

Welcome to a Reformed Church

by Daniel R. Hyde

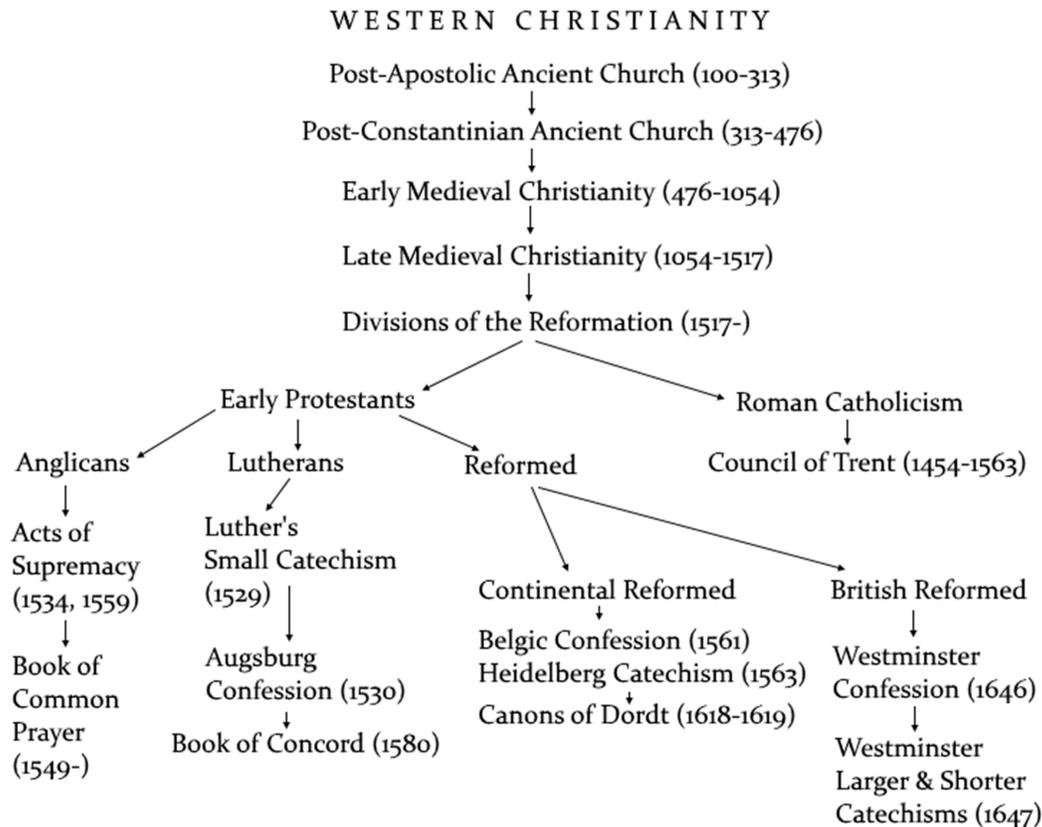
WEEK 1 | NOVEMBER 8, 2015

Overview: Foreword & Introduction

- A Reformed church is a catholic church:
 - “Since the time of the Reformation, Reformed churches, in line with John Calvin, have argued that Rome is schismatic and that confessional Protestants are the true catholics. Such Protestants endeavor to hold fast to the pattern of sound words that Christ, the only King and Head of the church, has given to the whole church through His apostles (2 Tim. 1:13). Rome has departed in fundamental ways from this pattern. The claim to catholicity, these Protestants maintain, is valid only when it is attached to the reality of apostolicity.” (xv)
- A Reformed church loves sound doctrine:
 - Doctrine is not treasured for its own sake, but rather as means by which we grow in love for God:
 - “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” (Titus 1.5)
 - Yet how can we have a ‘sincere’ faith unless we sincerely know who we trust?
 - “Theology is the doctrine or teaching of living to God” (xvi, citing William Ames)
 - “Man’s chief aim is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” (WSC 1 – *Modern English Draft*)
 - “This is why the life of Reformed churches is directed exclusively by the Bible – its study, reading, preaching, meditation, memorization, and application across the spectrum of life. The Bible guides and leads us by pointing us to the source, standard, and goal of all Christian living.” (xvi)
- A Reformed church has a serious view of worship:
 - “The criteria that are so often applied to the public worship of God – cultural relevancy, evangelistic appeal, or emotional satisfaction-all proceed from a mistaken premise. Biblical public worship does not find its justification in what is thought to please me or the people around me, but in what is known to please God, according to what God has authorized in the Bible.” (xvii)
 - *Revealed worship makes sense* – how else could creatures know how to relate to the Creator?
 - *Word-directed worship transforms us* – detaching us from self-seeking and making us God-centered.
- A Reformed church is historically rooted – we are Christians, then Protestants, then Reformed...

Chapter 1 – “Roots: Our History”

- “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” (George Santayana, 1863-1952)
- “To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child.” (Cicero, 106-43 BC)
- The danger of what C.S. Lewis called “chronological snobbery”:
 - “This “snobbery” presents us with very real dangers. Since we live in a time when history is easily forgotten at best or dismissed as irrelevant at worst, we need to heed the words of the Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana and the Roman philosopher Cicero, as quoted above. It is important for us to take these words to heart, for if we do not know our past, we will suffer its tragic mistakes again and again, remaining like little children forever.” (1)
 - What we must understand is that “Reformed churches did not come out of nowhere,” (2).
- Reformed churches are Christian churches – we embrace the great ecumenical creeds:
 - Apostles’ Creed (c. AD 100-700)
 - Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (AD 325, 381)
 - Definition of Chalcedon (AD 451) / Athanasian Creed (AD 500-800)
 - “These four great creeds defined ancient Christianity against various errors for the first one thousand years of the church’s existence until the rise of many more errors in the centuries just before the Protestant Reformation. Because Reformed churches believe these creeds, they are historical Christian churches.” (10)



- Reformed churches are Protestant churches:
 - Origin of the term: "German princes who supported Luther's ideas first used the term *protestant* at the Second Diet of Speyer (1529), a meeting between the Holy Roman emperor and his rulers. Some of these rulers issued a *protestatio* against the emperor, Charles V (1500-1558), because of their convictions against certain Roman Catholic teachings." (11)
 - "Reformed churches joined the Lutheran churches in protesting the Roman Catholic Church's false teachings. The main teachings to which these reform-minded groups objected were Rome's insistence that the Bible was only one authority among many, including tradition and the pope, and the teaching that sinners were saved from their sin and God's wrath by cooperating with God's grace in doing good works. The protestations of the Reformers were that Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*) was the ultimate authority in the church and that sinners are saved by God's grace alone (*sola gratia*), which is received through faith alone (*sola fide*), which is placed in Christ alone (*solus Christus*)." (11)
- Reformed churches are Reformed churches:
 - Definition: "As time passed during the Reformation, the Lutherans and the Reformed became distinct camps within Protestantism with distinct confessions. The Protestants who followed Luther's teachings were derided as 'Lutherans,' while the Protestants who differed from Luther in several ways were derided as 'Calvinists,' though they called themselves 'Reformed' Christians. This term, Reformed, was a shorthand way of saying, 'Churches that are reformed according to the Word of God.'" (12)
 - *Semper reformanda* (always reforming) meant that Reformed churches did not just seek to reform their understanding of salvation, but also of worship, the sacraments, and church government.
- Reformed churches cultivate spiritual stability through historical connectivity:
 - "Although the word catechism might sound 'catholic' to us, a catechism is simply a document that instructs in the basics of the Christian faith by using questions and answers; this is sometimes called the 'Socratic method' of instruction." (16)
 - "The churches of the Protestant Reformation known as Reformed churches have deep roots historically and theologically. These roots are the ancient Christian creeds and the Reformed confessions and catechisms. Because these creeds, confessions, and catechisms are based on the teachings of the Bible, Reformed churches have deep biblical roots, as well. These roots give stability to modern Christians who have become detached from history, and maturity to those who were once like children." (21-22)