



HOLY TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

First Principles, Week #1

What is a Reformed church? (Theology: What is it and why is it important?)

B.B. Warfield, born in 1851 into a Christian home in Kentucky, was the son of a Presbyterian Ruling Elder who was also a cattle rancher. Warfield was instructed in the Scriptures and the Westminster Standards in his youth; he memorized the Westminster Shorter Catechism while he was a young boy, as did his siblings. Warfield had a keen mind which he intended to devote to life as a scientist until the Lord called him into ministry in his late teens. Warfield studied at the College of New Jersey (later Princeton College) and then Princeton Theological Seminary. After advanced studies in Europe and a teaching post in Ohio, he was called to teach theology at Princeton Seminary during a period in which commitment to the authority of the Bible and the church's historic orthodox teaching was in open decline in the broader church. Warfield marshaled the learning and godliness granted him in his youth along with all of the studies he accrued over time to defend and promote the Gospel of the Scriptures and to weed out all man-made counterfeits. He became known as "the lion of Princeton" because of his willingness to stand for truth (and stand against error) regardless of cost. May we follow in his train in our day of open abandonment of God's Word even in the church.

If you are familiar with the Westminster Shorter Catechism, then you are already familiar with this little essay. Warfield simply highlights the main features of the Shorter Catechism and puts them here in the form of a personal confession of faith. Pay attention to the high view of God, the absolute commitment to the authority of the Bible and the way in which we see man's role fit nicely into proportion when we start with God and his glory as the chief end of man and of all things. We desire to be a church whose chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever, which means that we must be individual people who share that common, biblical goal. As you read, ask yourself, if I were to write a summary of what I wholeheartedly and warm-heartedly believe, what would it say? Soli Deo Gloria! To God alone be the glory.

A Brief and Untechnical Statement of the Reformed Faith

B.B. Warfield

*From Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield – Volume I, pp. 407-410
John E. Meeter, editor (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970)*

1. I believe that my one aim in life and death should be to glorify God and enjoy Him forever; and that God teaches me how to glorify and enjoy him in His holy Word, that is, the Bible, which He has given by the infallible inspiration of His Holy Spirit in order that I may certainly know what I am to believe concerning Him and what duty He requires of me.

1

2. I believe that God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and incomparable in all that He is; one God but three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, my Creator, my Redeemer, and my Sanctifier; in whose power and wisdom, righteousness, goodness and truth I may safely put my trust.

3. I believe that the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is, are the work of God's hands; and that all that He has made He directs and governs in all their actions; so that they fulfill the end for

which they were created, and I who trust in Him shall not be put to shame but may rest securely in the protection of His almighty love.

4. I believe that God created man after His own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, and entered into a covenant of life with him upon the sole condition of the obedience that was his due: so that it was by willfully sinning against God that man fell into the sin and misery in which I have been born.

5. I believe, that, being fallen in Adam, my first father, I am; by nature a child of wrath, under the condemnation of God and corrupted in body and soul, prone to evil and liable to eternal death; from which dreadful state I cannot be delivered save through the unmerited grace of God my Savior.

6. I believe that God has not left the world to perish in its sin, but out of the great love wherewith He has loved it, has from all eternity graciously chosen unto Himself a multitude which no man can number, to deliver them out of their sin and misery, and of them to build up again in the world His kingdom of righteousness: in which kingdom I may be assured I have my part, if I hold fast to Christ the Lord.

7. I believe that God has redeemed His people unto Himself through Jesus Christ our Lord; who, though He was and ever continues to be the eternal Son of God, yet was born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them that are under the law: I believe that He bore the penalty due to my sins in His own body on the tree, and fulfilled in His own person the obedience I owe to the righteousness of God, and now presents me to His Father as His purchased possession, to the praise of the glory of His grace forever: wherefore renouncing all merit of my own, I put all my trust only in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ my redeemer.

8. I believe that Jesus Christ my redeemer, who died for my offenses was raised again for my justification, and ascended into the heavens, where He sits at the right hand of the Father Almighty, continually making intercession for His people, and governing the whole world as head over all things for His Church: so that I need fear no evil and may surely know that nothing can snatch me out of His hands and nothing can separate me from His love.

9. I believe that the redemption wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ is effectually applied to all His people by the Holy Spirit, who works faith in me and thereby unites me to Christ, renews me in the whole man after the image of God, and enables me more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness; until, this gracious work having been completed in me, I shall be received into glory: in which great hope abiding, I must ever strive to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

10. I believe that God requires of me, under the gospel, first of all, that, out of a true sense of my sin and misery and apprehension of His mercy in Christ, I should turn with grief and hatred away from sin and receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation; that, so being united to Him, I may receive pardon for my sins and be accepted as righteous in God's sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to me and received by faith alone: and thus and thus only do I believe I may be received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.

11. I believe that, having been pardoned and accepted for Christ's sake, it is further required of me that I walk in the Spirit whom He has purchased for me, and by whom love is shed abroad in my heart; fulfilling the obedience I owe to Christ my King; faithfully performing all the duties laid upon me by the holy law of God my heavenly Father; and ever reflecting in my life and conduct, the perfect example that has been set me by Christ Jesus my Leader, who has died for me and granted

to me His Holy Spirit just that I may do the good works which God has afore prepared that I should walk in them.

12. I believe that God has established His Church in the world and endowed it with the ministry of the Word and the holy ordinances of Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Prayer; in order that through these as means, the riches of his grace in the gospel may be made known to the world, and, by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them, the benefits of redemption may be communicated to his people: wherefore also it is required of me that I attend on these means of grace with diligence, preparation, and prayer, so that through them I may be instructed and strengthened in faith, and in holiness of life and in love; and that I use my best endeavors to carry this gospel and convey these means of grace to the whole world.

13. I believe that as Jesus Christ has once come in grace, so also is He to come a second time in glory, to judge the world in righteousness and assign to each his eternal award: and I believe that if I die in Christ, my soul shall be at death made perfect in holiness and go home to the Lord; and when He shall return in his majesty I shall be raised in glory and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity: encouraged by which blessed hope it is required of me willingly to take my part in suffering hardship here as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, being assured that if I die with Him I shall also live with him, if I endure, I shall also reign with Him.

And to Him, my Redeemer,
with the Father,
and the Holy Spirit,
Three Persons, one God,
be glory forever, world without end,
Amen, and Amen.