

## VI. Laws of Divine Establishment and the Royal Family Honor Code: Europe's First Church

Evans, M. Stanton. "What Wall?: The Myth of Strict Separation." *National Review* 23 Jan. 1995, pp. 56-60,76.

This is the exhortation of Paul in Philippians 2:12, Philippians 2:13, Philippians 2:14, Philippians 2:15. We will note the corrected translation and then notice some pertinent commentary which comes out of the exegesis.

**Philippians 2:12** - So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only but now much more in my absence, be accomplishing your own preservation in danger with reverence and respect;

**Philippians 2:13** - for it is the Holy Spirit who is at work in you, both to will and to do above and beyond his will and good pleasure.

**Philippians 2:14** - Keep on doing all things without sullen discontent and argumentations which undermine authority.

**Philippians 2:15** - In order that you yourselves might become blameless, even undiluted by evil, not a disgrace to society, students under the discipline and authority of God, in the middle of a dishonest and perverted Zeitgeist, among whom you keep shining as light-giving bodies in the Devil's world.

### K. Paul's Mandate to Influence the Zeitgeist

The Apostle Paul wrote Philippians during his imprisonment in Rome under Nero, circa A.D. 60.

His mandate to the Philippian church, namely, to influence the Roman Zeitgeist through invisible historical impact, is a fitting summary to our study of the separation of church and state.

The passage is Philippians 2:12, Philippians 2:13, Philippians 2:14, Philippians 2:15, and contains biblical documentation which further supports our study. We begin with an analysis of:

**Philippians 2:12** - So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only but now much more in my absence, be accomplishing your own preservation in danger with reverence and respect;

The verse begins with the vocative plural of the noun: *agapetos* + the possessive pronoun: *ego - agapetos + ego - "my beloved"*

aorist - Constativ; contemplates the verb in its entirety but emphasizes that this submission occurs every time an epistle from Paul is read and studied by this congregation.

PRINCIPLE: Remember, the newly established local churches in the first century were the recipients of many letters of instruction on the mystery doctrines of the New Testament. Pastors were left behind to teach the people while the Apostles sent back letters of instruction.

Each congregation received more epistles than are recorded in the New Testament canon. Philippians as we know it is just one of several epistles written to that church by Paul:

**Philippians 1:1** - ... to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.

Philippi was made a Roman colony by Augustus in honor of his victory there over Brutus and Cassius. A colony was a “*Little Rome*.” Its inhabitants were Roman citizens who could vote and governed themselves by means of a Senate and legislature. Whatever privileges and advantages came with Roman citizenship, they were enjoyed by the people of Philippi.

The Philippian church was made up of a wonderful diversity of women and men.

Lydia offered her home as a meeting place and maintained an environment for worship. The women attended to all the needs of Paul whenever he visited so that during his entire stay, he could concentrate on teaching the Word.

The men were Macedonians who were Roman citizens and many of whom were Roman veterans. Lutheran historian Adolf Hausrath observed in his book, **Times of the Apostles**, that:

*“The Macedonians represented the noblest and soundest part of the ancient world. Here was none of the shuffling and the indecision of the Asiatics, none of the irritable vanity of the Greeks. They were men of sterner mold than could be found in Asia Minor or Syria. The material was harder to work in, and offered more stubborn resistance; but the work, once done, endured. A new Macedonian phalanx [heavily armed infantry] of Pauline Christians was formed here. Manliness, loyalty, firmness, their characteristics in general history, are equally their characteristics in the history of the Christian church. They were always true to Paul, always obedient, always helpful.”*

The Roman veterans were trained in the Roman wars to orient to the hardness, discipline, and loyalty required for a successful campaign. Having defended freedom, they were proud of their Roman citizenship. Paul continually exhorts them to behave as citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ. He encouraged them to execute the Christian way of life as if they were citizens of a heavenly community.

Roman citizenship was described by the Greek word, *politeuma*, and it is used by Paul in Philippians 3:20 to describe to these believers their status in heaven: “*Our politeuma, our citizenship is in heaven.*”

It was the loyalty, the firmness, and the obedience which Paul recognized in these people of Macedonia. Their devotion to the work of Christ was the same characteristics they displayed toward their duties to the Roman Empire of which they were so proud to be called citizens.

And thus, the constative aorist tense of the verb *hupakouo*, indicates that the obedience of the believers in the church at Philippi was a constant ongoing thing.

active - These positive Philippians produced the action of the verb by hearing, metabolizing and executing Paul’s teachings.

indicative - Declarative, their obedience to Paul’s ministry and their loyalty to the Word of God was an historical reality.

Obedience to authority is an asset which must be learned.

It is most efficiently learned under the group discipline required of both military service and athletic competition.

Paul realizes that the men of the Philippian church are veterans of both the wars of Rome and the games of Rome.

Consequently, he employs quite a number of figures of speech in both areas:

**Philippians 1:27** - Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

The words “*standing firm*” is one word in the Greek: *steko*: refers to the mental attitude taken by one who seeks to defend his beliefs against assault. Military and athletic competition develops the attitude of defending one's territory. The territory

here is the command post of truth established in the souls of these believers. Paul exhorts them to defend it by standing fast, to stand up against opposition and adversity.

The words “*striving together*” is also one word in the Greek: *sunathleo*: to contend in the games, to wrestle in athletic competition.

Paul comments on their bravery in:

**Philippians 1:28** - You are in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of deliverance for you, and that from God.