

THE PRESBYTERIAN & REFORMED TRADITION

Reformed Tradition in Historical Context

- Children of God
- Children of Abraham (the Jews)
- Christians
- Roman Catholic Christians
- Protestant Christian
- Reformed Christians
- Presbyterians PC (USA)

The Protestant Reformation

- Reforming the Roman Catholic Church
- Martin Luther challenged the abuses of the church system
 - Indulgences—salvation by works
 - Scriptures interpreted only by clergy
- Church authority vs. Scriptural
- Return to Grace alone, Faith alone, Scripture alone

The Reformed Reformation

- Developed by Swiss reformers in the sixteenth century
- Ulrich Zwingli
- John Calvin (Frenchman who made his home in Geneva)
- Became alternative to Lutherans and Anabaptists

Major Beliefs of the Catholic Tradition

- One holy, catholic, and apostolic Church
- Recognition of canonical Scriptures
- Formation and adoption of the ecumenical creeds
- Nicene Creed—personhood of Jesus Christ and the reality of the Holy Spirit
- Apostles' Creed—One God in three persons (Trinity) and God as creator of heaven and earth

Major Beliefs of the Protestant Tradition

- God's grace in Jesus Christ is revealed in Scripture
- Grace alone—God's gift
- Faith alone—not our works
- Scripture alone—no other authority

Five Major Affirmations of the Reformed Faith

1. Election of God's people not only for salvation but also for service
2. Life together marked by disciplined concern for order in the church according to God's Word
3. Faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of the gifts of God's creation
4. Recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny
5. The people of God are called to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God

Six Central Beliefs of the Reformed Tradition

1. The Sovereignty of God
2. The Authority of Scripture
3. The Lordship of Jesus Christ
4. Justification by Faith
5. The Priesthood of All Believers
6. The Fellowship of the Church

THE PRESBYTERIAN & REFORMED TRADITION

Sovereignty of God

- There is no part of life that is separate from God
- Every human being at every moment has to do with the living God
- Human life is rooted in the will and intention of God
- The Glory of God and God's purposes in the world are more important than the salvation of one's own soul

The Authority of Scripture

- The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the only rule of faith and practice
- The Bible is to be interpreted in light of its witness to God's work of reconciliation in Christ (BoC 9.29)

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

- Christ alone is deserving of our allegiance and devotion
- The presence of God in Jesus Christ makes more sense out of life, and gives more meaning to life than any other revelation

Justification by Faith

- We are put right with God by grace through faith alone and not by any thing we are, believe, or do
- Note: the opposite of justification by faith takes two forms: *works righteousness* (where we earn our salvation by being good) and *beliefs righteousness* (where we earn our salvation by believing the right things)—both of which put the responsibility for salvation in humans, not God

The Priesthood of All Believers

- All persons have equal access to God
- No priest (minister) can answer for any human being
- Believers have a right and responsibility to answer for themselves and for their neighbors before God
- There is no qualitative distinction between clergy and lay, sacred and secular, Sunday Christianity and work-week life

The Fellowship of the Church

- You can't be a Christian by yourself; Christianity is corporate as well as personal
- Love of neighbor is the truest test of orthodoxy and doctrine

The Reformed Motto

Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda

- The Church reformed and always reforming
- Or, the Church reformed and always to be reformed

Comparison to Other Traditions

- Polity
 - Reformed: governance by clergy and elders in representative democracy
 - Episcopalian: hierarchical authority through bishops
 - Congregational : authority vested in individual congregations
- Lord's Supper
 - Reformed: bread and wine are unchanged, but Christ is truly present
 - Catholic: bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus

THE PRESBYTERIAN & REFORMED TRADITION

