

## THE DIVINE INSTITUTIONS

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Soli Deo Gloria!

**INTRODUCTION.** Five (5) divine institutions were ordained by God to be fundamental and enduring social structures of human civilization; as such, their acceptance is incumbent upon all men, believers and unbelievers alike, beginning in the dispensation in which they were introduced and continuing through the final dispensation (i.e., the 1,000-year Kingdom on this present earth). The divine institutions were not all established at the same time in history, but they all came into existence in human pre-history (i.e., Genesis 1-11). Three were established before the Fall of Man, and two were established after the Fall; however, those established after the Fall were not introduced to be redemptive in purpose<sup>1</sup>, but merely preservative (i.e., to provide constraints upon fallen humanity to prevent societal degradation into utter anarchy/chaos).

**IDENTIFICATION OF THE DIVINE INSTITUTIONS.** The divine institutions are: **1)** responsible human dominion as God's image-bearer, **2)** marriage, **3)** family, **4)** human government, and **5)** nation states based on linguistic and ethnic diversity.

- 1) HUMAN DOMINION. God established responsible human dominion as His image-bearer in the Garden of Eden before the Fall (Gen1:26-30; 2:15-17; 9:1-3; Ps8:4-8). Man is commanded to exercise "dominion" over all of God's animal creation (note, man is not an animal, he is a creation higher than the animals, but currently lower than the angels), and he is to "subdue the earth" (i.e., responsibly manage earth's resources for the benefit of humanity). In the Garden of Eden, God commanded man to "dress it and keep it" (i.e., cultivate it to be agriculturally productive, not legislate that it be preserved in its pristine condition unaltered by human activity).

Inherent to dominion is *labor* that is both creative and responsible. God Himself is a laborer, and the Bible begins and ends with records of His past and future creative labors (Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22). God created (Gen1:1), He evaluated the results of His creative activity (e.g., Gen1:4,10,18,21,25,31), and He derives pleasure (Rev4:11) and receives glory from it (Ps19:1). So also God expects man's exercise of dominion to include creative<sup>2</sup> labor. This began in the Garden of Eden, where God commanded man to "fill the earth" and "subdue it" (Gen1:28), to "dress" and "keep" the garden (Gen2:15), and to name all of the animals (Gen2:19-20). Labor was instituted before the Fall, not after<sup>3</sup>, and is part of God's original design for man. All are expected to labor as part of God's dominion mandate for man (cf. Luk19:13; 2Thess3:10; 1Pet4:10-11).

Man's creative labor is also expected to be responsible. As the image-bearer of God (Gen1:26-27), man is to rule over creation as God's

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<sup>1</sup> The error of much of Reformed and Postmillennial Christendom is the belief that society and social institutions (i.e., government, education, media, entertainment, etc.) can be redeemed by human activity apart from the gospel and the physical presence of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> Obviously, man's creative activities are not *ex nihilo*, as some of God's are.

<sup>3</sup> After the Fall, human labor becomes more difficult and less productive (Gen3:17-18).

representative on earth. He is to rule as God Himself would. As an illustration of this, Jesus instructed His disciples using several parables in which men are portrayed as stewards entrusted with governing on their lord's behalf while the master is absent, and these parables end with the return of the lord and his evaluation of the stewards' service rendered on his behalf (e.g., Matt25:14-30; Luk12:42-48). Similarly, the Apostle Paul characterized believers in the Church Age as "stewards of the mysteries of God", with the expectation that stewards are required to "be found faithful" (1Cor4:1-2) and will be judged by Christ for their labor (2Cor5:9-10). Any notion that the divine institution of human dominion grants man the authority to rule over God's creation in any way he wishes is unbiblical.

- 2) MARRIAGE. God established marriage in the Garden of Eden before the Fall (Gen2:18-24). Marriage is not a cultural convention invented by man. Rather, it was designed and ordained by God for multiple purposes: 1) for man's good (Gen2:18), 2) to enable man to fulfill the dominion mandate given to him by his Creator (Gen1:26-28), and 3) to be a model/object lesson of the permanent relationship of God with His peoples, namely Israel as the wife of Jehovah (Jer3:14,20; theme of the entire Book of Hosea; Mal2:11) and the Church as the Bride of Christ (2Cor11:2; Eph5:22-33; Rev19:7-9). As God's relationship with His peoples is established and defined by covenants, which is open to public witness and verification, He has ordained that human marriage be a public and covenantal institution (Mal2:14-16). In contrast, the modern trend has been to turn the divine institution of marriage on its head. It is alleged that "true love" does not require a covenant, so that the marriage relationship is perverted into a private, contract-less arrangement that views cohabitation at the same level (or even higher) on the moral scale as marriage. Biblically, marriage is as much (or more) about honoring a public commitment as it is about "love". As a divine institution, it ought to go without saying that God has defined the parties (i.e., one man, one woman), the duration (i.e., till death), and the parameters (i.e., no divorce) of the marriage covenant; no other relationship (regardless of the label it may be given by men) is marriage.

Marriage as a divine institution supports the first. While the "one flesh" character of the husband-wife relationship (Gen2:23-24) includes a romantic and sexual element, its first purpose relates to human dominion. The image of God could not be adequately expressed in the man alone (Gen2:18), but required both "male and female" (Gen1:27) since some of God's characteristics are feminine in nature (e.g., Matt23:37). The man could not properly exercise dominion on behalf of God without "help" from the woman (Gen2:18). God created the woman (Eve) to be a wife for Adam in order to "help" him in carrying out the dominion mandate (Cp., 1Cor11:8-9). That the Biblical role for a woman is that of helper to a man is not meant to demean her or relegate her to secondary importance, as God Himself is often referred to as a Helper (e.g., Exod18:4; Deut33:7).

- 3) FAMILY. God provided for the establishment of the family in the Garden of Eden before the Fall (Gen1:28), although it was not realized until after the Fall (Gen4:1; cf. Exod20:12; Eph6:1-4). The family is defined as a married man and woman who procreate and raise children. God created the family to be the fundamental unit of society (not the nation state; as the health of the family goes, so goes the health of the nation state, not vice-versa). God designed the man to be the head of the family. Education and moral instruction of children was prescribed to be in the

context of the family. Under the Mosaic covenant, land was apportioned permanently to families.

- 4) HUMAN GOVERNMENT. God established limited human government after the Fall. Furthermore, human government was not established until the Noahic Covenant made with man after the Flood (Gen9:5-6). While it became necessary at some point in the fallen world, it was not essential in the original creation. The purpose of human government is that it function as a righteous minister on behalf of God to restrain sin and punish the sinner for the protection of society (Rom13:1-4; 1Tim1:8-11); rehabilitation of the sinner is not the responsibility of government. Nations today would do well to recognize and accept God's revealed purpose for human government, along with its limitations. Governments that go beyond the limits of God's revealed purpose do so without divine mandate or sanction, and by so doing may create the necessity for civil disobedience on the part of its believer citizens. That is, all men must submit to human government when it functions righteously. However, it is a moral imperative that believers "obey God rather than men" when government acts unrighteously, and especially when it demands men do that which God has forbidden, or not do that which God has commanded (cf. Act5:29).
- 5) NATION STATES. God established nation states based on linguistic and ethnic diversity after the Tower of Babel (Gen 10; 11:6-9). Like human government, nation states were not essential to the original creation, but became necessary after the Fall. Nation states as ordained by God should share a common ethnicity (this is not a racial distinction, but one of genetic descent<sup>4</sup>) and language. Note that in the N.T. the Greek word for "nation" is *ἔθνος*, which is the etymological origin of the English word *ethnicity*.

**ATTACKS ON THE DIVINE INSTITUTIONS.** At present (i.e., the last days of the Church Age), all of the divine institutions are under massive attack as never before in history (Cp., 2Tim3:1-13; 2Pet3:1-7). Consider:

Attacks on Human Dominion include perversions such as Gaia/Earth worship, degradation of humanity to same level as animals (or lower), environmental regulations that prioritize alleged concern for animals/earth above human needs, so-called climate change.

Attacks on Marriage include perversions such as polygamy, same-sex marriages, rampant divorce/remarriage.

Family depends on procreation within marriage, so attacks on Family include perversions such as denigration of male headship, egalitarian feminism, rampant divorce, government control of education, the LGBTQ agenda (since none of these can procreate), population control/reduction, abortion.

Attacks on Human Government include perversions such as Marxism in all its graded forms (i.e., Keynesian economics, Socialism, Communism, which diminish or eliminate private property), rampant injustices in judicial systems (especially failure to swiftly exercise capital punishment on murderers),

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<sup>4</sup> Genesis 10 defines the original 70 nations according to their ancestral heads. As an example, the nation of Egypt was comprised of the descendants of Mizraim (Gen10:6; 50:11). Subsequently, God called out the nation of Israel to be the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen12:1-2).

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progressive income taxes and all property taxes, social justice/woke-ism which creates a multitude of protected classes that are treated differently by government (i.e., systemic discrimination).

Attacks on Nation States include perversions such as multiculturalism (which destroys the common linguistic/ethnic traits that promote national unity), open borders, global government.