

CONSTITUTION

In essentials – unity.

In non-essentials – liberty.

In all things – charity. (quote attributed to St. Augustine)

The essential doctrines of the faith are found in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed is the same as the Apostles' Creed except that it is more specific on the doctrine of the Trinity. All who believe in these creeds are Christians (at least outwardly). Those who deny these two creeds are not Christians.

In the non-essential doctrines there must be liberty to debate without calling each other non-Christians. This does not mean that the non-essential doctrines are not important. They can be very important, but that is no excuse for divisions. In all things there must be charity.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the constitution of the Church of the King. The name of our church is chosen in honor of the One we serve and in recognition of His authority over all creation. We, the members of Church of the King, McAllen, seek to establish a truly biblical church*. It is to be a church that is grounded solely in the Word of God (sola scriptura). This document is to be our foundation. We believe that all things - work or play, business or family - are to be done to and for the glory of our Lord. There is no part of life that is to be considered outside of our sovereign God's reach. Our vision is to see Christ's dominion expand into every aspect of society. As you read and study this document, keep in mind the following points. Our purpose in compiling and printing this document is not to cast aspersion on anyone else or their beliefs but to reinforce the doctrine of our own church. We also understand the transitional nature of the Christian walk. It is inevitable that among us, there will be many people in different stages of growth, maturity, and understanding. It is the imperative of Christian liberty to allow for that. It is also to be understood that many will find different personal uses and benefits in this constitution. It is not our purpose to overwhelm or place demands on anyone but rather to present a complete statement of our faith and operational procedure.

May God be our helper as we learn and grow together in our pursuit of the Kingdom of God.

The first twelve pages of this document are the most important. The rest is supplemental.

*"Reformation" is explained later in this document.

CHURCH OF THE KING CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith, and to govern the church in an orderly manner. Our desire is that each member will know the things most surely believed by the founders of this church

NAME

This body of believers shall be known as Church of the King, meeting in McAllen, TX.

OBJECTIVES

Our objective is to proclaim the crown rights of King Jesus with a vision to:

1. Minister to our Heavenly Father and His Anointed King Jesus through scriptural praise and worship.
2. Build a New Testament local church through strong covenant relationships and spiritually healthy families.
3. Declare and Demonstrate the Dominion of the Lord Jesus in every dimension of life through intercessory prayer and spirit lead action.
4. Evangelize and extend the authority of the Kingdom of God into the nations through the equipping and sending of God-called laborers.

General Statement of Faith

We believe that both Old and New Testaments constitute the divinely inspired Word of God, inerrant in the originals.

We believe in one God existing eternally in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became Man without ceasing to be God, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men.

We believe that the Holy Spirit came forth from the Father and the Son to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and to regenerate, sanctify, comfort, and seal those who believe in Jesus Christ, and to empower them to use spiritual gifts for the carrying out of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe that man is totally depraved in that of himself he is utterly unable to remedy his lost condition.

We believe that salvation of man's eternal being is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose atoning blood was shed on the cross for the forgiveness of sin.

We believe in baptism by water as the New Testament covenant sign between God and His people.

We believe in the observance of the Lord's Supper, commemorating the sacrifice of our Savior for the church.

We believe the life of the believer is to be separate from worldliness by consistent conduct before God and man, and is to be in the world as a life-giving light.

We believe in the ultimate coming of Christ and His kingdom to earth. At that time the last enemy (death) will be destroyed in history.

By-Laws
Church of the King - McAllen

Article I – Organization

The name of the organization shall be Church of the King – McAllen. The organization may at its pleasure by a vote of the Elders change its name. This is a local church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ governed through a plurality of elders. We seek to walk and act according to every word of His law. The bylaws of our constitution are established to preserve an orderly manner by which to accomplish this goal. At this point, we maintain a spiritual association and relationship with the leadership of Church of the King in Corpus Christi, Texas. The leadership of our church maintains regular communication and fellowship with the elders of the Corpus Christi church. Our relationship is not legal or coercive in nature but rather, familial. In times of difficulty, we maintain counsel with them. At this time, we, the leadership of this church self-consciously hold ourselves accountable to Jack Carter and the elders of Church of the King in Corpus Christi, Texas. This is subject to change upon a majority vote of the elders.

Article II – Purposes

To reform the church universal, and in so doing, spread the Kingdom of God across the face of the earth based on the Holy Scripture (Bible). This organization is organized for religious, charitable, and biblical purposes.

Article III – Membership

Section 1 –Requirements for membership

1. Be baptized by water
2. Attend services regularly
3. Have a heart for the ministry and support it financially
4. Believe in the Bible as God’s ultimate authority
5. Agree with the doctrinal statement on page 5.

Section II – God’s goals for disciples of His church

1. To devote oneself to a life of prayer and the study of God’s Word.
2. To share the gospel of Christ with every person as God gives the opportunity.
3. To live in peace and harmony with all the brethren.
4. To submit to one another in love.
5. To maintain family worship and orderly children.

Section III – Privileges of Members

1. To be part of this local company of believers, receiving the spiritual benefits that proceed from the preaching of God's Word, the worship of the Almighty, the administration of the sacraments, and the fellowship of other Christians.
2. To be able to seek the counsel and spiritual advice of the elders.
3. To participate in church sponsored ministry.
4. To petition the elders with grievances (as stated in the bylaws).
5. To vote in any special called meeting (one vote per household).

Section IV - Termination of Membership

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

- 1) Death
- 2) Dismissal to another church
- 3) Exclusion by action of the elders

Section V – Grievances

Any member of the church will have the right to petition the elders with a grievance concerning a church matter.

- 1) In such a hearing, all of the elders shall have a right to be present.
- 2) Any elder may excuse himself from such a meeting if he so desires.
- 3) The member with a grievance may request a hearing in the presence of a particular elder or elders only, but no member shall have the right to exclude any elder of the church from being present in the hearing of a grievance, if he desires to be present.

The elders of the church will consider grievances jointly. The considerations of the elders will be based on the Word of God. In some cases, they will also use the orthodox history, and practice of the church, as a guide to understand how others have related to a passage or concept in question.

The decision of the elders of the church will be considered final. In regards to matters concerning this church, there will be no higher court of appeal. At this time, the relationship we have with Church of the King in Corpus with regard to a grievance is one of advice and consent.

It is our belief that the Matthew 18:15-17 model is in reference to a dispute or grievance of a personal nature and cannot be applied with reference to a church matter. A church matter would be defined as a matter affecting or involving multiple individuals in the church or an activity/action of the corporate function of or in the church body.

This church will not receive an accusation against an elder except in the mouth of two or three witnesses. (I Timothy 5:19; Deuteronomy 19:15)

Section VI – Discipline

1) We want to emphasize to our members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The pastors and the elders are available for counsel and guidance. Redemption rather than punishment will be the guideline which governs our attitude in dealing with one another.

2) Modes – “The modes or types of church discipline vary from the mild to the severe...

a. Admonition – either private or public (Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16; I Thessalonians 5:14, 2 Thessalonians 3:14; Titus 3:10,11)...

b. Reprove, rebuke, convince, convict (Matthew 18:15; Ephesians 5:11; I Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9, 13, 2:15)...

Proper Recipients – All breaches of the biblical standards of doctrine and behavior require some form of discipline. Thus, every believer needs to be disciplined, and ‘whom the Lord loves, he disciplines.’ (Hebrews 12:6)...

a. Christian love is violated by serious private offences...

b. Christian unity is violated by those who form divisive factions which destroy the peace of the church. Such person must be watched, rebuked, and, if necessary, removed (Romans 16:17, 18; Titus 3:10)...

c. Christian law is violated by those living scandalous lives...

d. Christian truth is violated by those who reject essential doctrines of the faith. (I Timothy 1:19,20, 6:3-5; 2 John 7-11).” (Wray 5,8,9)

3) Should some serious condition exist which would cause anyone to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, every reasonable measure will be taken by the elders to resolve the problem. All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. But, finding that the welfare of the church will best be served

by the exclusion of any person, the elders may proceed to declare the offender no longer to be in the membership or fellowship of this church.

4) By the definition we will follow, discipline in its severest form (termination of membership) will not be the equivalent of excommunication.

5) The elders upon evidence of his repentance and reformation may upon his request restore any person whose membership has been terminated for any condition, which has made it necessary for elders to exclude him, to membership and fellowship.

Section V - Excommunication

Excommunication is an action by the elders of God's church, according to His Word, and in behalf of His government, which denies access to the Table of the Lord (communion). This action necessarily applies to those under our sphere of authority. The view of excommunication is toward restoration. The person excommunicated is expected to come and hear the Word of the Lord. It is in the hearing of God's Word that we pray repentance will be produced and the excommunicant will turn to the Lord.

It is our position that excommunication is to be recognized universally in the church by all those who have Jesus Christ as their Head and who are under the authority of His government. This is because this action is taken on behalf of the government of God.

It will be our position to recognize the excommunications of other church bodies under the Headship of Jesus Christ.

Section VI – Same Sex Weddings

Church of the King believes, as is consistent with the historic orthodox Christian Church, that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God. Scripture clearly commands obedience to God's law and speaks against all types of sin, specifically condemning acts of homosexuality. The will of Almighty God is the absolute authority and standard to be embraced in all matters. As recorded in Acts 4:19-20, the Apostles Peter and John spoke thusly to the council of Jewish leaders after they were commanded not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus; "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but

“speak the things which we have seen and heard.” Likewise, Church of the King will obey God’s law rather than the opinion of men. Therefore:

- 1) Church of the King will not perform same sex weddings for members or non-members, but will conduct wedding ceremonies for one man and one woman as biologically defined at birth.
- 2) If Church of the King is ever legally forced to perform same sex weddings, all clergy in this congregation will opt out of performing civil ceremonies and will only perform biblically based “covenant ceremonies” that bless the union between one man and one woman as biologically defined at birth.
- 3) To qualify as a member of Church of the King, every member must attend regularly, give regularly, and hold to the biblical standards of morality and ethics as opposed to homosexuality and lesbianism.
- 4) Church of the King McAllen has a policy that disallows non-members and non-attendees and/or outsiders to rent and/or use any of its facilities for same sex weddings and/or any civil ceremonies related to marriage.
- 5) If all else fails, and the courts eventually override church by laws, then the only alternative left will be for biblically based Church of the King McAllen clergy to engage in civil disobedience and refuse to comply with the law, irrespective of consequences, penalties or culture stigma.

Article IV - Meetings

Section I – Worship Services

The church shall meet regularly each Lord’s Day for the sacraments, the worship of Almighty God, preaching and instruction. These meetings will be open for the entire membership of the church and for all people and shall be conducted under the direction of the pastors. The church will meet on other days as designated by the elders.

Section II – Special Services

Special services and any other church meetings which will be essential in the promotion of the objectives of the church shall be placed on the church calendar.

Section III – Special Called Meetings

A specially called meeting may be held to consider special matters of significant nature. A two-week notice of the subject, date, time, and location must be given for the special called **business meeting**; a two-thirds majority of adult voting members is required to pass any issue before the church. No special called meeting shall supercede a worship service. A special called meeting may only be convened by a unanimous vote of the elders. Only adults certified for the meeting may vote. All certified adults must be present in order to vote (They cannot vote in absencia). Only adult heads of households (or a married head) over 21 years of age who have tithed since joining (since the creation of Church of the King – McAllen) or for the last 12 months will be certified. The motion must carry by two-thirds to be approved.

Section IV – Church Financial Meetings

It is understood that membership in this church involves the financial obligation to support this church and its causes with tithes and offerings. The elders shall prepare budgets, indicating by items the amount needed and sought for all local and worldwide expenses. A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the elders. All funds for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the financial administrator and be properly recorded on the books of the church. The fiscal year of the church shall be January 1st through December 31st. The yearly budget must be approved by a 2/3 Majority of those attending the business meeting. The meeting shall be announced two Sundays in advance during the church service. The elders will provide a general financial statement in the first month following the end of the fiscal year accounting for all expenditures.

Article V – Church Officers

Section I – Elders

The governing body of this church is the Eldership. It is their job to oversee the edification of the saints unto the work of the ministry.

The college of Elders will have one elder to serve as the spokesman for the group. This person will serve as such by the recognition of the other elders of the spiritual life, maturity, and authority invested by God on this person.

We count the office of Elder to be a governmental position. Therefore, men with various ministry gifts may be found in their ranks.

Section II – Candidacy to become an Elder

Application for candidacy to eldership must come in a threefold fashion (in no particular order):

- 1) The individual must recognize the calling of God and make it known to the Elders.
- 2) The body of Elders must also recognize in this individual such a calling and gifting by God.
- 3) The candidate must ultimately receive the recognition of the congregation in the function of an elder.

These elements being present, the candidate will undergo a trial period of an indeterminate period. During this period, the candidate will pass a period of study in the Reformed Faith under the direction of the Elders. It will be expected of the candidate (if confirmed) to continue in a lifelong pursuit of both formal and informal study of the Word of God.

The candidate will function as an elder during this period in every respect except with regard to the vote in an elder's meeting.

The Elders will make available a minimum course of study for an Elder-candidate and for those interested in privately pursuing this course of study.

Section III – Pastor - Teachers

These are the ministry gifts which we recognize to carry the primary preaching and teaching responsibilities at Church of the King. The Elders shall appoint those to minister in various seasons and times. It may often be the case that the Elders themselves would walk in these ministry gifts thus

fulfilling dual roles. The Pastor-Teacher's primary gift is that of feeding the flock the Word of God. Counseling gifts may or may not be resident in such a person.

Section IV – Deacons

Deacons shall be appointed and ordained as the need arises. They are to have the same qualifications described in I Timothy 3:8-13. Their work is that of service which will entail both spiritual and physical acts of service to the saints.

Section V – Trustees

Trustees shall be appointed by the elders. Five trustees will hold in trust the church property. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property without a specific vote of the elders authorizing each action. It shall be the function of the trustees to affix their signatures to legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property or other legal documents where the signatures of trustees are required.

Section VI – Church Staff

This church shall call or employ such staff members as the church shall need. A job description shall be written when the need for staff members is determined. Vocational Staff members other than the pastors shall be recommended for approval to the pastors and elders. At least two weeks notice at the time of resignation should be given. The secretaries shall be recommended to the elders for approval.

Article VI – Finances

Section I – Budget

See Article IV, Section IV

Section II – Charitable Contributions

There are several things that are important for every member to keep in mind with regard to charitable contributions. The most important is that in order to be tax deductible, a contribution must be unconditional and without personal benefit to the donor. A designated contribution is allowable (as a

tax deduction) if it is an approved project or program of the church. A contribution is tax deductible if made to a “designated individual” as long as the church maintains full administrative control of the gift. In other words, the church must establish that it would ordinarily give the benevolence in question. We discourage the giving of designated gifts without the need being fully established by the elders beforehand. (see IRS Manual for details)

Section III – Tithes and offerings

See Article III, Section III, Item 6

Section IV – Special Situations

Often, collections are gathered for various projects or needs within the fellowship. All monies are duly recorded and separated into the funds so designated for that use. It is our practice to use designated funds for the purpose for which they are collected. However, the elders reserve the right to use any money received for the area of greatest need in case of dire emergency.

Article VII – Amendments

All amendments to the constitution or bylaws will be passed by a unanimous vote of the elders with the advice and consent of the majority of the heads of member households in the congregation and be made public within a 15 day period.

The following was amended Jan 26,2014

In order to ensure that in the future, apostasy will not take place, Church of the King, McAllen requires that all deacons and elders sign an oath of allegiance to the Belgic Confession of Faith as tweaked below (hi-lited).

The oath promises that if anyone changes his mind, he will resign his office or be guilty of perjury.

You can find the entire Belgic Confession here:

<http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/BelgicConfession.html>

Article 29: The Marks of the True Church

...

As for the false church, it assigns more authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God; it does not want to subject itself to the yoke of Christ; it does not administer the sacraments as Christ commanded in his Word; it rather adds to them or subtracts from them as it pleases; it bases itself on men, more than on Jesus Christ; it persecutes those who live holy lives according to the Word of God and who rebuke it for its faults, greed, and idolatry.

These two churches are easy to recognize and thus to distinguish from each other.

(COTK McAllen adds that there is no such thing as a perfect visible church. We confess that God's visible church has always had tares both in Old Testament times and now. Any church that denies the Nicene Creed however, is not God's church. Rather than using the terms "true church" and "false church" we are more comfortable recognizing that the true visible church can have false doctrines and corruptions that should be reformed.)

Article 37: The Last Judgment

- Finally we believe, according to God's Word, that when the time appointed by the Lord is come (which is unknown to all creatures) and the number of the elect is complete, our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, bodily and visibly, as he ascended, with great glory and majesty, to declare himself the judge of the living and the dead. He will burn this old world, in fire and flame, in order to cleanse it.

(COTK McAllen adds that the "burning of this old world" could be figurative and not literal and that the end of the world for each person is at death, but the soul is forever.)

Then all human creatures will appear in person before the great judge-- men, women, and children, who have lived from the beginning until the end of the world.

They will be summoned there by the voice of the archangel and by the sound of the divine trumpet.

All those who die before that time are raised from the earth. And as for those who are still alive, they will not die like the others but will be changed "in the twinkling of an eye" from "corruptible to incorruptible."

Article 35: The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

- We believe and confess that our Savior Jesus Christ has ordained and instituted the sacrament of the Holy Supper to nourish and sustain confessing Christians (COTK McAllen adds "and their baptized children.")

The wicked person certainly takes the sacrament, to his condemnation, but does not receive the truth of the sacrament, just as Judas and Simon the

Sorcerer both indeed received the sacrament, but not Christ, who was signified by it. He is communicated only to believers. (COTK McAllen adds, "But children of believers may partake just as circumcised Israelite children partook of the Passover meal.") Finally, with humility and reverence we receive the holy sacrament in the gathering of God's people, as we engage together, with thanksgiving, in a holy remembrance of the death of Christ our Savior, and as we thus confess our faith and Christian religion. Therefore (COTK McAllen adds "no one of guilty conscience") should come to this table without examining himself carefully, lest "by eating this bread and drinking this cup he eat and drink to his own judgment."

The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.

COVENANT OF CONDUCT

I. As Christians, followers of The Living Christ, we are joined together to proclaim and advance the kingdom of The Lord Jesus Christ. We are to be a distinctive people, zealous unto good works (Ex. 33:16; Titus 2:14). Because we are dedicated to the total Lordship of Jesus Christ in all areas of life, for us there can be no distinction or division of the sacred from the secular (Col. 1:18).

II. “All who join in this mission bear a definite responsibility to conduct ourselves in such a manner that others may see our good works and glorify our Father Who is in heaven (Matt. 5:16; I Cor. 6:20). We seek always to please God; our obedience is to Him (Act 5:29; Gal. 1:10).

III. “In personal deportment, we are to be guided by God’s word and those Biblical principles and practices which God has set forth to govern Christian behavior (Titus 2:12). We are to shun that which is forbidden by the word of God including covetousness, maliciousness, envy, deceit, backbiting, lack of mercy (Rom. 1:28–31); drunkenness, sexual immorality, dishonesty (I Cor. 6:9-20), adultery, fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, jealousies, wrath, divisions, heresies (Gal. 5:19-21) and strife, vain-gloriousness, etc. (Phil. 2:3-5). We are to strive to present ourselves a living testimony acceptable unto The Lord. (Rom. 12:1,2)

IV. “We are to practice the Christian virtues of love, charity, consideration for others, forbearance and kindness (I Cor. 1-13), joy goodness, temperance (Gal. 5:22-26). We are to manifest the Christian ethic in all of our deportment and affairs (Eph. 4:23-25; II Tim. 2:19-26). In the choice of avocation and entertainment, we are to be mindful of God’s admonitions, avoiding that which is unseemly or injurious to our Christian witness.

V. “As God’s stewards, we are to be faithful in our tithes to Him (Mal. 3:8-10) and to remember always, as employees or employers, that we are the servants of Christ, “doing service unto The Lord” (Eph. 6:5-9), and that we are to manifest our faith through works (James 2:14-26).

VI. “We are to be faithful in the observance of The Lord’s Day (Ex. 20:8-11), forsaking not the gathering together of His people. We are to support actively this local church through attendance, service and giving of our time and resources (Heb. 10:23-25).

“We are to glorify and honor The Lord in all things. Through fervent prayer and the inspiration and guidance of The Holy Spirit, we will seek to live an exemplary life in Christ and for Christ (Gal. 2:20), refraining from any conduct which would dishonor His name (Acts 24:16; Phil. 1:10,11).”

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION TO THE STATEMENTS OF FAITH

This section on statements of Faith is divided into three parts. We feel these build on each other and offer a comprehensive view of our beliefs. It is important to us at this point to say that the Word of God is primary to us. Creeds and confessions are merely tools by which we declare our present understanding of God's Word and where we seek to establish our spiritual location in a jungle where many dangerous doctrines roam. Also, keep in mind that we reserve the right to take exception to any portion of a statement of Faith. These are presented because they embody most of the universal principles which we most surely believe. Allow these sections of the constitution to become signposts for your study and guide along your way as you grow with Church of the King. In this article, we will present a summary of the theological distinctives of our church. This will be followed by a series of articles on the five points of Christian Reconstruction. We begin then with this question: What are the theological visions and perspectives of Church of the King? "We are committed to historical Biblical Christianity. We seek to be thoroughly Biblical. We affirm the historic faith as presented in the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, and in the great statements of the Reformation such as the Canons of Dort, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Belgic and Westminster Confessions." We place primary importance on respecting the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That lordship is exercised first of all in the institutional Church. Through the Church all of society will be transformed to realize God's will "on earth as it is in heaven." The full Gospel of Jesus Christ is thoroughly theocratic. We are called to disciple the nations under the kingship of Jesus, and the lordship of Christ means national as well as ecclesiastical discipleship.

We promote the following perspectives:

1. Trinitarian Awareness, which is sensitive to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as Persons who are worshipped by the Church and who give themselves to us in the three primary gifts of the Kingdom: new persons and relationships, the Word of God, and the sacraments of life.
2. Biblical Absolutism, which means that the Bible is absolutely authoritative wherever it speaks and is the sole ultimate authority for our thinking. Along these lines we affirm such things as the importance of six-day creationism, biblical chronology, and biblical symbolism as God's way of teaching us how to interpret the world.

3. Covenant-historical Interpretation of the Bible, which means paying careful attention to the rise and development of the Kingdom of God, both typologically throughout the Old Covenant and in its stages of development in the New Testament. Covenant-historical interpretation is the antidote both to the unbiblical legalism that flourishes in American Christianity, and to the prophetic speculation and fantasies that have diverted Christians from real-world concerns.
4. Presuppositional Thinking, which seeks to strip bare the ungodly foundations of all pagan and semi-Christian thought, and ground every thought on Biblical principals.
5. Biblical Theocracy, which means affirming the crown rights of King Jesus over every area of life. Specifically, since “all scripture is profitable... for instruction” (2 Tim. 3:16), we believe that all Scripture, including the books of Moses, is given for instructing all areas of life, including national life. We are also committed to biblical Church government, since that is where Christ’s theocratic reign must start
6. Biblical Eschatology, which always points to the expansion of the Kingdom through trials until eventually all nations, will be Christ’s. Some today emphasize the suffering and external weakness of the Kingdom so much that they deny the Biblical promises of victory in history, while those who emphasize victory seldom emphasize sufficiently the role of suffering and martyrdom in the advancement of the Kingdom. We hope to give proper Biblical weight to both.
7. Biblical Worship, which means viewing the Lord’s Day as the Day of the Lord, the time when God comes and renews His covenant with His people. Covenant renewal is characterized by God’s calling us to worship, His forgiving our sins and restoring us, His teaching us from His Word, His feeding us at His table, and His commissioning us to go forth and conquer. Biblical worship is also characterized by the wholehearted participation of the whole congregation in active and vigorous prayer and praise.
8. Singing of God’s Word, especially the Psalms, which are the war songs of the Prince of Peace. In the days when the churches were filled with God’s own hymns, the gospel went forth in power. We do not believe in exclusive psalmody, but we are committed to the idea that for a healthy diet God’s people need His hymns in their hearts, as well as the other songs God Himself gives us in the Bible. We are committed to a lively, dance-like, vigorous singing of the God’s Word as essential to revival and reformation.
9. Christian Transformation, which means that we believe that the local Church, with all its problems is still the center of the Kingdom. It is the nursery of the Kingdom, where God’s people are trained in the basic tools and activities needed to extend the Kingdom into society. In the Church we

learn that we are starving and are given free bread and wine by God Himself, a principle we carry forth as charity to the world. In the Church we learn that we are appallingly ignorant, but we are instructed by the Word and carry forth those truths to the world. In the church we bring our rotten selves before God to be transformed into new creations that can go forth as salt and light to the world.” (James Jordan)

CHARACTERISTIC MARKS OF THE REFORMED FAITH

by Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen

I. The Sovereignty of God

- A. God all-powerfully created (from nothing) and owns all things.
- B. God wisely foreordained and providentially controls all events, without depriving man of freedom and responsibility.
- C. Salvation is entirely of God’s grace (as opposed to Arminianism):
 - 1. Total depravity of the natural man
 - 2. Unconditional election by the Father
 - 3. Limited [particular] atonement by the Son
 - 4. Irresistible grace of the Spirit
 - 5. Perseverance of the saints
- D. God will establish His dominion in history over all opposition.
- E. At history’s end all men will be subject to God as Judge.

II. Covenant Theology

- A. God sovereignly transacted a covenant of grace with His people, calling for trust in His promise and submission to His stipulations, and carrying both blessings and curses.
- B. All post-fall covenants are essentially one, supplementing rather than supplanting each other (as opposed to dispensationalism.)
- C. God’s revealed commands and principals continue to be binding until He reveals otherwise (e.g., Old Testament law).
- D. The New Testament church has replaced Old Testament Israel; thus today, believers and their children (households) are able to participate in the New Testament covenant symbols as the Old Testament believer participated in the covenant symbols.
- E. The Messianic kingdom (millennium) is presently established on earth and will grow to have worldwide, visible success prior to Christ’s return – at which time there will be a general resurrection and final judgment of all men, saved and lost (as opposed to pretribulational rapturism and premillennialism).

III. Affirmation of this World

- A. The physical world was created good; matter is not evil.
- B. All areas of life are sacred and are to be subdued to God's glory; Christ is Lord over all (as opposed to pietism and sacred / secular dualisms).
- C. All vocations are equally dignified (as opposed to priestly exaltation).
- D. In the world we are at liberty within Scripture – thus whatever is not forbidden is permitted (as opposed to asceticism).
- E. Nobody but God may bind the Christian's conscience (as opposed to monasticism, fundamentalist cultural taboos, political tyranny).

IV. The Church's government, Worship, and Sacraments

- A. Christ, as Head, has ordained an elder-led government for His church as opposed to monarchical bishops or congregational independency.
- B. The perpetual offices within the church are elders and deacons; those who fill them must be males, spiritually mature and gifted, who are recognized by the people and approved by the elders.
- C. The worship of the church is regulated by the word of God – thus in worship, whatever is not commanded is forbidden.
- D. The worship of the church is centered on the word of God – thus must be intelligible, for edification of the body, done decently and in order.
- E. The sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant of grace, effective through the Holy Spirit to bless or curse.

Basic Reformed Beliefs

By Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen

1. Trinitarian theology

- A. The full deity and uniqueness of Jesus Christ as having two distinct, but inseparable natures (fully divine, fully human) in one person;
- B. The personality, distinct personal status and fully deity of the Holy Spirit (whose historical proceeding from the Son as well as the Father reflects the eternal inter-Trinitarian relationship).

- 2. Reality of cognitive knowledge of God and verbal revelation from Him.
- 3. Full inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible.
- 4. Sole authority of the Bible for Christian doctrine and living.
- 5. Historicity of (non-evolutionary) creation, prophecy, miracles.
- 6. Reality of everlasting damnation as judgment upon man's guilt.
- 7. Justification by faith in Christ alone, apart from meritorious good works.
- 8. Rejection of:

- A. Mary's intercession, treasury of merit, prayers to saints, confessional, penance, purgatory, indulgence – as well as
- B. Papal infallibility and/or apostolic succession.

9. Priesthood of every believer (personal salvation and the religious dignity of one's calling not mediated by, or dependent upon, church officials).
10. God's foreordination of every event, yet man's freedom and responsibility.
11. Moral bondage of man's will – indeed, his total depravity.
12. God's eternal **predestination** of the saved, reprobation of the lost.
13. Denial that Christ's divine attributes are communicated to His human ones.
14. Christ's particular atonement (dying as a substitute only for the elect).
15. Holy Spirit's efficacious (irresistible) call to the gospel.
16. Regeneration solely by the Holy Spirit, apart from man's cooperation or the church's baptism.
17. Underlying unity of all Biblical covenants, supplementing (not supplanting) each other and all centered on Jesus Christ.
18. Unity of God's people in all ages (the church as the "new Israel).
19. Postmillennialism (the millennium is during the church age and is followed immediately by Christ's return, a general resurrection of saved and lost, the final judgment) – thus denial of the military rule of Christ upon earth for a literal thousand years following the rapture.
20. Perseverance of the saints (as well as eternal security for the believer).
21. Necessity of sanctification (growth in holiness) for those who are saved.
22. Impossibility of moral perfection in this life, prior to glorification.
23. Rejection of:
 - A. Mystical means of piety and/or
 - B. Prophetic revelations today purporting to supersede the scripture.
24. Abiding validity of God's Old Testament law (unless Scripture alters it).
25. Rejection of asceticism: cultural legalism and unbiblical binding of the conscience (either in monasticism or prohibitions of "worldliness").
26. Affirmation of the state, just war, private property.
27. Rejection of the physical presence of Christ in or around the communion elements (transubstantiation, consubstantiation) in favor of His "presence" through the working of the Holy Spirit.
28. Denial that the sacraments are automatically efficacious or necessary as a means of salvation or blessing.
29. Affirmation of the sacraments as a true means of grace (not mere memorials) – signs and seals of the covenant of grace.
30. Believers' children are included in the covenant of grace today.
31. The mode of Baptism can include immersion or pouring.
32. Regulative principle of worship (whatever is not commanded is forbidden).

33. Elder-led church government (multiple elders, graded courts, no monarchical bishops).
34. Necessity of church discipline (censure).
35. Church government separate from, and independent of, civil government.

The Sacraments

The Sacrament of Baptism

These quotes from Douglas Wilson's book, MOTHER KIRK, best describe our doctrine on baptism.

"Baptism is the doorway of the visible Church. A man who has not been baptized in water is not yet a professing Christian. He may be regenerate - God knows - but he has not yet professed Christ in the way Christ instructed and required. Jesus said, in the Great Commission that the nations were to be discipled, and that the first step in doing this was to baptize them (Mt. 28:18-20). In short, the visible mark of a visible saint is water baptism. This is how Jesus told us to make disciples."

"A man who is baptized is a professing Christian. Even if he is unregenerate, he remains a professing Christian. Regardless of what he might say or do, until he is excommunicated or God removes him through death, he is part of the visible Church. The profession made through baptism is Christ's profession, the mark of Christ. Of course it is the duty of everyone who bears this mark to make the same profession with his life throughout the course of his life - to say amen to what Christ has said in the baptism."

"In the baptistic understanding of this, baptism is a profession of a profession. That is, a man has believed in Christ, and has consequently made a verbal profession of faith. He then seeks water baptism in order to point to the condition of his regenerate heart, which prompted him to make his verbal confession. Baptism is an arrow pointing in."

"But in the covenantal paedobaptist [infant baptism] view of baptism [which we believe in], water baptism points away to Christ, and not to the internal condition of the one being baptized. This is not because the internal condition is irrelevant - it is very important, but it is just not what baptism primarily signifies. To speak autobiographically for a moment, my baptism had nothing whatever to say about Douglas Wilson. My baptism spoke only of Jesus Christ. But because I bear this mark which speaks so loudly of Christ, I have an obligation to add my voice to the testimony, so that every fact may be confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses."

"In this view, baptism points authoritatively to Christ as the only salvation of sinners, and the fact that this marker was placed on a particular

individual places him under a covenantal obligation to say the same thing with his life that his baptism does. A baptized child, growing up in a covenantal home, is taught that his baptism confesses Christ - so must he. His baptism points to Christ - so must he. His baptism testifies faithfully to Christ - so must he. His baptism reflects the gospel - so must he."

The Mode of Baptism

"Baptism can lawfully be administered with various modes, but this does not mean that the Bible gives us no direction on the subject." "Contrary to what many assume, the most biblical mode of baptism is not immersion. Where mode is indicated by context, we have no instances of baptism being immersion in the Bible. That is, no narrative of a baptism describes it as an immersion, or in terms which require an immersion. Confronted with this, the response of many immersionists is that the word baptizo simply means "to immerse," and so we do not have to have contextual descriptions. Now if "John the Baptist" means "John the Immersionist" then the point is well taken." "The problem is that the claim is simply untrue. Many examples of baptism can be shown in the more biblical modes of sprinkling and pouring. We will not have to deal with this at length because the passages concerned are fairly straightforward. The only reason it presents any difficulty at all is that the force of ecclesiastical tradition is a powerful one."

"In the ninth chapter of Hebrews, the author is discussing the ceremonial washings of the Old Testament at some length. These washings are described throughout the Old Testament as sprinklings, and they are described in the same way in this section of Hebrews. These sprinklings are then called 'baptisms.' 'Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings [baptismois] and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation' (Heb 9:10).

"No Jew would have had any trouble recognizing a ceremonial washing, conducted by means of sprinkling, as a baptism. This is a very natural use of the term. And the imagery which points to the cleansing of the new covenant, and the giving of the Spirit, is fully adequate to the occasion."

For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart

and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God (Ezek 36:24-28).

"And so we see that sprinklings are baptisms - but so is pouring. The early Christians were baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Whenever the mode in which the Holy Spirit was given is described, it is consistently described as a pouring out, or as a descending. The disciples are not lowered into the 'water' of the Holy Spirit. Rather, the 'water' of the Spirit is poured out upon them. They are not placed in Him; He is placed on them. The evidence for this is overwhelming (Acts 2:3, 16-17,33; 10:44-45;11:15-16; Mt. 3:16-17; Jn. 1:32; Lk. 3:22; Isa. 44:3)."

"While the mode of baptism is not the most important thing about it, the image given in these scriptural modes is truly glorious."

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:5-6).

Infant Baptism (Paedobaptism)

The New Testament identifies baptism as the fulfillment of the Old Testament shadow of circumcision.

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses. (Col 2:11-12)

If Old Testament circumcision was done when the child was an infant, it follows that the New Testament fulfillment of that shadow should be done the same way. Just as circumcision did not save, neither does baptism. Just as it was possible to be circumcised in the flesh and not circumcised in the heart, so it is with baptism. It is the sign of the covenant just as circumcision

was. It points to Christ and our covenant with Him just as we should. Baptism is covenantal. For that reason, it is done by the faith of the parents in order to continue the generational succession of raising up a godly offspring that will eventually inherit the earth.

Since we do not believe in a half way covenant, only baptized believers and the baptized children of believers are to partake.

The Sacrament of Communion As stated in The Scots Confession

Among Reformed confessions, the Eucharistic teaching of the Scots Confession is "high" because it states that believers receive and absorb the true body of Christ as a gift.

The enabling power of this sacrament is neither the words and actions of the minister (as in Roman Catholicism) nor the recipients' faith (as with many Protestants), but the Holy Spirit:

"This union and conjunction we have with the body and blood of Christ Jesus in the right use of the sacraments is achieved by the Holy Spirit, who by true faith carries us above all things that are visible, corporal, and worldly, and offers us the body and blood of Christ Jesus as food..."

The sacrament mystically conveys to believers Christ in full. Real communion with Christ not only brings food for the soul, it also promises ultimate physical regeneration:

"We believe...that the faithful, in the right use of the Lord's table, eat the body and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus so that he remains in them and they in him; they are made flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone so that just as eternal God has given life and immortality to the flesh of Christ Jesus, which by nature was corruptible and mortal, so eating and drinking the flesh and blood of Christ Jesus does the same for us..."

Thus, contrary to some other Protestant teachings, the Eucharist is not just a memorial service:

"Therefore if anyone slanders us by saying that we hold the sacraments to be nothing more than symbols, they offend us and the truth."
(Article 21) CHRISTIAN HISTORY MAGAZINE ON JOHN KNOX

However, we do not believe the bread and wine are transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ. We do not believe in transubstantiation or in consubstantiation.

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION

“And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast of yourselves.” (Isaiah 61:4-6; KJV)

“Christian Reconstruction is a call to the Church to awaken to its biblical responsibility to subdue the earth for the glory of God. While holding to the priority of individual salvation, Christian Reconstruction also holds that cultural renewal is to be the necessary and expected outworking of the gospel as it progressively finds success in the lives and hearts of men. Christian Reconstruction therefore looks for and works for the rebuilding of the institutions of society according to a biblical blueprint.” (Reformation 1)

“Christian Reconstruction, unlike Christian “movements” in general, has no central director, no overall, tightly controlled strategy. What unites Reconstructionists is their commitment to certain distinctive biblical doctrines that are fundamental to the Christian faith and have been supported by the church for centuries. In particular, Reconstructionists espouse the following distinctives:

1. Regeneration – salvation by grace through faith – is man’s only hope both in this age and in the age to come. Only new men who reflect the image of God in Christ can bring about any significant social change since social change follows personal change, and personal change can only come through regeneration. God’s sovereignty as it relates to personal salvation and limited institutional authority is foundational for the salvation of man and the abolition of tyranny.
2. The continuing validity and applicability of the whole law of God, including, but not limited to, the Mosaic case laws is the standard by which individuals, families, churches, and civil governments should conduct their affairs.
3. A victorious view of the future progress of the kingdom of God prior to the return of Christ is foundational for the building of a Christian civilization.

4. Presuppositional apologetics as opposed to evidentialism establishes that God's Word is self-authenticating and is the judge of all other supposed authorities, human reason included.
5. A decentralized social order where civil government is only one legitimate government among many other governments, including family government and ecclesiastical (church) government, is the basis for a free and orderly society.

“One does not have to hold to all of these distinctives to be thought of as a Reconstructionist, although the belief that personal regeneration precedes family, church, civil, and societal regeneration is foundational to all theories of social reform. (The rejection of this premise was the fatal flaw among those who advocated a “social gospel.”) God has not prescribed either anarchy or revolution as ways to change our world. (This is the error of “liberation theology.”) (DeMar 81)

“As the informed Christian will quickly realize, each of the above distinctives has a great deal of biblical support as well as having formed the foundation of orthodox (conservative) Christianity for centuries. In a word, Christian Reconstructionists' distinctives are nothing new to the church...

In simple terms, however, a Reconstructionist is anyone who believes that the bible applies in some way to issues beyond personal salvation.” (DeMar 81,82)

The Five Points of Christian Reconstruction as commonly presented are: 1) Calvinistic Soteriology, 2) Covenant Theology, 3) Presuppositional Apologetics, 4) Postmillennialism, and 5) Theonomic Ethics.

STATEMENT OF FAITH – DISTINCTIVES

I. CALVINISM

“Reconstructionists are Calvinists, i.e., defenders of the doctrine of **predestination** by God. This is certainly no aberration of historic Christianity. Many of the greatest ministers and theologians of the Christian church have been Calvinists. Many of the greatest ministers and theologians of our own day are Calvinists.” (DeMar 148)

“The doctrine now known to us as ‘Calvinism’ was set forth very plainly in the writings of Augustine (354-430). It held sway over the church for

centuries until the church finally plummeted into apostasy, specifically because of the theological chain reaction set off by its rejection of Calvinism. Martin Luther (an Augustinian monk) and John Calvin revived the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and the particular biblical doctrine known as **predestination**. Luther with his *Bondage of the Will* (1525), and Calvin, with his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536) and his nearly complete commentaries on the Bible, gave the doctrine its fullest expression.”

“These men were not alone in their belief and application of this life-transforming doctrine. As Rev. D. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministries has said, this doctrine was held also by Melancthon, by Zwingli, by John Knox, and by Thomas Cranmer in England. Without exception, all of the Reformers of the Protestant Reformation professed the doctrine of **predestination** by God. ‘All Protestant churches which came into being out of the Reformation hold the doctrine in their creeds. The Presbyterians and the Reformed of Holland and Switzerland and German, Anglicans, the Huguenots, the Covenanters, the Puritans, the Pietists of Germany, the Pilgrims of America, were all firm believers in this great doctrine of **predestination**.’”

“It is no accident that it has been Calvinists who have developed a comprehensive social theory that places all men and institutions, including civil government, under the sovereign rule of God. Authority to rule is ministerial, derived from God and also limited by Him. The State’s right to exist is not based on the ‘will of the people’ but on the will of God (Romans 13:1-4).”

“Calvinists believe that:

‘the ultimate source of authority is not the state itself, as in Hegel and contemporary absolutist philosophers; nor in the people, as in modern democratic thought; nor in a classless society, as Marx taught; but in the will of the triune God. It is God who ordains the state, confers upon it its legitimate powers, and sets limits upon its actions. The state is not the source of law, nor of the concepts of right and wrong or of justice and equity.’”

“Calvinistic social theory had its greatest impact on the Western world: A limited State and a free people bound by the sovereign rule of God. Arminianism now predominates in the church. This too has social and political implications. If man is sovereign in salvation, which Arminianism

implies, since God cannot save until man exercises his will, then man is equally sovereign in the social and political spheres. To throw off Calvinism is to open the door to apostasy and tyranny.” (DeMar 149, 150)

STATEMENT OF FAITH – DISTINCTIVES

II. THEONOMY

The word theonomy means “God’s law.” This term has been used to designate those who believe that the law reflects the character of God, thus making its principles applicable to all men and societies. The following points represent the most commonly accepted principles of theonomy:

1. “Since the Fall, it has always been unlawful to use the law of God in hopes of establishing one’s own personal merit and justification, in contrast or complement of salvation by way of promise and faith; commitment to obedience is but the lifestyle of faith, a token of gratitude for God’s redeeming grace.”
2. “The word of the Lord is the sole, supreme, and unchallengeable standard for the actions and attributes of all men in all areas of life; this naturally includes God’s moral directives (law).”
3. “Our obligation to keep the law of God cannot be judged by any extra-scriptural standard, such as whether its specific requirements (when properly interpreted) are congenial to past traditions or modern feelings and practices.”
4. “We should presume that Old Testament standing laws¹ continue to be morally binding in the New Testament, unless they are rescinded or modified by further revelation.”
5. “In regard to the Old Testament law, the New Covenant surpasses the Old Covenant in glory, power, and finality (thus reinforcing former duties). The New Covenant also supercedes the Old Covenant shadow, thereby changing the application of sacrificial, purity, and “separation” principles, redefining the people of God, and altering the significance of the Promised Land.”

¹ “Standing Law,” is used here for policy directives applicable over time to classes of individuals (e.g., do not kill; children, obey your parents; merchants, have equal measures; magistrates, execute rapists), in contrast to particular directions for an individual (e.g., the order for Samuel to anoint David at a particular time and place) or positive commands for distinct incidents (e.g., God’s order for Israel to exterminate certain Canaanite tribes at a certain point in history).

6. "God's revealed standing laws are a reflection of His immutable moral character and, as such, are absolute in the sense of being non-arbitrary, objective, universal, and established in advance of particular circumstances (thus applicable to general types of moral situations)."
7. "Christian involvement in politics calls for recognition of God's transcendent, absolute, revealed law as a standard by which to judge all social codes."
8. "Civil magistrates in all ages and places are obligated to conduct their offices as ministers of God, avenging divine wrath against criminals and giving an account on the Final Day of their service before the King of kings, their Creator and Judge."
9. "The general continuity which we presume with respect to the moral standards of the Old Testament applies just as legitimately to matter of socio-political ethics as it does to personal, family, or ecclesiastical ethics."
10. "The civil precepts of the Old Testament (standing "judicial" laws) are a model of perfect social justice for all cultures, even in the punishment of criminals" (Bahnsen 345).

STATEMENT OF FAITH – DISTINCTIVES

III. PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS

As an important part of the teaching of Christian Reconstruction is presuppositionalism. This was largely brought forth as an apologetic method by Professor Cornelius Van Til. This is an important feature of Reconstructionism's worldview and method of defending the Christian faith.

"As presuppositionalists, Reconstructionists hold that there is no neutrality, that the only common ground between believer and unbeliever is that both know that God exists. The unbeliever, however, suppresses the truth that both know that God exists. The unbeliever, however, suppresses the truth of his knowledge of God in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18-32). He knows God and what God requires of him, but he chooses to reject God. The unbeliever, because he rejects both God and His Word, seeks to build a worldview independent of God. As the unbeliever becomes more consistent with His anti-God position, this worldview self-destructs. God is not mocked." (North 89)

"There is a tendency among evangelicals to assume (1) that there is an area of philosophical neutrality in the areas of law, education, politics, and

economics; (2) that knowledge is somehow “neutral,” (3) that facts can be interpreted without any prior presuppositions, and (4) that the facts “speak for themselves.” This is an untenable position. All facts are interpreted facts. It is a mistake, therefore, to believe that the world of unbelieving thought has anything to contribute to the Christian worldview when it is on unbelieving presuppositions.” (90)

1. “Presuppositionalism says that, “the given presuppositions of any philosophical position predetermine and govern much of its later outworkings...’ One must begin with the presupposition that there is a God and that men are responsible to him. Information about this God is presented in the inspired Scriptures. This was the beginning of Presuppositional apologetics with which Van Til’s name has been identified for the past half century.” (Roeberts 74)

2. “The doctrine of God is of fundamental importance to Presuppositional apologetics. Everything in this system is made to turn on the existence of God. In presuppositionalism God is the absolute, self-conscious Being who is the source of all finite being and knowledge. Consequently, the “ontological” Trinity is made the category of interpretation for all things and the final reference point in all human thinking. The most basic fact of all facts is the existence of the triune God. Thus presuppositionalism asserts that ‘belief in God is not merely as reasonable as other belief or even a little or infinitely more probably true than other belief; ...rather that unless you believe in God you can logically believe in nothing else.’ Theologically, presuppositionalism teaches that every doctrine is bound to be false if the first and basic doctrine of God is false... The God of whom Van Til speaks is not one whose existence can be proved by philosophical arguments. He is the self-contained and self-sufficient God who has revealed himself in Scripture.” (75)

3. Presuppositionalism says that “we must presuppose the triune God revealed in the Bible.” Presuppositionalism, “points out that since God is incomprehensible to us, our knowledge, though true, is partial and always finds itself involved in paradox or seeming contradiction. Our knowledge is analogical and therefore must be paradoxical. To God there is no mystery... reality is rationally controlled by God’s plan.” Presuppositionalism, “insists that all knowledge that any finite creature would have must rest upon the revelation of God. Thus the knowledge that we have of the simplest objects of the physical universe is based upon the revelational activity of God.” (77,78)

4. “Presuppositionalism stresses the fact that Scripture is the objective principle of knowledge for the Christian. This means that the truths of the Scriptures must be taken as the light in which all the facts of experience are to be interpreted. It follows necessarily that if Scripture holds such a crucial position, its pronouncements about reality cannot be subject to the scrutiny of reason, but must be taken on their own authority. Van Til is aware that such a position will be criticized as authoritarian, but he maintains that God’s revelation is always authoritarian. ‘All the objections that are brought against such a position spring, in the last analysis, from the assumption that the human person is ultimate and as such properly act as judge of all claims to authority that are made by anyone. But if man is not autonomous, then man should subordinate his reason to the Scriptures and seek in the light of it to interpret his experience.’” (78,79)

5. Presuppositionalism, “does have a lofty concept of reason, but it is careful to make reason function in total dependence on God. It teaches that reason is a gift given by God to man in order that he might order the revelation of God for himself. But it was never meant to function by itself without relationship to authoritative supernatural revelation... Non-Christian philosophy ought to admit that there is a dimension of reality that is beyond its reach and therefore it ought to listen to the voice of authority.” (78,79)

6. “As a presuppositionalist, Van Til starts with the presupposition of the existence of God. His doctrine of God requires that it be made foundational to everything else as a principle of explanation. ‘If God is self-explanatory, then he must be the final reference point in all human predication. He is like the sun from which all lights on earth derive their power of illumination.’ The alternative to this, according to Van Til, would be to make man the final reference point, in which case he need not subject his mind to the revelation of God as absolutely authoritative for him. All that would be necessary is for man to refer to God as an expert who has had greater experience than he; but he need not make all thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. Van Til maintains, therefore, that dependence can be the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian points of view are clearly pointed out. The most basic difference between the two systems is to be found in their presuppositions. On the assumption of the non-Christian (that is, of human ultimacy), his system is one in

which he himself occupies the place that God occupies in Christian theology.” (80)

7. “Van Til’s method of presenting Christianity is quite simple. Instead of trying to prove the truth of Christianity to the natural man, he assumes its truth at the outset and then challenges the presupposition of the natural man, pointing out that on his principles nothing is true, and nothing can be accounted for. Some critics view this approach as being too dogmatic. Van Til accepts this criticism because he believes God speaks to man in Scripture with absolute authority. ‘A Reformed method of apologetics must seek to vindicate the Reformed life and world view as Christianity come to its own... This implies a refusal to grant that any area or aspect of reality, any fact or any law of nature or of history can be correctly interpreted except it be seen in the light of the main doctrines of Christianity.’” (82)

STATEMENT OF FAITH – DISTINCTIVES

IV. POSTMILLENNIALISM

“Postmillennialism is that system of eschatology which understands the Messianic kingdom to have been founded upon the earth during the earthly ministry and through the redemptive labors of the Lord Jesus Christ in fulfillment of Old Testament prophetic expectation. The nature of that kingdom is essentially redemptive and spiritual and will exercise a transformational socio-cultural influence in history, as more and more people are converted to Christ. Postmillennialism confidently anticipates a time in earth’s history in which the gospel will have won the victory throughout the earth in fulfillment of the Great Commission. After an extended period of gospel prosperity, the history of fallen man will be drawn to a close by the personal, visible, bodily return of Jesus Christ (accompanied by a literal resurrection and a general judgment).

Descriptive Features:

1. The kingdom was prophesied in the Old Testament era and is the Messianic age.

2. Christ established the kingdom in its mustard seed form during His earthly ministry at His First Coming. It will develop gradualistically through time.²
3. Satan was bound by Christ in His earthly ministry and is progressively hindered as the gospel spreads.
4. The Great Tribulation occurred in the first century at the destruction of the Jewish Temple and Jerusalem, because of Israel's rejection of their Messiah, Jesus Christ.
5. The kingdom will grow and develop until eventually it exercises a dominant and universally gracious influence in a long era of righteousness, peace, and prosperity on the earth and in history.
6. Christ's great kingdom will eventually come to earth. His kingdom will come, and His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. He will then usher in the eternal order. Hence: the system is postmillennial.

Matthew Henry's Commentary on Matthew 24, says that the events of A.D. 70 were a type of the ultimate coming of Christ.

Representative Adherents:

“In the ancient church: Eusebius (A.D. 260-340) and Athanasius (A.D. 296-372). In the modern church: (traditional) J.A. Alexander, O.T. Allis, David Brown, Lorraine Boettner, John Calvin, Roderick Campbell, David Chilton, John Jefferson Davis, Jonathan Edwards, A.A. and Charles A. Hodge, Erroll Hulse, Marcellus Kik, John Murray, C.H. Spurgeon, B.B. Warfield; (covenantal or theonomic) Greg Bahnsen, Francis Nigel Lee, Gary North, R.J. Rushdoony – and the Westminster Confession of Faith and many of the Puritans.”

The Biblical and Theological Superiority of Postmillennialism

“There are two sets of primary considerations: biblical and theological. The former relates to the actual biblical texts; the latter relates to the implications of these texts.

Biblical Considerations:

² It does not develop uniformly, but gradualistically in spurts. In a sense, it is like seed, which is planted and grows and produces other seed (see Matt. 13:3-9, 23). Thus, we can expect it to grow in certain areas and perhaps eventually to die, but eventually to come back, because the productivity of seed involves its death and renewal (see: John 12:24; 1 Cor. 15:36). In addition, we may expect God's pruning from time to time (John 15:5-6).”(140)

1. Contrary to dispensationalism's view of the Church Age being unforeseen by the prophets of the Old Testament, see: Acts 2:16-17; 3:24-26; 15:14-18; Galatians 3:8.
2. Contrary to dispensationalism's view that the kingdom promises refer to national Israel rather than to the Church as the New Israel of God, see: Galatians 3:28-29; 6:16; Ephesians 2:12-22; Philippians 3:3; Romans 2:28-29; and 1 Peter 2:5-9.
3. Contrary to dispensationalism, Christ did establish His kingdom in the first century, see: Mark 1:15; 9:1; Luke 11:20; 17:20-21; John 18:33-37; Colossians 1:13.
4. Contrary to dispensationalism, Christ is now enthroned and ruling over His kingdom, see: Acts 2:29-35; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 1:3; 10:12-13; Revelation 1:5-6; 3:21.
5. Contrary to dispensationalism and historic premillennialism, Christ's kingdom is not an earthly-political kingdom, but a spiritual-redemptive kingdom,³ see: Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36-37
6. Contrary to dispensationalism and historic premillennialism, Satan was bound in the first century, see: Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8
7. Contrary to dispensationalism, historic premillennialism, and amillennialism, the Great Tribulation occurred in the first century (at the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem), see: Matthew 24:34 (cp. Matt. 24:2, 3, 15, 21); Revelation 1:1, 3, 9, 3:10 (cp. Revelation 7:14) "(141, 142)
8. "Contrary to dispensationalism, historic premillennialism, and amillennialism, the Church will not fail in its task of evangelizing the world, see: Matthew 13:31-31; 16:18; 28:18-20.
9. Contrary to dispensationalism, historic premillennialism, and amillennialism, Christ's redemptive labors will hold a universal sway in the world before the end of contemporary history, see: Matthew 13:31-32; John 1:29; 3:17; 4:42; 12:31-32; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Hebrews 1:3, 13; 10:12-13.
10. Contrary to dispensationalism and historic premillennialism, there is but one resurrection and one judgment, which began in A.D. 70 and will continue until the end of this world system, see: Daniel 12:2; Matthew 24:31-32; John 5:28-29; 6:39-40; 11:40; Acts 24:15.
11. Contrary to dispensationalism and historic premillennialism, when Christ comes, the history of fallen man will end, see 1 Corinthians 15:20-25; Matthew 13:29-30; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.

³ 20 "Although Christ's kingdom does have an earthly-political influence." (142)

Theological Considerations:

1. “In distinction of dispensationalism, historic premillennialism, and amillennialism, postmillennialism is optimistic in its historical outlook, see: Psalm 2; 72; Isaiah 2:1-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-9; Matthew 28:18-20.
2. In distinction to dispensationalism and historic premillennialism, post millennialism does not allow for a monstrous and absurd mixing of immortal, glorified and resurrected saints with mortal, unglorified men upon the earth for a 1000 year period of interaction.
3. In distinction to dispensationalism and historic premillennialism, in postmillennialism Christ will not undergo a, “second humiliation” on earth (or ever).
4. Contrary to dispensationalism, postmillennialism does not teach there is coming a return to, “weak and beggarly elements,” such as the temple, sacrifices, Jewish exaltation, and such, see: Galatians 4:9; Hebrews 9-10; 1 Peter 2:5-9; Ephesians 2:20-21; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:19ff.” (142, 143)

STATEMENT OF FAITH – DISTINCTIVES

V. COVENANTALISM

The usual idea of covenant is that it is a mutual compact or agreement between parties or persons, whereby each agrees to render some benefit to the other. Obviously, though a Biblical covenant has some of these characteristics, this definition lacks depth in describing in detail a Biblical covenant. When speaking of covenant between God and man, one would have to acknowledge that such a covenant is not one between equal parties, but that God as the greater is the author and instigator of the covenant, while man the sinner is the responder but benefactor of God’s grace in granting the covenant.

Perhaps one of the best definitions of a Biblical covenant is the one given by Palmer Robertson as he states it is a sovereignly administered bond-in-blood which relates God and man in a life and death relationship. The word, “bond” speaks of the commitment of people or person one to another as God and man relate and commit themselves one to another in a covenant. The phrase, “bond in blood” speaks of the ultimacy and seriousness of the relationship or commitment between the two parties. The phrase, “sovereignly administered” speaks of the covenant as being superintended by God and not by man as the covenant is initiated by God, as the terms are

set by God, and as man is not a negotiator in the arrangement, but the recipient of God's goodness and grace." (Belcher 16,17) The Covenant Structure

"Most Christians and Jews have heard the biblical word, "covenant." They regard themselves (and occasionally even each other) as covenant people. They are taught from their youth about God's covenant with Israel, and how this covenant extends (or does not) to the Christian church. Yet hardly anyone can define the word. If you go to a Christian or a Jew and ask him to outline the basic features of the biblical covenant, he will not be able to do it rapidly or perhaps even believably. Ask two Jews or two Christians to explain covenant, and compare their answers. The answers will not fit very well.

"For over four centuries, Calvinists have talked about the covenant. They are known as covenant theologians. The Puritans wrote seemingly endless numbers of books about it. The problem is, nobody until 1985 had ever been able to come up with "the" covenant model in the writings of Calvin, nor in the writings of all his followers. The Calvinists had always hung their theological hats on the covenant, yet they had never put down on paper precisely what it is, what it involves, and how it works – in the Bible or in church history.

The Five – Point Covenant Model

"In late 1985, Pastor Ray Sutton made an astounding discovery. He was thinking about biblical symbols, and he raised the question of two New Testament covenant symbols, baptism and communion. This raised the question of THE Old Testament's covenant symbols, circumcision and Passover. What did they have in common? Obviously, the covenant. But what, precisely, is the covenant? Is it the same in both Testaments (Covenants)?

"He began rereading some books by Calvinist theologian Meredith G. Kline. In several books (collections of essays), Kline mentioned the structure of the Book of Deuteronomy. He argued that the book's structure in fact parallels the ancient pagan world's special documents that are known as the suzerain (king-vassal) treaties." (North 53,54)

"That triggered something in Sutton's mind. Kline discusses the outline of these treaties in several places. In some places, he says they have five

sections; in other places, he indicates that they may have had six or even seven. It was all somewhat vague. So Sutton sat down with Deuteronomy to see what the structure is. He found five parts.

“Then he looked at other books of the Bible that are known to be divided into five parts: Psalms and Matthew. He believed that he found the same structure. Then he went to the other books, including some Pauline epistles. He found it there, too...

“Here, then, is the five-point structure of the biblical covenant, as is developed by Sutton in his excellent book, *That You May Prosper: Dominion by Covenant*.

1. Transcendence / presence of God
2. Hierarchy / authority / deliverance
3. Ethics / law / dominion
4. Oath / sanctions: blessings and cursings
5. Succession / inheritance / continuity

“The acronym is THEOS (Greek for God). This is the key that unlocks the structure of human government, and not just civil government. Here is the structure that Christians can use to analyze church, state, family, as well as all other non-covenantal but contractual institutions.

“Perhaps you can better understand its importance by considering the five basic question a person needs to ask before joining any institution:

1. Who is in charge here?
2. To whom do I report?
3. What are the rules?
4. What happens to me if I obey (disobey)?
5. Does this outfit have a future?

“God gives us the answers in His Bible. (1) He is in charge; there are no other gods before Him. (2) All men are to serve Him, worship Him, and rely on Him. Covenantally faithful people do this by becoming members of His church. (3) They show their loyalty by obeying His commandments. (4) If they do obey these commandments, He will (a) protect them and (b) dismay their enemies because they are also His enemies. (5) They and their spiritual heirs will inherit the earth. ‘His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth’ (Psalm 25:13). ‘For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth’ (Psalm 37:9).

‘For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off’ (Psalm 37:22).” (54,55)

A Comparison of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology

“Another way to sharpen one’s understanding of the individual convictions of dispensationalism and Covenant theology, as well as distinguish their beliefs, is to compare the two systems in some of their main tenets. Notice the following subjects as delineated in each of these systems of theology.” (Belcher 29)

I. God’s People

A. “Covenant Theology believes that God has one people, the church, with two manifestations of it, one in the Old Testament and other in the New Testament. What God has been doing since the fall of man concerns the calling out of a people to be His own. Thus the saints of God of the Old and New Testament eras compose the one body of Christ.

B. “Dispensationalism postulates that God has two peoples – Israel, the Old Testament people of God (God’s earthly people), and the Church, the New Testament people of God (His heavenly people) – with a strong antithesis between the two. Never do the two meet as far as equaling each other or including the one in the other. (Belcher 29,30)

II. God’s Plan for His People

A. “Covenant Theology states that since God has one people, the Church, He also has one plan in all the ages since the fall of Adam – to call out this one people into one body in both the Old Testament and the New Testament ages.

B. “Dispensationalism believes that since God has two peoples, Israel and the Church. He also has two plans – a separate plan for each of these two distinct peoples. For Israel His plan is the kingdom, which is yet to come, in light of Israel’s rejection of the kingdom at Christ’s coming. Concerning the Church, which is only present on earth during the Church age (which is a parenthetical period until God gets back to Israel and the Kingdom), God’s plan is to call out a heavenly people for Himself from the New Testament era (30)

III. God’s Plan of Salvation

A. "Covenant Theology believes that God has had one plan of salvation for His one people during the outworking of His one plan since the fall of Adam. That plan of salvation is a plan of grace, in that each covenant is an outworking of the everlasting covenant of grace. The content of faith of both testaments has been the Lord Jesus Christ, though obviously, the New Testament era has a deeper concept and understanding in its content of faith concerning Christ.

B. Dispensationalism has been in some controversy over the years as to whether it believes in one plan of salvation or two. All modern dispensationalists would argue for one plan of salvation (salvation by faith), yet some, like Charles Ryrie have argued for a salvation by faith, yet meaning by such a statement a salvation by faith in God, without any content of Christ.

"The controversy over whether dispensationalism has held to two plans of salvation or one may well go back to statements made by early dispensationalists. The first edition of the Scofield Reference Bible states: 'As a dispensation, grace begins with death and resurrection of Christ. The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation but acceptance or rejection of Christ.' (Belcher, 30,31)

IV. The Place of Eternal Destiny for God's People

A. "Covenant Theology believes that since God has one people and one plan for these people and one plan of salvation concerning the redemption of this people, that God also has one place in eternity for them. That place in eternity and for eternity will be in His presence for all those who make up the one body of Christ.

B. "Dispensationalism has not been in agreement concerning the eternal state of the two people of God. Some dispensationalist would hold that the church will sit with Christ the King on His throne in the New Jerusalem as He rules over the nations of mankind, while Israel will continue as head of the nations of earth. Thus the distinctiveness of the two peoples continuing throughout eternity is the conviction in one way or another of most dispensationalists. (Belcher 32,33)

V. The Birth of the Church

A. Covenant Theology holds that the Church existed prior to the New Testament era, even back to the Old Testament period, and included all the redeemed people of God since the fall of Adam. Certainly, this view would agree, there are two testaments, but not two peoples of God. There are two different sets of ordinances for the two

testaments, but not two peoples of God. There are two different sets of ordinances for the two testaments for the local manifestation of the body of Christ, but there is still only one body. What took place on the day of Pentecost was not the birth of the Church as the body of Christ, but the empowerment of the New Testament manifestation of the body of Christ.

B. Dispensationalism believes that the Church was born on the day of Pentecost, and that it did not exist before that point of time in history. The body of Christ is strictly New Testament and not to be found in the Old Testament. The Old Testament saints do not make up or are part of the body of Christ. (33)

VI. The Purpose of Christ's First Coming

A. "Covenant Theology states that the purpose of Christ's first coming was to establish the new Israel, that is, the New Testament era or New Testament manifestation of the Church. Actually, this was a continuation of God's past plan with a definite historical change as the Church was now related to God in a new and better covenant, yet which was still a manifestation of the Covenant of Grace. The kingdom, which He preached, was not the offer of an earthly kingdom, but the authority of the King over the life of the one who would accept Him. Thus, the kingdom Christ spoke of and offered was a present, spiritual, invisible kingdom and not an earthly and visible one.

B. "Dispensationalism believes that the purpose of Christ's first coming was to establish an earthly kingdom in fulfillment of the Old Testament promises to Israel. Christ came forth preaching and offering the kingdom to the Jews, and had the Jews accepted His offer, an earthly, visible kingdom would have been immediately established. (Belcher 34)

VII. The Postponement of the Kingdom

A. Covenant Theology has no concept of a postponed kingdom because it does not believe Christ offered the Jews a literal and visible kingdom at His first coming. (34)

B. Dispensationalism believes that the kingdom of Christ offered to the Jews at His first coming has been postponed until the millennium because of the Jews rejection of the King. That is to say, when God's first plan, an earthly kingdom for the Jews, was rejected, God moved to put plan one (the kingdom) in temporary abeyance, while at the same time He began the unfolding of plan two (the Church). The

church is only a parenthetical period until God can get back to plan one, the kingdom. Therefore before God returns to unfurl plan one again, plan two must be brought to a close by the rapture of the Church from the earth. The rapture will be followed by a tribulation period (thus the church's rapture is a pre-tribulation rapture), which will bring judgment on a Christ-rejecting Gentile world and the purification of His people, the nation of Israel. (34,35)

VIII. The Church as the Work of God

- A. "Covenant Theology believes the calling out of an elect people, that is, the formation of ekklesia (church), has always been God's primary work...
- B. B. "Dispensationalism, as it has already been stated, sees the church as the secondary work of God. Hypothetically, if there had been no rejection of the kingdom of Israel, there would have been no Church. And before God gets back to that primary work of a kingdom for Israel, the secondary work must come to an end, and it does with the rapture of the Church at the beginning of the tribulation period. (35,36)

IX. The Future Coming of Christ

- A. "Covenant Theology views the coming of Christ as the culmination of God's one total plan – the calling out of a people for Himself based on His everlasting covenant of grace. Postmillennial covenantalism believes His coming leads immediately to the final judgment and the eternal state.
- B. "Dispensationalism sees the second coming of Christ fulfilling a manifold purpose. It consists of His coming for His heavenly people, the Church at the rapture, and it also consists of His coming in power and great glory to bring final judgment on the Gentile, Christ-rejecting nations. The two comings are separated by a tribulation period where God purifies His people, the Jews, and begins His judgment on the nations. The Second Coming in power and great glory will be followed by the millennial period, which will then lead to the final judgment of all men and then the eternal state." (Belcher 37,38)

Statement of Faith – Preference

This section of the statements of faith is to help clarify areas which we believe fall in the realm of Christian liberty. There are some teachings which other churches place more emphasis than we do and it is also our desire to point out those distinctives. Once again, we present these hypothetical questions and answers in an effort to be as open and forthright as possible in the way that we desire to practice our faith. Please keep in mind that the answers to these hypothetical questions are from the leadership and are not necessarily everyone's position.

1. Are you charismatic and is this congregation part of the charismatic movement?

The answer to both of these questions is largely a matter of perspective. We prefer to identify ourselves as a Reformed congregation because it is the Reformed Faith that we teach and preach here. We believe that the charismatic movement was a prayer group movement that ended sometime in the 1980's. The people who were part of the charismatic movement have filtered back into the mainline denominations or joined on of the many independent neo-pentecostal churches that surfaced since that time.

Because of the history that the leadership of this church has had in our city, we will be considered by some to be "charismatic." Also, we continue to enjoy expressive and progressive forms of worship when we meet. We also believe that spiritual gifts continue unto the end of the age and desire that the Lord move in our midst. Some will consider this to be "charismatic." We consider these things to be biblical.

While appreciating the work and efforts of many who do consider themselves "charismatic," we do not have the same emphasis and worldview that would generally be considered "charismatic."

2. What do you believe about being filled with the Holy Spirit? We believe that every believer should seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit every day. Being under the daily control of the Holy Spirit is the goal of every true Christian and will manifest itself in obedience to God's Word.

3. Do you believe in the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit?"

Once again, this depends on what is meant by the use of this phrase. If the question is asking if we believe in the supernatural power of God working in believers today, the answer is yes. If the question refers to a second blessing theology, the answer is no. The classic Pentecostal teaching is that there is a crisis experience which must be sought subsequent to salvation, manifested by speaking in tongues.

We believe that Christians have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus and that the Christian life is a walk which progressively appropriates these blessings. The main problem with the, “second blessing” theology is that it implies that the Christian life is completed by the power of one crisis experience. In fact, there are many fillings of the Holy Spirit we will need along with an active obedience to God’s Word if we are to mature and become vessels fit for His use.

4. What is the sign of being filled with the Spirit?

We believe that there are many signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit. The primary ones are obedience and love for the Word of God. The scripture also says some prophesied (Acts 19:6), others spoke with tongues (Acts 2:4), some were filled with boldness (Acts 4:31) while others sang psalms and hymns (Ephesians 5:18,19). The Bible specifically tells us that the apostles were filled with power to witness for Christ when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:8). Rather than looking for a single sign, we should look for the many signs of being filled with the Spirit.

5. What should I do if I want to manifest a spiritual gift?

We believe that, “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (I Corinthians 14:32). Any gift of the spirit is subject to the control of the believer. The scripture also says that all things are to be done decently and in order (I Corinthians 14:40). Therefore, we believe it is best for someone desiring to manifest a spiritual gift or to make any public expression in a meeting to check with the leadership to see if it is in order. A word given or gift manifested by an individual without the approval of the leadership constitutes the usurping of governmental authority. God will work through the authority that He Himself has established.

6. What do you believe about prophecy?

We believe that the New Testament prophetic gift is a word of exhortation, edification, or comfort (I Corinthians 14:3). To prophesy does not make one a prophet, nor is the New Testament prophet equal to the Old Testament prophet. Essentially, the twelve apostles fulfilled in a New Testament way what the Old Testament prophets did; that is, to give the word of the Lord under the full inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Our definition of a prophecy is to speak human words to report something God brings to mind. This is the reason prophecies are to be judged. This is also the reason that we generally disapprove of prophetic utterance being made in the first person.

7. Do you allow banners and dancing in worship?

We believe that worship is an event which requires us to use every part of our being in the exaltation of God. The scriptures speak about the use of banners and the dance in worship. The history of God's people is full of a rich tradition of expressing worship to God with a visual emphasis (banners) as well as a dramatic or physical emphasis (dance). The important thing to remember is that worship is for God, not man and it is He whom we seek to please in all that we say and do.

8. What do you believe about head coverings?

The concept of head covering is one that has undergone much debate over the years. We feel that the scripture's reference to head covering is too vague to impose a uniform rule on all women. Therefore, we leave this as a matter of Christian liberty and request that people allow those with differing views to follow the dictates of their own consciences without trying to impose our personally held views on one another. The key is for us all to respect the personal convictions of others on this matter.

9. Do I have to agree with everything in this manual in order to be a member here?

No, we do not ask for a uniform conformity to the doctrines stated in this publication. We know that what is expressed on these pages are the beliefs of many of our members. However, we ask that those who are yet searching for greater understanding have an open mind and search the Word of God for the truth. It is required of everyone who fellowships with us to maintain a spirit of unity and not to openly or actively oppose the teachings of our church while with us. If there are things you do not agree with, the leadership is open to helping to clarify with you any problem areas. It is our prayer that although no one can agree with everything, that each of you will find enough areas of agreement that can form the ground upon which you grow and experience the richness of our Lord Jesus Christ in this place.

Local Church Government – Part I

Different Forms of Church Government

By Dr. Roy Harthern

I. Episcopal

A. Practiced by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Church of God, etc.

B. So called because it includes Bishops and the Greek word for “Bishop” is “EPISKOPOS.” The word “EPISKOPOS” gives us the word “Episcopal.” C. There are other governing agencies besides Bishops, but by and large Bishops are the final authority.

D. Some believe that this form of government grew out of a desire to re-establish Apostolic authority in the church.

II. Presbyterian

A. Authority is vested in a Presbytery which comes from the Greek word “PRESBUTEROS,” meaning “Elder.”

B. Elders govern the church. This plurality of Elders comes together to form a “session.” (Session – the Latin word for “seating”.)

III. Congregational

A. Practiced by Baptists, Assemblies of God, Church of Christ, Congregational Church, etc.

B. This form of government asserts that the people should be the final authority in the church and everything is done by democratic vote.

C. This type of government was influenced a few hundred years ago by the emergence of the democracies and the democratic ideals in the western world.

IV. Independent

A. In some independent churches the pastor is the sole authority and even the property may be held in a closed corporation by his family.

B. Some independent churches have deacons but the pastor is usually a strong leader and his influence determines the policies of government for the most part.

V. The Organizational, Ruling, Headship of Christ over the Church by J. Garcia

A. Church of the King recognizes good in all of the forms of government mentioned and has striven to incorporate various aspects of each in a

Biblical form of church government. We believe Scripture endorses various applications of each form of government depending on the life and maturity of the congregation.

B. “In the purest sense of the word, the church should be a Monarchy, a Theocracy, and a Christocracy with Jesus Christ as its King. He is the organizational head of the church, governing and regulating it subjectively by the Word of God. In the church, Christ’s word is law. Only Christ, the king of the church, has jurisdiction in and over his church. No other person or institution, particularly the state, has the right of jurisdiction over Christ’s church. He bears absolute and total government, Matthew 28:18. God has established him as the only king and lawgiver on his ‘holy hill of Zion,’ Psalm 2:6. Church members are to submit to his headship in everything, Ephesians 5:23, 24. ‘The Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of his Church, has therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.’ (Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter XXX)” (Murray 45)

C. Church of the King has a two-pronged approach to leadership. These are ministry and government. On the ministry side, we have the pastor-teachers. On the government side, we have elders, with one elder acting as the president of this college.

D. Church of the King has an elder-led church government. These elders, equal in authority, form the governing body of the church. They will be multiple in number with no special restrictions regarding the number of elders which are to serve at one time.

E. The men serving the congregation in these capacities may serve on either the ministry or government side. They may also serve in both capacities depending on their gifting and calling in God.

Local Church Government – Part II

Christ and Delegated Authority by Dr. Roy Harthern

I. Christ is the Head of His Church

A. He is building the church (Matt. 16:18)

B. He has all authority (Matt. 28:18).

C. He is the head of the church (Eph. 1:20-22; 4:15; 5:23)

II. Christ governs His Church through delegated authority

A. The Father was represented by Christ who ministered under the Father's authority; Christ was represented by His disciples who ministered under the authority of Christ and the Father (Matt. 10:40 and Luke 10:16).

B. To receive the disciples was to receive Christ and the Father and to reject Christ's disciples was to reject both Christ and the Father. (Matt 10:40 and Luke 10:16).

C. In John 13:20, Christ expanded this truth to include "whomsoever I send."

D. Thus, our attitude towards those whom Christ appoints as His delegated authority in church government is the outward and visible expression of our attitude towards Christ and the Father.

III. Those appointed by Christ as His delegated authority

A. The ministries given by Christ to His church are: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastor-Teachers (Eph. 4:11).

B. Their function is to equip the believers to perform the job God calls them to do so that the Body of Christ can be built up – both spiritually and numerically (Eph. 4:12-16).

Local Church Government – Part III

Elders are Responsible to Govern the Local Church

by Dr. Roy Harthern

I. Five Titles used in the KJV referring to the same office.

A. Elder – "Presbuteros"

B. Bishop or Overseer – "Episkopos"

C. Shepherd or Pastor – "Poimen"

II. Compare the following scriptures:

A. Acts 20:17 – Paul calls the ELDERS together... in verse 28 he says to the Elders, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you "OVERSEER (OR BISHOPS)," to "FEED (OR SHEPHERD/PASTOR)the church of God." Thus, the Elders were Bishops or Overseers whose responsibility was to Shepherd or Pastor the flock.

B. Titus 1:5 – Paul instructs the ELDERS and in verse 7 Paul describes the qualifications of an Elder and uses the word "BISHOP." Thus, Paul uses ELDER and BISHOP interchangeably to refer to the same office.

C. 1 Peter 5:1-5 – Peter writes, "the ELDERS which are among you I exhort, who am also an Elder (Literally a "co-Elder") ...

FEED(SHEPHERD OR PASTOR)the flock of God taking the OVERSIGHT(be its BISHOP).

D. The above Scriptures prove that ELDERS were also BISHOPS (OVERSEERS) responsible to SHEPHERD(PASTOR)the flock (CONGREGATION).

III. The Ministry of an Elder is to Rule and to Teach.

A. Teaching is not necessarily “pulpit teaching” but could include personal counseling from the Word and teaching in a small group setting.

B. 1 Tim. 5:17 – Elders are to RULEand “labor in the Word and doctrine” (TEACH).

C. Heb. 13:7 – Elders are to “have the RULEover you and have spoken unto you the Word of God” (TEACH).

D. 1 Thess. 5:12 – “...know them which labor among you and ARE OVER you in the Lord (RULE)and admonish you (TEACH).”

E. 1 Tim. 3:2 – “TEACH”...VERSE 5 “RULE.”

IV. The Meaning of “Ruling” (3 Greek words translated “to rule” in KJV)

A. “Hegeomai” – “to lead” as a shepherd leads his sheep or as a general leads his army.

1. Heb. 13:7 – “remember them that have the RULE over you...”

2. Heb. 13:7 – “obey them that have the RULE over you and submit yourself...”

3. Heb. 13:24 – “salute them that have the RULE over you...”

4. This word, “RULE” which applies to the Elders governing the church is the same word used of Jesus in Matt. 2:6 where it speaks of Him as a “GOVERNOR.”

B. “Poimaino” – “to shepherd” and is translated “to FEEDand “to RULE.”

1. In Matt. 2:6 the word is translated RULEwhen it refers to Christ as “Governor that shall RULEmy people, Israel.”

2. John 21:16 – “FEEDmy sheep...”

3. Acts 20:28 – “FEEDthe church of God...”

4. 1 Pet. 5:2 – “FEEDthe flock of God...”

5. Thus, “to shepherd” include both FEEDING(TEACHING)and RULINGwhich agrees with No. 3 above.

C. “Proistemi” – “to be set over” or “at the head of”

1. 1 Thess. 5:12 – “...know them which labor among you, and ARE OVER you in the Lord, and admonish you.”
2. Rom. 12:8 – he that “RULETH” with diligence...”
3. 1 Tim. 3:4,5 – the word “RULE” is used to suggest the relationship between the Elders RULING in the church and a father RULING in the home.
4. 1 Tim 5:17 – “let the Elders that RULE well be considered worthy of double honor (honorarium), especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine.”

Local Church Government – Part IV

The Three Categories Making up a Total Local Church by Dr. Roy Harthern

I. Bishops

- A. These would also be called Overseers, Pastors, Shepherds or Elders (Part III, Numbers 1 & 2)
- B. They would be responsible for governmental oversight of the church.

II. Deacons

- A. Deacons were elected to serve the church.
- B. The word deacon means “servant.”

III. Saints or Believers

- A. The believers make up the congregation.
- B. Believers should obviously know the Elders who “are over you” (1 Thess. 5:12) in the church. There should be a personal relationship between the Elders and the believers and because of the growth and size of the New Testament churches, not all believers would have the same personal relationship with every Elder in the local church.

Local Church Government – Part V

Elders Must Govern in Plurality by Dr. Roy Harthern

I. Scriptures to support plurality of Elders:

- A. Acts 14:23 – “they had ordained them Elders (plural) in every church (singular)”

- B. Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23 – in every case Elders are referred to in the plural while the church in Jerusalem is referred to in the singular.
- C. James 5:14 – “...call for the Elders (plural) of the church (singular).
- D. Note the plurality of leadership in the following scriptures: I Thess. 5:12; I Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17; Phillipians 1:1.
- E. Nowhere in the New Testament is there any reference to one pastor (singular) of a local church.

II. Elders must govern in plurality but also act in unity.

- A. Consider the example of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Godhead governs the universe in plurality but acts in absolute unity.
- B. In Acts 13:1-4, the five Elders (prophets and teachers) were so related to the Lord and to one another that when, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, they fasted prayed and laid hands on Barnabas and Paul to send them on their missionary journey it says, “being sent forth by the Holy Ghost...” (verse 4)
- C. Each ruling Elder must be mutually submitted to the will and purpose of the whole group.
- D. Consider the benefits of Elders in plurality yet in unity:
 1. It promotes mutual relationships.
 2. It encourages mutual submission.
 3. It provides the discipline, correction and counsel necessary for every leader (checks and balances).
 4. It develops spiritual maturity in each leader as he submits his will at times to the will of the whole group.
 5. Unity creates the spiritual atmosphere where God can bless the leaders and the whole body. (Psalm 133).
 6. It develops a spiritual relationship among leaders, which the Holy Spirit can use to give birth to guidance, revelation, ministry, etc.
 7. It prevents an Elder from abusing his authority.
- E. In Acts 15, the Elders (plural) in the church in Jerusalem were in such total unity (after “much disputing”), (verse 6), that it says, “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us...” (verse 28).

III. Plurality – Unity and “Headship”

- A. In the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is not only plurality and unity but the Godhead operates on the concept of “Headship.”

1. There is equality between the Father and the Son (John 5:17-18; Phil 2:6) yet the Son recognizes the authority and the “headship” of the Father (1 Cor. 11:3).
 2. In this sense, Christ is equal to the Father yet voluntarily submits to that authority and “headship.”
- B. Just as in the Godhead, the plurality of Elders in the local church must recognize that one Elder is raised up by the Holy Spirit to be a “leader among equals.”
- C. The one Elder given this position of leadership must never seek to impose his will on the other Elders. Submission is always given voluntarily otherwise it becomes domination.
- D. In Rom. 12:6-8, Paul lists several “gifts” (charismata) among which he includes, “...he that RULETH let him do it with diligence...” The Holy Spirit imparts this “charisma” for ruling. This would be a special gift for administration and direction among the collective Eldership.
- E. With this special “charisma” the Elder becomes the mouthpiece and the representative of the whole group of leaders.
- F. Peter was this leader in Acts 2:14, “Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said...”
- G. James was the one upon whom the “charisma” of leadership rested in Acts 15. He expressed the unanimous decision of the whole group (see verse 28).
- H. Only James was named with the other Elders in Jerusalem (Acts 21:18).
- I. In Rev. 1:4, 11; 2:1, John is told to write to the seven churches of Asia, but he writes to the “angel” (messenger) of the church. This was the Elder who was the spokesman and the representative for the group of collective leaders – Elders in each local church.
- J. While Israel had Elders, God recognized the leadership of Moses.
- K. While judges rule in Israel, God recognized Samuel’s leadership in Israel.
- L. Every local church must have a plurality of Elders acting in unity with one Elder recognized as having God’s anointing for leadership among the other Elders.

Local Church Government – Part VI
Qualifications for Elders
by Dr. Roy Harthern
(and amended by COTK McAllen)

I. A Submissive Attitude

- A. One who exercises authority must be “under authority” - Luke 7:7-8
- B. Submission is “humility expressed in love and service” – Phil. 2:5-11; John 13.
- C. Submission must be given voluntarily. Submission cannot be imposed otherwise it becomes domination and produces exploitation, resentment, and rebellion. – Luke 22:25-27
- D. Submission and service is God’s method of promotion. – Phil. 2:5-11; Matt. 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45
- E. An Elder must be submitted to the Lordship of Christ.
- F. An Elder must be submitted to his fellow Elders – I Pet. 5:5; Eph. 5:21
- G. An Elder must be submitted to the authority of the Word of God – 2 Tim. 3:16; 4:4; Isa. 8:20
- H. Submission is an inner attitude of spirit. This means that it is possible to obey without being submissive (the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:25-30 is an example). Obviously, it is possible to be submissive, yet not be able to obey in specific instances (See Act 4:19-20; 5:29).
- I. A submissive attitude and a willingness to be a servant keep a Christian from pride. Knowledge alone puffs up but love builds up – I Cor. 8:1.

II. Faithfulness

- A. In the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is not only plurality and unity but the Godhead operates on the concept of “Headship.”
 - 1. Faithfulness in little things qualifies one to be faithful in great things.
 - 2. Faithfulness in finances qualifies one to be faithful in spiritual riches.
 - 3. Faithfulness in another man’s ministry (where one is willing to serve another) qualifies one to have his own ministry.
- B. Matt. 20:26-27 – A servant’s attitude qualifies one to be great (a leader) and a willingness to be a slave qualifies one to be first in God’s kingdom.

III. Training

A. Training must first be done through discipleship. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you...” (Matt. 28:19-20)

B. Jesus trained His disciples not merely what to teach, but also how to teach. It was a training in “being,” “doing,” and “saying.” Acts 1:1 and Mark 6:30 teach that Jesus emphasized what He did as well as what He taught and the followers of Jesus reported what they did and what they taught them.

C. In the great commission, Jesus instructed His disciples to make disciples and teach them to do what he had taught them.

D. In looking at the example of Jesus we see the following steps:

1. He called them and taught them the principles of submission and by example and teaching emphasized the need to have a servant’s attitude.
2. His followers then worked with Him under His personal supervision.
3. He gave His followers assignments and they reported back to Him.
4. As Christ’s followers qualified in the areas outlined above, they became leaders in the church. Jesus called His followers “servants,” “friends,” and “brethren.”

5. Whatever formal training an Elder may have, the training and discipleship to build character, spiritual maturity, etc., and to learn all aspects of the ministry by practical experience under the influence of a godly and more experienced brother is invaluable.

E. Church of the King encourages everyone to pursue a disciplined course of study in the Reformed Faith. This course of study can be via church tutorials, independent reading, seminar education or extension classes through qualified institutions.

III. Other Spiritual Qualifications

A. 1 Tim. 3:1-7

1. Blameless
2. Husband of one wife
3. Vigilant
4. Sober
5. Good behavior
6. Given to hospitality
7. Apt to teach
8. Not given to wine
9. No striker - abusive
10. Not greedy of filthy lucre (money) - greedy

11. Patient
12. Not a brawler
13. Not covetous
14. His house must be in order
15. Not a novice
16. Have a good name in the community

B. Titus 1:5-9

1. Blameless
2. Husband of one wife
3. Home in order
4. A good steward
5. Not self-willed (submissive)
6. Not soon angry
7. Not given to wine
8. No striker - abusive
9. Not given to filthy lucre (money) – greedy
10. Hospitable
11. A lover of good men
12. Sober
13. Just
14. Holy
15. Temperate
16. Be able to teach the Word

IV. Qualifications are Safeguards

A. It is dangerous to promote any person too quickly without using qualifications as safeguards.

B. Even though a local church may have a biblical government, it will not be enough if the leaders do not measure up to the biblical standard of personal integrity and character.

C. It is absolutely imperative that men entering the ministry today plan to pursue a formal, disciplined, course of theological study in the Reformed Faith.

Local Church Government – Part VII
The Recognition and Appointment of Elders
by Dr. Roy Harthern
(and amended by COTK McAllen)

- I. An Elder is first called by the Holy Spirit
 - A. The apostle Paul was prepared for his ministry for several years before he was called specifically by the Holy Spirit – Acts 13:1-5.
 - B. Acts 20:28 – “...the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers...”
 - C. 1 Cor. 12:28 – “...and God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers...”
 - D. An Elder may be called by the Holy Spirit and God will place within his heart the desire for the ministry. However, no man should ever promote himself. Promotion comes from the Lord (Psalm 75:6-7), and, “a man’s gift makes room for him.” (Prov. 18:16)

- II. A potential Elder who is called to, and qualified for the ministry by the Holy Spirit will be recognized and approved by the Elders
 - A. Timothy was “well reported of by the brethren...” in his home church before he was invited to join the apostle Paul in his ministry.
 - B. Timothy was “ordained” to the ministry when the Presbytery (Board of Elders) laid hands on him (I Tim. 4:14). Thus, Timothy was recognized by the other Elders in his local church.
 - C. When Paul went to Jerusalem, he submitted to the Elders of the church and, “they perceived the grace that was given unto me...”
 - D. Before an Elder is appointed, the plurality of Elders should be in complete unity. The rule must always be, “it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us...”

- III. For an Elder to give effective leadership he must be recognized and accepted by the congregation.
 - A. While Elders are appointed by other Elders (not voted on by the congregation), it is necessary for each elder to be recognized and approved by the congregation with a 2/3 vote.
 - B. Believers must, “know them which are over you in the Lord...” – I Thes. 5:12. Believers are told to, “remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation...”- Heb. 13:7
 - C. Believers are told to, “obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give

account, that may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you..." – Heb 13:7

D. Believers are told to, "esteem them (Elders who are 'over you in the Lord') very highly in love for their work's sake..." – I Thess. 5:13

E. The above Scriptures make it necessary that there be a close relationship between the Elders and the members of the congregation. Obviously, there will be some personal relationships that will be closer than others. Not every Elder will be able to have a personal relationship with every believer but every Elder should have a personal relationship with some believers.

F. To receive "whomever I send" as Christ's delegated authority is to receive Christ and the Father. John 13:20

III. Safeguards to prevent an Elder from abusing his authority

A. Christ is the Head of the Church – Eph. 1:22

B. Promotion (and demotion) come from the Lord – Psalm 75:6-7

C. If an Elder refuses to submit to the Word of God and the counsel and discipline of his fellow Elders, he will be disciplined by the plurality of Elders and the congregation will be informed of their action. (Matt. 18:15-17)

D. If an Elder continues the abuse of authority, Christ will intervene in judgment and establish new leadership (see Revelation chapters 2 & 3).

E. Christ gives His sheep to His under-shepherds (Acts 20:28) and His under-shepherds must give an account to the Lord for the sheep whom He commits to their care. (Heb. 13:17). Christ is jealous over His sheep.

F. All elders are equal in authority – majority rule.

Local Church Government – Part VIII

The Recognition and Appointment of Deacons

The second distinct office God has established in His church is that of the deacon. Acts 6:1-7 describes the nature of a deacon's job. "When the spiritual leaders of the church were being distracted from their primary duties through various mundane concerns, their response was to delegate the responsibility to spiritual men - men who would serve the church as deacons. The work of the deacons involved the serving of tables (v. 2), which was a physical concern of the church at Jerusalem. " (MOTHER KIRK, p 184)

"The Bible contains clear teaching on the qualifications for this office as well. In 1 Timothy 3:8, we see there is some comparison to be made between the character of elders and deacons. In the earlier part of the chapter, Paul had outlined the character of a godly elder. Then, in verse eight, he turns to discuss the qualifications for the deacons, and he begins with a likewise. The moral qualifications of deacon and elder are consequently very similar. We may therefore assume that our previous discussion of the qualifications for elder applies in large part to deacons as well." (MOTHER KIRK, p 185)

“Some notable differences, however, should be marked. First, the deacon is not required to be able to teach the doctrines of the faith, although he is required to understand and hold to them (3:8). He must be sound in the faith, although he may not be gifted in teaching. Another interesting difference is the requirement that deacons be tested before they assume the office (v. 10). They are to go through some sort of probationary period. Paul also gives a requirement for the wives of deacons, while there is no such requirement for the wives of elders (v.11). Arguing by analogy, and on the strength of the likewise, we should expect the wives of elders to be like the wives of the deacons." (MOTHER KIRK, p 185)

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