

Gary Scott Smith – Ordination Questions

3. I do sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and I have been and will continue to be instructed and led by those confessions as I lead the people of God. I became a Presbyterian in my early 20s in large part because I concluded that the Reformed faith is the most accurate expression of biblical teaching. My study of theology, church history, and the Scriptures during the last 45 years has further confirmed for me the validity of the Reformed theology as expressed in the PCUSA's confessions. By concentrating in church history at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, completing a Ph.D. in American History with a focus on American religious history, doing extensive research in the history of Reformed individuals, movements, and denominations, and writing numerous encyclopedia entries, articles, and monographs on subjects related to the Reformed faith, I have come to understand and appreciate it even more. Most notable are my entries in *The Dictionary of the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition in America*, a book I wrote titled *The Seeds of Secularization: Calvinism, Culture and Pluralism in America, 1870-1915* (Eerdmans, 1985), and three books I edited—*Building a Christian Worldview*. Volume 1: *God, Man and Knowledge* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986; Volume 2: *The Universe, Society and Ethics* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988); and *God and Politics: Four Views on the Reformation of Civil Government* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1989, 2010). I am currently co-editing *A Handbook on Presbyterian Studies* for Oxford University Press that contains sections on the history of Presbyterianism, ecclesiastical forms and structures, theology, worship, ethics, education, and politics. My own area of specialty is Presbyterians and social reform.

Reformed theology has a distinctive perspective of God, humanity, epistemology, society, and ethics. The most important tenets of the Reformed faith, in my judgment, are the sovereignty of God, the depravity of humanity, a focus on the kingdom God is building on earth, and the mandate Christians have to transform all aspects of culture. God's control over all things means that His plans and purposes will ultimately be accomplished and that in many periods of history Christians will be able to have a major influence in shaping their societies. Our cultural mandate requires Christians to seek to redeem all of life through our involvement in the church, community, home, and workplace. These tenets supply a solid scriptural foundation for what Christians should believe and do.

6. Throughout my adult life I have sought energetically to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love my neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world. I have done this through teaching, research and writing, campus ministry, pastoral ministry, and community service. Especially significant for me has been my advising of thousands of college students for almost 30 years who led Bible studies and mentored teenage juvenile delinquents at George Junior Republic in Grove City, my five years of volunteer work with the Christian Assistance Network in Grove City helping low-income individuals and families deal with financial emergencies related to housing, utilities, car repair, and medical problems, and writing a book titled *Suffer the Children: How We Can Improve the Lives of Impoverished Children* (Cascade Books, 2017). I will continue this type of service by co-directing the mission emphasis at Saint Andrew-Covenant Presbyterian Church in Wilmington. The hardest challenge in keeping this vow has been coping with my own sinfulness and selfishness, the oppression and injustice in our fallen world, and people's unwillingness to forgive one another.