

PODCAST – Founding of the Church

Fact of the Founding of the Church

- I. Opinions of Opponents
 - a. Orthodox Protestants
 - i. It consists of the just (Lutherans) or of the predestined (Calvinists) --- therefore, the true members of Christ, wanting to show their unity and faith, join together and form *visible churches*.
 1. It is thus a human institution, and can adopt various social forms as localities and the times require. It can even fall apart.
 2. Not identical to true church, because it can always harbour hypocrites.
 3. It can become so corrupt as to contradict the Gospel teaching – then it must be abandoned (e.g Catholic Church)
 - b. Modern Protestants
 - i. Christ inaugurated a movement, preaching an elevated morality.
 - ii. Christ had no intention of founding a Church or separating from the synagogue; this was a later creation, largely orchestrated by St Paul, as a response to persecution from the Jews.
 - c. Modernists
 - i. Not afraid of denying historical statements in Gospel.
 - ii. They take position that Christ thought end of the world was at hand, so he did not have any notion of founding a Church.
 - iii. The Church was born from a two-fold need.
 1. Urge to share one's faith and experiences;
 2. Growing numbers required some organization – therefore establishment of an hierarchy. – and historical circumstances led it to be formed on Roman principles.
 3. Can be said to be founded by Christ, in so far as the Christian consciousness is by some vague force the consciousness of Christ.
 - a. What 'Christians' chose – Christ chose.

Thesis 1: Christ Personally Founded a Church which is a true Society

- 1) Christ directly founded a Church
- 2) Church is a society in a strict sense – permanent assembly for the attainment of a common goal.
 - a. This stable union is effected by means of certain bonds which united the minds and efforts of the group.
 - i. Esp. authority / 'form' of the group
- 3) Demonstration/ Proof

- a. Promise of Christ – anything he promises, as true God, will invariably prove to be true.
 - i. “Thou are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church... I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...” (Matt 16:18-19)
 - ii. He told his disciples to preach that the kingdom of heaven was close at hand.
 - 1. Analogous term
 - a. Kingdom of heaven
 - b. God’s kingdom on earth
 - i. Internal kingdom (Messianic peace)
 - ii. External kingdom (Church – instrument of planting/fostering reign of Christ in souls)
 - 2. Not every reference refers strictly to Church, but some texts rendered incomprehensible without this understanding.
- b. Actions of Christ
 - i. Enjoins profession of same Faith.
 - 1. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be condemned.
 - 2. N.B – this requires profession; because internal belief alone is not enough to unite men together.
 - ii. Enjoins practice of the same sacraments – notably Baptism & Blessed Eucharist
 - 1. Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’
 - 2. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you.”
- c. Earliest historical evidence gives witness to the existence of a real society.
 - i. Christ’s disciples formed a real society.
 - ii. Establishment of that society was attributed to Christ himself.
 - 1. 3-fold bond:
 - a. Profession of Faith – from very first sermon of St Peter on Pentecost (Acts 2:37-42); Gal 1:8
 - b. Same rites: Have a change of heart and be baptized...” (again, Acts 2:38)
 - c. Same authority. Subject to same pastors, laying property at apostles feet. (Acts 4:34). Apostles call together people for selection of deacons, etc (Acts 6)
 - 2. Christ established it:
 - a. Church is a ‘spiritual edifice’ of which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone.
 - b. Christ is the head of the Church, which is truly His Body.

- c. Acts 20:28 – Christ has ‘purchased it with His own Blood’.

4) Linked Truths / Corollaries

- a. Christ established only ONE CHURCH
 - i. Christ explicitly states that he would gather together ‘his flock’ – only one.
 - ii. Peter is given the special charge of feeding Christ’s sheep.
 - iii. The apostles state that all the faithful and the various churches make up ‘one body’ (Acts 9:31; 16:4; 20:28 et alia)
 - iv. There is neither ‘Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free’
 - 1. The notion of regional churches – is that the essence, or is that accidental?
 - 2. But if it is essentially a distinct church, then it is not founded by Christ; but this has already been addressed. – and in stressing the unity of the Faith, and of the flock, one can only wonder why Christ would want to divide his Church based upon nationalities.
- b. When did Christ establish the Church?
 - i. Not accomplished all at once.
 - 1. Preparations laid out from the beginning of his public life – preparing the Apostles for it.
 - 2. Immediate preparations right before his passion.
 - a. Institution of the priesthood / Eucharist
 - b. Has already indicated who would be his vicar.
 - 3. Pentecost – it’s mission is promulgated, and that is when it takes force.
- c. Distinction between early Church & Synagogue
 - i. Apostles continued practicing out of reverence for what had been the true religion.
 - ii. But from beginning, Christians held their own assemblies, obeyed their own leaders.
 - 1. When Paul speaks of persecuting the Church of God, he is clearly speaking of a manifestly recognizable group.

Thesis 2: Christ founded a visible society

- 5) This flows from the very fact that the Church is a real society of men.
 - a. And this question is distinct from the Church being recognizable.
 - i. Visible – is it a public society of men;
 - ii. Recognizable – is there a way to know that this public society is the true Church founded by Christ;

- b. In fact its being recognizable, presupposes it's being visible.
- 6) Question: is Church visible by its nature?
 - a. Of course, it is a body of visible men – but what about the possibility of the bonds uniting them only being spiritual. The same faith, even if not made public; charity in the heart, even if no one knows; etc.
- 7) Demonstration / Proof:
 - a. What did Christ impose? Three-fold bond! Profession of the same Faith; participation in the same rites; obedience to the same authority.
 - b. To speak of unity without these elements is to speak of nothing at all.
 - i. The bonds that unite the society of men are external – professing the same doctrine; practicing the same rite; obeying the same authority. Without these visible practices, one could only ask what unity, society is there.
 - ii. E.g. there are 10 people standing at the street light; I don't know what they think; I see no common activity; and I don't know what allegiance or affection they have to the country or to one another. In what possible way could I call that a society? let alone a unified, noble, and holy one?
 - c. Terminology of Christ – compared his church to a flock, a house, a net let down in the sea, a field producing wheat and weeds, a city built on a mountain, etc
 - d. The earliest Fathers stressed the importance of belonging to the Church of Christ, and said that it was clearly discernible.

PURPOSE

Thesis: Church was founded in order that THROUGH it and IN IT, the Christian religion would be practiced and men made holy

- 8) Two elements – inseparably intertwined:
 - a. Practice of Christian religion
 - i. Preaching and guarding of Christ's teaching
 - ii. Celebration of Christian rites / worship;
 - iii. Living life according to that teaching.
 - b. Sanctification of souls
 - i. This belief / worship / and service render the soul holy – in this life, with a view to eternity.
- 9) Demonstration / Proof
 - a. Baptize all nations ... teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."
 - i. In other words, practice the religion that Christ has taught. – so is God honoured; his honour is given in no other way than souls sanctifying

themselves through his charity/union – which the practice of religion is directed towards.

10) Church is a religious, spiritual, supernatural society.

- a. The society is distinguished by its object – its goal is not civil or temporal, but eternal.
- b. It is not natural, but supernatural – this eternity with God requires the grace of God, the life of God.
- c. “My kingdom is not of this world.” But it would be a mistake to say, as liberals do, that this means the Church has no rights on this earth, or is indifferent to the work of the State. The inter-relation of Church and State would be a whole new topic, but just as Christ has taught man that he must not sacrifice heaven for the passing happiness of this earth; because this life is ordered towards that one; so too, the State must be ordered towards protecting the Catholic Church
 - i. This life must be directed to the next.
 - ii. State in directing men; must take that next life into account – and so aid the Church according to its capacity.