

# THE PURITAN-REFORMED THEOLOGY & IT'S FAITH

By White Young Jeon D.Min.

## \* Introduction

In the will of God ITCS began with the vision of reformed evangelism toward the countries of East-South Asia at Phnom Penh in Cambodia on 2008 through the role of Asian Reformed Mission. According to by law of Asian Reformed Mission ITCS should establish the reformed theology that applied in the East South Asia in order to win the lost souls. Here the reformed theological purpose means to spread the puritan- reformed Theology to the third world.

First of all, I identify the definition of Puritan- Reformed Theology and propose the present answer of the contemporary issues and make sure our position and suggest the methodology to proclaim the theology and it's faith.

## 1. Definition of THE PURITAN-REFORMED THEOLOGY

Puritan reformed theology and it's faith points to the Calvinistic theology and faith that the Korean churches have kept traditionally since the Pyung Yaung Theological Seminary had been established in Korea. It was not a simple theory but the applied theology to the actual life. In order to understand it, we should think, first of all, of the definition.

The term, "reformed" means Calvinism that founded on biblical theological system. In other words, it has the soteriology against the Arminianism by claiming the theory of TULIP that have been called the five features of Calvinism, those are; total depravity, unconditional selection, limited atonement, irresistible salvation and perseverance of saints. However it does not identify the total themes of Calvinism. Rather, Calvinism is summarized in the theology of Lordship that John Frame points at his book, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God.* ( pp11-13 P&R 1987) It stresses to glorify God in the total areas in the whole life. Therefore the Reformed thought is broader than the Evangelicals because of including the redemption of culture. In such meaning, all the reformed are Calvinists but all the evangelicals are not the Calvinists

Next, what is the Puritanism? It is the theological system that British reformed Christians applied Calvinism to their lives and their ministries from the last days of 16<sup>th</sup> century to the early days of 17<sup>th</sup> century. So J. I. Packer would like to use the terms, "reformed" and "renewal". (*A Quest For Godliness*, p38 Crossway 1990) In other words, Westminster Confession was depended upon Calvinism that Calvin's Institutes of Religion explain. Puritans concentrates on the practical life more than intellectual system. In short, Puritanism is one of flowers that Calvinism blossoms in their lives in order to return to the early church. Today we may find some tendency that some people depended on the

Biblical Theology that Geerhardus Vos or, Herman Ridderbos teach and admit as the absolute position among the reformed camp. At that point, Frame warns seriously in his book, *The Knowledge of God pp207–212*, but also J Adams criticized it at his book, *Truth Applied ( Zondervan 1990)* In fact it is a controversial issue that the pastors meet in their ministries.

We can find some tension among them.

1) One is the tension between the method of redemptive historical preaching and the method of puritan experimental preaching. The one stresses more on the expository elements than on the applicatory elements, The other tends to incline to applicatory elements than the expository elements. Their emphasizing points is interrelated in the light of the Scripture. If anybody sees the stream of redemptive history, surely he shall fall down in the wonderful grace and try to focus all things to it for he know the great absolute standard. But the preacher of redemptive historical view will be tempted by ignoring the applicatory elements for he expects that the truth shall be applied in the congregation although he cannot try to apply them automatically. But this is extreme thought. Otherwise the puritan preacher that cannot see the stream of redemptive history in the Scripture; it will incline to apply the artificial element to the God's people that is depended on *eisgesis*. The result will produce humanistic ethic in their lives. If two perspectives be interrelated in preaching, It shall be very idealistic.

2) And also we can see another tension among the purpose of preaching. Can not the reformed preacher preach the Word of God for evangelism in the church? The redemptive historical preachers limit the preaching of the Word of God within the edification for covenant people in the church. In short they claims that preacher can not preach the sermon for the evangelism because they already had become the covenant people and they need only edification by preaching. So they see that preaching is teaching as well as teaching is preaching. However Lloyd-Jones stresses that preaching is different to teaching because of existing of application elements. Teaching focuses to deliver the information but the preaching focuses to apply the expository elements positively. So he stresses to preach the evangelism sermon in the church regularly. Matthew 28:18–20 that is the greatest commission command of our Lord, obviously reveals both preaching and edification (teaching) in order to make the disciple of God's kingdom. And also Paul teaches two elements those are; to receive the salvation and to know the truth in the ministry of Timothy at Ephesus. Actually the church should preach the Word of God for the purpose of evangelism to the covenant people.

3) And there is the other tension in Pneumatology. Does God outpour the gift of Holy Spirit in the contemporary churches? Richard Gaffin and B. B. Warfield claime discontinuity but Grudem continuosity. The one is dissessionist, but the other is

secessionists in outpouring the gift of Holy Spirit. In the sharp controversy of the tension Vern Poythress harmonized by the teaching of Westminster Confession very well. As J. I. Packer points in his book, *Pursuit to godliness*, Although the puritan reformed experienced the wonderful gifts of Holy Spirit very much, he did fall down into unbiblical experience but depended on the teaching of Scripture faithfully. Even though John Welts was called for a prophet of that times for his gift of Holy Spirit, he depend upon the Scripture faithfully in his ministry. To know the teaching of such issue we may refer to the essay of Poythress, *Modern Spiritual Gifts As Analogous To Apostolic Gifts: Affirming Extraordinary works of the Spirit within Cessationist Theology* (Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society Vol 39, No1 pp71–101)

Therefore we have to respect the heritage of our faithful fathers as the biblical gifts and admit them in our reformed ministries and make to develop by applying them to the contemporary.

In the Korean church history I find the strong influence of puritan reformed theology and it's faith through the preaching and teaching ministry executed by the early missionaries in the center of Pyung Yauang theological seminary that was the first Presbyterian school. Although they inclined into the dispensational color, they followed the line of puritan godly life and reformed theological system. So we can evaluate that Korean churches was influenced by the sound biblical teaching and puritan devotional life in providence. Among them one of great spiritual leaders I know is Jung Am, Dr. Yoon Sun Park (1905–1988) who had finished writing the whole commentaries of the Scriptures as a personal interpretator. He always had followed the Calvinistic line, the puritan reformed line consistently in his commentary ministry and preaching and teaching ministry. He claimed the salvation to get by thought that was depended on only the revelation (the Scripture), which was founded on the main line of the Puritan theologians (Owen, Baxter, Goodwin ect) and reformed theologians (Herman Bavinck, Abraham Kyper, B.B. Warfield ect). He had had lived as a divine according to the Word of God faithfully, who overcome the danger of the artificial humanistic theology by the godly passion of private prayer. He had been a sample of the puritan reformed pastor and theologian in our times.

## 2. Contemporary Challenges toward THE PURITAN–REFORMED THEOLOGY

When we watch out the present church we can find two kinds of enemy attack in our ministry.

One is Internal Challenge, that is, the corrupted character, *Sark* that the Apostle Paul points in his soul. (Rom.6:6, Eph5:22–24, Col 3:5 ). John Owen pointed that “the power of sin remains where the dominion has been banished, and though that power of sin be

weakened, yet its nature is not changed". When we stand up before the presence of God we find our marvelous miserable state in us and deny ourselves under the light of the Lord. (Is. 6:1-7 Lk5:1-8)

Second, external enemies challenge to us. Just it is extreme humanism, autonomy. Postmodern movement and the New Age movement were spread in the contemporary times. We can find good role models in that time when the puritan giants, those are; William Perkins, John Owen, Richard Baxter, Thomas Goodwin, Richard Sibbs had overcome to the internal and external problems very well. They were the gifts that God gave to the church in applying the reformed theology to their lives and churches practically, pastorally. As Packer said, they revealed the reformed thought and life to the world through God- centric life, the priority of the Scripture, the passion with effective activities, some programs to strengthen the family and the vision to renew the church. Their godliness is like Bradford, their concern is like Calvin and their purpose is like John Knox. The puritan reformed stream makes us strengthen our thought and lived as the pillar of truth (ITim3:5) and as the one who establish the virtue of Christ. (IPeter2:9)

### **3. We can overcome it by godliness and divine intellect**

How can we overcome against the several internal and external problems? In short, It is the godliness and the learning that is summarized by the Word and the prayer. Already the Apostles are our examples as the experience of Isaiah and Peter. As the saying of Jung Am, they stand firm on the thought depended on the revelation that is the Scripture. The church should fight against the enemy with good conscience and true faith. (ITim.1:18-19)

Actually we have to response to the issue of Punumatology and the issue of unbiblical Feminism ect. in the cotemporary time.

I had felt some controversy that was made among such issues in my above 30 years pastoral ministry in South Korea and the United States of America. Especially I had found same controversy in the academic stream of the Westminster Theological Seminary in process of my D. Min. Program in 1996. (Refer to Doctor Dissertations completed by Westminster Theological Seminary). Then I had delighted for finding the answer of my issue in the ministry of reformed puritan. It is fact that the historical reformed theology could overcome such controversies under the light of the Scripture in relevant wisdom to glorify God and enjoy Him fully.

### **4. The detailed suggestion for restoration**

I would want to suggest as followings to solve such problems.

*(1) The movement of the Word of God*

The reformation of Josiah, a king of Israel was great for beginning with keeping and teaching the Scripture, the Word of God for the reformation of Israel. II King 23:25 says , “Neither before nor after Josiah was there were a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did– with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.” How could the reformation begin with? Actually it is not to find the Law scrolls in cleaning the temple, but reading them and keeping them in their lives. According to the Scripture he understood the truth in his heart in reading the Word of God and took away all idols in his country. Such understanding the Word is very important for true reformation.

Jung Am who is my teacher had confessed in his preaching “When he understands the truth in studying the Scripture, he had felt that he wanted to die in such state.” And also continually he stressed that this is wonderful experimental event as tasting sweetness, seeing brightness and feeling the firing passion with hope in his heart that is an evidence of seeing to living God. So I would like to claim the experimentalism of the Scripture that every Christian should pursue in his lives and ministry. In our day when the view of the Scripture has been revealed as main issue, we have to return to the Scripture and to mediate them in present situation and obey them in our ministry. So it is so important to study the Word of God deeply and to preach them to our neighbor faithfully because it is the starting point of reformation.

### *(2) The movement of prayer*

After the pastoral epistles focus on the foundation of understanding the Scripture, and also approached sound prayer. (I Tim. 1:18–19, 6:11–12). I Tim 1: stresses the economy of God and next, 2:1–2 says “I urge, then, first of all , that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quietness in all godliness and holiness.” Why did the Apostle say “the first of all”? Because the prayer is the weapon of good fighting, the channel of accomplishing the divine economy and the tool of applying the truth in the actual lives he did. So Paul exhorted “prayer without pause” (I Thessalonian 5:17) and “pray in the Spirit in all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.”(Eph6:18) Traditionally It is the main theory of the apostles’ ministries to be that the prayer is the priority in the church ministry (Acts 6:4)

Why did he stress the priority of prayer? 2: says” that we may live peaceful and quietness in all godliness and holiness.” What does it mean? It is to pursue the actual godly life that includes the simplicity, the devotion and the peacefulness.

In the such stream the puritan experimental ministry that is based on the reformed life in that day should be a example in our time.

#### *(4) Pursuit of holiness and Peace*

Above of all, we have to follow the purity and peace. (Heb12:14) If we stay in holiness, we have to reveal the proof of peace in Spirit. We have to destroy all present blocks in the church life. God that destroyed the stern Judaism with the power of Cross of Christ already had demolished every obstacle by the power of Holy Spirit in Christ. (Eph 2:13-16) Moreover the reformed puritan should take the passion for the purity and peace that the Word of God reveals us in our actual ministry in our day.

John Rogers who was one of great puritan preachers, who had pursued to holiness and peace in his ministry, had kneeled down before God and prayed, because of despising the Scripture, "Lord, take away our property and our children but do not take away the Scripture out of our country!"

Conclusion:

Puritan reformed theology is not a movement of thought, but the movement of life. The movement without the life tends to be artificial, humanistic movement. ITCS that began with the Reformed Conservatism, the reformed puritan theology and faith should take the spiritual vision and serve our contemporary church which is the body of Jesus Christ, our Lord.