



“Semper Reformanda”

Study 2: The Prophethood Of Christ (Rev. 2:12-29)

o The principle of “semper reformanda” requires that the church submit to Christ’s prophethood.

I. The significance of Christ’s prophethood.

1. Jesus Christ is the great prophet promised by God who would come to His people (Deut. 18:18 cf. John 1:45; 4:25; Acts 3:20-22).
 - A prophet reveals (forth-tells & foretells) God’s word (Deut. 18:18). In the OT, a prophecy that turned out to be false, or turned the people away from God, would require the prophet to be put to death (Deut. 18:20; 13:5).
 - Jesus Christ is Himself the incarnate Word, so that he who has seen Him has seen the Father (John 1:1-3; 14:7, 9). The risen Christ continues to strive with His people to bring them into closer conformity with His word (Eph. 5:25-27). In other words, He reveals God and His will to His people.
2. Prophethood is concerned with doctrine and the word of God. A church that submits to Christ’s headship will show submission to His word. There will be an appreciation of correct doctrine and the authority of Scripture, shown practically in three ways.
 - First, the teaching and preaching of God’s word will be central in the life of the church. The Roman Catholics would commonly say, “We are going to church for the mass,” while Protestants would say, “We are going to church to hear the word of God.”
 - Second, the church would want to sort out its doctrine of salvation, since this concerns the gospel, the core teaching of the Christian faith (1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 1:9). Following the Reformation of the 16th century, three views of the gospel emerged: Calvinism, Arminianism, and Amyraldianism. Which is the biblical view? Calvinism upholds the so-called Five Points of Calvinism, while fully-fledged Arminianism holds to the Five Points of Arminianism. Amyraldianism does not hold to “limited atonement”, claiming that “Christ’s death is sufficient for all, and efficient to some”.
 - Third, a good Confession of Faith would be accepted as the doctrinal basis of the church. Churches that trace their origin - historically or doctrinally - to the Reformation would hold to one of the Confessions that arose during or after the Reformation. These are “Reformed churches”, characterised by confessionalism (i.e. the esteem for, and use of, the Confession of Faith). Churches that arose after the Reformation tend to be content with a short Statement of Faith, of 10 to 20 articles, e.g the Methodist denominations, the Plymouth Brethren, and the Evangelical Free Churches.
3. In the early 20th century, Theological Liberalism developed within the Protestant ranks. Liberalism is Modernist in outlook - rejecting accepted ideas, and the miracles and

supernatural events of the Bible. Modernism relies on human ability, the rational faculty, and the scientific approach in the study of the Bible. It is claimed that the Bible is not infallible (incapable of error) and not inerrant (without errors).

- The Evangelicals, who were Conservative in outlook, united to counter the Liberals. They held that the Bible is infallible and inerrant as originally given, and has been preserved pure by God's providential care through the centuries. The copying errors in the process of transmission are so minimal that they do not affect the doctrine of the Bible.
 - : The characteristics of Evangelicals are adherence to the sole authority of Scripture, the gospel of justification by faith, and the belief in evangelism.
- Once Liberalism was contained, the Conservatives split into three camps: the Reformed, the Fundamentalists, and the Neo-evangelicals. By the end of the 20th century, another camp appeared, viz. Charismatism.
 - : The Reformed are characterised by their adherence to Reformed theology (the Five "solae"), covenant theology, confessionalism, the primacy of preaching, and traditional worship. It is not possible to be Reformed and non-cessationist or dispensationalist.
 - : The Fundamentalists are characterised by a tendency to be over-literal in their interpretation of Scripture, the practice of aggressive separation, holding tenaciously to dispensational premillennialism, and a lack of patience with those who use Bibles other than the KJV.
 - : The Neo-evangelicals are characterised by a tendency to be ecumenical-minded, placing emphasis on social concerns, being non-cessationist, and being open to contemporary worship. The Ecumenical movement emphasises organised visible unity between churches at the expense of truth.
 - : Charismatism began with the Pentecostal movement from the early 20th which merged with the Charismatic renewal movement of the 1960s. The Charismatic renewal movement emphasised the restoration of the extraordinary gifts and the subjective aspect of the Christian life. The charismatic renewal was largely welcomed by the Neo-evangelicals and the Roman Catholics. Excesses such as dancing, making sounds like animals, speaking in tongues, and prophecies were associated with the churches of the Vineyard Movement and John Wimber in the West, and the churches of the Full Gospel Assemblies and Paul Cho Yonggi (later changed to David Cho Yonggi) in the East. Historically speaking, the Charismatics are not Evangelical. In spirit and doctrine, they are not Conservative.

II. Its implications.

1. In practising selective fellowship, we want to avoid the extremes of laxity and rigidity. There are fundamentals of the faith over which we cannot compromise, while there are differences over non-essentials of the faith which we must tolerate (cf. Eph. 4:4-6; Heb. 6:1-3; Phil. 3:15-16). (We are not saying the so-called non-essentials are not important, but rather that they do not cause immediate harm to the faith. e.g. whether one is pre-millennial, post-millennial, or amillennial.)
- Arminianism is similar to Pelagianism, but they are not exactly the same. Pelagianism denies original sin and holds that the human will is capable of choosing between good and evil without special divine aid. Arminianism, as held by the Methodists and many other Evangelicals today, believe in total depravity but also "prevenient grace", i.e. divine grace that precedes human decision, and that Christ died for everyone to make salvation possible. They also uphold the Evangelical belief in justification by faith and the need to evangelise. Arminianism was rejected by the Synod of Dort but never condemned as heresy. It is an error concerning the *mechanism* of salvation, not the *manner/way* of salvation.

- Charismatism undermines the authority of Scripture by teaching the continuance of the sign gifts, including tongue-speaking and prophecy (2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4). It emphasises subjective feelings at the expense of correct doctrine. It focuses on the ministry of the Holy Spirit at the expense of the glory of Christ (cf. John 14:17; 16:13-15). Fellowship with Charismatic churches will not be possible.
 - We may have various degrees of fellowship with Fundamentalist and Neo-evangelical churches that are Arminian in soteriology, depending on how much other truths we share in common. It is difficult to have fellowship with Neo-evangelical churches that have adopted Charismatic beliefs and practices, or are involved in the modern Ecumenical movement.
 - Fellowship with Liberal churches is not possible. Liberals not only have a low view of Scripture, but also do not believe in an exclusive gospel and the need for evangelism.
2. Fellowship between Christians operate on the same basic principles - the more of truth we hold in common, the greater is the likelihood of fellowship; the more of love for the Lord shown by submission to His word, the greater is the likelihood of co-operation in gospel enterprises.
- It is possible to love doctrine, to be correct in doctrine, and yet lack submission to Christ as Prophet. Beware!
- = In the process of submission to Christ's prophethood, we keep in mind the admonition to "love the brotherhood (1 Pet. 2:17)".

Review Questions

1. What does the Old Testament reveal about Christ?
2. As prophet, what does Christ reveal to His people?
3. An appreciation of correct doctrine and the authority of the Bible will show itself in what three practical ways?
4. What does Modernism think of the Bible?
5. What do Evangelicals believe about the Bible and its preservation?
6. State the characteristics of the Reformed.
7. State the characteristics of the Fundamentalists.
8. State the characteristics of the Neo-evangelicals.
9. State the characteristics of the Charismatics.
10. Why is it not possible to have fellowship with Theological Liberals?

Assignment/Discussion

What difficulties do you foresee in our interaction with those who Fundamentalist, and those who are Neo-Evangelical? What difficulties might we encounter with those who are Reformed?

Memory passage (John 14:15-18)

15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

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