

May 30th-The Church Administering the Sacraments & The Word of God

Creation ordinances are important because they give us a foundation for what we should expect of the state. The Lord has appointed two kingdoms to govern the affairs of men — the church administers the sacraments and the Word of God to direct our Father's children in godliness, while the state bears the sword against injustice and makes laws for the good of all people, regenerate and unregenerate alike (Rom. 13:1–7). Each authority must do its delegated tasks and not try to usurp the authority of the other. The church does not bear the sword, and the state does not administer church discipline. Nevertheless, on account of the covenant of creation, it is right for the church to expect the state to honor life and bear the sword justly, and it is the responsibility of the church to be a prophetic witness against the state when it fails in these duties.

Lets look at the churches aspect of this today and the states next week.

The Triune God: The Ontological Foundation of the Church

1. **The church defined:** "The church is the covenant assembly of the triune King, called from all nations to be his holy sanctuary: the place where God's glory dwells and where the blessings of the Messiah are communicated to God's elect in accordance with his promise and where God's people serve him as a kingdom of priests in accordance with his command."

Builder analogy-Questions for the Class

- i. Efficient cause: Who is the builder of this house?
- ii. Material cause: What is this house made of?
- iii. Exemplary cause: What is the blueprint for this house?
- iv. Final cause: What is the ultimate purpose of this house?

1. The church is God's building project, which God builds through the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ, God's messianic King.

a. Scriptural support:

i. Ephesians 2:11-22

11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

ii. 1 Corinthians 3:9

For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

vi. Matthew 16:18

18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock[a] I will build my church, and the gates of hell[b] shall not prevail against it.

b. Johannes Wollebius: “The efficient cause of the church is the entire Holy Trinity, but more specifically Christ.”

How instrumental causes work: by the strength and wisdom of the efficient cause, not by their own strength or wisdom.

Ministers through whom you believed – 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? iServants through whom you believed, jas the Lord assigned to each. 6 kl planted, lApollos watered, mbut God gave the growth. 7 So nneither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 He who plants and he who waters are one, and each owill receive his wages according to his labor. 9 For we are pGod’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, qGod’s building.

iv. Jars of clay – 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you.

v. It is a great privilege (1 Corinthians 3:9) and a great responsibility (1 Corinthians 3:10-14) to serve as an instrument of God in Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

What is this temple made of? The material cause of the church:

a. Ephesians 2:11, 14-18

11 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source.[a] That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,[b] 12 saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;

in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

13 And again,

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again,

“Behold, I and the children God has given me.”

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

What is the blueprint for this temple? The exemplary cause of the church:

a. God’s eternal counsel/plan, revealed through Jesus Christ, God’s anointed prophet is the “blueprint” for the church.

i. Ephesians 1:9-10, 22; Ephesians 3:1-6

9 making known[a] to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

iii. Jesus’s reveals the blueprint of God’s heavenly/eternal tent (antitype): Hebrews 8:1-5

(see also 1:1-4; 2:1-4)

b. Because God’s eternal counsel/plan provides the blueprint for the church’s construction, blessing, and ministry, general revelation is insufficient; special revelation is required.

c. Ministers are accountable to this blueprint: 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 18-20, and may expect divine blessing to follow from faithful service according to this blueprint: 1 Corinthians 3:6,

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1 Corinthians 2:10-15: 10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled[a] master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive

a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

a. **The ultimate end of the church:** The church exists to behold and reflect God's radiant glory, to receive and respond to God's saving goodness – both as mediated through Jesus Christ, God's anointed priest.

i. 2 Corinthians 3-4; Ephesians 3:14-21; 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 12:18-29

ii. **Thus our definition: The church is the covenant assembly of the triune King, called from all nations to be his holy sanctuary: the place where God's glory dwells and where the blessings of the Messiah are communicated to God's elect in accordance with his promise and where God's people serve him as a kingdom of priests in accordance with his command.**

iii. Public worship is not merely a means to some other ecclesiastical end. Public worship is an end in itself, and an anticipation / participation in our ultimate destiny: communion with the triune God through Jesus Christ the mediator.

. The means to this ultimate end: The church itself is the divinely ordained means to accomplishing this divinely ordained end.

i. The Great Commission: Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:16. By God's grace, the church "builds itself up in love."

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

WCF 1.1: "Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation: therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in diverse manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto

writing; which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.”

WCF 1.10: The supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

Administering the Sacraments

The sacraments are an invitation and occasion to move beyond a merely theoretical theology

1. Two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

2. On what basis do we admit these two sacraments?

a. Johannes Wollebius provides a representative answer, “Three things are necessary for a sacrament: that it has been divinely instituted under the covenant of grace; that it have an external symbol appointed by God; that the promise of grace be connected with it.”

b. In other words, on the basis of Holy Scripture, we confess that true

sacraments must be instituted by Christ through the apostolic Scriptures, with his

accompanying promise to bless (Exod 20.24b; Matt 28.18-20; Luke 22.19), as visible

representations/symbols of the gospel (Acts 2.38; Rom 6; Luke 22.19-20; 1 Cor 10.16; HC 67:

designed images), to be perpetually performed until the day of Jesus Christ, where they will

be consummated in the kingdom of God (Matt 28.20; Mark 14.25; Luke 22.19; Rom 6; 1 Cor

11.26; Rev 19).

c. Only baptism and the Lord's Supper fulfill these requirements

Through the sacraments, Christ signifies, seals, and delivers the blessings of the covenant of grace to his people. Sacraments are symbolic actions (performed with water, bread, and wine by lawfully appointed ministers) whereby God seals and delivers to his elect children the blessings of the covenant of grace in accordance with his sovereign faithfulness to his promise. The sacraments also function to distinguish the people of God from the rest of the world as God's treasured possession, and to bind God's people to his love and service.

How do the sacraments emphasize the personal nature of covenant union and communion?

A. "God's covenant is . . . a matter of . . . personal pronouns" (J. I. Packer)

1. Packer: "Christianity is a matter of personal pronouns, in the sense that everything depends upon knowing that Jesus died for me, to be my Savior, and that his Father is my God and Father, personally committed to love, nurture, uphold, and glorify me. This . . . is covenant thinking, for this is the essential substance of the covenant."

2. Luther on Galatians 1:4: "who gave himself for our sins": "Be careful to learn this definition, and especially this pronoun 'our'. Believe this one syllable and it will swallow up all your sins; that is, you may know for certain that Christ has taken away not just certain people's sins but yours . . . So believe that Christ was given not only for other people's sins but also for your own. Hold on to this, and by no means let yourself be drawn away from this very sweet definition of Christ."

B. The sacraments, because they are applied directly to persons, do not simply show that the gospel happened or that God promises great blessings but that the gospel happened for you that God's promise is to you—personally

We are in need of eternal helps in our weakness, God in his mercy has secured the effectual preaching of the gospel in the church. He has appointed pastors and teachers for this reason. When we confess we believe in the church we are stating not only the visible church but the invisible church of which all saints are a part of. When we make this confession it relates in some measure to the external church in that we must maintain some type of brotherly accord with all the children of God, giving due authority to the church, and conduct ourselves well as members of the flock. The church universal is the multitude collected out of all nations, who, though dispersed and far distant from each other, agree in one truth of divine doctrine, and are bound together by this common tie. Those who continually alienate themselves from Christian society and the sacraments can be regarded as deserting of the religion. Thus, the logic follows that a revolt from the church is a denial of God and Christ.

The Lord has faithfully promised to be with his church until the end of the age. (Matt 28:20/Rev 2:13) It is his tabernacle in which he dwells and walks continually. And it is the presence of Christ that makes the church to be what it is. The spirit has been promised to for the continuance and preservation of the church. Christ kingdom and church is to last throughout all generations (Ps 72:5). The entire duty of those of us in the church is to act according to the gift that we are partakers in.

Look at the church and sacraments anew. Realize these are good and gracious gifts promised to preserve. If we love God we are to love the church and its people. To love God and be separated from

the church is a warning at a minimum. To take on the sacraments is an opportunity to take theology to a personal level quickly and be reminded of what we believe.