

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: Reformed from what?****Reformed from what? - posted by run2win, on: 2009/5/30 19:55**

Can someone clarify this for me? I need some solid answers--and please keep them as simple as possible.

I have had discussions with some believers who hold to Reformation theology. I know the history of the Reformation, generally, but my question is how it applies to basic Biblical theology today. Was this the reforming of the Catholic Church? How does this differ from Protestantism? Was the protestant movement more about the Anglican Church?

Anyway, I have noticed that a lot of Reformed theology followers and teachers quote heavily from the leaders of the Reformation (Luther and Calvin mostly), but also from Roman Catholics, most often Augustine.

This seems a little dangerous at times. Though they deny it, it almost appears that the writings of these men plus church tradition are weightier in the theology than they should be. Quotes from these men are woven into the fabric of teachings with almost equal weight with the Scriptures (this is how it appears to me, an outsider listening in; I'm not saying this is what they believe--just how it comes across).

Now, the emergent movement seems to exhibit a similar pattern. Has anyone heard of Phyllis Tickle? She and others in this movement claim that the emergence is the new reformation. This would be a reformation from Protestantism I guess. However, this movement looks back to the early Catholic church for its patterns--again, Why not the Bible? I guess monastic practices are a large part of this emergent movement, as well as the mystics and so forth--all stuff from before the Reformation. Yet there seems to be no great emphasis on the first century church as described in Scripture.

My point is, should the church even be "reformed"? Has it not existed since Pentecost? Isn't the idea of reformation sort of like patching the old garment or pouring new wine into old wineskins?

Shouldn't Christians just stick to the Bible, looking to the first century church and the Apostles for patterns? This has had me stumped for some time. Any helpful information would be greatly appreciated.

Re: Reformed from what? - posted by rookie (), on: 2009/5/30 21:03

Hi run2win,

I have found a good teaching on this subject. Go to this page and look for a sermon by Jacob Prasch. The title of the sermon is: What the Reformers Forgot.

Prasch covers the church history of the reformation and the foundations on which Reformed theology is based. He talks about the error of the protestant reformation in that those who lead the reformation based their doctrine not on the bible but on the teachings of men like Augustine de Hippo. Prasch is a good teacher.

http://www.radiofreechurch.com/topics_display/52?page=2&sort=alpha

In Christ
Jeff

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Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2009/5/30 21:29

Run2win,

I appreciate your post very much and agree with your concerns over any kind of reformation. What we truly need today is a passion for the original message of the original apostles.

We need leader's in the church with a prophetic voice to restore the original message given once for all at Pentecost. We must return to the original pattern, back to where it all began. I don't believe God is going to be a part of any movement of men. He is moving upon men who will hear Him with the message of Pentecost. The church must return to that which it was in the beginning. This should be our heart and passion to the glory of God.

Blessings to you!

Re: Reformed from what? - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2009/5/30 21:30

Quote:
-----My point is, should the church even be "reformed"? Has it not existed since Pentecost? Isn't the idea of reformation sort of like patching the old garment or pouring new wine into old wineskins?

I just wanted to comment on this particular question that you asked, I will leave the other questions to those more intimate with reformed theology.

I believe the word 'reformation' is related to the word 'restore'. It refers to a restoration to pure doctrine, as you said, "looking to the first century church and the Apostles for patterns."

The word 'revival' is also related to the word 'restore' and it refers to a restoration in the Christian's life.

The church in our generation is in need of both reformation and revival. Reformation speaks of a return to the teachings of Scripture and revival speaks of a life brought into its right relationship with the Holy Spirit.

It seems that great movements in church history have occurred when these two things came together at the same time so that the church returned to pure doctrine and the lives of the Christians have known the power of the Holy Spirit. There cannot be true revival unless there is reformation and reformation is not complete without revival.

Just think what such a combination could do in our day!

In Christ,

Ron

Re: Reformed from what? - posted by tjservant (), on: 2009/5/30 21:31

I would say this article (http://www.scriptorium.org/articles/faqs/faq_0034.html) What was the Reformation? by Dr. Herbert Samworth answers most of your Reformation questions.

Quote:
-----Anyway, I have noticed that a lot of Reformed theology followers and teachers quote heavily from the leaders of the Reformation (Luther and Calvin mostly), but also from Roman Catholics, most often Augustine. This seems a little dangerous at times. Though they deny it, it almost appears that the writings of these men plus church tradition are weightier in the theology than they should be. Quotes from these men are woven into the fabric of teachings with almost equal weight with the Scriptures (this is how it appears to me, an outsider listening in; I'm not saying this is what they believe--just how it comes across).

I have also seen this at times, but this is also done by others who quote Wesley, Finney, etc... People on both sides of

en go over board with name dropping and over quoting.

Quote:

-----Shouldn't Christians just stick to the Bible...

One of the Reformations five slogans was Sola scriptura ("by Scripture alone").

The others being:

- 1 Sola scriptura ("by Scripture alone")
- 2 Sola fide ("by faith alone")
- 3 Sola gratia ("by grace alone")
- 4 Solus Christus or Solo Christo ("Christ alone" or "through Christ alone")
- 5 Soli Deo gloria ("glory to God alone")

The article I linked to really provides a lot of answers.

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2009/5/30 22:07

Brethren,

It is to be God moving upon men with the power of the Holy Spirit to bring His message to the people. Nothing can truly be accomplished for God without the Holy Spirit.

God has moved upon men by his Spirit but when other men try to make a movement out of what God did through those men is when you have dead doctrines of men void of the life of God. We must be delivered from the doctrines of men. Studying the doctrines of men is not what will bring you into the life of God. It will always be doctrine that comes out of life and not the other way. This is how many can be so full of the doctrines of men but not filled with the Holy Spirit. We are to study the word of God by the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:3-6 (KJV) 3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

The Holy Spirit gives life to the written word and without Him God cannot use us to minister to others.

Blessings to you all!

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2009/5/30 22:16

I happen to attend a United Reformed Church.

The original poster wrote, "**Was this the reforming of the Catholic Church?**"

Yes, and no. Reformation was, and continues to be, a restoration of the visible Church to the doctrines found in scripture. You and I experience this often. Practically speaking, if a local Church is not teaching something scriptural, and then corrects the error, that is reformata (restoration).

Christ alludes to this concept when He tells the churches in Rev. 2&3 to "return to their first love." It would not be a true return if the move did not include doctrinal correction for God's glory.

"How does this differ from Protestantism? Was the protestant movement more about the Anglican Church?"

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Protestantism is an umbrella term used broadly to describe those who reject the authority of the Pope, and oppose certain central dogmas of the RMC, such as baptismal regeneration and salvation by gracious acceptance of works.

"I have noticed that a lot of Reformed theology followers and teachers quote heavily from the leaders of the Reformation (Luther and Calvin mostly), but also from Roman Catholics, most often Augustine."

Please be aware that Augustine predates the RMC by several hundred years, and cannot be called a Roman Catholic. One must understand that the Reformers were accused by the RMC of inventing their doctrines of justification by faith, etc., and so appealed to early Christian writers as a secondary source. In effect, the Reformers were saying, "we're not the first one to interpret the bible this way." Anytime we quote Tozer, Washer, or Ravenhill in agreement with our views, we are doing the same thing. Reformers, past and present do not elevate such men above scripture, but acknowledged their wisdom. The Apostle Paul said, "Mark those men who walk amongst you godly." We note outstanding teachers and refer to them as a secondary source when interpreting scripture. In fact, this very site is a testimony to this practice.

"Does the visible Church need reformata (restoration)?" You bet it does. That restoration must always begin with a return to apostolic doctrine, which when overshadowed by the Spirit, will itself effect revival. Revival cannot produce right doctrine, but right doctrine is used by God to produce revival.

God bless your studies.

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2009/5/30 22:24

Quote:

-----Studying the doctrines of men is not what will bring you into the life of God.

Amen.

I suggest the doctrines of grace. They are located on every page of the Bible.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2009/5/30 22:52

Brother Michael wrote:

Quote:

-----Please be aware that Augustine predates the RMC by several hundred years, and cannot be called a Roman Catholic. One must understand that the Reformers were accused by the RMC of inventing their doctrines of justification by faith, etc., and so appealed to early Christian writers as a secondary source.

From what I understand, it is the way one divines the Scriptures. Augustine who was influenced by Origen and Ignatius of Antioch, was responsible for introducing or mixing greek philosophy with the way one approaches the interpretation of Scripture. The influences of Plato were mixed into Augustine's interpretations of Scripture.

The error is rooted in the fact that Augustine interpreted Scripture through the understanding of greek traditions without concern for the fact that the Scriptures are of the Jews. So those reformers who are like minded with Augustine fall into the same error. They fail to rightly divine the Scriptures according to the Jewish mind.

The reformers foundations were based on Patristic Christianity. The church at Pentecost is based on Apostolic Christianity.

For a greater understanding of this error I would suggest you listen to the sermon of Jacob Prasch. He covers this subject in much more detail.

In Christ
jeff

Re: - posted by yoadam (), on: 2009/5/30 23:45

Hi rookie.

I'm no Augustine scholar, but I just want to comment that your particular view of Saint Augustine of Hippo is highly debatable... Yes, Augustine was impressed with plato's philosophy before he was converted to Christ-- but that's just the thing, it was before he was converted to Christ. And knowing philosophy is not necessarily a bad a thing, as everybody has a philosophy, much in the same way everyone has a theology.

I would recommend other readers to not take rookie's view of Augustine as plain fact, but to research it for themselves.

Rookie, I must ask, have you ever read anything by Augustine? Lately I have been casually reading his "Confessions", which is his autobiography written to God in the form of a prayer! So far it has been so God-centered I am left wondering why it is that I read anything from modern Christian authors.

Think for a minute-- If you were Augustine and writing an autobiography, how would you start out? "I come from a poor family in North Africa, life was rugged growing up..." No. Read the first words of his Confessions:

Quote:
-----CHAPTER I
1. "Great art thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is thy power, and infinite is thy wisdom."66 Cf. Ps. 145:3 and Ps. 147:5. And man desire s to praise thee, for he is a part of thy creation; he bears his mortality about with him and carries the evidence of his sin and the proof that thou dost resist the proud. Still he desires to praise thee, this man who is only a small part of thy creation. Thou hast prompted him, that he should delight to praise thee, for thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee.

How's that for starting out an autobiography? What a great example of how to aim to live our lives to always point to God and not to ourselves. And how bold of him to say, "And man desires to praise thee". Can you imagine the impact potentially Augustine can have upon the reader? And now consider that many universities require their students to read Augustine. I wonder how many have been converted to Christ because of a forced reading of St. Augustine in a university class? We should thank God for raising up such a guy.

Now could we possibly elevate Augustine too high? Of course, just as we could do to any person, and let's not go there. But let's not throw the baby out with the bath water, either!

Reading Augustine is much like reading Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress-- they're choke full of scripture. Now I know why men like Tozer were always reading the classics, and why he had said he would not need to write his contemporary books on the Christian life if people would but read the classics.

:)

Re: - posted by ceedub, on: 2009/5/31 0:31

Nice reply.

I was in a church recently where an elder opposed to the doctrines of grace did a horrific smear against Augustine without, of course, reading anything but third party criticism.

You're right. When you read his stuff yourself, you're hard pressed to not be impressed.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2009/5/31 6:35

Brother Adam wrote:

Quote:
-----Rookie, I must ask, have you ever read anything by Augustine?

Maybe 10 years ago, I started to read Augustine but lost interest quickly. Whether it is Augustine, Tozer, Murray, Wesle

y, Wigglesworth or Calvin, I've always lost interest in reading the books other than the bible.

It is like before I was saved I listened to all types of music. Now when I occasionally go back to these I once listened to, I quickly loose interest. I find that not to be so when the music that I listen to is filled with Scripture.

For me, I always go back to reading the Scriptures. There is no other place that I can find where the truth is pure, untainted by the thoughts of men. I have found that the promise of the New Covenant...

Hebrews 8:

1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

8:3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 11 None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Hebrews 4

12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

We have a High Priest who is willing to teach us individually through the whole council of God found in the Holy Scriptures. I have found the same things that the writer of Psalm 119 found.

This man's prayer is my prayer because I have tasted the goodness of the word of God...

Psalm 119

13 With my lips I have declared

All the judgments of Your mouth.

14 I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,

As much as in all riches.

15 I will meditate on Your precepts,

And contemplate Your ways.

16 I will delight myself in Your statutes;

I will not forget Your word.

17 Deal bountifully with Your servant,

That I may live and keep Your word.

18 Open my eyes, that I may see

Wondrous things from Your law.

Has you learned Christ in this way?

In Christ

Jeff

Re: Reformed from what? - posted by rookie (), on: 2009/5/31 6:49

run2win wrote:

Quote:
-----Anyway, I have noticed that a lot of Reformed theology followers and teachers quote heavily from the leaders of the Reformation (Luther and Calvin mostly), but also from Roman Catholics, most often Augustine.

The Catholic church created an order of monks called Augustinian Monks. Luther was one of them. In reality the Reformation replaced the state church of Catholicism with the state church of Protestantism. And both state churches killed the people who strove to live as true to the word of God as possible. These people that were killed are known as the Anabaptist. From the Anabaptist we have the Baptist, Pentecostals and Mennonites.

So whether it is the Catholic church or Reformed church both have their roots in the teachings of Augustine.

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2009/5/31 7:28

Quote:
-----And both state churches killed the people who strove to live as true to the word of God as possible. These people that were killed are known as the Anabaptist.

Those who accuse the Reformers of persecuting the Anabaptists are being unfair and selective in not reporting the whole context. The Anabaptists were not so much opposed and convicted for not being willing to baptise babies, but because the Anabaptists in the 1520's and 1530's were radical, violent revolutionaries.

While the Anabaptists claimed to be the only true Christians, they denied many of the key elements of the Faith. They rejected Biblical Law, Christian ministry, worship and sacraments, and the Anabaptists proclaimed socialism, egalitarianism and revolution. They claimed "it is impossible to be Christian and wealthy at the same time"; "all authorities, secular and clerical, must be deprived of their offices once and for all or be killed by the sword..."

Igor Shafarevich in his book *The Socialist Phenomenon*, documents the teachings and activities of two important Anabaptist leaders, Thomas Muntzer and John of Leyden. Muntzer, an itinerant preacher and organiser of rebellions, established his revolutionary base in Muhlhausen from where he issued proclamations damning landowners, magistrates, and the Reformers. "I would like to smell your frying carcass" he wrote to Martin Luther.

In 1525, Muntzer was successful in rousing up many of the peasants of central Germany in the bloody, so called Peasants Revolt, which it should be noted attracted several nobles to his side. "Let your swords be ever-warm with blood!" Muntzer exhorted his faithful followers. Muntzer's army of Anabaptists struck terror throughout the countryside, robbing, burning and destroying the property of the faithful, killing many thousands.

Frederick Engels praised Muntzer's "robust vandalism" and explained "by the Kingdom of God Muntzer meant a society without class differences, private property and the state authority... All the existing authorities...were to be overthrown, all work and property shared in common and complete equality introduced."

Engels praised Muntzer's doctrines in this way: "Under the cloak of Christianity he preached a kind of pantheism, which curiously resembled modern speculative contemplation and at times even approached atheism. He repudiated the Bible both as the only and as the infallible revelation. The real and living revelation, he said, was reason, a revelation which existed and always exists amongst all people at all times. To hold up the Bible against reason, he maintained, was to kill the spirit with the letter, ...faith is nothing but reason come alive in man, and pagans could therefore also have faith...just as there is no heaven in the beyond, there is no hell and no damnation. Similarly, there is no devil...Christ was a man, as we are, a prophet and a teacher..."

In 1534, Anabaptist leader Jan Mattheijs siezed the town of Munster. "Armed Anabaptists broke into houses and drove out everyone who was unwilling to accept second baptism. Winter was drawing to a close; it was a stormy day and wet snow was falling. An eyewitness account describes crowds of expelled citizens walking through the knee-deep snow. They had not been allowed even to take warm clothing with them. Women carrying children in their arms, old men leaning on staffs. At the city gate they were robbed once more." (The Socialist Phenomenon - Shafarevich)

Jan Mattheijs and Johan Bokelson then instituted a reign of terror in Munster, ordering the socialisation of all property, and ordaining apostles of revolution to preach throughout Europe. The communist paradise of Munster attracted thousands of Anabaptists from throughout Germany and Holland. Mattheijs was killed in one of the early battles with surrounding cities. Johan Bokelson took command and established a dictatorship in Munster. He then issued the order for holding every thing in common, including wives.

As Frederick Engels observed: "It is a curious fact that in every large revolutionary movement the question of free-love comes to the foreground". No woman was allowed to be exempt - there was a law against being unmarried, which meant that every girl was forced to be passed around amongst the men. Every woman in Munster became fair game for the lusts of these Anabaptist men. Rapes, suicides, severe punishments and mass executions took place almost every day. On one notable occasion, Bokelson himself beheaded a virtuous woman who had refused his sexual advances. As he ceremoniously chopped her head off in the public square, a choir of his wives sang "Glory to God in the Highest"! (Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt Manipulators by David Chilton).

This reign of terror continued for a year and a half until the city was freed by Protestant forces who put Bokelson and his lieutenants to death for their crimes - crimes committed in the name of love, equality and spirituality.

I have left out most of the sordid and horrifying details of the 1525 Peasants Revolt and the 1534 Anabaptist "Kingdom of God" established in Munster. But these few examples should be sufficient to explain why Anabaptists were opposed. It was not that they were being persecuted for taking the Scriptures seriously, but because they were violent revolutionaries subverting the entire social order and guilty of the deaths of many thousands of innocent people. - Dr. Peter Hammond

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2009/5/31 8:33

To Brother tjservant'

This is all true by what you have written. But this is not the Anabaptists that I was pointing too.

Have you ever read the letter that Conrad Grebel wrote to Muntzer?

You see Conrad Grebel is known as the one who turned back to God by resting only on the foundation of the Holy Scriptures. You will find that Grebel warned Muntzer of many errors.

God did not extend the covenant that He made with Israel to the church. What I mean by this is that Israel as a nation is the only nation that God made a covenant with. The new covenant did not include the nations that followed the death of Christ. Yet whether it is the Catholic church or the denominations created out of the Reformation, these have sought to establish God's kingdom on earth. This goes against the New Covenant. So whether it was the Church of England or the Church established by Calvin in Geneva, all were apostate according to the New Covenant.

In Christ
Jeff

Re: Reformed from what? - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2009/5/31 8:37

Run2Win,

You are definitely onto something. The reformers weren't without their critics even from within their own movements, and there were those in their days that didn't think they were reformed enough. You have such groups as the Anabaptists, the Puritans, the German Pietists and others who thought Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli had not gone far enough. Each group leveled their own unique criticism.

To really understand things though, I would highly suggest you get a basic grasp of church history. Such is really the only

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any way you can properly assess our Reformed brethren and the roots of their stances and methods.

Consider the following books. Naturally, they are all academic in nature:

Christianity Through the Centuries by Earle E. Cairns. <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0310208122/christian-step-20>

Theology of the Reformers by Timothy George.

A History of Christian Thought. Volume 3: From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century.

All are very good reads.

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2009/5/31 9:00

Quote:
-----This is all true by what you have written. But this is not the Anabaptists that I was pointing too. Have you ever read the letter that Conrad Grebel wrote to Muntzer? You see Conrad Grebel is known as the one who turned back to God by resting only on the foundation of the Holy Scriptures. You will find that Grebel warned Muntzer of many errors.

Thanks for explaining brother.

I just wanted to point out that the Anabaptists were far from perfect. A lot of militant anti-reformed folks (not placing you in this lot brother) like to treat them like God's special select few...the ones who truly reformed and found some special more spiritual form of Christianity. They are often held in the same un-warranted super high esteem as the reformed groups that have made idols of Luther and Calvin.

You can find thousands of articles, preachers, pastors and professors on both sides of this and every issue. I'm sure you know this...I'm just saying...

As far as my research goes...

I would say that few men throughout Christian history have endured such levels of character assassination and massive amounts of smear tactics as have Martin Luther and John Calvin. They were not perfect. But neither was the adulterous murderer King David.

Once again, I am not lumping you into this group. I just wanted to add some additional info to the thread.

I appreciate your insights and thanks again for taking the time to explain.

Reformed from ... - posted by crsschk (), on: 2009/5/31 11:06

Quote:
-----We note outstanding teachers and refer to them as a secondary source when interpreting scripture. In fact, this very site is a testimony to this practice.

Quote:
-----I was in a church recently where an elder opposed to the doctrines of grace did a horrific smear against Augustine without, of course, reading anything but third party criticism. You're right. When you read his stuff yourself, you're hard pressed to not be impressed.

Quote:
-----Those who accuse the Reformers of persecuting the Anabaptists are being unfair and selective in not reporting the whole context.

All very well said. There is always *much more* to consider - First person accounts where they are available so you are not being *guided* by a preposition of a 'third party' view. Too often, even subconsciously we can read into matters with our minds made up by however we have been persuaded before hand ...

Thought I would offer up a compelling alternative that I have been reading over the course of the last few months -

John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition: Between the Conversions of Wesley and Wilberforce -

D. Bruce Hindmarsh

An older mention - Excerpts, etc.

(http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id26483&forum35&start0&viewmodeflat&order0) Letters of John Newton

Mr. Hindmarsh did an outstanding job in my opinion on a number of fronts. He uses an incredible amount of first hand accounts for one, but also manages to shelve his *opinion* other than where there are breaks in continuity of accounts, things of that sort. He must have spent a great deal of time to put this together, a lot of research - It is excellent since it is not a scholarly style read, nor a theological treatise but does contain the theological tenets in place in that era - mid to late 1700's.

Didn't set out to write some type of review here but wanted to bridge some of the quotes above with why I find it important on some peripheral levels.

One of the things in the book that is striking revolves around the whole Cal/Arm debate, ever present, always ongoing, the constant feuding etc. etc. I am speaking of *now* in emphasis more than ... then. What I found and almost expected was far more a camaraderie in a sense even amongst the varying viewpoints, frankly it was less hostile than it often is now. Part of that is in the way the subject matter is treated. Because it is something of a biography set in the surrounding times and locations it is less ... a dogmatic setting forth of viewpoints but more of a *looking into* the matter over the course of several chapters - In other words, more like a sideways glance, an observance but again with first person accounts and so forth. Coming at it from a less decided angle, bias lets it stand on its own merits, not punctuating one 'side' over the other.

Another older post touched on the letters exchanged between Wesley and Newton that had me full of wonder of what else might be available;

(http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?viewmodeflat&order0&topic_id26785&forum34&post_id&refreshGo) John Wesley's Letters

And it was interesting to stumble upon this book that contained so many of both between them.

It's very difficult to summarize all this because it is a very long account of correspondence between the two ... and only a portion of overall scope of the book itself. But maybe the point I am trying to tie together is that things are just never so simple as to put these and other men into categorical constructs and tie them to their own stakes as it were. They are lots of changes, there is a great deal of *silence*, there are *reasons*, situations, for instance just the inherent extremism within in their own corresponding 'ranks' that blur and confuse matters. Times were even Wesley's followers were taking his positions and key word here, (one of his own) - *Expressions* out to seed and the various attempts to reel them back in.

On the flip-side was Newton's great difficulty in getting a pastorate (as things were conducted at that time) because of his mere associations with Wesley and others - Years it took to get through these very same things - Hard line stances in the "Established church" and his own wrangling over whether he should not just go the way of the Methodists and others despite his background, upbringing "Calvinism". It's tremendous in the sense that there was a lot more blurring of the lines than might be supposed. From the Moravian's to what was called Particular Baptist's there is a word that stands out and was often appealed to -

Latitudinarianism

It may be the one 'ism' worth latching on to-

Latitudinarianism

LATITUDINARIANISM, n.

1. Freedom or liberality of opinion, particularly in theology.
2. Indifference to religion.

Still, there were many disagreements, many often, heated controversy's - Even a seeming 'divide' in latter years, but there is that missing element again - Letter's from one side missing the response from the other. Added to that is changes in locations and travels and a drop in correspondence. Added to this is a change in perception and a change of mind on particulars.

For however many years now when it comes to SI there has been this tension and this seeming wish for a silver bullet to end all controversy. Have touted the 'both' of it all if it must be distilled down to the two fractional entities but it is never that simple and always that complicated.

Is it running down the 'middle' that fosters a compromise? Or is it putting oneself in-between the warring factions that get their teeth set on edge when their *point of view* is the be all end all of any other consideration?

What makes this site differ in my opinion is the strange ability it has presented to force all to think and consider, that a great deal of the past, old, 'dead saints' are often extremely difficult to pigeon hole. Tozer, Ravenhill, Chambers or Wesley - Even the so called 'Mystics' - "Catholics" and on and on backward - The Anabaptists may be one of the greatest examples already mentioned here, *great extremes* that need to be presented openly and honestly - The reformation itself and the outgoing tentacles.

Again it is difficult to put this all in Reader Digest styled language. There is a sense of *backing off* and holding ones peace when things begin to get acrimonious, it is less to do with particulars then it is with a sense of ...

Php 2:3 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

A portion from the book;

There was always the danger of Calvinist spirituality slipping into quietism. At it's worst there was the temptation (to which Newton gave in not a little) to pour exaggerated abuse on oneself as a way of exalting the power of Christ to save. Romaine's rhetoric could be easily construed this way when he wrote, 'Depend upon it, man cannot be laid too low, nor Christ set too high. I would therefore, always aim, as good brother Grimshaw expresses it, to get the old gentleman down, and keep him down and then Christ reigns like himself, when he is ALL and man is nothing!' While the determination not to wink at sin and the desire to exalt Christ were admirable, the keeping oneself low could easily lead to low expectations of sanctifying grace altogether. Newton sought to temper such excesses in his Calvinist spirituality by gathering insights from Wesley's doctrine of perfection.

Indebted to Wesley for theological method and constructive criticisms of Calvinism, Newton was also influenced by Wesley's evangelical latitudinarianism. Wesley emphasized, despite their differences, the basis which they had in religious experience for shared Christian communion. He wrote that though they differed on some things, 'notwithstanding this, we tasted each other's spirits, and often took sweet counsel together'. Jean Orcibal comments on Wesley's efforts in this direction: 'Totally opposed to religious indifference, he was the exponent of a toleration which was mystical rather than doctrinal, such as he had seen John Byrom champion from the time of his youth. Newton sounded remarkably like this when he wrote to John Ryland about a disagreement in 1772, making appeal to their common experience of the thing they described differently. He said, 'If we hold the *head* and love the Lord, we *agree* in him, and I should think my time ill employed in disputing the point with you'. Or again, when writing to John Campbell, Newton said, 'I congratulate you and myself on the progress of what some may call latitudinarianism in Scotland. May we not say with the apostle, "Grace be with all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity?" I think that is a latitudinarianism prayer - I hope many agree in loving him, who sadly disagree about trifles.' Newton and Wesley could both ground latitude on common religious experience.

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When it came to straightforward discursive theology the situation was more difficult. Initially Newton was able to treat his differences with Wesley simply as *adiaphora*. He was satisfied with Wesley's distinction between opinions and essential doctrines. But then the problem came, as always with this formula, when they could no longer agree over which principles were essential and which were non-essential. As noted above, by 1765 Newton's convictions about predestination had become more firm, and he refused to think of it as only an opinion. Still he was able to work out a revised formula of concord that would maintain evangelical solidarity, by saying, 'Though a man does not accord with my view of election, yet if he gives me good evidence, that *he is effectually called of God*, he is my brother' (vi.199).⁴¹ Thus, he reverted to the shared experience of grace. He was not, however, able to work out such a formula for perfectionism.

⁴¹ Likewise, Newton wrote to Hannah More about Calvinism on one occasion, and told her; 'I believe you are one yourself, though you are not aware of it.' *Memoirs of Hannah More*, ii. 410.

Re: Reformed from what?, on: 2009/5/31 14:33

Hi Jeff,

How would you like to put some meat on these bones you offered?

Quote:

-----The new covenant did not include the nations that followed the death of Christ.

I'm looking forward to your reply. :-)

Re: Reformed from what? - posted by JoeGrey (), on: 2009/5/31 15:24

Interesting discussion here!

I think the reply to this post on reform = the restoration to pure doctrine throws a lot of light on the issue at hand.

Concerning Augustine, I suggest you listen to John Piper's biographical sketch (sermon) about his life. It made me understand much better where and how he fits in.

blessings! :-)

Re: Reformed from what? - posted by run2win, on: 2009/5/31 16:50

So much for simple answers!

Thanks to all who have responded. I can't say that I have any more clarity...just more information, and with it, countless knots and tangles. I will continue to read responses and check out some of the resources.

Jeff, I listened to the audio of Jacob Prasch. I am not familiar with him; that was my first and only exposure, but I found myself agreeing with much of what he said. He has a fascinating background. I'd love to hear his testimony. I hold to the belief that true Christianity is a Jewish faith. I believe what the Scriptures say about the gospel, that it was given to the Jew first. Romans 1:16 It is helpful to understand the Jewish perspective when studying the NT.

Michael, thanks for your answers. I was somewhat confused about Augustine. Was he not a catholic? Do they not claim him as one of their own? Of course, they say that Peter was the first pope, so I guess this is all a matter of how they trace and define their history. Anyway, did Augustine, or did he not, establish a monastic order? Was he the originator of contemplative thought/writing? I'm seeing so much tossed around these days.

I don't have all of this in context historically. I did look up a few things on the net, but I'm trying to see how both the Roman Catholics and the Reformers view Augustine as such a vital root in their theology. I understand what many of you were saying about other teachers, etc. through the ages, but Augustine seems to hold a place of extreme veneration in church history. Again, my personal observation. This appears to be so in many cases.

From perusing these responses, I can say that my knowledge of church history in the time period following the Biblical accounts is very limited indeed. Still, I don't know to what extent I wish to devote time and study to it. I'm not persuaded that an abundance of this knowledge will be of great profit to me in my walk with the Lord. I am rooted and grounded in my

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faith, and growing in my relationship with the Lord. I only want to know Him and desire Him more and more.

I'll digest some of this and probably return with more questions.

Lastly, I appreciate the Moderator's input. I need to read through that again. All of this should prove to be of great help. Thank you all.

In the course of all this, God led me to 1 Corinthians 1-4 which brings me back solidly to the Word of God and its sole authority and power Heb4:12. If every record of the church and every written word of man were lost to us forever, if only the Word of God remained, we would be lacking in nothing.

May the Lord find each of us faithful. May Christ and His gospel be our consuming passion.

1 Cor 2:2 "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."
5 "That your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

1Cor3:11 "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Grace and peace to all.

Re: - posted by yoadam (), on: 2009/5/31 21:15

Quote:

JoeGrey wrote:

Interesting discussion here!

I think the reply to this post on **reform = the restoration to pure doctrine** throws a lot of light on the issue at hand.

Definitely. 8-)

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Jeremiah 6:16

Quote:

-----Concerning Augustine, I suggest you listen to John Piper's biographical sketch (sermon) about his life. It made me understand much better where and how he fits in.

blessings! :-)

Yes, Piper's biographical sketches really will shed even more light on this discussion. I would highly recommend both the one on Augustine and Calvin.

(http://www.desiringgod.org/download.php?filehttp://media.desiringgod.org/audio/conferences/bcp1998/19980203_piper_augustine.mp3) The Swan Is Not Silent - Sovereign Joy in the Life and Thought of St. Augustine

And,

(http://www.desiringgod.org/download.php?filehttp://media.desiringgod.org/audio/conferences/bcp1997/19970204_piper_calvin.mp3) The Divine Majesty of the Word - John Calvin: The Man and His Preaching

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Re: , on: 2009/5/31 21:23

Quote:

run2win wrote:

In the course of all this, God led me to 1 Corinthians 1-4 which brings me back solidly to the Word of God and its sole authority and power Heb4:12. If every record of the church and every written word of man were lost to us forever, if only the Word of God remained, we would be lacking in nothing.

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1Cor3:11 "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Grace and peace to all.

Bless GOD!

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2009/5/31 23:41

Run2Win, thank you for reading our responses. I would like to reply to you, Rookie, and others,

"The error is rooted in the fact that Augustine interpreted Scripture through the understanding of Greek traditions without concern for the fact that the Scriptures are of the Jews."

If I may say so, it is apparent that you have read little of Augustine yourself, and ought to be embarrassed of the assertion, "Augustine interpreted... without concern..." You have certainly shown little concern, yourself, in rightly interpreting Augustine's motives and methods. My intention is not to defend Augustine in particular, but saints as a whole. No believers should be subjected to such sweeping assertions without credible citations of primary sources. I have read Augustine's "On Christian Doctrine" and can attest that he took into account the historical origins of the scriptures.

"Maybe 10 years ago, I started to read Augustine but lost interest quickly. Whether it is Augustine, Tozer, Murray, Wesley, Wigglesworth or Calvin, I've always lost interest in reading the books other than the bible."

Friend, your thinking sounds very spiritual but contradicts the very scriptures you uphold.

In Matthew 23:34, Jesus promised, "I will send you prophets, wise men, and scribes." For this purpose the Holy spirit gave and gives the gift of teaching. . Certainly Timothy was ordained to teach. Paul told him, "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you." Though he was not an Apostle, I doubt we would take Timothy's lessons lightly. What about the teachers who came after him? Paul instructed Timothy, "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." And if Timothy or his successors wrote down their lessons, would their words then be less valuable?

God thinks we need teachers apart from the Bible, to help us understand the Bible, so much so that He gives spiritual gifts for this purpose. Surely you acknowledge that God is correct.

I will be forward, but I speak in love, such aversion to books smacks more of anti-intellectualism and individualism, than godliness. Paul himself had commentaries on his mind when he wrote, "When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments."

"These people that were killed are known as the Anabaptist. From the Anabaptist we have the Baptist, Pentecostals and Mennonites."

May I correct a historical error here? Historian R. Scott Clark writes, "Though like the Anabaptists in their rejection of infant baptism as contrary to the New Covenant, Modern Baptists are actually descended from congregational and Presbyterian churches." Modern Baptists hold almost totally different views of salvation, Christ, church structure, and government

t. Anabaptists of the 1500's and 1600's, including those who were otherwise peaceful, generally rejected the deity of Christ and salvation by grace through faith, as is demonstrated here:

"Almost without exception, the Anabaptists from Hans Denck (1500-1527), to probably the most learned of all the radicals, Balthasar Hubmaier (1481-1528), to the most moderate of them all, Menno Simmons (1496-1561), rejected the Lutheran and Reformed confessional doctrine of justification, for the same reason as Rome rejected it, because they thought it would tend to encourage immorality and impiety... the Schleithem Confession (1527), in which there is no mention of justification *sola gratia, sola fide, solo Christo* but strong emphasis on piety and morality is illustrative of this tendency. The Mennonite Dordrecht Confession (1632) confirms this judgment in article 5, which is headed "The Law of Christ, which is the Holy Gospel, or the New Testament," wherein the law and gospel are related, and justification is described in ways much closer to the Council of Trent (Roman Catholic) than to Luther and Calvin."

I was somewhat confused about Augustine. Was he not a catholic?

Let's get some terms straight. *Catholic* simply means universal. If you believe there is only one body of Christ, that is, the invisible one, you are a Catholic. However, a Roman Catholic is someone who believes that the invisible body of the Church is comprised only of those who submit to the Pope's authority. So, Augustine was catholic, just like you and I, but he lived long before there were any Pope's, let alone the Roman Catholic Church as we know it.

"Do they not claim him as one of their own?"

They claim Jesus as their own, too!

"Did Augustine, or did he not, establish a monastic order?"

Augustine lived in the 300s AD. The Augustinian monastic order which derives its name from him, was not established until roughly 900 years later.

Was he the originator of contemplative thought/writing?

Though mystics in the middle ages promoted a kind of mind-emptying form of prayer or enforced silence, which is sometimes inappropriately called "contemplative", they have little connection to Augustine's practices of prayer. One may read only a little of his works before realizing his mind was always busy and had little time for that sort of Eastern meditations. In stark contrast, his entire *Confessions* is a very intelligent 300 page prayer to God, which recounts the story of his theological journeying and conversion into Christianity.

Hope that helps!

Dr. R. Scott Clark, *Baptism, Election, and the Covenant of Grace*, 6.

Dr. R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confession*, 76

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustinian#The_Order_Saint_Augustine

Re: - posted by yoadam (), on: 2009/6/1 5:09

"7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." Hebrews 13:7 (ESV)

Is it not complete arrogance to forget those who have run the race before us? We are commanded in the Scriptures to "Remember your leaders".

Theopenlife has hit the nail on the head-- in that he said, "such aversion to books smacks more of anti-intellectualism and **individualism**, than godliness."

I like the way the guys over at the (<http://monergism.com/>) monergism book store have said it,

"I am one person in one place at one time. My experiences and perceptions are limited and colored by the environment in which I live. Therefore, it would be profoundly arrogant of me to think that I can best grow in the knowledge of God through Scripture by myself.

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Certainly the Holy Spirit is graciously given to all God's children to enable us to comprehend and be conformed to the truths of the Bible. Nevertheless, one of the primary means of grace God uses in the process of our transformation is the universal-historical community of believers. Within that community, God graciously provides leaders of few and leaders of many to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

It is a humbling thing for me to read a book. Most books take at least several hours of combined time to process, and I have to forsake other distractions in order to focus and benefit from what I am reading. Most of all, I can't talk back. I am forced to just listen, patiently follow and receive, to think another man's thoughts after him.

One of the new desires placed into the heart of every believer is the desire to think God's thoughts after him. Let's pursue humility by receiving the thoughts of those who have led us and spoken the word of God to us in the most enduring of all earthly mediums: the book."

Adam

Re: - posted by yoadam (), on: 2009/6/1 5:21

Quote:

run2win wrote:
I did look up a few things on the net, but I'm trying to see how both the Roman Catholics and the Reformers view Augustine as such a vital root in their theology.

Hi.

Basically, protestants hold to Augustine's views on salvation, but reject his views on the church; while Roman "catholics" hold to Augustine's views on the church, but reject his views on salvation.

I guess Augustine had unresolved issues with his views on these two subjects.

:)

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2009/6/1 6:32

Quote:

Basically, protestants hold to Augustine's views on salvation, but reject his views on the church; while Roman "catholics" hold to Augustine's views on the church, but reject his views on salvation.

It should also be noted that Augustine was a very complicated theologian. While asserting salvation by grace, he also ultimately taught baptismal regeneration, the means by which he saw grace becoming effectual. When people make use of Augustine, they treat him like a piece of swiss cheese (with holes evident). Neither Catholics, Orthodox, or Protestants truly make full use of him. Though, some who feel the need to have his "authority," tend to baptize him into their own school of thought, as if he were one of their own. It's a nice touch to have Augustine to agree with you on some point :-)

Re: Reformed from what?, on: 2009/6/1 9:33

Hi Jeff,

I left a question for you on p2, and in retrospect I wonder if it deserves a thread of its own?

No-one else seems to have noticed what you wrote here, but I would still be grateful if you would explain how you hold it together within the New Testament?

'God did not extend the covenant that He made with Israel to the church. What I mean by this is that Israel as a nation is

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the only nation that God made a covenant with. The new covenant did not include the nations that followed the death of Christ.'

Thanks! :-)

EDIT: Just for the record, here are some Bible verses to consider:

Genesis 17:2

And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, 4 As for me, behold, my covenant with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. {many...: Heb. multitude of nations} 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. {Abraham: that is, Father of a great multitude} 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

Galatians 3:14

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Re: - posted by Friedrich (), on: 2009/6/1 22:41

Quote:
-----I have found a good teaching on this subject. Go to this page and look for a sermon by Jacob Prasch. The title of the sermon is: What the Reformers Forgot.

Prasch covers the church history of the reformation and the foundations on which Reformed theology is based. He talks about the error of the protestant reformation in that those who lead the reformation based their doctrine not on the bible but on the teachings of men like Augustine de Hippo. Prasch is a good teacher.

http://www.radiofreechurch.com/topics_display/52?page=2&sort=alpha

In Christ
Jeff

This teaching was helpful to me. Thanks for posting.

Re: Reformed from what?, on: 2009/6/6 12:04

The Pilgrim Church is interesting for anyone who can bear to read history. It doesn't attempt to answer the questions in the leading post, but broadens the perspective to include non-demoninational moves of God, down through the centuries. Greg Gordon brought it the the attention of SI, and posted the introductory part, (http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id22063&forum40&5) here.