

Introduction: Our confession was purposefully derived from the Westminster Confession of Faith (English and Scottish Presbyterian confession of 1646) and *Savoy Declaration* (English Congregationalist confession of 1658).

- In this chapter, there are significant differences between those two and our. How and why?

1.) Change of the chapter's title

- Westminster had “of the Sacraments”, while ours has simply “of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper”. The modern update by Andrew Kerkham uses the title “The Ordinances”, which I prefer because it moves from the general idea to the specifics of baptism and the Lord’s Supper in chapters 29-30.

2.) Non-usage of the term “sacrament”

- As has been seen, they changed the chapter title. After this, there is the exclusion of the use of the term 8x throughout. What is the reason for this exclusion?

- One is likely the connotation of the term sacrament, conveying almost a magic or superstitious meaning. It is actually the transliteration of the Latin term *sacramentum*, which means something sacred. Because of the abuses of the Roman Catholic church in regards to the Mass in particular (where the bread and wine supposedly becomes the actual body and blood of Christ), the writers were trying to distance themselves from this idea.

- The same is likely in regards to baptism, in which there is supposed to be some mystical working and change of the status of grace in the baptism itself (which is true of Roman Catholic, and often in Paedo-Baptists).

- In light of this controversy, should we use it?

If the term to us is associated with a superstitious sacramentalism which attributes saving efficacy to the sacraments, we should probably not use it. If sacrament to us is just a reverent and convenient way of speaking about the only two ordinances of Christ which make use of physical emblems, then we may find it a useful word – Modern Exposition of the 1689

3.) Deletion of paragraphs 2, 3, and 5 (found in both the Westminster and Savoy)

- There are concepts with which the framers of our confession were not comfortable. In summary:

- Ch.2 – A spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the thing itself and what it represents.

- Ch.3 – There is no power in the sacrament itself (a proper hedging of the statement in ch.2), but only by the Spirit. Also, that the benefit is not dependent on the one distributing, but on the recipient.

- Ch.5 – The sacraments of the Old Testament (i.e. Covenant) signified the same things as those of the New Testament.

Paragraph 1

- The first paragraph states that there are but two ordinances for the New Testament Church, that of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Notice the use of the term “ordinance” as a replacement for “sacrament”. Ordinance simply means an authoritative command or order.

- They are said to be of positive institution. This means that there are specific commands given for the establishment of the practice, not something that is merely observed as an early practice. It also relates to the contrast between “natural law” or God’s commandments which are moral and permanent. Both of the ordinances are temporary in nature, and will have an end. God’s moral commandments are forever binding.

- They are also said to be of sovereign institution. This means that Jesus Himself established them by His Lordship and as the Lawgiver to His Church.

- The importance of these statements is seen in relation to the backdrop of the Roman Catholic Church which states that it has the authority to instate other sacraments or ordinances, such as marriage, extreme unction, celibacy, etc.

- The confession then states that these are to be practiced until the end of the world (or age), meaning until the return of the Lord Jesus. The proof texts given at this point are in relation to baptism Matthew 28:19-20 (“even to the end of the age”) and 1Corinthians 11:26 (“until He comes”).

Application: As we study the next two chapters, we do so with a realization of the fact that the Lord Jesus, as King of His Church, has established the practice of these ordinances in His appointed way until His return. It is a great sin to add to, take away from, or modify them contrary to Scripture.

Careful observation of and obedience to Christ’s “positive and sovereign institutions” manifests a peculiar love for and loyalty to the will of Christ the King. Despising his ordinances argues a lack of respect for Christ’s kingly office. – Waldron’s Exposition

Paragraph 2

- This paragraph states that the ordinances are to be administered only by those who Christ has appointed. The question that follows, which is not directly answered is “why has Christ appointed?”

- The answer of the Westminster confession is that only ordained ministers can do so. One possible distortion this can lead to is a kind of “clericalism”, that too highly exalts the office. The other end of the spectrum is a kind of egalitarianism which says that anyone can equally administer the ordinances.

- The 1689 seeks to cut a middle course. We aren’t given explicit directives in the Scriptures, it seems that the general principle is that *ordinarily* they are to be administered by the leadership and in the context of the local church. This is seen as how church leadership are identified as “stewards” in a way that all believers are not (1Corinthians 4:1; Titus 1:7).

- This is also seen in that the great commission was given not to the church in general, but specifically to the apostles. As they established church, leadership in those churches were established as apostolic representatives.
- There are historical exceptions to this general practice in baptism (Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch – Acts 8:27-38; also the baptism of households by the deliverer of the message where there was no local church – Acts 16:31-34)
- In relation to the Lord's Supper, we only have examples of it being practiced by assemblies of disciples in the context of what we would call the local church, not as a non-ecclesia (i.e. non-church).
- These are the *ordinary* places, but I would say that there may be extraordinary exceptions where there is no access to a local church (i.e. prisoners in exile, et al.). However these exceptions, and shouldn't become the rule.