

THE SEVEN SHARED VALUES IN GERMANY: HOW REFORMED THEOLOGY CHANGED EVERYTHING

CHRISTIAN WEGERT

After 15 years, we as Arche Church in Germany are still filled with gratitude to be associated with Sovereign Grace Churches and to share the seven values. In fact, the first shared value Reformed Theology has great significance for us.

Our Way to Sovereign Grace

As parts of the Pentecostal movement in Germany took on more extreme aspects of the charismatic movement, we were looking desperately for sound biblical teaching. One day we invited the Baptist pastor Ted Tripp, as guest speaker. When he heard about our conversion to the reformed faith, he asked us whether we as former pentecostals still believe in the active presence of the Holy Spirit. After hearing the answer “We do,” he spontaneously exclaimed: “I know which church movement you would fit into.” And right away the name “Sovereign Grace” was mentioned. We had never heard of Sovereign Grace before. Ted told us about the characteristics of family of churches, how they indeed call themselves reformed at the heart, yet at the same time believe in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. That was precisely what we had been looking for.

It led us to attending the Sovereign Grace Pastors Conference as guests for the very first time in 2006 and 2007. Revived and reaffirmed in the teaching of the sovereign grace of God, we returned to Germany, each time highly motivated to proclaim this glorious message not only in Hamburg, but with the help of our TV ministry, also in all of the German-speaking parts of Europe.

From the Pastors College Back to Hamburg

However, participating in conferences wasn't the only thing. Sovereign Grace opened the doors for me to study at the Pastors College. My family and I look back on that time with much gratefulness. At the Pastors College I was able to gain insight into the breadth and depth of reformed theology. I had the privilege of seeing the effect of the healthy and transforming power of Gospel-Centered D doctrines in the lives of individuals, families, and even churches. Returning home with these treasures, I desired to spread the gospel of grace in Germany.

My father, Wolfgang Wegert, who was the senior pastor at that time welcomed that wholeheartedly. He was the one who had started the reformation in our church. Together with the elders, he appointed me as his successor which was confirmed by the church. I will not forget the help of Sovereign Grace pastors who supported this generational change by giving biblical counsel and helpful practical advice. The assistance of Sovereign Grace in this process had much impact in spreading reformed theology in Germany.

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Arche Pastors College

Jeff Purswell played an active role in founding the Hamburg Pastors College according to the example of the Sovereign Grace Pastors College. The purpose of the college is to equip young men for pastoral ministry and to strengthen pastors in their existing ministry. The Bible-based lecture units take place on a number of weekends every year and were conducted by Jeff Purswell during the first few years. God used him in a wonderful way with his excellent teaching gift and his love for Germany, to get the college on the right track. Today, the teaching is done by Arche Pastors as well as other

guest teachers. Markus Kniesel leads our Pastors College, having also studied at the Sovereign Grace Pastors College, USA. So Sovereign Grace has had a blessed impact not only on our church, but also on our whole nation.

Church-planting Activities in Germany

We were very excited by the vision to plant new churches in addition to caring for the local church in Hamburg and being involved in its nationwide TV ministry. With God's help we started and planted a reformed church in a town called Stade, about 60 kilometers away from Hamburg and another church in the city of Hannover, about 150 kilometers away. These churches are pastored by graduates of our Pastors College and, God willing, others will follow. A network has been established of partner churches and associated churches. One of the churches is in the town of Görlitz near the border to Poland – a church made up by Polish and German members. Resulting from our missions ministry in the Ukraine, a number of Arche churches came into existence. They all embrace the glorious gospel of free grace and they continue to preach it in their oppressed country. One way we build and establish this network is our annual conference called "Ecksteinkonferenz" where we have invited brothers from Sovereign Grace, such as C.J. Mahaney, Jeff Purswell, Bob Kauflin, and Rick Gamache.

From Arminian Law to Reformed Freedom

On the basis of knowing reformed theology, our preaching and teaching ministry also changed. In former times man and his activity were at the center of our preaching. Without knowing it, we preached justification by works in disguise. Now the living God who initiates everything is at the center, and we declare that from beginning to end salvation comes from him alone. That turned the hearts of many of our listeners upside down and they told us: "All these years we thought we had true faith; now we know the true gospel." Others even said: "We thought we were Christians, but now we have been born again." And still others testified, how this message of grace set them free from their own struggles and that now they have received rest, assurance, and true joy of salvation.

Only a few days ago someone wrote: "Having dropped out of prosperity by shutdown of my company, unemployment, and marriage problems, I sat in my mobile home meditating on my life so far. Then I took your book

*Foundations of Faith*¹ which I had ordered from you and started to read until I came across the statement: 'I am justified by Jesus Christ.' For the very first time I understood what God in Christ had really done for me. This little word 'justified' struck me and changed my life forever!"

How Reformed Theology Created Unity

The people in our church say it is remarkable how much all of our seven pastors agree. While we were part of the pentecostal movement, there were many contradicting doctrines. One pastor preached on one Sunday and another pastor preached the exact opposite the next Sunday. That led to confusion and strife. "But today," many say, "it doesn't matter who stands in the pulpit. You all preach the same thing. There is not even room between you for a single piece of paper!" Voices such as these convinced us that the reformation brought about a precious unity in our church because reformed pastors have learned that there is only one gospel, not two, three, or even more. And if all of us preach the one, sound, healthy gospel of the Scripture, we proclaim it each one in his own way, yet with one voice. A pastor once said: "Whoever has embraced the gospel of the free grace, will cling to it for the rest of his life." Thanks be to God, due to the loving care of Sovereign Grace, we too were able to embrace it. And we too will cling to it for the rest of our lives.

1. A booklet that we distributed through our TV program and in which we explain the basics of the gospel.

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