
Conkin defines the Reformed tradition—the "center" upon which he focuses—as including Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Calvinistic Baptists, Methodists, German and Dutch Reformed and as excluding Lutherans and Roman Catholics on the right and various smaller groups on the left. Acknowledging that his inclusion of Methodists widens the usual understanding, he defines Reformed Christianity not by conformity to Calvinist orthodoxy, but as comprised of groups growing out of that tradition, as well as that of Zwingli and others of the reformers.

The book can be summarized by its major sections. The introduction presents a concise and helpful history of Christianity in the West prior to the Reformation. This background material is compromised, however, by Conkin's unqualified assertions of points about first century...