marks of empire throughout history - the emperor cult cannot simply be regarded as a secondary 'superstructure.' This cult was not just the legitimization of the emperor and his empire; it played an active role in the construction of empire."51 This speaks directly to the desire for some in the United States today who believe that the removal of Christian prayers and Bible reading in public schools is the reason for our moral and social problems today. But this raises the question this paper is addressing regarding the face of Empire and the relation of the Church to Empire: if religion is intertwined with politics, economics and culture, is religion then a part of Empire? I'm trying to argue in this paper that Jesus and Paul sought to present a different face to religion, a counter to the domination of Empire, which Jesus called the Realm of God. And what would that Realm look like? Can the Realm of God, as we are describing it, exist within an Empire and not become corrupted or at least tainted by it?

Do we read Paul only from the perspective of Jerusalem and his Jewish roots? Or is there a political element to Paul that has been generally ignored or repressed? Joerg Rieger's position, as well as Crossan's, is that Paul was definitely speaking politically in ways that are subtle, and not so subtle. "...the depoliticized Paul is the one that is - paradoxically - more political in more dangerous ways because he ends up on the side of empire by default and without our being aware of it. One of the biggest mistakes in reading Paul is, therefore, to read him in a political vacuum. Paul needs to be understood as a man of his own time, engaging the powers of his time."52 To not put up resistance would amount to endorsement. The goal in this section is to examine ways in which Paul put up resistance.

51 Rieger, 27.
52 Rieger, 45.
Rieger sees Paul addressing politics not in the traditional way of challenging particular laws or the administration head on, but rather "by resisting three of the most powerful mechanisms of control of the Roman Empire." I'll put them in outline form.

- The emperor cult.
- The system of patronage (built on Latin notions like *pietas*, trusting a father figure; and *fides* [Greek: *pistis*, 'faith'], loyalty between rulers and people)
- The prominent themes of the empire's rhetoric. Example: the assertion that peace and security are established by the emperor.

As we examined earlier, the foundation of the Roman empire was "peace through victory," as expressed by Crossan. It begins with a religious base, worship of the gods, followed by the use of war and force to expand the empire, believing that the gods have blessed this. With victory, because the gods have blessed it, then comes peace. Piety, war, victory, and peace. With this came the exaltation of the emperor to a divine status. The language used to describe the emperor shapes the culture: lord, son of god, king, savior. Political language then becomes religious, theology. Paul challenges this foundation, this "mantra of normalcy with a vision of peace through justice or, more fully, with a faith in the sequence of covenant, nonviolence, justice, and peace."

What Paul does is takes the language used by the emperor and makes it a part of his theology therefore challenging the empire in a very basic and substantive way. So when Paul uses *ekklesia* for church, he is redirecting a word used by Rome for the gathering of citizens; Paul takes *euangellion*, 'the gospel' that was used for imperial good news. Savior, son of god, lord, king were all used to describe the Emperor; Paul used them to describe Jesus. *dikaiosyne*, 'justice,' was attributed to Caesar; Paul attributes it to Jesus; *eirene*, 'peace,' was what Caesar established through victory in war; Paul proclaims that it only comes through Jesus Christ - nonviolence and justice. Richard Horsley adds, "Insofar as Paul deliberately used language closely associated with the imperial religion, he was presenting his gospel as a direct competitor of the gospel of Caesar." Even the belief that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven could be a challenge to Rome. "If only select emperors ascended into heaven - only those the Roman Senate considered deserving - could the proclamation of the ascension of Jesus have been harmless?" Paul turns the tables on Rome when he talks of Jesus' crucifixion. Crucifixion was the official form of execution for political criminals, those who challenged the power of Rome. It was intended to keep subjects in line. Yet, Paul turns that around and challenges Rome with his emphasis on the cross. It becomes a political jab at Rome. "For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the

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53 Rieger, 30.
54 Rieger, 30.
55 Crossan and Reed, xi. In this book they use covenant and piety instead of religion as found in Crossan's book.
56 Crossan and Reed, xi.
57 Rieger, p. 31.
59 Rieger, 31.
wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1: 22-24) Neil Elliott in his article, "The Anti-Imperial Message of the Cross" states as his premise, "The crucifixion of Jesus is, after all, one of the most unequivocally political events recorded in the New Testament." Horsley states it even more strongly when he says, "Surely the most blatantly anti-Roman imperial aspect of his gospel was its focus on the crucified Christ." Later on in that same chapter, Paul makes another punch at empire and its views of power and structure in society, "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God." (1 Cor. 1:27-29) Taken in light of the Roman sense of patronage, which we will examine later, Paul is turning upside down the societal structure that undergirds the Roman Empire. This speaks to what Jesus was about in his associating with the common folk, caring for the hungry, homeless, powerless.

Numerous other examples could be given, but I want to highlight two others found in Paul's letter to the church in Rome, which carries in itself extra weight - his theological statement written to the people in the capitol city. Romans 12: 2 "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect." Think of this passage with the Emperor cult in mind. Paul is challenging the thinking and theology that undergirds the Emperor Cult.

Later in that same chapter Paul lays out his understanding of covenant, nonviolence, justice, and peace which turns upside down the foundation of the emperor cult. "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12: 14-21) We see in this rhetoric the sense of covenant and nonviolence which are at the core of Paul's message about Christ and the Realm of God.

A beginning point of the emperor cult was the religious element, including offering sacrifices to the appropriate gods but also the gradual development of Caesar being recognized as a god. "While not all Roman emperors in the time of Jesus and Paul preferred to call themselves *lord*, the term becomes more and more popular, designating an ever-stronger monarchy and pointing to an emperor who is in control of the world. But when official Roman coins are stamped with the image of Augustus and the words "son of God" on them you know that the culture has anointed the Emperor; the Emperor may be trying to show humility but there didn't seem to be much effort to stop it.

The term *lord* has both religious and political elements when used in the Roman Empire in regards to Caesar; they cannot be separated. If then the term *lord* is used to describe Jesus, do we mean only in a religious way or does it carry a political meaning as well? If Jesus is seen as

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62 Rieger, 39.
countering Caesar, should there not be a political element? "Christians must have understood, then that to proclaim Jesus as Son of God was deliberately denying Caesar his highest title and that to announce Jesus as Lord and Savior was calculated treason."\(^63\)

But what do we mean when we say "Caesar is Lord" and what do we mean when we proclaim "Christ is Lord," as was the proclamation of the Early Church? Is Christ's lordship modeled after Caesar? Or did the early church want to counter Rome with a different understanding of lord? Rieger makes a revealing statement when he claims that "the difference between Christ's kind of lordship and the emperor's kind of lordship has not been discussed much by mainline theology in two thousand years."\(^64\) Maybe it is time.

Rieger puts the case very clearly when he states, "The contemporary lack of awareness of the relation of Jesus' lordship to structures of power does not do away with the problem. Even if Jesus' lordship is seen in narrowly religious terms, common imperialistic assumptions about lords return through the back door and shape Christology by default. Any reference to Christ as Lord that does not reflect these unconscious political and economic connotations of the term that are a central part of our history shores up the powers that be."\(^65\) He goes on to argue that Paul has frequently been used to defend empire, especially the use of the Deutero-Pauline epistles.\(^66\)

The issue of lord and lordship enters our discussion of the Doctrine of Discovery and the treatment of Native Americans. "(N)ative American theologians have been most acutely aware of problems with confession of Christ's lordship. Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George Tinker have argued that the statement 'Jesus is Lord' is 'the one scriptural metaphor used for the Christ event that is ultimately unacceptable and even hurtful to American Indian peoples.' Because Native American cultures had egalitarian characteristics, they point out, even a chief had limited authority. From this perspective, the term lord is closely tied to the history of colonization and the resulting hierarchies of power."\(^67\)

Jesus was trying to counter Rome with a different vision of the Realm of God in contrast to Rome; justice, equality, compassion, nonviolence, being the servant instead of the one being served. Paul sought to change the focus as well; "Christ crucified" "do not be conformed to this world..." "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." "Do not be haughty but associate with the lowly." But the Church has not done a good job at defining clearly the understanding of the lordship of Jesus in contrast to the lordship of Caesar. "With few exceptions, most biblical scholars have not given much thought to the fact that Jesus' being Lord might be qualitatively different from Caesar's being lord.\(^68\) Isn't that interesting! We proclaim in our Confession of Faith that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and proclaim him Lord and Savior." Do we mean anything differently than Caesar is lord and savior? Again, Rieger states the issue clearly, "God in Christ is a different kind of lord who is not in solidarity with the powerful but in solidarity with the lowly. To be more precise, Christ's way of being in solidarity with the powerful is by being in solidarity with the lowly; the powerful are not outside the reach of Christ's lordship, but their notions of what it means to be lord are radically reversed.

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\(^{63}\) Crossan and Reed, 11.

\(^{64}\) Rieger, 32. The first chapter of this book, from which this quote comes, has its main focus as to discuss lordship in terms of Christ and Caesar. Very helpful chapter.

\(^{65}\) Rieger, 34.

\(^{66}\) Rieger, 36.

\(^{67}\) Rieger, 34.

\(^{68}\) Rieger, 40.
This position - at the heart of the new world proclaimed by Paul - directly contradicts the logic of the Roman Empire. 69

The hymn that Paul quotes in his letter to the Philippians is a central text in this discussion.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross.
Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2: 5-11)

When Jesus emptied (kenosis) himself and became "human" did he abandon all sense of divinity and power? If you read Paul's letters carefully, there is no hint in any of his writings that Jesus was anything more than human; there is no discussion, or need, for Jesus to be a miracle worker. Central to Paul is that Jesus died, Jesus was crucified and was raised. No walking on water.

But in the second section of the hymn, because of Jesus' humility, obedience even to death, he is exalted and given the title "Lord." Is Jesus given the title "Lord" because of his humility and obedient life among us? And if so, does "Lord" in this context mean something different than when Lord is used for Caesar? Crossan and Reed state it this way, "Was it just a case of accepting crucifixion and then obtaining exaltation, or did the kenotic crucifixion establish a very different mode of exaltation? Did that downward kenosis forever change the upward exaltation in its type, its mode, and its practice? In other words, is the Lordship of Christ, now in Christian heaven, irrevocably different from the Lordship of Caesar, now in Roman heaven? 70 Rieger comments, "The tension between the humiliation and the exaltation of Jesus in Philippians 2 might give us a hint of the different sort of power promoted by Jesus: a power that is in diametrical opposition to the power of the emperor." 71

Let's back up and put this in its context in Philippians 2 by looking at the verses just prior to Paul inserting this hymn, the reason for quoting it to begin with, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." (Philippians 2: 3-4) This is not your typical empire statement. Look at Paul's thinking in 2 Corinthians 12: 9, 10 when he talks about

69 Rieger, 52.
70 Crossan and Reed, 290.
71 Rieger, 43.
his thorn in the flesh, "...but he [God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness'..."Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong."

It seems that Paul is making the case that the *kenosis* of Christ makes for a different lordship in exaltation. "Christ as Lord models a kind of power that is diametrically opposed to the power of the empire." Crossan and Reed would support that position when they propose nonviolence and justice as the basis for peace rather than war and victory.

The problem is that the Church has not really bought into this notion strongly enough to develop a theology that permeates the thinking, worship and mission of the Church. When we proclaim Christ as the exalted Lord in heaven, we get hooked into the Empire model of power and domination because that is the normalcy of civilization. Could this be what the Native Americans fear when they hear the Church proclaim, "Jesus is Lord!"? Did the Church buy into the Empire model of Lord instead of the model of servanthood that Jesus and Paul proclaimed? What is our understanding of "Jesus is Lord" as a part of our Affirmation of Faith?

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**55 CE ➔ 80 CE ➔ 100 CE**

The third area where Paul challenges Empire, patronage, needs to be under a separate topic because of the development that takes place in the letters attributed to Paul.

Patronage was the social system that Rome developed which provided stability within the culture through a complex hierarchical ladder. When combined with the emperor cult the empire was a cohesive whole. "The patronage system provided a socioeconomic hierarchy where the property owners, who enjoyed highest social status, dispensed power to be received by the lower classes." It is interesting to reflect on this in light of our own U.S. Constitution where European males who owned land were the only folk who could vote and African American slaves were counted as 3/5 of a human for taxing purposes and establishing numbers for the election of members to the U.S. House of Representatives. Native Americans were left out of the discussion. Caucasian women had more rights than blacks, but not near that of Caucasian males. So we had our own patronage; and we are still struggling with it.

An interesting point that Rieger makes is that in Rome "unlike in the contemporary United States, rich and poor did not live in separate neighborhoods but in contiguous areas." We have gated communities; up until recently certain areas of the city were designated for blacks or Hispanic. In my experience, anyway, well-to-do folk give money to the Salvation Army or Union Gospel Mission or the Food Bank but seldom will you find them rubbing shoulders with those who need those services.

Patronage is an intentional social system of top down authority where everyone has his or her place. It is based on economics and political capital. Horsley comments that, "The patronage system was rooted in the basic Roman value that honor and prestige, for which all were clamoring, derived from the power to give what others needed or wanted." Patronage was a means of using power to control by either giving or withholding. We catch a very clear glimpse

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Rieger, 50.
Rieger, 30.
Rieger, 30.
of this when we hear Paul proclaim in Galatians 3:27-28 "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Paul clearly outlines the patronage system for us and then dismantles it. This is clearly a political/theological statement challenging the Roman system and proclaiming that the Realm of God has a better way.

The purpose for the 55CE - 80CE - 100CE as the heading for this section is to briefly discuss a piece that has significant implication for our discussion. Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan develop this very thoroughly in the second chapter of their book, The First Paul. Scholars have questioned for some time whether Paul actually wrote all the letters in the New Testament that have his name on them. Though there are varying degrees of agreement, most scholars believe Paul wrote for sure: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon. Many scholars place Ephesians and Colossians as written by a disciple of Paul a decade or two after Paul's death in around 64 CE; some will also put 2 Thessalonians in this category. This is the Deutero-Pauline group. The Pastorals - 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus - are considered by many to have been written even later, around the end of the first century. Don't consider these dates set in stone but as a point by which to give a relative idea of time and distance. So, 55 CE is the original Paul; 80 CE is the Deutero-Pauline group and the 100 CE represents the Pastoral Epistles group.

The reason Borg and Crossan bring this up is that for centuries Christian folk have struggled with some of the conflicting instructions given in these letters. This approach, which has much going for it, helps us understand these difficulties. The Paul of 55 CE, which Borg and Crossan call the Radical Paul, holds that Christians cannot own or have a Christian slave. If the master and the slave are both Christian, how can they call each other "brother" in worship and partake equally in the Lord's Supper but then leave the worship service and go back to the patronage of the society? See their discussion of Philemon. The same held true for the relationship of men and women. Borg and Crossan's discussion of Romans 16 is very insightful; a letter written to the church at Rome speaks of women deacons and even an apostle; equality of women and men is obvious. Note the Galatians 3 passage quoted above; in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek; slave nor free; male nor female. All are one in Christ. This was a core value of Paul and turned upside down the patronage/patriarchal system of the Empire.

Deutero-Pauline (Colossians, Ephesians and 1 Thessalonians), called Conservative Paul by Borg and Crossan, pulls back from the original radical inclusion and brings it toward the patronage understanding of the culture. By the time we get to the Pastorals, or Reactionary Paul, the relationship of master and slave and the male/female relationship, the teachings under Paul's name are soundly in the patronage camp. The radical Paul is almost all gone. Crossan and Reed put it this way in their book, In Search of Paul, "Our argument is that the historical Paul insisted on equality among Christians over against the hierarchal normalcy of Roman society. First, a Christian mistress or master should not and could not have a Christian slave. Second, Christian women and Christian men were as such equal in marriage, assembly and apostolate. How could one be equal and unequal at the same time, since in Christ all were equal before God?" This understanding regarding slavery and patriarchy goes a long ways in explaining the conflicts often felt in the letters under Paul's name.

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77 Crossan and Reed, 75.
Neil Elliott in his article, "The Anti-Imperialism Message of the Cross" affirms this view when he says, "The pseudo-Pauline letters already began to modify Paul to serve the churches' agenda in the post-apostolic period, and to an extent to accommodate the word of the cross to the interests of empire."\(^78\)

The point of this discussion is to show that during that first century of the Church, the message, in the name of Paul, is being changed so that it will come into line with the patronage system of the Roman Empire. The reason for all the struggle with Paul's writing in these two areas is that Paul didn't write it all and that later authors changed Paul to sound less threatening to the status quo. The original Paul was a threat to the system.

**313 CE ➔ 1452 CE**

The moving of the views of slavery and patriarchy from Radical Paul to Reactionary Paul not only moved the Church away from Paul, and Jesus, but it also sped the Church toward its encounter with Constantine in the early 4th century CE. I want to highlight just a couple of issues in this era before we make concluding remarks.

In 313 CE, Emperor Constantine signed the Edict of Milan which removed Christianity from the persecution list and made it acceptable to be a Christian and a citizen of the Empire. It has been my understanding that the Church in those early centuries, though they endured horrible persecution at different points, actually grew and spread tremendously during this time. When one confessed Christ as Lord and considered baptism, it was in light of possible threats to one's life; it was costly. After 313, as it evolved, Christianity eventually became the official religion of the Empire; when you were born into the Empire, you were born into the Church. Being a follower of Jesus cost you nothing.

Constantine called the bishops of the Church together in 325 CE to have them iron out the theology of this Christian Church. His purpose was to unite the Empire under one religion and he didn't want a dozen different views dividing the empire; he wanted one unified religion with a clear doctrine. Constantine was engaged in this discussion and even gave suggestions at key points.

Clark Williamson, in his article "Confessing Christ in Empire and Colony" which was cited earlier, quotes a statement from the church historian, Eusebius, about a banquet held by Constantine at the conclusion of the Council of Nicaea. Remember that Williamson was the one who invited us to look at the banquet of Herod Antipas and the banquet of feeding of the 5,000 as putting the Realm of Herod and the Realm of God at odds with each other. Consider these words of Eusebius, "Detachments of the bodyguard and troops surrounded the entrance of the palace with drawn swords (keeping at a safe distance the destitute, the smelly, and the scruffy), and through the midst of them the men of God proceeded without fear into the innermost of the Imperial apartments, in which some were the Emperor's companions at table, while others reclined on couches arranged on either side. One might have thought that a picture of Christ's kingdom was thus shadowed forth, and a dream rather than reality."\(^79\) Sadly, Williamson comments, "Note that the church turns toward the empire."\(^80\) Solidly!

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\(^79\) Williamson, 100.

\(^80\) Williamson, 100.
Rita Nakashima Brock's article, "Who Do We Say He Is?" found immediately following Williamson's article in *Chalice Introduction to Disciples Theology*, adds to the discussion, "The bishops at Nicaea did not equate Jesus with the emperor. They put him above the emperor. This theology put the church in tension with the political power of the empire. It also placed emperors in a double bind. If the emperor was a Christian, he would be subject to the church and under the moral authority of its leaders. Most emperors made a practice of deferring baptism until their deathbeds." She goes on to say that the "Nicene Christ reflected a tension between the power of his church and imperial domination, especially around bloodshed, which the church regarded as sin. The greatest mark of imperial power was the military." But, she goes on to add, that the church did not create a theology that supported imperial power. The church was wrestling with how to sit at the table of power but also keep its sense of the mission of Christ.

The movement of the church towards empire reached its conclusion, Brock says, under the leadership of Charlemagne in the 8th and 9th century. "Charlemagne conquered the church for the empire by making bloodshed sacred." The bishops of the church objected to this policy but Charlemagne's own theologians pointed to Eusebius of Constantine's era as the model. This is where the theology of the Eucharist changed and when the cross moved from a sign of life to a sign of death for our sins.

Brock then goes on to say that when Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade in 1095 CE, "He promised that all who joined the holy war could count their duty as penance for their sins, a ritual of pilgrimage to, and pillage of, Jerusalem. He also promised that if the crusaders died, they would immediately gain salvation, which he displaced from life here and now into the afterlife. Shedding human blood became absolution for sin and the fastest route to salvation." Sounds pretty similar to Islamic militant jihad. It is in this context that Anselm of Canterbury wrote his *Cur Deus Homo?* which developed the atonement theology that is so pervasive in Christian churches today. "Atonement theology is useful to imperial power," says Brock; in fact, atonement theology needed the theology of bloodshed in order to work. "Atonement theology lacks ways to understand human agency as moral because it places morality in being powerless, and it does not understand love as the wise use of power. To regard the poor, oppressed, and victimized as innocent and good reinforces the structures of benevolent paternalism, where by helpless victims can be admired and their champions can maintain power by denouncing evil on their behalf."

As a short aside, John Dominic Crossan, in his book, *God and Empire*, gives his own opinion as to why the monastic movement developed in the centuries following 325 CE. As the church turned toward empire more and more, it began to embrace the world of empire. The radical witness of Jesus Christ against empire was basically gone. "The monastery presents an alternative lifestyle that implicitly criticizes the greed, injustice, and oppression of our everyday world. It is a mode of semicommunal or fully communal life witnessing that violence is not the

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81 Rita Nakashima Brock, "Who Do We Say He Is?" in *Chalice Introduction to Disciples Theology*, ed.: Peter Goodwin Heltzel, (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2008)108.
82 Brock, 108.
83 Brock, 108.
84 Brock, 109.
85 Brock, 109.
86 Brock, 110.
87 Brock, 112.
88 Brock, 112.
inevitability of human nature but only the normalcy of human civilization.” He sees the
monastic movement as a desire by people to live more fully the vision Jesus had of the Realm of
God by removing themselves from the culture as best they could.

Do we not see, then, in the blessing on violence and shedding of blood in war and a
teology of Eucharist that embraces blood and violence, as the church completely embracing
empire? The Doctrine of Discovery has arrived.

2016 CE

The Doctrine of Discovery arose out of the church having bought into empire to the
extent that the vision and mission of Jesus Christ was lost. The church had become a part of the
empire, even using and claiming its values for the purpose of evangelism and church growth.
The temptation of power is very great. The desire to reach higher can be destructive. The
church became blind to the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in so doing was able to
embrace the position of the Doctrine of Discovery without having any qualms about it.

The Church, as we have experienced it in western Europe and the United States, has lived
its entire history as a part of the dominate culture, a culture shaped by the Doctrine. But we must
remember that Jesus and Paul lived as a minority under the domination of Rome, and they sought
to proclaim and demonstrate a different way of living and being. We still use the language of the
New Testament but we interpret it in terms of the Doctrine and empire.

I want to propose some specific areas for discussion and action that will, hopefully,
transform the church, or at least some of the followers, to a more faithful position in living the
Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus was about politics. For too long we have sought to avoid this area because it
would require us to rethink our commitment to Jesus Christ. A first step would be to recognize
that Jesus and Paul were intentionally confronting the power structures of their day and seeking
to present a different way of living and being in contrast to domination and war as a means to
control the world. A theory that I have held for some time is that when the Church is in a
position of power and empire, the message of salvation has its focus in the afterlife, getting to
heaven and less emphasis upon living the Realm of God in this life. To put the Realm of God
and salvation in this life means confronting the values and actions of economic, political, cultural
and social perks of privilege, those who rise to the economic top on the backs of others, those
willing to use power and fear to control and dominate others.

This requires an understanding of the language that Jesus and Paul used and how it spoke
truth to power. It requires rethinking the reason for Jesus' crucifixion and therefore what Easter
and resurrection are all about. It calls for a different theology that moves us out of our traditional
and comfortable pews into a different way of being church.

2. Normalcy of Civilizations Violence. Newcomb was right in pointing to Joshua in the
Hebrew Scriptures, but he didn't go back far enough. It goes back past Abraham to the very
beginning of humanity. Our Scriptures put it in the Garden of Eden and the temptation to
"become like God, knowing good and evil." Civilization, from the beginning, has had this bent
toward the use of power and war to control and expand economic wealth. We find it in cultures
all around the world, not just in our biblical stories.

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Crossan, 46.
And in many of them religion was used in some form or fashion to bless and justify the actions of war and conquest. I found Crossan's images helpful: empire building uses religion to justify war in order to get victory to obtain peace (control, domination). Crossan proposes that Jesus was about a completely different agenda: understanding of God that uses nonviolence to achieve justice which leads to true peace (equality).

Rita Nakashima Brock gives her voice to this, "We live in a world driven by injustice, war, and economic exploitation. Though many people in the world now live in democratic societies, the will to pursue power and domination, the quest for wealth and status, the denial of knowledge and truth, the reliance on bloodshed and terror, and the scarcities and betrayal of love remain unabated since Roman times. In our world, these sins have been given greater reach and control through technological advances that now threaten not only individual societies or nations, but the interdependent web of life."\(^{90}\)

We need to be reminded again that Jesus and Paul lived as oppressed people and spoke from that position to the power of Rome and even Jerusalem. We in the United States have always lived in the position of the majority, the dominant, those in power. This is an important point to remember as we examine ourselves in light of Jesus and Paul.

3. The Realm of God. Jesus' central message can only be fully understood when we grasp that this was an intentional move on his part to promote a way of living and being that is based on justice, love, compassion, forgiveness and equality. The normalcy of civilization demonstrates the brokenness of humanity; Jesus was seeking to embody the heart of God.

The choice of Jesus to use "kingdom" language when that language was already being used by Rome to describe their emperor cult, states clearly that Jesus was intentionally challenging the dominant culture and leadership. I believe that the Church needs to spend serious time defining and studying what Jesus was about in his proclamation of the Realm of God and put that over against empire and the Doctrine of Discovery.

4. Jesus is Lord. And if Caesar was already being called "Lord" in the first century, then the use of this affirmation by the early church was a direct challenge to those in power. Again, a clear understanding of this affirmation in light of the political situation needs to be discussed today. What does it mean for us to proclaim "Jesus is Lord" in our cultural context?

This raises important theological questions. Crossan and Reed raise some of them, "What were the structural and systemic differences between the God incarnate in Augustus and the God incarnate in Christ? What were the religious and political differences between Caesar Augustus as Son of God and Jesus Christ as Son of God? What were the ethical and economic differences between a world grounded in Caesar and a world founded on Christ?"\(^{91}\)

5. Doctrine of Discovery. I am just beginning to open the door as to what it means to live in a country that was founded and shaped by the Doctrine of Discovery. The Doctrine is basically a different way of talking about the normalcy of civilization's violence, the use of power and empire to abuse and misuse other peoples and lands for the sake of economic might and domination. In some ways I am not sure that the Church in the United States will be able to grasp this fully because it would demand a reexamination of our national and church history, our whole way of life. It is the air that we have breathed for centuries. But we must try. It is the basis of the racism that is still present in our society; it is the basis for the images and political decisions taken toward Native American.

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\(^{90}\) Brock, 113.

\(^{91}\) Crossan and Reed, 11-12.
If you walk the Mall in Washington, D.C., you will quickly observe that the dominate theme is war: Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War. We define our history in terms of war. There is one monument, of which I am aware, that speaks to the other theme, and that is of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. His message was religion - nonviolence - justice - peace, the complete opposite of all the other monuments.

The United States has two national holidays every fall that rub the Doctrine of Discovery painfully into the face of Native Americans: Columbus Day and Thanksgiving Day. Isn't it time to have some discussion on these two, especially Columbus Day? In the midst of the Cold War the United States inserted "under God" into the pledge to the flag in 1954 and then two years later officially made "In God We Trust" the official motto of our country, placing it on all currency in 1957. The phrase actually began occurring on coins beginning in the Civil War era; interesting timing. Once again uniting flag and cross.

Joerg Rieger states, "One of the odd things about empire in our own time is that many people have no sense for the pressures produced by empire and do not perceive empire at work. As a result, there is no context to observing the difference between Christ as Lord and the emperor as Lord. This may explain the otherwise strange attraction to 'purely religious' and depoliticized language. Yet, when Christians in a context of empire are unaware of the political implications of the faith, their Christ is likely to be co-opted by empire by default." 92 That is why it is so important that the Church be intentional about the points I sought to make above.

Central to confronting the Doctrine of Discovery in our midst is to grasp again the radical message of Jesus in the context of his speaking a different way of living and being in contrast to the brokenness of humanity lived out in war, slavery, oppression, economic disparity, injustice. I appreciate how Rita Nakashima Brock stated it. "He [Jesus] taught resistance to the unjust principalities and powers of the world, declared that we must be friends of God and each other, and organized a movement to enable the least respected and most oppressed a place at the table of life and leadership in his community - women, poor peasants, slaves, paupers, prisoners, the homeless, and the disabled and sick. He was tortured and murdered for resisting injustice and challenging authorities. He lives still among those who love him and each other." 93 Contrast that to the Pope's Bull in the 15th century where he blessed Portugal to "invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed...and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit." The Realm of God confronts the Doctrine of Discovery!

The picture below was taken in the sanctuary of a church where I have attended worship recently. It could have been taken in thousands of church buildings across this country. You will see in front the Lord's Table prepared and ready with bread and chalice. The two chairs behind are for the Elder and Pastor. Prominent behind the table you will see the Christian flag on the congregation's right and the American flag on the left.

Proper flag etiquette says that the American flag is to be displayed to the right of the podium or center, the position of honor. If Jesus Christ is truly the host at the Lord's Supper, then to have the national flag on display in the position of honor behind Jesus is a powerful image of what we mean by the Doctrine of Discovery - the church giving its blessing to empire

92 Rieger, 44.
93 Brock, 113.
and placing the message and life of Jesus inside the political structure, and in the process changing the transforming message of Jesus to fit and bless empire. The flag and cross standing together, symbols of conquest and subjugation of humans considered inferior.

This last Fall as I was in the midst of writing this paper, I fell into conversation with a clergy colleague about some of the reading and writing I was doing on this paper. In the midst of our conversation she shared her own story. Some years back she was ordained into the Christian Ministry and she took to heart the ordination vows that she spoke that day. Since her ordination, she said, she has not said the pledge to the American flag, not even once. She can't. "I pledged my allegiance to Jesus Christ." Next time I am called to stand and repeat the pledge to the U.S. flag, I will have second thoughts.

The radical life and message of Jesus Christ has been captured by the forces of empire and power and turned to its use. We see that clearly in the Doctrine of Discovery. It is time we begin to reclaim that original message and the life of the One we affirmed at our baptism.
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