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The true church of Jesus Christ—Her marks

Prof. Russell Dykstra

Chi (X)

Rev. William Langerak

Is the gospel part of the law?

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Meditation

Rev. Dennis Lee, pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Roselle, Illinois

The mind of God: Exalting Jesus Christ supremely

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

These verses continue the thought from verses 5-8 of the mind of Christ, who humbled Himself and made Himself of no reputation. From the state of Jesus Christ's deep humiliation, climaxing with His death on the cross, these verses we consider reveal Christ taken out of the state of humiliation and lifted up to the state of exaltation—*glorious* exaltation! “Wherefore” is the word that connects those two states. “Wherefore,” that is, since Christ has made Himself of no reputation, taking on our human nature and becoming obedient to the death of the cross, God now justly rewards Him for that unspeakable, unfathomable humiliation with supreme exaltation! In a word, God tells us that the way *up* is *down*!

He tells us that in connection with His exhortation to put on the mind of Christ—that nothing might be done through strife or vainglory in the church, that each must esteem others better than himself, that the church might manifest her blessed beauty and unity in her Lord. Thus, these verses set forth the great incentive for us to humble ourselves and to live that life of humility and service for the sake of the church. Because the mind of Christ was to humble Himself to the lowest levels, He was supremely exalted! So also will God deal with us!

Remembering this, may we be encouraged to humble ourselves in the manner our Savior did! For we too can expect to be graciously exalted by God in our Lord who was exalted supremely by God, and whose exaltation will one day be supremely displayed for His glorious purpose.

The text begins with the *supreme exaltation* of Jesus Christ by God: “Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him....” What kind of “high exaltation” is this? A “super” one! A super, supreme exaltation of Jesus Christ, in which God gave to Jesus the highest possible position that can ever be had by anyone, that of being at God's own right hand in heaven. That place or position at God's right hand is, of course, not literal but a figure of speech. The idea of being at God's right hand is one with which we are familiar: a “right-hand man” is in a supreme position of trust, to the extent that all the authority and power is delegated to him. That is in keeping with the original Greek here, a word used nowhere else in the New Testament: a “high” exaltation of Christ that is *supreme, and unmatched*!

This is only fitting! To be sure, the supreme exaltation spoken of here is for the *man* Jesus. The divine second Person, the Son of God, has always been supremely exalted, since He is God and never ceased to be God, even when He assumed our human nature. Fittingly, the Holy Spirit uses this distinctive word exclusively for the supreme exaltation of Christ. For this is in accord with the supreme humiliation our Savior suffered for us! He Who is in the bosom of the Father in heaven departed from those joys and glories! He, the Creator God, came down to our lowly creaturely level, the level of the dust of this world, a sinful world! He took on our flesh, suffered all His life long, and bore the punishment of hell for all our sins! Who can understand the depths of pain, anguish, and humiliation our Savior suffered for us? According to the perfect justice of God, He rewarded that supreme suffering and humiliation with supreme exaltation. As part of that supreme exaltation, Christ was given that supreme position of glory and power at God's right hand.

But still more, Jesus was also given a super-exalted, supreme name or title: “and given him a name which is above every name....” What is that name? Some suppose that it is “Jesus,” according to verse 10a. But it is not “Jesus,” because Jesus was already given that name

at the time of His birth (cf. Matt. 1:21). Nor is the name “Christ,” which means “Anointed” or “Messiah,” a name we already read of in the Old Testament, from which we learn that God had appointed this Jesus to be His anointed servant. The name given for the supreme exaltation of Jesus is “Lord”: “And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...” (v. 11a). He is King of kings and Lord of lords!

The great significance of this name is well expressed by various apostles under inspiration—by Paul in Romans 10:9, by Peter in Acts 2:36, and perhaps most emphatically by John in the book of Revelation: “These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Rev. 17:14); “And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16). From these biblical references, we see that the name “Lord” given to the man Jesus is a supremely significant name in the mind of the Holy Spirit who inspired these apostles. It also was the chief confession made by Christians in the early, post-apostolic church: Jesus Christ is Lord! Not any of the powerful caesars who ruled over them, but Jesus Christ, is Lord! Not Caesar Augustus, not Caesar Trajan, not Caesar Nero, but Jesus Christ is Lord!

This was the paramount confession of Christians then. A paramount confession made with a paramount price! How many thousands of Christians were not tortured, martyred, and killed when they refused to acknowledge caesar as Lord! Is that your confession, reader? Are you willing to make that confession, even if it will cost you something: an inconvenience, a loss of your job or your friends, shame, or even physical suffering? Today, there are those in the church who consider themselves “Christian” who will have Jesus as Savior but not as “Lord,” and are acknowledged as true believers by their church leaders. How different is the testimony of Scripture and the historic Christian church from yesteryear!

What a precious, comforting confession this is! Do we realize what comfort it brought to Christians in ages past? Can you imagine what a comforting confession it was for the apostle Paul when he was in prison, and the apostle John while he was banished on the isle of Patmos for maintaining that confession? It was not their powerful persecutors who were Lord. Jesus is Lord! And it is His Lordship that determined that Paul would be a prisoner and John a lonely exile for His name’s sake. It is His Lordship that will cause all things to work together for good to them who love God! The same enjoyment of comfort was had by suffering Chris-

tians who lived during the time of the Roman Empire and maintained that confession in the face of severe persecution! You who maintain that confession, you who love God, is it not a confession that brings you comfort? We see wicked rulers ruling over all the world. We see sin and evil growing all around us. But it is not Christless man or the forces of evil around us who are Lord. It is not Antichrist who is Lord, but it is Jesus and Jesus alone, our Savior, who is Lord!

The truth of that confession will be *supremely displayed* when the Lord Himself shall come again. The text speaks of this supreme display in verse 11a: “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” The Word of God covers every rational, moral creature that ever existed, exists, or will exist. Those in heaven—all the host of good angels, and the church triumphant that has been called home to be with the Lord. Those on earth—all of mankind, elect and reprobate on the earth. And those under the earth—all the damned in hell, both human beings and the fallen angels. Of all these creatures, from these three categories, “every knee [shall] bow and every tongue [shall] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” When the King of kings and Lord of lords shall return, when the Lamb of God shall return as the Lion of Judah, then the Lordship of Jesus Christ will be supremely displayed. He alone has all the power and authority of God, and He alone will be Judge of every rational, moral creature that ever lived. Then, either with humble adoration and love, or with gritted teeth in subjection, *every* knee (of both the righteous and the wicked) will bow and *every* tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!

What a supreme display that will be!

How is that truth and confession to be applied? This way. To the impenitent, there will be no comfort and joy, but only dread and terror. And rightly so, because justice will be meted out to them. What a day of terror that will be! But to all the penitent, to all who trust in the Lord and love Him, there is and will be comfort for us. All our sufferings endured for the blessed name of our Savior and God will have been worth it! Will we then not be diligent in speaking of this truth often before and to our family, extended family, and brethren? Will we not also, seeing the terror of the Lord that is to come, give witness to others who do not yet know Jesus to turn from their sins and flee to Him?

The day when this truth of the supreme exaltation of Christ is supremely displayed is also when the *supreme*

purpose of God will be fulfilled, which is the glorification of God the Father (v. 11b). God has purposed to glorify Himself through glorifying Jesus Christ as Lord in the way of His wondrous salvation of us by His cross! That is the supreme purpose of God: to glorify His Son and our Savior as Lord.

Is that not also your purpose, dear reader? If so, live out your life with that one goal and purpose in mind

more and more. Do so by putting away strife and vain-glory! Do so by being humble, by putting others first, by looking not only on your things, but also on the things of others! Do so in your life and service to your family, church, denomination, and all who love His Name! Having the mind of Christ in you, you too will be exalted with your Lord, who shares His great exaltation so graciously with you and with me.



Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

The true church of Jesus Christ—Her marks

The Belgic Confession, a Reformed creed, bears the impression of John Calvin's theology. Soon after it was written by Guido de Brès in 1561, Reformed churches in the Netherlands began adopting it. The Belgic Confession includes a lengthy section on ecclesiology, reflecting the reality that the doctrine of the church was a major conflict between the Romish church and the churches of the Reformation. The ecclesiology is clearly Calvinistic.

Article 27 of the Belgic Confession expresses the Reformed confession on the church—one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church—the truth considered in the May 1 editorial. This one body of the church is manifest concretely in a local congregation, and the Confession (Art. 28) states the Reformed/Calvinistic teaching that outside the church there is no salvation. Therefore, “all men are duty bound to join and unite themselves with it.” Article 29 also acknowledges the fact that all nominally Christian groups “which are in the world assume to themselves the name of the church.”

If it is the duty of all to join the church of Christ, it follows that believers must be able to distinguish what really is the church from that which improperly calls herself the church of Christ. This, in turn, implies two realities. First, that believers are given discernment to distinguish the true church from the many that “assume...the name of the church.” Second, that the true church possesses distinguishing marks that enable believers to identify her with confidence. The marks “by

which the true church is known” (Art. 29) are three official activities of the church, specifically, the preaching, the administration of sacraments, and Christian discipline. It is to these marks of the true church that we now turn.

Preaching

The true church of Jesus Christ is identified chiefly through the preaching heard from the pulpit week after week. It must be the gospel—the pure doctrine of the gospel. Preaching is a unique activity—there truly is nothing like it in all the world. An ordained minister of the Word studies (exegetes) a text of Scripture (God's Word) for hours, and through prayer and meditation, comparing Scripture with Scripture, comes to understand the text. He grasps the main message that the Spirit intends. That main message will be the theme of the text and of the sermon. The minister seeks the truth of God in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, as it comes out in the particular text. When he is confident that he has this, he can proceed to write a sermon, an orderly and logical explanation of the text with proper application to the church today. Then, come Sunday, he preaches the sermon as one called by Christ to proclaim the Word of God. He preaches the gospel of Christ crucified. This “pure doctrine of the gospel” proclaims with authority that “salvation is of the Lord alone.” This salvation is rooted in eternal election, grounded in the cross, and received through the faith worked by the

Holy Spirit. Then, amazing to consider, Christ speaks through this preaching so that His sheep hear His voice (John 10:16). This speech of Christ is what makes preaching unlike anything else in the world.

The preaching in Christ's church sets forth the doctrine of the gospel in all its glory and power. It is pure, unmixed with the errors of Pelagius or Arminius that ascribe to man a part in his salvation. It is uncorrupted with Romish or Federal Vision errors that require man to perform works that will in some way contribute to his salvation. The opinions and philosophies of men are excluded. It must be the pure doctrine of the gospel.

Preaching the pure doctrine of the gospel is the chief mark of the true church of Christ. Every sermon, whether it is expounding prophecy, a psalm, an epistle, or biblical history, is the preaching of the *gospel*. Sermons on Genesis 1 (creation), Exodus 20 (the law), Haggai 1 (God's rebuke of Israel), or Matthew 3 (the life of Jesus) must set forth the truth of the text in the light of Christ crucified—the *gospel*.

Why preaching is the chief mark of Christ's church should be obvious. Preaching sets forth, with authority, the revelation of God in the face of Jesus Christ—the God of our salvation Whom the church worships and serves. Through such preaching God speaks to His people and they come to know and love Him. Without such preaching, therefore, God will not be known or worshiped. The true church, holding forth the Word of truth, also condemns the lie. She hates and will not tolerate any corrupting of the revelation of the God she loves.

Sacraments

The second mark of the true church is the pure administration of the sacraments. Sacraments are holy visible signs and seals of the gospel instituted by Jesus Christ (see Lord's Day 25 of the Heidelberg Catechism). They set forth Christ crucified to the believers' senses. God knows the weakness of His people's faith and therefore gave them sacraments to confirm and strengthen it. The true church, adoring Christ and confessing Him to be their only Savior, also insists that the sacraments do in fact set forth Christ to the faith of believers. Man-made ceremonies added to those sacraments ordained by Christ will not confirm faith in Christ; they will rather draw attention away from Him. Accordingly, the true church is known by the fact that she carefully administers the two sacraments, and those only, in the manner in which Christ gave them to the church. In the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize. The institution of the Lord's Supper is found in Jesus'

command, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). No other ceremonies are allowed as sacraments.

Christian discipline

The third distinguishing mark of the true church is that "church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin." Scripture requires this of Christ's church and gives guidelines for the proper exercise of Christian discipline. Jesus taught His disciples that a believer who has been sinned against by a fellow believer must seek the brother's repentance by various efforts. However, if there is no repentance, Jesus further instructed that the offended believer must "tell it unto the church," that is, to the elders of the church (Matt. 18:17). The elders are called to deal with the sin in official discipline. The inspired apostle Paul admonished the church in Corinth for failing to discipline a member living in fornication (I Cor. 5). And he instructs Titus, "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject" (Tit 3:10).

Christian discipline is required in Christ's church because His church must be holy. Although all believers are sinners, they are washed in the blood of Christ. Their sin and guilt are removed in the way of repentance and confession of sin, which implies also a turning away from the iniquity confessed. Impenitence, therefore, may not be tolerated. The true church, loving the holy God, hates sin and will not allow the honor of God to be dragged in the mud. The church also will not endure the sacraments being profaned through the use of them by impenitent sinners. Christian discipline prevents these abominations.

Why these three?

Why are these the three distinguishing marks of the true church of Christ? Several reasons can be given. First, as noted above, Christ the King of the church enjoined these upon His church. This was noted above in connection with the administration of the sacraments and the exercise of Christian discipline. Jesus' direct command to *preach* is the Great Commission, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..." (Mat. 28:19). It is also the example of all the apostles—they preached. Paul stands out in his reminder to the Corinthians of how "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Cor. 1:17), and that therefore he "preached Christ crucified" and did not want to bring anything other than that (I Cor. 1:23; 2:1-2). His instruction to the pastor Timothy was, "Preach the word" (II Tim. 4:2). The true church is an obedient church, submitting to Christ's commands regarding preaching, sacraments, and discipline.

The second reason why these are the proper marks of the true church is that where these are found, Christ is present. Christ speaks through the preaching of the pure gospel. Christ is presented in the sacraments, and His power imbues them. And Christ opens and shuts heaven through the keys of the kingdom, that is, preaching and Christian discipline. Where these commanded activities are absent, there also Christ is absent.

Third, Christ uses preaching, sacraments, and discipline to save His church. The elect are saved through faith in Christ. The preaching of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation in them that believe (I Cor. 1:17ff.). The seed of faith planted by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the elect sinner is brought to activity and consciousness through preaching. The same Spirit confirms and strengthens that faith with the sacraments. Through church discipline, Christ opens the kingdom to His own and keeps them there.

While the preaching is obviously the primary mark, there is, nonetheless, a co-dependency among the three. Notice that the preaching of the gospel gives the content of the sacraments as well as their proper administration. Preaching identifies the sacraments, gives the form for administering them, and teaches who may properly use them.

With regard to Christian discipline, the preaching is also determinative, as it declares both what must be believed and how believers must live. In this way, preaching is a key of the kingdom, and at the same time it draws the lines for Christian discipline. Those who “under the name of Christians maintain doctrines, or practices inconsistent therewith, and will not...renounce their errors and wicked course of life...are...forbidden the use of the sacraments; whereby they are excluded from the Christian church, and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ” (Heidelberg Catechism, A. 85).

That in turn indicates that the pure administration of the sacraments depends not only on the preaching, but also on Christian discipline. Proper exercise of church discipline admits only proper participants to the sacraments.

The exercise of church discipline is, as noted, guided by the preaching. However, there is an inseparable relationship between preaching and discipline, such that they stand and fall together. Preaching that fails to con-

demn error and godless living will vitiate the power of discipline. When the preaching fails to condemn Arminianism or the desecration of the Lord’s Day, the key of Christian discipline will eventually cease to remove those who hold to the heresy or who desecrate the Sabbath. On the other hand, if the elders do not exercise discipline against those members who live in fornication or those who hold to the heresy of works-righteousness, then the preaching loses its authority and effectiveness. Eventually, these evils will no longer be condemned in the preaching.

These, then, are the marks that distinguish the true

church from the false. Where these are present, the church is the true church of Christ. The Belgic Confession adds this summary: “in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the church. Hereby the true church may certainly be known, from which no man has a right to separate himself” (Art. 29).

The importance of being in a church that manifests these marks cannot be understated. Christ is present there, present with His Spirit, present with His saving power. Outside of this church, there is no salvation. The church that by God’s grace possesses these marks must not imagine that they cannot be lost. Scripture and church history indicate the contrary. There is a constant tendency in the church to deform—to let these precious gifts be corrupted and to slip away. And when the church loses these, what then? Christ removes His candle from her. His Spirit departs. She has become the false church. Terrible is the judgment on the church that does not maintain these marks.

The Belgic Confession has more to say about the true church that is worthy of our attention. Article 29 teaches that there are not only marks of the true church, but also that the *members* of that church have marks. What are the marks of Christians? That will have to wait until the next editorial on the true church. [That will be the August issue, because the July editorial will cover the 2018 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches.]

...where these [marks] are found, Christ is present. Christ speaks through the preaching of the pure gospel. Christ is presented in the sacraments, and His power imbues them. And Christ opens and shuts heaven through the keys of the kingdom, that is, preaching and Christian discipline. Where these commanded activities are absent, there also Christ is absent.



All around us

Rev. Martyn McGeown, missionary-pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, stationed in Limerick, Republic of Ireland

The pope and hell

Recent headlines have suggested, in their normal lurid fashion, that Pope Francis has denied the existence of hell. These claims have been shared widely on social media platforms, but officially denied by the Vatican. Christians would do well to show due diligence before sharing these or similar stories online. The claim originates from an Italian journalist, Eugenio Scalfari, to whom the pope frequently grants interviews. One would think that the pope would decline such interviews, especially if he desires not to be misunderstood, since Scalfari takes no notes during his interviews but instead quotes from memory and, therefore, has the tendency to misquote people (intentionally or not). Be that as it may, the Vatican claims that the pope and Scalfari met in private, and that there was *no official interview* in this case.

Scalfari alleges that the pope said, “The souls of those who are unrepentant, and thus cannot be forgiven, disappear,” and “Hell does not exist; the disappearance of sinful souls exists.”¹ Official Roman Catholic news agencies, however, cite other examples in which the pope affirmed the reality of hell:

[On one occasion] the Pope assured the children [who asked him about hell] that God is good, but reminded them that there was also a “very proud angel, very proud, very intelligent, and he was envious of God. Do you understand? He was envious of God. He wanted God’s place. And God wanted to forgive him, but he said, ‘I don’t need your forgiveness. I am good enough!’”

“This is hell: It is telling God, ‘You take care of yourself because I’ll take care of myself.’ They don’t send you to hell, you go there because you choose to be there. Hell is wanting to be distant from God because I do not want God’s love. This is hell. Do you understand?”

On other occasions, the Pope has described hell as the destination for those who choose to continue to sin and do evil.

Speaking to families of victims of the Mafia March 21, 2014, the Pope made an appeal to all men and women in the Mafia to stop, turn their lives around and convert.

“Convert, there is still time for not ending up in hell. It is what is waiting for you if you continue on this path,” he said.

The pope seems to affirm the existence of hell, therefore. Hell is for the impenitent Mafia; hell is for the proud devil; hell is for those who reject the love of God. Nevertheless, the pope’s teaching of hell differs sharply from the Bible’s doctrine of hell.

First, the pope believes that God desires to save everyone, even the devil (“God wanted to forgive him”). Second, the pope believes that God has made provision to save everyone, for He loves everyone (presumably, even the devil), and Christ died on the cross for everyone (although I suspect the pope would exclude the devil from Christ’s atonement). Third, the pope believes that everybody has the capacity to choose the love of God—a person “chooses” hell by rejecting God’s love, but God does not send people there.

Nevertheless, the Bible teaches sovereign reprobation, as well as sovereign election, concepts anathema to Rome, Arminianism, and even to many professing Calvinists. To the reprobate, Jesus will say on the Last Day, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41), which everlasting fire constitutes “everlasting punishment” (v. 46). The apostle Paul affirms that God was “willing to shew [show] his wrath, and to make his power known” and, therefore, that He “endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” (Rom. 9:22). We sing in Psalm 11:5-6 that God *hates* the wicked (not merely their wicked deeds) and that “upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup”

1 <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/8821/pope-does-not-deny-existence-of-hell-says-vatican> and <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/vatican-dont-trust-report-that-pope-francis-denied-reality-of-hell-53450>

(see also Psalm 5:5). The book of Revelation warns the worshiper of the antichristian beast that he “shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever” (Rev. 14:10-11). Such everlasting torment is the portion of the devil (Rev. 20:10) and of all those who forever dwell in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8), whose names are not written in the book of life, that is, the reprobate. And notice that, contrary to the affirmations of the pope, unbelievers are cast into hell (Matt. 13:41-42; Rev. 20:15).

On another recent occasion, Pope Francis received a question from a young boy called Emanuele, whose father, an atheist, had recently died. The young boy was weeping profusely when he came to ask his question, so, rather than ask it publicly, he whispered it in the pope’s ear. Emanuele’s question was whether his unbelieving father was in heaven. With the boy’s permission, the pope chose to make the answer to Emanuele’s sensitive, emotional question public, using it as a teaching moment. I quote the pope’s answer. Let the reader judge whether the pope *really* believes in hell:²

It’s good for a son to say about his father, “he was good.” Do you think that God could abandon a man like that? Do you think that? Speak louder, with courage. [No].³ Does God abandon his children? [No]. Does God abandon his children when they are good? [No]. Here, Emanuele, this is the answer. God was surely proud of your father, because it is easier when one is a believer to baptise his children, than it is to baptise your children as an unbeliever. God surely was very pleased with that. Talk to your dad. Pray for your dad. Thank you, Emanuele for your courage.

Obviously, one has to be careful and sensitive to answer the question of a young, grieving boy. However, the pope explicitly denied the gospel—not that we should be surprised, for the pope, being a false teacher and the head of the false church, does not know the gospel. In the pope’s answer, there is no mention of Christ, the cross, or the grace of God. The boy’s atheist father, according to the pope, entered heaven based on his own merit, the meritorious, “pleasing” work of having his children baptised despite his own unbelief. Not only did the pope

whisper this false gospel in Emanuele’s ear, but he also taught this false gospel publicly to the people. He even encouraged the young boy to pray to and for his departed father, who is presumably in heaven, if not in purgatory, according to the Roman pontiff. The devils rejoiced at the pope’s answer, for they love to make people deny hell, so that they can bring as many souls as possible to that dreadful place. Perhaps the angels wept, for such an answer discourages repentance—why repent and believe in Jesus Christ if even atheists go to heaven? Certainly, God was displeased with the pope’s answer.

Does the pope believe in hell? Yes, on paper he does, but for all practical purposes, hell has disappeared from his theology. Such a disappearance of hell fits with the pope’s—and Rome’s—universal love of God, universal, ineffectual atonement of Christ, and universal, ineffectual, saving will of God.

We must continue to believe in, and preach, hell, as a real place of everlasting torment, warning unbelievers (including Roman Catholics) to flee from the wrath to come. And we must continue to be thankful to God that Jesus Christ “by His inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies, in which He was plunged during all His sufferings, but especially on the cross, hath delivered [us] from the anguish and torments of hell” (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 16, Q&A 44).

California bill AB 2943

“California Bill Will Ban the Bible.” Such is the shrill reaction to a proposed law, AB (Assembly Bill) 2943, which is making its way through the legislature in Sacramento, California. The bill seeks to expand the ban on “sexual orientation change efforts” (SOCE) in the state of California by amending the California Consumer Remedies Act. The secular and Christian press, as might be expected, have reacted very differently to the proposed law. Therefore, I took the time to read through the bill:

This bill would include, as an unlawful practice prohibited under the Consumer Legal Remedies Act, advertising, offering to engage in, or engaging in sexual orientation change efforts with an individual.⁴

The Courts, including in California, have recognized the practice of sexual orientation change efforts as a commercial service. *Therefore*, claims that sexual orientation change efforts are effective in changing an individual’s sexual orientation, may constitute unlawful, unfair, or fraudulent business practices under

2 There are various YouTube videos of the incident with different versions and translations of the pope’s words into English from Italian, but the gist of what the pope said is clear: God was pleased that the atheist baptized his children; therefore, God will have mercy upon the atheist, despite his unbelief, and grant him a place in heaven.

3 These bracketed “No’s” are the crowd’s response.

4 https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB2943

state consumer protection laws. *This bill intends to make clear that sexual orientation change efforts are an unlawful practice under California's Consumer Legal Remedies Act.*⁵

That seems clear enough—under Californian law, SOCE may not be offered to minors. “Existing law prohibits mental health providers, as defined, from performing sexual orientation change efforts, as specified, with a patient under 18 years of age”.⁶ This law would make SOCE illegal for all people, not only mental health providers; therefore, *no one* in California would be permitted to offer such a service even to consenting adults. The proposed law would also make it illegal to *advertise, offer, or engage in* SOCE in the state of California, if such SOCE include a commercial service, financial transaction or service, or the sale of goods and services. The rationale behind the bill is that SOCE are supposedly harmful and deceptive, and therefore the offer of SOCE constitutes fraud.

How, then, does the bill define SOCE?

[Sexual orientation change efforts are] any practices that seek to change an individual's sexual orientation. This includes efforts to change behaviors or gender expressions, or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same sex.

So, any effort in which an individual, as part of a commercial service, financial transaction, service, or sale or lease of goods or services seeks to *change* the behaviour or gender expression of a person who identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or some other sexual identity would be unlawful and constitute a fraudulent, deceptive practice in California under the proposed law.

This bill, if it becomes law in the State of California, has serious implications. As with all laws, it would be tested in the courts, but it does not take too much imagination to see where this could lead. Would it lead to the ban of the Bible? Unlikely, at least in the short term. Robert Gagnon, author of *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, imagines the following scenarios:

So you would be violating the law if you advertise that Christ can empower people not to engage in homosexual practice or not to identify as “gay” or

“transgender” because such behaviors and self-identities are morally wrong, or if you offer to engage or actually engage in efforts to persuade people of Christ's power to transform in this area, you will be in violation of California AB 2943, at least so long as your advertising or efforts involved in any way an exchange of money for goods or services.

Consequently, selling religious or secular books (pamphlets, videos, audios, etc.), holding conferences, teaching courses in a college or seminary where tuition is paid, giving a speech at a paid venue, counselling people for a fee, or perhaps even posting online articles in a site that requires a paid subscription, in which it is asserted (in whole or part) that it is morally wrong for people to engage in homosexual practice or identify as “gay” or “transgender,” all could be treated as a violation of California Assembly Bill 2943.⁷

What about the First Amendment? Does it not guarantee freedom of speech and religion? In the hands of activist, leftist judges, the U.S. *Constitution* with its Amendments is just a piece of paper, to be interpreted and reinterpreted until nothing remains of the intent of the founding fathers. SOCE are *harmful*—that is the contention of the framers of AB 2943, and they quote a slew of “experts” to prove that very point. Is harmful speech—psychologically harmful to LGBT people—*really* protected under the First Amendment? Of course not! If the people can be convinced of that, and they are already convinced of that, the First Amendment must go. On college campuses, with their “safe spaces” that protect students from speech that might offend them, the First Amendment is already dead.

The LGBTQ juggernaut moves forward. Homosexuality must not be criticised; it must be celebrated. And soon it will be forbidden to call homosexuals to repentance, for repentance is a change of mind and behaviour. Nevertheless, all *elect* homosexuals shall repent, whether AB 2943 passes or not, because God will see to it in His sovereign, efficacious, particular grace (I Cor. 6:9-11). In the meantime, “evil men and seducers [including *reprobate* impenitent homosexuals and their allies] shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (II Tim. 3:13).

⁵ CAB 2943, italics in the original bill.

⁶ Notice that a mental health provider may not seek to change the “sexual orientation” of an individual. However, he not only may, but he is encouraged, if not compelled, to help someone change their *gender* from male to female or vice versa. “Sexual orientation” is fixed, but gender is fluid, at least in the minds of many in the state legislature of California!

⁷ <http://thefederalist.com/2018/04/24/snopes-sneaky-liar-californias-bill-ban-christian-lgbt-talk/>



A word fitly spoken

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Chi (X)

We have a saying, “X marks the spot.” It comes from the practice of marking an important location on a map with an “X,” something that has fascinated many a reader of tales about buried treasure. Scripture also has its “X.” It marks treasure that is somewhat hidden to us English readers, but infinitely more valuable than a chest stuffed with gold. This “X” is not a particular word (the usual subject of this rubric), but the Greek letter *Chi* (pronounced much like ‘key’). Although there are few English words that begin with an “X,” in Greek, this ‘key’ opens a vast treasury of dazzling words in the New Testament Scripture.

“X” (remember, *Chi*, like ‘key’) is for *Xristos*, or “Christ,” which means “anointed” (Acts 2:36). It refers to the Old Testament ceremony of pouring a special formula of olive oil on the head of someone God chose to hold the office of prophet, priest, or king in the kingdom of Israel. As Christ, Jesus is marked by God as His one officebearer to, for, over, and in His covenant people and kingdom. As Christ, Jesus is anointed by the Spirit with God’s authority and power to be His Prophet, who fully reveals *to us* the secret counsel of God concerning our redemption; His Priest, who by the sacrifice of His body redeemed and continually intercedes *for us*; and His King, who by His Word and Spirit rules *over us* and preserves us *in* the enjoyment of that salvation He has purchased for us (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 31).



Somewhat as an aside, that *Chi* (X) stands for Christ explains why in the second century the fish became a symbol for Christians (and is still today). It may have represented disciples of Christ as fishers of men, but the symbol itself is derived from the Greek letters beginning each word in the phrase *Iesous* (Jesus) *CHristos* (Christ), *THEou* (God’s) *Yious* (Son), *Soter* (Savior), or *ICHTHYS*, the Greek word for fish (even in English the study of fish is called Ichthyology).

Not surprisingly, *Chi* (X) begins many words related to the saving work and benefits in Christ. *Chi* (X) is

for *chreia*, or “need.” The blind, sick, and lame need the Great Physician, whereas any cleansed by Christ have no need to be washed again (Luke 5:31; 9:11; John 13:10). In the body of Christ we need one another; and he who does not help his brother in need has not the love of God dwelling in him (I Cor. 12:21; I John 3:17).

Chi (X) is for *chrusion*, or “gold.” God considers the adornment of a meek and quiet spirit in godly women more beautiful than gold; the trial of our faith is more enduring than gold; and we are not redeemed with gold, but with the precious blood of Christ (I Pet. 1:7,19; I Pet. 3:4). Yet, Christ’s gathered, redeemed, and perfected church is called a city of pure gold (Rev. 21:18).

Chi (X) is for *chilias*, or “thousand,” as in the thousand figurative years until Christ returns, four and five thousand He fed with bread and fish (Mark 8:19-20), seven thousand God kept from Baal (Rom. 11:14), twenty-three thousand He killed for fornication (I Cor. 10:8), 144 thousand He sealed, and 200 thousand, thousand horsemen who plague earth as a sign of Christ’s coming (Rev. 7:4; 9:16).

Finally, *Chi* (X) is for three words that represent all the treasures of the Christ’s saving work: *charis*, *charisma*, and *chara*, or “grace,” “gift,” and “gladness” (joy). In English, these three have no linguistic connection; but in Greek they have the same root, which has rich implications. Basically, they together show that the saving work of Christ proceeds from the Father, by the Son, and through the Spirit as one, inseparable work from beginning to end. Salvation essentially is to receive the gift (*charisma*) of Christ’s Spirit (I Cor. 12:4), which gift, since Christ alone merited, imparts, and preserves it, is grace (*charis*) (Rom. 5:17; Heb. 10:29), with the fruit or effect always of gladness (*chara*) (Gal. 5:22). Christ, by faith, makes us partakers in His anointing—Christians, who in gladness for this gift of grace, confess His name, present ourselves a living sacrifice unto Him, fight against sin and Satan now, and afterwards reign with Him eternally over all creatures (HC, Q&A 32). Those, brothers and sisters, are the real treasures of Christ marked by *Chi* (X).



Taking heed to the doctrine

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Revelation, inspiration, and infallibility (24) “What saith the Scripture:” The Bible’s trustworthiness

Previous article in this series: April 15, 2018, p. 323.

In the last several articles in this series we have been examining the perfections of Scripture. Just as God possesses certain perfections, so also does His Word. The perfection of God’s being demands the perfection of His works, and one of His greatest works is the revelation of Himself in His Word. Who and what God is necessarily impacts the nature of His Word. It cannot be otherwise. If God is weak and fallible, so also His Word will be weak and fallible. But if God is perfect and absolutely holy, as indeed He is, it follows that His Word is also perfect and holy. Conversely, if Scripture contains errors and contradictions, that can only be due to the fact that its author is prone to falling into errors and making mistakes. What we say about the Bible, whether for good or bad, has everything to do with what we say about God, the author of the Bible.

Up till now, we have identified four distinct perfections of Scripture. They are, in the order in which we have considered them, Scripture’s authority, Scripture’s necessity, Scripture’s perspicuity, and Scripture’s sufficiency. The fifth and last perfection of Scripture that Reformed Christians specify is Scripture’s *trustworthiness* or *reliability*.

Although trustworthiness is identified as a distinct perfection of Scripture, it is, in a way, the result of the other four perfections. Because Scripture is authoritative, the ultimate authority for faith and for life, Scripture must also be trustworthy. If Scripture were not trustworthy, neither could it function as an authority in the life of the Christian and in the life of the church. Because Scripture is necessary, it must also be trustworthy. If Scripture were unreliable, it could not be necessary. Rather than to be necessary, it would be needful to reject Scripture. Because Scripture is perspicuous, it follows that it is also trustworthy. If Scripture were unclear, a conundrum, then it could not be trusted. Scripture’s reliability depends on its perspicuity. And Scripture’s sufficiency demands its trustworthiness; since Scripture is sufficient, it must also be trustworthy. If Scripture

were not sufficient, if instead it was necessary to add something to Scripture or take something away from it, it ought to be clear that the reason for that could only be that Scripture all by itself is unreliable. Scripture’s trustworthiness is the practical fruit of all the other glorious perfections of the Bible.

Trust is everything!

Trust is everything, absolutely everything! What is trust and what does it mean to be trustworthy? My Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines trust as an “assured reliance on the character, strength, or truth of someone.” Someone who is trustworthy is reliable, or dependable. They have proven themselves to be “worthy” of our “trust,” and have shown themselves to be someone who will not disappoint or fail to do that to which they have committed themselves.

Every meaningful relationship is built on trust. Certainly that is true of the relationship between a husband and wife. Marriage is built on the trust that the spouses have for one another. Of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 we read in verse 11 that “the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.” When everything is right in a marriage, a husband trusts his wife and a wife trusts her husband. When that trust has been betrayed, it often takes a long time, if ever, for that trust to be restored. The intense pain of Jesus’ betrayal by Judas is captured in the prophecy of Psalm 41:9. It was “mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted,” who betrayed Jesus into the hands of His enemies.

In everyday life in the business world, so much business is conducted on the basis of trust. For a businessman to do business with someone whom he trusts makes all the difference in the world. What a relief it is when our car breaks down that we can trust the mechanic to repair what needs fixing and not unnecessarily replace parts that are working just fine. Recently, I heard of dentists who are scamming their patients into

doing thousands of dollars of unnecessary dental work by means of a computer program that makes it appear from x-rays that there are many cavities that need to be filled in the mouths of their patients. What has our world come to!

Especially is trust built on the trustworthiness of a person's word. A person is trustworthy who speaks the truth and carries out what they have promised to do. Of the wicked the psalmist says in Psalm 36:3 that "the words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit." And in Psalm 62:4 the inspired psalmist says of the wicked that "they delight in lies." With one who lies and has been known to lie, it is impossible to establish a relationship of trust. The wife who has caught her cheating husband in a tangled web of lies finds it difficult to trust him. The person addicted to pornography who, despite his attempts to cover his tracks, has been exposed cannot easily be trusted. Crucial to any trusting relationship is the trustworthiness of one's word. What is true among human beings is also true in our relationship to God.

If God cannot be trusted in His Word, He cannot be trusted. If His Word is unreliable, He is unreliable. To discredit the truthfulness of God's Word is necessarily to discredit God's own trustworthiness. If God's Word is unreliable, so that you cannot depend on it that what you are reading is the truth, then God who speaks the Word is unreliable.

What do we mean by trustworthy?

What we mean when we say that the Bible is trustworthy is not what many are saying today. There are those who, while they are affirming that the Bible is trustworthy, are actually denying its trustworthiness. They are like those referred to in Lord's Day 11 of the Heidelberg Catechism, who although they boast in words, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," in actual fact "deny Jesus the only deliverer and Savior." There are those who do something similar with Holy Scripture, and specifically with Scripture's trustworthiness. Scripture is trustworthy, they affirm, but on closer examination of what they believe about the Bible, it becomes plain that in actual fact they deny the Bible's trustworthiness.

One such person is the well-known "evangelical" Arminian theologian—such is how he desires to be known—Roger E. Olson. In a blog post he answered the question, "What do I mean when I say the Bible is 'trustworthy?'"¹ He began by saying: "With the whole catholic church of Jesus Christ I wholeheartedly affirm

that the Bible, the Christian scriptures, is entirely trustworthy and true." So far, so good. But the devil is in the details. He went on to say: "When I say Scripture is trustworthy and true, I mean it is perfect with respect to its purpose. It is infallible in the sense that it does not fail to fulfill its assigned function—to identify God for us." And further, he says: "When I say the Bible is trustworthy, I mean it can be (and for Christians must be) trusted to transform those who are open to its message, the gospel, by bringing them into encounter with the living God through Jesus Christ.... When I say the Bible is trustworthy, I do NOT mean every event recorded in the Bible happened exactly as it is described there." Olson insists that there are discrepancies in the Bible that "resist harmonization." He insists that his view is the prevailing view among most conservative evangelical scholars, though "they keep it a secret (except among themselves)" and do not "share it with the lay people who look to them for fundamentalist support."

After all is said and done, Olson does not believe that the Bible is trustworthy. God's Word is not necessarily true; it is certainly not true word for word. The Bible's trustworthiness is a kind of functional trustworthiness, that it can be "trusted to transform those who are open to its message." That is comparable to a husband's saying that his wife is trustworthy, not because she is true to her word to be faithful to him alone, true to the vow that she spoke on their wedding night, but because she can be trusted to cook a delicious meal every evening. Would such a husband under those circumstances consider his wife to be trustworthy? Of course not!

Two things ought to be noted in connection with Olson's view of the Bible's trustworthiness. First, he defines Scripture's trustworthiness in relation to its *purpose*, which purpose is man-centered: "to transform those who are open to its message." In keeping with his committed Arminian viewpoint, the salvation of man is the great goal of Scripture. But the truth is, *the* purpose of the Bible is not the salvation of men, but the revelation of the glorious God. The whole purpose of Scripture is necessarily distorted by the Arminian.

Secondly, Olson is an outstanding example of someone who works out consistently his Arminian viewpoint in his view of Scripture. The Arminian holds that salvation is due to the cooperation of God and man, at least the cooperation of the will of man, the consent of man's free will. It follows that if man contributes to his salvation, he also contributes to the means of salvation, the holy Scripture. Scripture has its origin in the cooperative work of God and man, just as salvation is accomplished jointly by God and man. What this comes

1 <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2012/10/what-do-i-mean-when-i-say-the-bible-is-trustworthy/>. Accessed on 5/4/2018.

down to is that Scripture is not exclusively the Word of God—the Word of God in the words of men. But Scripture itself is partly the Word of God and partly the word of man. The Bible contains both a divine element and a human element. The presence of the human element explains the fact that there are discrepancies—not apparent discrepancies, but real discrepancies. There are, in addition, inaccuracies, mistakes, and human errors mixed into the Bible.

Where does it end?

Once it is granted that the Scriptures are not trustworthy because they are not word for word the very Word of God, where does it end? What is the effect of the denial that the Scriptures are the very Word of God? When the trustworthiness of Scripture is brought into question, on what path do men and churches set themselves?

If Scripture is partly the words of men and partly the Word of God, how are we to decide what is divine and what is human in the Bible? And who will decide? The effect of this teaching leaves us to wonder which parts of Scripture are the Word of God and which parts are only the words of man. The practical effect is that the child of God is at sea to know with certainty what in the Bible is actually the Word of God. In the end, there is no certain way of knowing.

To teach that the Bible is partly the word of man and partly the Word of God is destructive, utterly destructive of Scripture's trustworthiness. We cannot say with our Lord, then, in John 17:17, "Thy word is truth." Instead we must say, "Thy word is partly truth," or, "Thy word is a mixture of truth and error." And if that is the case, the sanctification (holiness) of the people of God of which Jesus is speaking in John 17 is jeopardized and, in the end, forfeited. Ultimately, we are sanctified by the Word of truth and only by the Word of truth. In more than one place the prophets warn God's people, "Trust ye not in lying words" (Jer. 7:4).

On the contrary, we are to trust the Word of God because, like God Himself, His Word is trustworthy. Its history is to be received; its doctrine is to be believed; its promises are to be embraced; its commandments are to be obeyed; and its comfort is to be enjoyed. And this is all due to the fact that Scripture is the Word of God.

With the psalmist in Psalm 119:160 we confess: "Thy word is true from the beginning." And if it is true from the very beginning, it is true throughout and to the end. From Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21, God's Word is true and is, therefore, trustworthy. With the same psalmist we boldly confess, "I trust in thy word" (Ps. 119:42).



Guest article

Rev. Cory Griess, pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Is the gospel part of the law?

In my previous article (May 15, 2018), I asked and gave what I believe is the biblical and confessional answer to the question, "Is the law part of the gospel?" We saw that there are two ways the Bible uses the word "gospel," and that the answer to the above question depends on understanding what way we use the word "gospel." In this article I ask, "Is the gospel part of the law?" The answer to this question depends in large part on what one means by "law."

Just as there is a broad use and a narrow use of the term "gospel" in the Bible, so there is a broad use and

a narrow use of the term "law" in Scripture.¹ In the

¹ Calvin makes this distinction as I describe it here. Among other places one of the most clear and concise is in the *Institutes*, (Battles ed.), 2.9.4. "Hence, also, we refute those who always erroneously compare the law with the gospel by contrasting the merit of works with the free imputation of righteousness. This is indeed a contrast not at all to be rejected [here using law and gospel in the narrow sense]. For Paul often means by the term "law" the rule of righteous living...giving us no hope of life unless we completely obey him, and adding on the other hand a curse if we deviate in the slightest degree.... But the gospel did not so supplant the entire law as to bring forward a different way of salvation. Rather it confirmed and satisfied whatever the law [broad sense here, as the whole message of the Old Testament] had promised,

broad sense the term is used to refer to the Torah² (the books of Moses, namely, Genesis through Deuteronomy) or even at times to refer to the entire Old Testament with its commands, its promises, and its types. In the *narrow* sense “law” is used to refer to what God requires of His people whether in the Old Testament or in the New, whether under civil, ceremonial, and/or moral laws. The term “law” is used in the Bible to refer to the commanding revelation of God, “Do this!” The content of that command is essentially “love me!” but is expressed in different ways in the Old and New Testaments. Calvin calls this narrow use of the term, “the bare law in a narrow sense.”³

Law in the narrow sense

This “bare law in the narrow sense” is used very clearly in the Bible, usually in contrast to the gospel in a narrow sense.⁴ Perhaps the most clear example is Galatians 3:12-13: “And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ

hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.”⁵ Here, the law is defined as what man must do to live before God. *Only* if he does what the law requires will he live. Because man cannot do what is required, the effect of the law upon him in this sense is *only* curse. On the other hand, the gospel in this text is that Christ has redeemed His people from this curse that comes from the law’s requirements.

This same “do this” use of the term “law” is found in Romans 9:30-32:

What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone.

In this text the issue is righteousness. The Israelites who sought righteousness by obedience to the law never achieved it. But the Gentiles who sought it by faith in Christ did, for Christ alone attained to the law’s requirement of righteousness, imputing that righteousness to his children by faith.

The Reformed confessions use the term “law” in this “bare and narrow sense” as well. Lord’s Day 2 (Q&A 3) of the Catechism asks, “Whence knowest thou thy misery?” It answers, “Out of the law of God.” It then asks, “What doth the law of God require of us?” Here the Catechism is speaking of the law in the narrow sense. It defines the law as that which God “requires” of us. This term shows up again in Lord’s Day 4 (Q&A 9) in reference to the law: “Doth not God then do injustice to man, by *requiring* from him in His law that which he cannot perform?” The law here is meant in this narrow sense: God’s requirements, His “do this.” The Canons of Dordt also use “law” in this sense in Heads III/IV, Articles 5 and 6, where they make a distinction between the law in the narrow sense and the gospel.

Art. 5 In the same light are we to consider the law of the decalogue, delivered by God to His peculiar people the Jews, by the hands of Moses. For though it discovers the greatness of sin, and more and more convinces man thereof, yet as it neither points out a remedy, nor imparts strength to extricate him from misery, and thus, being weak through the flesh, leaves the transgressor under the curse, man cannot by this law obtain saving grace.

Art. 6 What therefore neither the light of nature, nor the law could do, that God performs by the operation

and gave substance to the shadows. When Christ says, “The Law and the prophets were until John,” he does not subject the patriarchs to the curse that the slaves of the law cannot escape.... Hence Paul, calling the gospel, “the power of God unto salvation for every believer,” presently adds, “The Law [in the broad sense, Old Testament especially the Torah] and the Prophets bear witness to it.” In addition, see M. Horton’s evaluation of Calvin, <https://wscal.edu/resource-center/calvin-on-law-and-gospel>. Further, see J. Hesselink’s evaluation of Calvin on this score in *Calvin’s Concept of the Law* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publ, 1992), 157-158. H. Bavinck’s explanation of the whole Word of God as law, gospel, and power centers on the distinction as understood here. See his *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 448-455. This is also the main distinction made in T. Schreiner’s explanation of the biblical use of the term “law,” in his recent book, *40 Questions About Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2010), 19-23. Other distinctions concerning the law can and ought to be made. Reformed writers, based on Scripture as I will show, made this distinction, in my judgment, the main one. Understanding it will help with all the other distinctions made about law.

2 The main Hebrew word for law.

3 *Institutes*, 2.7.2. Calvin also refers to the broad and narrow sense of the term “gospel” spoken of in the previous article. You can find that especially in the first paragraph in 2.9.2.

4 Bavinck: “God uses his word to make his will known in the area of morality and spirituality, and it must be differentiated as law and gospel” (450). Consider these also: “The Reformers... perceived the sharp contrast between law and gospel and thereby again restored the peculiar character of the Christian religion as a religion of grace” (453). “This antithesis between the law and the gospel was again understood by the Reformation” (454). “They (the law and the gospel in this narrow sense) differ especially in content: the law demands that humans work out their own righteousness, and the gospel invites them...to accept the righteousness of Christ” (454).

5 This is also the teaching of Romans 3:28.

of the Holy Spirit through the Word or ministry of reconciliation; which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it hath pleased God to save such as believe, as well under the Old, as under the New Testament.

When used in this sense in both Scripture and the confessions, no, the gospel is not part of the law.

Law in the broad sense

The Bible also uses the word “law” in a *broad* sense. In these cases, the Bible refers to the entire Old Testament, sometimes with focus on the first five books of the Old Testament. Matthew 11:13—“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John...” Obviously, the Lord is referring here not merely to the *requirements* of the Old Testament, for He speaks of the “prophesies” in the law. In addition, in John 10:34 the word “law” is used this broad way.⁶ “Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?” Here, the “law” from which Jesus quotes is a Psalm. The Psalms are not even part of the Torah, thus indicating that “law” was sometimes used to refer to any revelation in the Old Testament.⁷ Helpfully, the Scriptures in a few places bring both the narrow and broad uses together in one sentence. Romans 3:21, is one such place: “But now the righteousness of God without *the law* [narrow use] is manifested, being witnessed by *the law and the prophets*; [broad use].” The gospel that requires no obedience to the law to be justified is revealed in the law.⁸

This broad use of the term “law” is found in the Reformed confessions as well. In the Belgic Confession, Article 25, speaking of the falling away of the ceremonial law, the Confession states, “In the meantime, we still use the testimonies *taken out of the law and the prophets* to confirm to us in the doctrine of the gospel....” The testimonies the article speaks of are found “in the law and the prophets.” The Confession is using the biblical phrase “law and prophets” to refer to the Old Testament. That is, the “law” not merely as God’s requirements, but as the first five books of the Bible, and the “prophets” as the other books of the Old Testament.

In this broad sense, to answer our question, absolutely, the gospel is part of the law. The Reformers maintained the unity of the Old and New Testaments in part for this very reason.⁹ The difference between the Old and New Testaments is not that the Old Testament only contained the law and the New Testament only the gospel. Rather, the difference is that in the Old Testament the gospel was less fully revealed and in the New Testament it is more fully revealed. And, in the Old Testament more specific case laws were added because the people of God were in the time of types and shadows and were constituted as a civil society, whereas in the New Testament neither of those two is the case.¹⁰ The Decalogue is still in force, but is applied by Christ Himself and His apostles in ways that reckon with the Lord’s coming. In the Old Testament (sometimes called the time of the law) there is both law and gospel. In the New Testament (sometimes called the time of the gospel) there is both law and gospel.

6 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.11.10, “The three latter comparisons to which we have referred are of the law and the gospel. In them the law is signified by the name Old Testament....” Bavinck, vol 4, “Now to the extent that the Old and New Testament dispensations of the covenant of grace can be described—*following Scripture and in terms of the most salient difference between them*—with the terms ‘law,’ and ‘gospel...’” (452). “Although in a *broad sense* the terms law and gospel can indeed be used to denote the old and new dispensation of the covenant of grace...” (453).

7 This is because though the gospel was there in the Old Testament, the Old Testament was dominated by the giving of the civil, ceremonial, and moral law.

8 Many more examples could be given of the use of the term in the broad sense, Matthew 5:17, Matthew 7:12, John 15:25 etc. I am not in this article going to get into the debate surrounding the way Paul uses the term “law” in every specific instance in his epistles. Orthodox men have disagreed over individual instances. Paul’s uses mainly fall under the broad or narrow sense as I describe them here. The only exceptions are a few places where, playing on the term “law,” he uses that term to refer to “principle” (Rom. 7:21, etc.). I make this significant comment, however, on the use of the term in Paul. It is vital to note that often in the epistles of Paul he uses the term “law” in a broad sense (to refer to the Old Testament or the Torah) but

has in mind *exclusively the commanding aspects* of the Old Testament or the Torah. Thus, it appears, at first, he is using the term in the broad sense, but truly he is still using it in the narrow sense of “do this.” An example of this is Galatians 4:21 ff. Paul speaks of being “under the law.” He is thinking of the Old Testament, as the next verses make clear. But as the beginning of the chapter makes clear, he is thinking of the Old Testament laws as *laws*. That is, as commandments that acted as a tutor to lead us to Christ, and thus no different from the Decalogue that remains as that law for us. The reason why it is *vital* to understand that Paul is still thinking of law as “do this” in such instances is that the New Perspective on Paul and Federal Vision do not. They say Paul’s only concern is to do away with the Old Testament laws as a means to justification. The laws were the tutor to Christ, not the commands of the New Testament lived out of faith. Hence, they conclude, those laws obeyed by regenerated people may play a part in their justification.

9 See Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.10.

10 Thus the civil and ceremonial laws fall away while the principles behind them, which principles include the commands of the Decalogue, still stand.

The law and God's covenant

Seeing that, we learn what holds all of these distinctions together. The Old and New Testaments are the old and new administrations of the *covenant*. It is *the covenant* that holds law and gospel together. The distinctions we have made in these two articles *must* be made. To fail to distinguish law and gospel in their narrow senses is to open the church to the dangers of Pelagianism. At the same time, to take the narrow distinction between law and gospel in justification, and to exaggerate it when it is outside the theological area of justification, is to open the church to the dangers of antinomianism.¹¹

God's covenant with His people is an unconditional covenant of grace. Thus, the law in its narrow sense cannot be the means by which we enter or remain in that covenant. Only the gospel in the narrow sense, received by faith, is that means. At the same time, God's covenant unconditionally established and maintained with His elect in Christ is established and maintained *as a relationship*. Though never dependent upon us, it is a relationship in which we live with our Father and relate to Him. It is a bond in which He calls us to walk with Him in gratitude, just as an earthly father calls his earthly children to the same. The gospel of that covenant in its broad sense includes the law in its narrow sense. As out of gratitude I obey the commands of my earthly father and in that way experience the closeness of the relationship (*not* as though I earned it, *never* as the legal basis for it, for I obey out of grace), so too the child of God with His heavenly Father.

Keeping the distinctions and the definitions of the terms (law and gospel) properly in view, this covenant holds everything together, so that *for God's elect*,¹² everything in the end is grace, even the law in its narrow sense.¹³ In every administration of God's covenant, law and gospel are distinguished but not separated. They are held together beautifully as part of God's gracious covenant to His people.

In light of this understanding of these distinctions, as well as of the unity of law and gospel in God's cov-

enant, Protestant Reformed writers and preachers have made statements such as, "The law is gospel. If anyone doubts it, let him read Psalm 19 and Psalm 119."¹⁴ Calvin says glorious things about the law as a unique gift of grace to God's people and even a "special grace" to them.¹⁵ Bavinck reminds us of how to preach the law as part of the covenant in Reformed churches:

Christians...delight in the law in their inmost being (Rom 7:22) and meditate on it day and night (Ps 1:2). For that reason that law must always be proclaimed in the church in the context of the gospel. Both law and gospel, the whole Word, the full counsel of God, are the content of preaching. Accordingly among the Reformed the law occupies a much larger place in the doctrine of gratitude than in that of misery.

However, in my judgment, we would do well especially in this day and age of the Federal Vision to explain what we mean when we make statements like "the law is the gospel" or "the law is part of the gospel," *very carefully*. And, with Calvin, to say in almost the same breath how the law is also *not* the gospel.¹⁶ The apostle sets the example of doing both, Galatians 3:21-22: "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Here, there is a law-gospel distinction in the narrow sense—all are under sin because we cannot attain to the law, that the promise of the gospel might be given to those who believe. But at the same time, this truth is placed in the setting of the covenant purposes of God to His elect. Thus, he says, "Is the law against the promises (gospel) of God? God forbid!" This is the beauty of the covenant of grace!

11 Bavinck (vol 4): "In the Christian church this antithesis between law and gospel was even exacerbated and made irreconcilable...by antinomianism in its various forms.... On the other hand, this antithesis between law and gospel was weakened and cancelled out by nomism in its various forms..." (451).

12 It is important to keep in mind the intended *audience* of the law here. In the covenant, the law speaks to elect and, at some point, regenerate people. That makes all the difference in the world. (See Bavinck, vol 4, 455.)

13 And in all three of the law's uses in that narrow sense (Calvin speaks of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd uses of the law in its narrow sense in *Institutes*, 2.7.6-13). For the elect it is in the end grace to us in all three ways.

14 Hanko, *Contending for the Faith*, 263.

15 Commentary on Psalm 19:7

16 Cf. Calvin in his comments on Psalm 19:8, "These different ways in which the law may be viewed, easily show us the manner of reconciling these passages of Paul and David, which seem at first view to be at variance. The design of Paul is to show what the law can do for us, taken by itself; that is to say, what it can do for us when, without the promise of grace, it strictly and rigorously exacts from us the duty which we owe to God; but David, in praising it as he here does, speaks of the whole doctrine of the law, which includes also the gospel, and, therefore, under the law he comprehends Christ."



When thou sittest in thine house

Mrs. Sue Looyenga, member of Zion Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan

Walk about Zion

Sion or *Zion*, the mount upon which the Canaanite town of Jebus was situated, was a place with a fair and lovely climate, but it was blessed especially with the natural defenses found in its high aspect and in the three deep valleys that surrounded it. In addition, the city had a natural water source in the Kidron Valley just outside the city walls, the Spring of Gihon. Named from a verb meaning “gush forth,” the spring supplied fresh water in abundance, refreshing and cleansing the people, and providing ample water for their terraced gardens throughout the valley. King David realized Zion’s value as a central location among the tribes of Israel not long after coming to the throne of Israel, determined it would be the place from which he would rule the tribes, and fought the tenacious Jebusites to secure it.

Upon Mount Zion, in the southeastern part of the old city, King David built his mighty citadel, fortified it with even more secure ramparts, and renamed it “the City of David.” To this place he also brought the ark of the covenant to signify God’s own presence in Zion. Even so, Zion was not the highest point in this mountainous area. In a higher place, on a northerly ridge known as Moriah, was an ancient Canaanite threshing floor, along with altars to many of their gods. Here was the place David reserved for God’s house, although God told David that he would not build this temple himself. It would, however, rise there under his son Solomon’s direction to be the very place wherein God would dwell, the glorious temple of the living God of His people.

Zion became a treasured place for the people of God as it expanded from the part of the hill containing the City of David to encompass all of the surrounding area, including the temple of God in the northern part of the mountain. Gradually, the name “Zion,” which had once referred just to Old Testament Israel, grew to encompass the entire church of God, comprised not only of God’s people found in Israel’s tribes, but also those who had been dispersed by conquering nations, famine, and persecution, and later those of the Gentile race gathered from heathendom. With joy in their hearts, all of God’s people who were able went up to Jerusalem to worship, lifting their eyes to the hills in the distance

as they traveled with anticipation. With the beautiful picture of God’s provision, protection, and abiding presence before them, their songs began to arise to His praise even as they ascended those hills, wherein lie the place of rest after a long, uphill journey; the place of refreshment and community among God’s people; the place of safety from all threats: God was in the midst of her; she would not be moved. It is no wonder then that God, through the psalmist in Psalm 48:12-13, urged His people to “walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to generations following.”

Researching the history and geography of Jerusalem and the place known as Zion may stir in us a desire to walk about Zion and see the ancient homes of great kings and the places where the Great King of Israel, Israel’s Messiah, walked. But we, the church of Jesus Christ in this twenty-first century have so very much more than the Old Testament saints ever imagined. As glorious as the long-awaited arrival in Jerusalem was for the pilgrim travelers, and their ascent to the highest point where the temple of God stood, joining in the music that floated downward from those holy courts, these were still but a symbol of the reality of God dwelling among them. We, His church on earth, now have God with us—Immanuel; and our bodies are the temples of the living God, spiritual temples with His Spirit indwelling us, the very Spirit of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. We, His church, are Zion, a spiritual house. And the Holy Spirit through the psalmist likewise bids us to walk about Zion and view the springs that gush forth His grace; the towers and ramparts of protection He affords us; and the glory of His presence, here and now, showing forth an even greater glory yet to come. There is no better time to take this walk and consider the spiritual kingdom of Zion, which is a harbinger of the heavenly Zion yet to come. For as we walk and consider, we, just like those who longed for the earthly Jerusalem visible in the distance as they journeyed, also rejoice, for we

see the beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem approaching nearer and nearer.

As God's people came up from the valleys to worship, there were difficult places to navigate—shadowy, barren, and threatening—and beyond their own strength to continue. Israel could be a dry and thirsty land, and weary pilgrims, fainting with thirst and fatigue, often cried out for relief. And the springs of Gihon did not gush forth at all times; those who have studied them tell us they were intermittent springs. Yes, there were great times of refreshment, when the bountiful rains came and Gihon's springs overflowed with abundance, rushing down into the valleys below, and providing enough water to enrich the terraced gardens and to fill rock-cut pools that served as reservoirs even for later need. But there were also times when the people suffered dry spells, when the rains were sparse and the land became "dry and thirsty" (Ps. 63:1).

Is that not so for us as God's people as well? Are there not often times of weariness for us His church, as one dry period follows another and there seems to be no relief from the thirst for truth and genuine love in a changing world opposed to Christianity, and no rest from engaging in spiritual warfare within and without ourselves throughout the week? Are there not times when we would love to abandon our baggage beside the pilgrim trail and leave for some place that would offer immediate relief, the shaded gardens of pleasure or oceans of happiness that the world offers? Do we not tire of warning our children and young people of the dark dangers that threaten those who leave the path to meddle with things that appear to offer immediate relief to earth's many woes?

Then, we must "walk about Zion," too, with our families, especially in our times of fatigue and questioning, "coming into God's temple" to hear the gospel, opening His Word and communing with Him in our hearts, for it is there that we see blessings—of His grace, His love, and His tender mercy that continually pour down upon us. We must lovingly remind each other that all of our fountains are in Him, and in no other (Ps. 87:7). We have a Source for pure joy in our God, Who has promised His people: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring" (Is. 44:3).

And what about the times when real physical enemies surround us? What about the times when sin and evil come near, even physically entering into our homes to harm us or our children? Almost daily we hear of heinous crimes in our world—home invasions, robbery, murder, kidnapping and selling of children,

school shootings, hate crimes, and a host of other evils in a society that grows increasingly wicked. These have affected God's people at times, and will continue to, as well. When Satan works in some hearts to bring abuse—physical, psychological, spiritual, and sexual—to some of God's children through others who claim the name of Christian, even in what seem to be "protected places," then where *can* one run for protection? Many of our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ already suffer physical danger as Christian believers in lands and villages opposed to Jesus Christ, and some are currently displaced from their homes, imprisoned, tortured, and even killed. Added to this are dread diseases that can invade our bodies and minds and cause devastation. When there is nowhere else to turn, when we are in such grave physical danger, where is our help, our protection, then?

The answer to that comes once again by walking about Zion: seeking God in prayer, being edified and strengthened by His Word, and embracing His promises by His abiding grace and Holy Spirit within us. With our fellow saints and loved ones, we must count the lofty lookout towers that soar above the enemies seeking to overthrow God's city. We must mark the many places that are bulwarks, which will not allow enemies to so much as touch our souls even though they may breach our physical bodies for a time. We must consider that Jehovah God Himself is that rock, that salvation, that defense (Ps. 62:1) and we will not be moved away from Him, not ever. When all that we own may be threatened, we must consider the wealth of her palaces, the fair dwelling places whose wealth cannot be stolen from us, become rusty, or be eaten by moths because it is spiritual treasure guarded by His watchful eye. These promises are not only for this life, but for our everlasting life with Him in heaven as He calls us to Him.

And, for eternal comfort in this present life of physical pain, weakness, and temptation, above all we must "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest [we] be wearied and faint in [our] minds" (Heb. 12:3). Because of Him—our Lord Jesus Christ—death and sin are swallowed up in victory forever. He is the Healer of those broken by the sins of others. Our temporal enemies, enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ, will face Him as their Judge in the Last Day. Those of His people who have been lured by Satan into committing sins against God's beloved saints, and who repent of their sins in sincerity, have a Savior Whose blood washes them white as snow, freeing them to abide in Him once again. The bodies of God's children that have been ravaged by physical attacks, evil aggression, and diseases of this world are still His holy

temples, damaged though they are. Whatever is done to Christ's children is done to Him, and justice will prevail for that. That same flesh will go to the grave and rest until He returns and it rises from the grave in perfection to rejoin our already-glorified souls. If that ravaged body is still here when the Lord comes again, it will be changed "in a moment; in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (I Cor. 15:52), when He returns, to become perfect and whole once again along with the soul, and be received into glory forever. There is nothing that can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:28).

As we witness sin's corruption in our fallen world,

fight sicknesses ourselves, and experience those of our loved ones, and as we must walk to the grave time and time again in our lives and face the last enemy, death, we must not fail to see that God's presence always has been and always will be with His church. He is our Provider, our fountain of life and blessing; He is our Protector, Who watches over us, His people, at all times and in all places; and He is the eternally present God of our lives. Walk about Zion, and tell this to the generation following, even as you sing praises to Him with great rejoicing among His saints there.



Strength of youth

Rev. Joshua Engelsma, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa

A servant-leader

What does it mean to be a man?

In the last article (March 1, 2018), I began to answer that question by pointing out the differences between men and women and identifying the things that make men unique. I ended by saying that God calls men to be leaders.

I showed, briefly, that this idea of men as leaders is biblical. I pointed to the fact that, in the beginning, God made the man first. He created Adam to be the head of the human race and the king of the creation. The woman was created after the man, out of the man, and for the man (I Cor. 11:8-9). I also pointed to passages that show that the man is to be the head and leader of his wife (Eph. 5:23) and a leader in the church (I Cor. 14:34-35; I Tim. 2:11-14).

In this article I want to spell out in detail the idea of male leadership. I want to answer the question, "What does the Bible say about being a leader?"

Dangerous ditches

If, like me, you live in an area blanketed by snow for a quarter of the year, you probably know a thing or two about ditches. The likelihood is pretty high that at some point you have slid off the road and into one of these deep trenches that line the road. When the snow is flying, the wind is blowing, and the temperature hovers in the single digits, the ditch is not a place you want to be.

Such is the case spiritually as well. Lurking on either side of the straight and narrow way are dangerous ditches that must be avoided. The area of male leadership is no exception.

On one side of the road there is what we can call *the ditch of indifference*. Resting there are weak, lazy men who have no interest in being real leaders. They are more than happy to allow the women in their lives to take the steering wheel, provide direction, and assume the role of leader. Being a leader requires too much energy and puts them out of their comfort zone, so at best they make a feeble attempt at leadership and at worst do not give it a moment's notice. This kind of man has a Slinky for a spiritual spinal cord.

God save us from the ditch of indifference!

But there is another ditch on the other side of the road that must be avoided as well. We can call this *the ditch of domineering*. Far from being weak and indifferent, the men in this ditch are proud, controlling, heavy-handed dictators. Their philosophy of leadership is simple: "I'm the boss, and you're not. You do what I say, and don't give me any lip. When I tell you to jump, you say, 'How high?'" The steel rod that they have for a backbone serves also as the scepter clenched in their iron fist.

This second theory of leadership is what is commonly promoted in the world. Today people seem to have a fixation on the subject of leadership. There is no end

of self-help books, websites, and blog posts devoted to turning you into a leader. And the ideal leader, in their mind, is a strong, assertive individual. This man has big dreams, and is not going to let anyone stand in the way of his attaining them.

Sadly, a similar line of thought can be found in the church. Some wrongly interpret the biblical idea of headship as meaning a man has supreme authority to do whatever he wants. He has a dim view of women as weak, emotional creatures whose sole purpose is to serve his needs and desires.

This thinking might be due in part to a wrong understanding of Genesis 3:16: "Unto the woman [God] said...thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." What God is saying here is that now after the Fall the woman will have to deal with a sinful husband who at times will abuse his headship and be cruel and unloving and domineering. While the passage acknowledges that this will happen after the Fall, this in no way gives men the license to abuse their headship. Any appeal to this passage in support of a domineering man is wrong.

God save us from the ditch of domineering!

The road less-traveled

Having identified the ditches into which so many fall, we can now lay out the path of biblical male leadership. There are two main things we can say about genuine leadership.

First, and obviously, leaders lead.

A spiritual leader is someone who charts the course for others. Think of a sergeant in the army. He gives direction to the troops under him and makes important decisions in the heat of battle. Or think of the captain of a basketball team. The rest of the team looks to him for direction when key decisions have to be made.

The calling to be a spiritual leader involves instructing. The Reformed "Marriage Form" says that the calling of a husband is to "lead [his wife] with discretion" and this includes "instructing." To be a leader, a man must be a teacher. He does not have to have a teaching degree and does not even have to go to college, but he must be concerned about helping others grow. This might happen in more formal settings, but usually this will be in informal situations. A leader does not want those who look up to him to follow blindly and mindlessly, but he wants them to do so knowledgeably.

One of the main ways that he teaches is by his own example. Think again of the army sergeant. He is not a general locked away in his office moving pieces around on a map, but he is down in the trenches leading by his own example. Or the team captain. He leads by exam-

ple: diving on the floor for loose balls, being the first one to practice, and staying late to get in extra shots. A strong leader is willing to go where he wants his followers to go.

Being a leader also involves the responsibility of protection. Again, the "Marriage Form" includes in the calling to lead the importance of "protecting." A man leads others by protecting them. When another person is physically threatened, he does not shy away but steps forward to protect. He protects the name of others from being slandered and dragged through the mud. He also is concerned about protecting others spiritually from sin and temptation. He does not want to lead others into temptation, but wants to do all in his power to keep them from sin and encourage them in their walk with God.

Included with being a leader is the necessity of being a decision-maker. Making important decisions can be a terrifying thing, and it is so easy to freeze in that moment. But a leader knows that he is ultimately responsible for making wise decisions for those under his care. This does not mean that he makes every decision and always does what he wants. A good leader values the input and advice of others and will allow others the freedom to make decisions. But he knows that ultimately he must bear the responsibility for those decisions.

A good leader is also someone who recognizes the gifts in others. He does not despise those who are under him, or belittle them to assert his superiority. He sees their gifts and values them. As a leader, he wants to encourage them to see their gifts and to put those gifts to good use. He wants to mobilize the strength of others.

I hope you can see that these ideas will apply to different men in different circumstances in different ways. The relationship between a single man and his female friends will be different from the relationship between a married man and his wife. The specific responsibility of a man toward the women in his life will differ according to the nature of their relationship. What I am laying out here is the general pattern of leadership. I hope in future articles to see how this applies in different situations. For now, the general point is this: Leaders first must lead.

In the second place, a leader must be a servant.

I can imagine you are thinking, "Hang on! Did I read that right? Leaders must be servants? That doesn't make any sense!"

The idea of leaders being servants certainly is a radical idea. It goes against the grain of the natural mind. When the world talks about being a leader, they paint a picture of someone who is self-seeking, pushy, and aggressive. If you suggest that a leader is a servant, they would laugh you out of the room.

But this road less-traveled, this radical, counter-cultural idea of leadership is what God clearly teaches us in His Word.

Jesus taught this to His disciples on a number of occasions. He had to correct their thinking about leadership too. On one occasion, the mother of James and John came to Jesus and asked, “Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom” (Matt. 20:21). When the other disciples heard about what she did, they were angry with James and John. Jesus saw this and called them all together and said, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (vv. 25-27).

A similar thing happened when Jesus was gathered with His disciples in the upper room for the last Passover. Before they ate, they were supposed to wash their feet. Since they wore open sandals and walked on dirty, unpaved roads, their feet were usually in need of a good scrub. And this was typically the work of the lowliest servant in the house. But when the disciples were gathered together, there was no servant to wash their feet. And they were not about to get down on their knees and take the smelly feet of another in their hands. But when Jesus saw this, He took the bowl of water and a towel, stooped down, took the dirty feet of His disciples in His hands, and performed the work of a servant in

washing their feet. When He was done, He rebuked them, “Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:12-15).

Jesus is our example here. He “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). He who is God “made himself of no reputation,” “took upon him the form of a servant,” and “humbled himself” (Phil. 2:6-8). And the calling to us is: “Let this mind be in you” (v. 5).

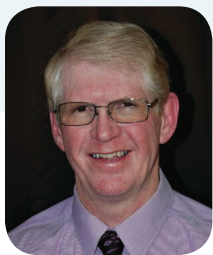
If our Lord came to serve, then all in positions of leadership must see themselves as servants. As a leader, a man is not concerned first and foremost with himself. Life does not revolve around him and his desires. But he views himself as a servant whose first concern is for others and their well-being. He always has the best interests of others in his heart.

He exercises all the responsibilities entrusted to him as a servant. He instructs others, as a servant. He leads by example, as a servant. He protects, as a servant. He makes important decisions, as a servant. He mobilizes the strengths of others, as a servant.

This point cannot be stressed enough: Leaders are servants!

This is what the church so urgently needs: Mature men who are servant-leaders!

God, give us men who lead! As servants!



News from our churches

Mr. Perry Van Egdome, member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa

Trivia question

Is which state of our country will this summer’s Young People’s Convention be held? Answer later in this article. Speaking of the convention brings another question: In what year was the first Young People’s Convention held?

Evangelism activities

Edgerton, MN PRC recently sponsored a lecture by their pastor, Rev. M. De Boer. This speech was entitled “What It Means to Keep the Sabbath Day Holy,” and all from the surrounding area were invited to come.

Congregational activities

Hull PRC hosted the annual Spring Ladies League meeting on Thursday, April 26. Rev. James Laning spoke on the topic “Communing as a People.” Women of all ages were encouraged to come for a time in God’s Word and Christian fellowship.

The PR Psalm Choir presented their annual concert at Hudsonville PRC on May 6.

Minister activities

Rev. A. Brummel preached his farewell sermon in Heritage, Sioux Falls on May 13. His installation as

Calvary PRC's new pastor took place on May 20.

After the acceptance of their pastor's call to Calvary PRC (Rev. A. Brummel), the Council of Heritage PRC of Sioux Falls, SD formed the trio of Rev. E. Guichelaar, Rev. S. Key, and Candidate Jonathan Langerak. On April 29 the congregation of Heritage PRC extended a call to Candidate Langerak to be their next pastor, and on May 13 he announced his acceptance of this call. We rejoice with him and Heritage PRC, and pray for him as he prepares to enter the gospel ministry!

Mission activities

On April 29, missionary-pastor Daniel Kleyn preached for the Bearers of Light Community Church in Guiguinto, Bulacan. This was the second time our missionaries have preached there, as Rev. Daniel Holstege had also preached there on March 25. This is a church that desires to be Reformed and reforming. May God continue to bless our labors there and throughout the land of the Philippines!

Rev. Daniel Holstege and his family will take a furlough to the USA this summer. This will occur June 11-July 24, Lord willing, and Rev. Holstege will attend the meeting of the Synod of the PRCA during that time. The six-week furlough includes 3 weeks for vacation and 3 weeks for preaching, for attendance at Synod, and for mission-field presentations in our churches. Their tentative, busy itinerary is as follows: **June 11-17**, Grand Rapids; **June 18-27**, Randolph; **June 27-July 1**, Doon/Hull; **July 2-15**, Grand Rapids; **July 16-23**, Loveland, D.V.

Also attending Synod will be the first representative from the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (PRCP), as Rev. Leovino Trinidad, pastor in Maranatha PRC, will represent our sister denomination at synod this summer, D.V.

At the service on May 13 the Maranatha PRC celebrated its 35th anniversary as an organized church. Rev. Smit was scheduled to lead both services that day and to give an "anniversary message." A meal was held after the service.

School activities

Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA held their Grandparents Day in late April with the offer to all grandparents to "come back" to school. Then, on May 4 they held their Geography Fair with decorations, displays, costumes, and food samples from around the world, as well as adult participation activities! Sounds like fun, and I'm guessing a few people learned some new things in the process!

According to the bulletin of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada, the Genesis School PTA con-

ducted a highway clean-up fundraiser on Saturday, May 5. All participants were asked to meet at school at 9:00 A.M. to sign up and watch a short video presentation on possible safety issues while cleaning up along the highway. Gloves and safety vests were distributed at this time, and then they left to clean the highway ditches from Clive to Tees. Child-care was provided and lunch at Genesis followed when the work was completed.

Young people's activities

The first ever Doon Young People's Car Challenge took place on April 25. Patterned after the Edmonton Car Rally, this event took participants to seven of the eight incorporated towns in Lyon County, Iowa. They included Alvord, Inwood, Lester, Rock Rapids, Larchwood, George, and Doon. A spirited competition between teams ended with the team led by Rev. J. Engelsma in the lead by one point! A good time was had by all, and refreshments were enjoyed in the church basement after the friendly competition. We may have to make this an annual event!

The Young Calvinists invited all young people and young adults to enjoy an evening of fellowship and spiritual growth at their recent "Talking Points" event! Many came to Hope PRC at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, May 29 to hear Rev. A Lanning speak about "The Five Points" and how they relate to the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dordt and the lives of our young people today. Refreshments and fellowship followed.

The Wingham, Ontario Young People's Society is hosting a dodgeball tournament on Saturday, June 2, at F.E. Madil Secondary School. They hoped to have 14 teams, each team consisting of 8 players aged high school or older. The proceeds of this tournament will go toward the cost of our young people attending this year's Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention.

Trivia answer

This summer's Young People's Convention (www.prconvention.com) will be held in the great state of Minnesota! The dates are August 13-17 and the location is the Lake Geneva Christian Center of Alexandria, MN. The theme of the convention is "Guided by God" and the banquet theme is "Hawaiian Luau." This event is hosted by the Siouxland area churches of the tri-state area of Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota. Many of our young people are registered (registration has been closed) and are preparing to go! Hope to see you there! Oh, and the first convention was held August 2 and 3 of 1939!

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Announcements

Resolution of sympathy

The Council of the Kalamazoo PRC extends its Christian sympathy to the Kalamazoo congregation in the passing away of our dear sister in Christ, **Alice Nederhoed**. In our loss, may we be comforted in God's Word where we read: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, or crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Rev. Michael DeVries, President
Steve DeVries, Clerk

Teacher needed

The Edmonton Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2018-2019 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1-3, and the board is willing to work with the teacher on a curriculum suited to their preference. Please contact Gord Tolsma at gr.tolsma@gmail.com / 780-777-5780 or Scott Ferguson at s_r_ferguson@hotmail.com.

Call to synod!!

Synod 2017 appointed Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, Byron Center, MI the calling church for the 2018 Synod.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 2018 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 12, 2018 at 8:00 A.M., in the gymnasium of Adams Christian School.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 11, at 7:00 P.M. at Byron Center PRC. Rev. S. Key, president of the 2017 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

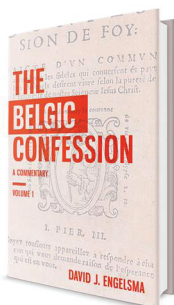
Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Mike Elzinga (clerk@byronprc.org). Phone: (616) 328-2753.

Consistory of Byron Center PRC
Mike Elzinga, Clerk

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— VOLUME ONE —

DAVID J. ENGELSMA, author



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Reformed Witness Hour

Rev. Carl Haak

- June 3 "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit" Matthew 5:3
- June 10 "Blessed Are They That Mourn" Matthew 5:4
- June 17 "Blessed Are the Meek" Matthew 5:5
- June 24 "Blessed Are They That Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness" Matthew 5:6