

# THE REFORMED LIFE AND WORLD VIEW – WHAT IS IT?

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The Apostle Paul Thanked God for the Thessalonian Christians whose faith grew exceedingly in spite of all the persecutions and tribulations to which they were subjected (2 Thessalonians 1:3,4); and we thank God as we look back on the long line of those who have suffered for their faith (Revelation 2:10).

The Papacy has been one of the great instigators of persecution. We have only to consider the action in 1231 of Pope Gregory IX in conferring power over the Inquisition on the Dominican Order, which enabled them to initiate a campaign against the Albigenses, employing military force and lasting for twenty years, by which time they had been virtually wiped out.

The Papacy achieved overriding power from the days of Gregory VII (Hildebrand), through the days of Innocent III (1198–1216), till the time of Boniface VIII (1294–1303) who declared in his Bull, *Unam Sanctum*, "that for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pope is altogether necessary for salvation." During these centuries, when the Crusades were being fought (1096–1270), numerous doctrines completely at variance with the teaching of the Scriptures were imposed on the church. The more important were:

Celibacy imposed on priests and nuns.....	1079
Rosary introduced.....	1090
Sale of Indulgences commenced.....	1190
Doctrine of Transubstantiation adopted (Lateran Council).....	1215
Adoration of the Wafer.....	1220
Laity forbidden to read the Scriptures (Council of Toulouse).....	1229

After the death of Boniface, subsequent Popes were removed to Avignon under servitude to the French King, until 1378 when a Great schism scandalised the church with rival Popes at Rome and Avignon (1378–1417). Councils were summoned at Pisa (1409)

and subsequently at Constance (1414–1418), at which latter assembly John Hus was condemned to death and burnt.

These events undermined the authority of the Papacy and ultimately led to the Reformation of Luther and Calvin, when false doctrine was repudiated and there was a return to Reformed doctrine based on the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments – the Word of God.

It came to be recognised that the Word of God reveals a system of Truth, and that the Holy Spirit leads the Church of God – the company of the faithful called by God – into all Truth. This Truth, historically, is progressively set forth by the church in confessions of faith and doctrinal formulations. For this reason we reverence subordinate standards such as the Thirty-nine Articles, Westminster Confession, Canons of Dordt and others.

### Interpretation of the Word of God

The Word of God is to be interpreted, not in accordance with any human philosophy such as evolution, existentialism, naturalistic or other philosophic system, nor on the basis of human experience, nor yet on the basis of supposed scientific knowledge.

Rather it is to be interpreted by comparing Scripture with Scripture, in order to learn what man is to believe about *God*; the origin, purpose and destiny of human life; and the duty God requires of man.

### Teaching of the Word of God

Man was created in the *Divine image* and under *Divine law*. The *creation ordinance* or *cultural mandate* defined man's God-ordained task: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). A great disaster befell the human race when Satan tempted our first parents. They transgressed the commandment God had given them and *fell*, and the *fall of man* ruined the human race. The consequences of this have been seen in the whole of subsequent history. But God is Sovereign; He rules over all and He had already provided a Saviour.

The Work of Christ as our Redeemer is central to the whole record of the Scriptures. It was typified in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. Noah offered a burnt sacrifice to the *Lord* (Genesis 8:20); just as Abel had offered a sacrifice beforehand (Genesis 4:4) – an offering which must have been made in accordance with the Lord's command to Adam (Hebrews 11:4).

The sacrificial system revealed to Moses in the Passover and in

the construction of the tabernacle and the institution of its worship (Exodus chs. 13 and 25–30) typified the greatness of the sacrifice of Christ in all its manifold aspects. The same can be said of the later building of the temple by Solomon and the institution of its worship. All portray Redemption by the blood of Christ.

We are taught in Scripture of the work of the Holy Spirit, who gives new life to sinful men (Romans 8:9,14; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:11; 1 Peter 4:14). The work of Regeneration is the work of the Spirit.

Finally, we are taught that there will be a Day of Judgment, in which every man will give an account to God (1 Peter 4:5; Romans 14:12), and there will be a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Peter 3:13).

### **Basic Institutions Revealed in the Word of God**

Three basic institutions are revealed:

- a. the FAMILY, constituted in Adam and Eve.
- b. the STATE, constituted in the days of Noah on account of sin.
- c. the CHURCH, revived in Abraham and constituted by *Christ* and the Apostles.

Faith in the *Word of God* is reasonable. It is not a 'leap in the dark,' nor does it involve an abandonment of one's intellectual comprehension of the world – rather the reverse. It is reasonable to believe that such a good and wise Being would communicate with His intelligent creatures. Such a Being cannot be conceived as other than of infinite perfection, and it is reasonable to believe He would communicate infallibly. The Christian is conscious of his own sinfulness and finds it reasonable to believe that the discord and evil in the world is the result of the entry of sin – as revealed in the *Word of God*. He sees in that *Word*, commended to his heart and mind by the *Holy Spirit*, the only source of Light. Of course, there are mysteries that transcend human understanding, but how could it be otherwise?

The Christian welcomes all attempts to systematise human knowledge as being embraced in the God-ordained task defined in the creation ordinance. He therefore believes in research. Such research must be inspired by love for God's creation: "The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein" (Psalm 111:2). But he rejects research which involves cruelty to animals or which is outside the scope of the creation ordinance, such as research into manned space craft with the

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America, repealed those laws. But God is not mocked. One result is AIDS – spreading disease and death, not only amongst the sodomites, but inevitably further afield. Similar arguments might be made about abortion. The unborn are murdered and, with an ageing population, the politicians are now beginning to wonder who are going to support the elderly. And so we might go on – with unmarried mothers etc. But by now the bankruptcy of liberal humanism is surely becoming obvious, so doubtless the point is, or should be, taken. Unfortunately, unbelieving man is not yet prepared to go back and start unwinding all the evil notions in Church and State that have been imposed on us in the last hundred years.

Our position, then, as Christians is this: God exists. He has made a Revelation of Himself to us in Scripture. Inevitably unregenerate man, who is in rebellion against God, will reject that Revelation. *"The fool has said in his heart: There is no God."* But there is – and He has spoken. Our wisdom, then, is to live *"by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*

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### **HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY** *(Continued from page 1)*

Scripture comes to us with its command (NB. not an offer), "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). None can plead before God that he is not responsible for his actions because God is Sovereign. The command still comes with all its force to us today. He who does not repent and believe shall be damned but all those who do believe shall be saved (Mark 16:16). In the great Judgment Day Jesus Himself shall say so.

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### **REFORMED LIFE AND WORLD VIEW** *(Continued from p 9)*

objective of travelling to other planets.

The main message of the Gospel is summarised by the Apostle Paul: "GOD... now commandeth all men everywhere to REPENT: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30–31).

Salvation is to be found only in the *Lord Jesus Christ*: "...the FATHER sent the SON to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14), and it is He who will be the *Judge*: "The FATHER... hath committed all judgment unto the SON" (John 5:22).