

Reformation

Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Church History is not a dry and dusty pursuit – it gives us perspective on our own standing and inspires us to endure; it challenges us to keep reforming our own faith and practice. The European Reformations of the 1500's turned both church and society upside-down as both the Bible and biblical faith were rediscovered. In this series we look at a series of reformers and the key issues they faced as they wrestled with the Bible, and the reforms they sparked as a result.



Reformed Faith – Justification by Faith – Luther – Romans 1:7-17

Martin Luther

“I had certainly wanted to understand Paul in his letter to the Romans. But what prevented me from doing so was not so much cold feet as that one phrase in the first chapter: ‘the righteousness of God is revealed in it’. For I hated that phrase, ‘the righteousness of God’, which I had been taught to understand as the righteousness by which God is righteous and punishes unrighteous sinners.

Although I lived a blameless life as a monk, I felt that I was a sinner with an uneasy conscience before God. I also could not believe that I had pleased him with my works. Far from loving that righteous God who punished sinners, I actually hated him... I was in desperation to know what Paul meant in this passage.

At last, as I meditated day and night on the relation of the words ‘the righteousness of God is revealed in it, as it is written, the righteous person shall live by faith’, I began to understand that ‘righteousness of God’ as that by which the righteous person lives by the gift of God (faith); and this sentence, ‘the righteousness of God is revealed’, to refer to a passive righteousness by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, ‘the righteous person lives by faith’.

This immediately made me feel as though I had been born again, and as though I had entered through open gates into paradise itself. From that moment, I saw the whole face of Scripture in a new light... and now, where I had once hated the phrase ‘the righteousness of God’, I began to love and extol it as the sweetest of phrases, so that this passage in Paul became the very gate of paradise to me.”

Reformed Church – The Lord’s Supper – Zwingli – Matt 26:17-30

Zwingli

“To eat the body of Christ spiritually amounts to trusting with heart and soul in the mercy and goodness of God through Christ – that is, to have the assurance of an unbroken faith that God will grant us the forgiveness of sins and the joy of eternal salvation for the sake of his son, who gave himself for us... So when you come to the Lord’s Supper to feed spiritually upon Christ, you thank the Lord for his great favour, for the redemption by which you are delivered from despair, and for the pledge which reassures you of eternal salvation.”

Reformed Theology - Calvin – The sovereignty of God – Rom 9:10-24

Calvin

"God rules all mankind, and all men and things, also all parts and particles of the world by His infinite wisdom and incomprehensible justice."

C.S.Lewis

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Calvin

"We do not try to make God render account to us, but so reverence his secret judgements as to consider his will the truly just cause of all things. When dense clouds darken the sky, and violent tempest arises, because a gloomy mist is cast over our eyes, thunder strikes our ears and all our senses are benumbed with fright, everything seems to us to be confused and mixed up; but all the while a constant quiet and serenity ever remain in heaven. So we must infer that, while the disturbances in the world deprive us of judgment, God out of the pure light of his justice and wisdom tempers and directs these very

movements in the best-conceived order to right end."

"Yet when that light of divine providence has once shone upon a godly man, he is then relieved and set free not only from the extreme anxiety and fear that were pressing him before, but from every care. For as he justly dreads fortune, so he fearlessly dares commit himself to God."

Karl Barth

'The free God is always a step in advance of the free creature. The free creature does go of itself, but it can and does only go the same way as the free God. It goes its own way but in fact it always finds itself in a very definite sense on God's way.'

Calvin

"The Lord has furnished men with the arts of deliberation and caution, that they may [either] employ them in subservience to his providence, in the preservation of their life; [or,] on the contrary, by neglect and sloth, they bring upon themselves the evils which he has annexed to them."

Radical Reform - Muntzer – Our experience of Church - 2 Cor 13:1-6

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."

Reformed Worship - Cranmer – The centre of worship - 2 Tim 4:1-8

"...That all the whole Bible should be read over once in the year, that the Clergy, and especially the Ministers of the congregation, should (by often reading and meditating on God's word) be stirred up to godliness themselves, and be more able also to exhort others by wholesome doctrine, and to confute them that were adversaries to the truth.

And further, that the people (by daily hearing of holy scripture read in the Church) should continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God, and be the more inflamed with the love of his true religion."

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And I believe every word and sentence taught by our Saviour Jesus Christ, his apostles and prophets in the new and old testament. But now I come to the great thing which so troubleth my conscience, more than any thing that ever I did or said in my whole life, and that is the setting abroad of a writing contrary to the truth; which now here I renounce and refuse, as things written with my hand, contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death."