

5th. The Federal Vision within the Conservative Reformed subculture in the United States

Page 11 on the article from the WTJ for discussion 11-28-10

Plan: finish this aside 12-5 (or 12-12); no Bible Study until Jan 2 when we take up the 6th commandment

Final assessments

Perhaps with oversimplification ourselves, we may be inclined to say that there are not three different schools of reformed thought, but healthy discussions of major issues and their implications within the reformed tradition from Calvin to the present. There has been and continues to be unity without uniformity within the tradition that emphasizes the gospel (of the sixty-six books alone) of the sovereign grace of God in the salvation of needy sinners (per the eternal covenant of redemption that underlies all of history) by faith (without works but for works defined by the Law). Regarding the nettlesome theme of the sacraments, we should emphasize the trunk of the tree from which different limbs and branches extend; we must aim for root to fruit consistency.

1A. Central reformed beliefs (essential tree trunks)

What are the trunk truths that are central and give a strong basis for unity? Let me state some in a brief and provisional list. Is there something else to add?

1. *Sola scriptura* (with open-minded humility as always relevant in all stages of our lives)
2. Salvation by Christ alone
3. Justification by faith alone
4. The *pactum salutis*
5. The doctrines of grace (the five points of Calvinism; the fifth includes “for law-works”)
6. The identification of covenant children in relation to Abraham’s children
7. The objective nature of the sacraments
8. The regulative principle for church worship: hence, simplicity of worship
9. Expository preaching, book by book, paragraph by paragraph thoughtfully

Cf. Coppes, *Are Five Points Enough? The Ten Points of Calvinism* (REF, 1980, 197 pp.), His 10 are:

1. Scripture - God’s clear and coherent speech
2. Sovereignty of God - Predestination & Providence
3. Covenantal structure of Scripture
4. Plan of salvation - sovereignly accomplished and applied
5. Worldview perspective - focused in worship and submission
6. Holiness
7. Church government - covenantal
8. Sacraments - covenant of Abraham & Christ; so, infant baptism and covenantal supper
9. Evangelism - depravity, repentance, holiness, church life
10. Worship

We get a “better” outline by combining topics that overlap. He then has three points:

1. Scripture
Clear, 1
Covenantal, 3
2. Sovereignty of God
Providence & Predestination, 2
Worldview perspective, 5
Plan of Salvation, 4
Holiness, 6 (perseverance)
Evangelism, 9
3. Church: Covenant Community
Government, 7
Sacraments, 8
Worship, 10

What is in his list but missing from our *ad hoc* list?

We could combine some things on our list too (overlap within a list is for emphasis on x)
Missing in our list is *explicit* reference to the sovereignty of God, predestination, providence
However, the five points express sovereignty in the plan of salvation
The *pactum salutis* involves us in predestination, providence, and in turn a worldview

Assessment

The overlap of lists is high (we are more “reformed” than not)

We overlap on the objective nature of the sacraments (not mere memorialism)

Coppes includes *infant baptism* as necessary: only then do you have *enough* to be reformed

He makes no comment on Paedocommunion, no comment on PCR versus regular preaching

He gives nothing substantive on expository preaching: *this is a major point for us!*

Q: what is the difference between PCR and regular expository preaching (Christ is central in both)?

Hint: characterize the sermon outline in each.