

ECCLESIA SEMPER REFORMANDA

Apologetics

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**0. INTRODUCTION**

- Summary: 500 anniversary of the Reformation not only directs us to the original Christianity of the New Testament (Sola Scriptura), but also reminds us of the constant need to pay attention to the spiritual and doctrinal condition of the church according to the reformed watchword *Ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda* (Church reformed and in constant need of reform.)

**0.1. ORIGINS OF THE SLOGAN**

- Jodocus van Lodenstein (1620-1677) in 1674 – a Reformed minister in the Netherlands
  - *ecclesia semper reformanda est* or “the church is to always be reforming”

**0.2. REFORMING THE CONTENT OR THE FORM?**

- Radicals and Conservatives<sup>1</sup>

The motto speaks to two particular groups of people, found in the church in every generation, pulling in opposite directions – the radicals and the conservatives. The radicals are always champing at the bit for continual change. ...As Michael WELKER observes, because of our strong emphasis upon semper reformanda, reformed theology has put itself ‘at the mercy of the shifting Zeitgeist’ and has fallen ‘victim to the cultural stress of innovation’
- The unchangeable content of the gospel
  - **Gal 1:8-9** But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. (ἀνάθεμα ἔστω)<sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed (ἀνάθεμα ἔστω)
- The changeable forms of preaching (culture)
  - **1 Cor 9:20-23** To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.<sup>21</sup> To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.<sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. (τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα, ἵνα πάντως τινας σώσω)<sup>23</sup> I do it all

<sup>1</sup> [https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/anvil/26-1\\_031.pdf](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/anvil/26-1_031.pdf) [25-Sep-17]

for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings

## 1. THE MEANING OF “REFORMATA”

### 1.1. REFORMING THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO THE HIERARCHY

- the word “reformation” had been in use even hundred years before the Reformation of 1517

[Creighton Mandell] At the time of the assembling of the Council of Constance [1414-15] there was a widespread and serious desire throughout Europe for a reformation of the ecclesiastical abuses which the Schism had forced into such luxuriant growth : not only was unity to be restored to the headship of the Church, but a remedy must also be found for the evils which beset the entire body.

- Reforming council in Constance: put to death John Huss...

HÜBLER, *CONSTANZER REFORMATION*. Leipzig : 1867

**Das Constanzer Concil hatte eine dreifache Aufgabe:**

**1. Die Sicherstellung des katholischen Glaubens gegen die in der Kirche aufgetretenen Irrlehren: die *causa fidei*.**

**2. Die Beilegung des grossen Schismas, Beseitigung der drei Gegenpäpste und Wiederherstellung der kirchlichen Einheit: die *causa unionis*.**

**3. Die Kirchenverbesserung an Haupt und Gliedern: die *causa reformationis*.**

### 1.2. REFORMING THE CHURCH THROUGH THEOLOGY

#### 1.2.1. HISTORY

→ the “Five Solas” finely defined only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

- Wiki: 1554 MELANCHTHON wrote, "*sola gratia justificamus et sola fide justificamur*"<sup>2</sup>

#### 1.2.2. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

- (1) *sola gratia*,
  - → **Eph 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- (2) *sola scriptura*, (historically first “sola”)
  - → **1Cor 4:6** I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.
- (3) *sola fide*,
  - → **Rom 3:28** For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law
  - → **Gal 2:16** ...by works of the law no one will be justified
- (4) *solus Christus*,
  - → **Acts 4:12** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.
- (5) *solus Deo gloria*.
  - → **Eph 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast (ὅνα μή τις καυχῆσθαι)

## 2. WHAT MEANS “REFORMANDA” TODAY?

[TOZER *The Root of the Righteous*] The bias of nature is toward the wilderness, never toward the fruitful field. That, we repeat, every farmer knows. ... The moral bent of the fallen world is not toward godliness, but definitely away from it. "Is this vile world a friend to grace," asks the poet rhetorically, "to help me on to

<sup>2</sup> *Opera omnia*, p. 357.

God?" The sad answer is no, and it would be well for us to see that each new Christian learn this lesson as soon as possible after his conversion. We sometimes leave the impression that it is possible to find at an altar of prayer, once and for all, purity of heart and power to assure victorious living for the rest of our days. How wrong this notion is has been proved by countless numbers of Christians through the centuries

- Live according to the Gospel!
- Keep the doctrine scriptural!

## 2.1. UNDERSTANDING & LIVING

- The first thesis of 95: what it means *to repent*...
  - [Luther 95 Theses] When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance... We pray throughout our whole life and we must pray "forgive us our debts" [Matt. 6:12]; therefore, we repent throughout our whole life and are displeased with ourselves, unless anyone may be so foolish as to think that he must pretend to pray for the forgiveness of debts. For the debts for which we are commanded to pray are real and not to be treated lightly; and even if they were venial, we could not be saved unless they were remitted.

9. März 1522 *Invocavit*, Wittenberg (WA 10-3, p. 4)

Darumb laßt uns hie zusehen, daß Wittenberg nicht Capernaum werde. 20  
 Ich sehe und mercke, daß jr wol könd und wisset zureden von der Lere, die  
 euch gepredigt ist als vom Glauben und auch von der liebe. Welchs nu kein  
 wunder ist, ob jr gleich viel dauon könd reden: kan man doch schier einen  
 Esel leren singen, solt jr denn auch nicht so viel lernen, daß jr die Lere und  
 wörtlin soltet nachreden. Aber lieben freunde, Gottes Reich stehet nicht in 25  
 der rede oder in den worten, sondern in der krafft und in der that. Denn  
 Gott wil nicht alleine Zuhörer und Nachreder haben, sondern Nachfolger und  
 Theter, die das wort bewaren, die sich in glauben uben, der durch die Liebe  
 krefftig ist, denn der Glaube on die Liebe ist nichts werd, ja er ist nicht ein  
 Glaube, sondern nur ein schein des Glaubens, gleich wie ein angeficht im 30  
 Spiegel gesehen nicht ein warhafftigs angeficht ist, sondern nur ein schein  
 des Angefichts.

[Luther about Wittenberg] Here let us beware lest Wittenberg become Capernaum [cf. Matt. 11:23]. I notice that you have a great deal to say of the doctrine of faith and love which is preached to you, and this is no wonder; an ass can almost intone the lessons, and why should you not be able to repeat the doctrines and formulas? Dear friends, the kingdom of God,—and we are that kingdom— does not consist in talk or words [I Cor. 4:20], but in activity, in deeds, in works and exercises. God does not want hearers and repeaters of words [Jas. 1:22], but followers and doers, and this occurs in faith through love. For a faith without love is not enough—rather it is not faith at all, but a counterfeit of faith, just as a face seen in a mirror is not a real face, but merely the reflection of a face [I Cor. 13:12]

Musíme si dať pozor, aby sa Wittenberg nestal Kafarnaumom. (Mt 11:23)<sup>3</sup>. Všímam si a vidím, že viete veľa rozprávať o učení, ktoré sa vám káže a aj o láske. Nie je to žiadny div, že o tom viete toľko hovoriť: už by to vedel spievať takmer aj osol, prečo by ste vy nedokázali opakovať učenie a slovíčka? Ale milí priatelia, Božie kráľovstvo nespočíva v rečiach ani v slovách, ale v moci a skutku. Lebo Boh nechce mať len poslucháčov a opakovačov, repetítorov, ale nasledovníkov a činiteľov, ktorí slovo zachovávajú, ktorí sa vičia vo viere, ktorá je mocná skrze lásku, lebo viera bez lásky nestojí za nič, áno, nie je vierou, ale len zdaním viery, práve tak ako tvár, ktorú vidíš v zrkadle, nie je naozaj tvár, ale len zdanie tváre.

## 2.2. KEEPING THEOLOGY SCRIPTURAL TODAY

- against the *Zeitgeist*...
  - (1) anthropocentrism, (2) individualism/selfism, (3) scientism/manipulation, (4) secularised eschatology
- CAMBRIDGE DECLARATION 1996

<sup>3</sup> Mt 11:23 A ty, Kafarnaum, vari sa budeš vyvyšovať až do neba? Do pekla zostúpiš! Lebo keby sa boli v Sodome diali zázraky, ktoré sa diali v tebe, bola by zostala po tento deň.

- <http://www.alliancenet.org/cambridge-home>:

In April 1996, the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals held its first major meeting of evangelical scholars. *The Cambridge Declaration*, first presented at this meeting, is a call to the evangelical church to turn away from the worldly **methods** it has come to embrace, and to recover the Biblical doctrines of the Reformation. The Cambridge Declaration explains the importance of regaining adherence to the five “Solas” of the Reformation.

Evangelical churches today are increasingly dominated by the spirit of this age rather than by the Spirit of Christ. As evangelicals, we call ourselves to repent of this sin and to recover the historic Christian faith ... because of our love of Christ, his gospel and his church, we endeavor to assert anew our commitment to the central truths of the Reformation and of historic evangelicalism. These truths we affirm not because of their role in our traditions, but because we believe that they are central to the Bible.

### 2.2.1. *THESIS THREE: SOLA GRATIA*

[by Grace Alone - Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 3:3-7; 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 11:6]

We reaffirm that in salvation we are rescued from God's wrath by his grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

We deny that salvation is in any sense a human work. Human methods, techniques or strategies by themselves cannot accomplish this transformation. Faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature.

### 2.2.2. *THESIS ONE: SOLA SCRIPTURA*

[Scripture Alone - 2 Tim. 3:14-4:2; Isa. 8:20; Ps. 19, 119; 2 Pet. 1:3, 20-21, etc.]

We reaffirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured.

We deny that any creed, council or individual may bind a Christian's conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation.

### 2.2.3. *THESIS FOUR: SOLA FIDE*

[through Faith Alone - [Romans 4-5; Luke 18:9-14; 2 Corinthians 5:21; etc.]

We reaffirm that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. In justification Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice.

We deny that justification rests on any merit to be found in us, or upon the grounds of an infusion of Christ's righteousness in us, or that an institution claiming to be a church that denies or condemns sola fide can be recognized as a legitimate church.

### 2.2.4. *THESIS TWO: SOLO CHRISTO*

[Christ Alone - John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Colossians 1:13-2:17; Hebrews 1-13, etc.]

We reaffirm that our salvation is accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father.

We deny that the gospel is preached if Christ's substitutionary work is not declared and faith in Christ and his work is not solicited.

### 2.2.5. *THESIS FIVE: SOLI DEO GLORIA*

[for the Glory of God Alone - Isaiah 43:7; Romans 11:36; Ephesians 1:3-14]

We reaffirm that because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and that we must glorify him always. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God and for his glory alone.

We deny that we can properly glorify God if our worship is confused with entertainment, if we

neglect either Law or Gospel in our preaching, or if self-improvement, self-esteem or self-fulfillment are allowed to become alternatives to the gospel.

**2.2.6. A CALL TO REPENTANCE & REFORMATION**

The faithfulness of the evangelical church in the past contrasts sharply with its unfaithfulness in the present. Earlier in this century, evangelical churches sustained a remarkable missionary endeavor, and built many religious institutions to serve the cause of biblical truth and Christ's kingdom. That was a time when Christian behavior and expectations were markedly different from those in the culture. Today they often are not. The evangelical world today is losing its biblical fidelity, moral compass and missionary zeal. We repent of our worldliness. We have been influenced by the "gospels" of our secular culture, which are no gospels. We have weakened the church by our own lack of serious repentance, our blindness to the sins in ourselves which we see so clearly in others, and our inexcusable failure to adequately tell others about God's saving work in Jesus Christ. We also earnestly call back erring professing evangelicals who have deviated from God's Word in the matters discussed in this Declaration. This includes those who declare that there is hope of eternal life apart from explicit faith in Jesus Christ, who claim that those who reject Christ in this life will be annihilated rather than endure the just judgment of God through eternal suffering, or who claim that evangelicals and Roman Catholics are one in Jesus Christ even where the biblical doctrine of justification is not believed.

The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals asks all Christians to give consideration to implementing this Declaration in the church's worship, ministry, policies, life and evangelism. For Christ's sake. Amen.

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<b>Five Solas</b>	<b>The Reformation stood against:</b>	<b>Today we stand against:</b>
(1) <i>sola gratia</i>	<i>meritorious works,</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no need either for grace or mercy of God →</li> <li>• human rights in salvation, → no humility</li> <li>• <b>egalitarianism</b>, → no election</li> <li>• <b>universalism</b> in soteriology,</li> </ul>
(2) <i>sola scriptura</i>	<i>church traditions,</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• historical criticism of the Bible,</li> <li>• <i>scientism</i>, → “how to” guides</li> <li>• postmodernist attitudes to <b>truth</b></li> <li>• religious <b>experiences</b> (after death)</li> </ul>
(3) <i>sola fide</i>	<i>rituals, indulgences,</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• psychologism, → faith is “what works”</li> <li>• emotional manipulation (media)</li> <li>• self-help guides</li> </ul>
(4) <i>solus Christus</i>	<i>saints, priests,</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• popular/populist teachers,</li> <li>• “substitution of wholeness for holiness” (CD)</li> <li>• prosperity gospel</li> </ul>
(5) <i>solī Deo gloria</i>	<i>church, humans,</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• anthropocentrism,</li> </ul>

**3. TO REMEMBER**

- Reformed Christian life and teaching must be actively kept and guarded against the “onslaught of the wilderness” [Tozer].
- Attempt at reform had been unsuccessful until the reform began with the heart (repentance) and doctrine (faith).
- To live in the Reformation tradition today means to understand the contemporary attacks against Christianity and the church.