

Reformed Theology Distinctives

Confessional Church

2 Timothy 4:3-4

³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Galatians 1:6

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Philippians 1:27

Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

Presbyterian Government

1 Peter 5:1-3

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Acts 15:22

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, with the following letter:

Infant Baptism

Romans 4:11

Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

Colossians 2:11-12

¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Acts 2:38-39

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Genesis 17:7, 12-13

⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you. ... ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, ¹³ both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised.

Predestination

John 15:16

You did not choose me, but I chose you.

Ephesians 1:4-6

He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

John 6:44

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

Notes

Introduction

- Reformed Theology = Reformation theology (John Calvin)
- two denominations direct descendants of John Calvin
 - Dutch Reformed and Presbyterians
- “Reformed Theology” is comprehensive system of doctrine
- 4 distinctives set apart from rest of Evangelicalism
 - (1) *What do we believe?* (2) *How church governed?*
 - (3) *Who is in the church?* (4) *How are we saved?*

(1) What do we believe? | Confessional Church

- Bible talks about true/false teaching, true/false gospel

How can we tell the difference?

- one answer: Bible
- problem: different opinions about Bible (to suit own passions)
- Problem of Subjectivity

Reformed answer: historic creeds and confessions

- objective standard (less subjectivity)
- communal standard – we join with Christians throughout time
- therefore, get out of our own narrow time perspective
- creates unity (Phil. 1)

Confessional Standards of PCA

- Westminster Confession of Faith
- Westminster Larger Catechism
- Westminster Shorter Catechism

(2) How is church governed? | Presbyterian Government

- three models: Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopalian
- Bible supports elder-rule (Presbyterian) – 1 Peter
- “shepherd” – leading, caring for sheep (“pastor” = shepherd)

- “oversight” – ruling over, managing, authority
- 3 warnings: do it willingly, not for selfish gain, not domineering
- Hebrews 3 – there are leaders and we must submit to them

Connectionalism (distinguished from Independency)

- church are connected to each other
- Acts 15, Council of Jerusalem: decision was binding to all churches

(3) Who is in the church? | Infant Baptism

Parallel between circumcision and baptism

- they both symbolize the same thing, one in OT and one in NT
- if you look at circumcision in OT, babies were circumcised

Baptist counter-argument: no, circumcision is ethnic marker

No, circumcision is symbol of salvation

- Romans 4 – seal of righteousness by faith

Colossians 2

- sacrament is outward sign of inward reality
- inward reality is salvation in Christ
- both circumcision and baptism are outward signs of same inward reality

Therefore, why would God command Abraham circumcise babies?

- do they have inward reality? no.
- faith of parents count for child (principle of representation)
- therefore, raise them up as believers (belong in church)

Is there a NT command to baptize babies? Yes!

- 4 household baptism
- Peter’s sermon (Acts 2)
- “promise” = Abrahamic Covenant
- three recipients: you, your children, and those far off

- echoes Genesis 17 exactly
- therefore, NT church is under the Abrahamic Covenant
- therefore, NT church includes children of believers

(4) How are we saved? | Predestination

- whose choice is ultimate in salvation? Ours or God's?
- John 15 – pretty clear
- Eph. 1 – before we even existed, God choose us
- John 6 – if we can't come unless God draws us, his choice is ultimate, not ours