

# Essential Tenets of Reformed Theology\*

The great purpose toward which each human life is drawn is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

## I. God's Word: The Authority for Our Confession

We glorify God by recognizing and receiving His authoritative self-revelation, both in the infallible Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and also in the incarnation of God the Son.

## II. Trinity and Incarnation: The Two Central Christian Mysteries

### A. Trinity

With Christians everywhere, we worship the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - who is both one essence and three persons.

### B. Incarnation

Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly human.

The divinity of the Son is in no way impaired, limited, or changed by His gracious act of assuming a human nature, and that His true humanity is in no way undermined by His continued divinity. The risen Jesus, who was sent from the Father, has now ascended to the Father in His resurrected body and remains truly human. The same Jesus Christ who is now ascended will one day return visibly in the body to judge the living and the dead. We are able to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and God only through the work of the Holy Spirit.

## III. Essentials of the Reformed Tradition

### A. God's grace in Christ

The present disordered state of the world, in which we and all things are subject to misery and to evil, is not God's doing, but is rather a result of humanity's free, sinful rebellion against God's will. No part of human life is untouched by sin. Our desires are no longer trustworthy guides to goodness, and what seems natural to us no longer corresponds to God's design. In union with Christ through the power of the Spirit we are brought into right relation with the Father, who receives us as His adopted children. Jesus Christ is the only Way to this adoption, the sole path by which sinners become children of God.

### B. Election for salvation and service

Having lost true freedom of will in the fall, we are incapable of turning toward God of our own volition. God chooses us for Himself in grace before the foundation of the world, not because of any merit on our part, but only because of His love and mercy. Through His regenerating and sanctifying work, the Holy Spirit grants us faith and enables holiness, so that we may be witnesses of God's gracious presence to those who are lost.

### C. Covenant life in the church

In Christ, we are adopted into the family of God and find our new identity as brothers and sisters of one another, since we now share one Father. Within the covenant community of the church, God's grace is extended through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful practice of mutual discipline.

### D. Faithful stewardship of all of life

The ministries of the church reflect the three-fold office of Christ as prophet, priest, and king — reflected in the church's ordered ministries of teaching elders (pastors), deacons, and ruling elders. Jesus teaches us that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. There is no part of human life that is off limits to the sanctifying claims of God.

### E. Living in obedience to the Word of God

Progress in holiness is an expected response of gratitude to the grace of God, which is initiated, sustained, and fulfilled by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. As we practice the discipline of regular self-examination and confession, we are especially guided by the Ten Commandments.

\* This is a condensed version of the Fellowship's Essential Tenets. Full version: Essential Tenets Listed in the document: "Fellowship Theology".