

Protestant Reformed Theological Journal

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PROTESTANT REFORMED
THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

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Editor's Notes

With thanks to God we introduce the first issue of the 39th volume of the Protestant Reformed Theological Journal. This issue reflects current trends among many Reformed and Presbyterian denominations — trends that, we are convinced, must be resisted.

This issue also contains an article on the Archives of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). In this article Prof. Russell Dykstra traces the beginning of the PRC from March of 1925 through November of 1926. The Dutch have a saying, “*beginselen werken door*” (principles work through). Among other matters, this article demonstrates the truth of that saying as it concerns the error of common grace.

Prof. David Engelsma's review article will open the eyes of the discerning reader to the many faceted heresy of the so-called “Federal Vision,” which has infected so many churches in our day. It is a “must read.”

Clayton Spronk, a senior in the seminary, demonstrates with accuracy and clarity the fact that Question and Answer 80 of the *Heidelberg Catechism* must be retained.

RDD

The Archives of the Protestant Reformed Churches

Russell J. Dykstra

It is characteristic of a Reformed church that it retains accurate records of its official actions, and thus of its history. This accurate record keeping is in harmony with the Lord's command to His church that "all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). Preservation of records is also due to a conviction that the history of the church is worth preserving for future generations, for it is the Lord's church, and its history is a record of how the exalted Lord has led and governed His church in times past. The church of every age promises to show "to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done" (Ps. 78:4). If the church needs additional reason for preserving its history, there is this: Good records must be kept in order that, on the one hand, the church does not repeat the mistakes of the past, and on the other, the church retains her heritage.

The Protestant Reformed Churches are zealous for good order and the keeping of accurate church records. The Church Order, essentially the Church Order adopted by the great synod of Dordrecht (1618-19), requires that accurate records be maintained. Article 46 requires that "(i)nstructions concerning matters to be considered in major assemblies shall not be written until the decisions of previous synods touching these matters have been read, in order that what was once decided be not again proposed, unless a revision be deemed necessary." Obviously, Article 46 can be observed only if complete and accurate records of past decisions have been maintained.

This care is demanded in all the ecclesiastical assemblies. To facilitate this, minutes are accurately kept and are approved at the end of a meeting as "script" minutes. Once more, at the beginning of the next meeting, the body approves its record of decisions as "transcribed" minutes.

The Reformed church does more than require this “on paper,” she enforces it. In the Protestant Reformed Churches, the church visitors annually peruse the minute books of the individual consistories and deaconates. The books must be in order if they are to receive the approval of the church visitors.

Like most Reformed and Presbyterian churches, the Protestant Reformed Churches have archives — a collection of records, documents, or other material of historical interest. The synod of the PRC has demonstrated concern for the archives of the churches. The Acts of the first synod of the PRC (1940) records the following (Art. 32): “Because this Synodical gathering is the first in the history of our denomination and it therefore will undoubtedly prove of great historical interest, Synod decides it proper that a photograph be taken of the delegates and officers of Synod and a copy be preserved in the archives.” A later synod assigned the stated clerk the task of “maintain(ing) the archives of synod.” This includes, in addition to the printed Acts, correspondence, supplements, agendas of synods, as well as the original copies of the first and second clerks’ minute books from each synod. For many years these records were kept in boxes and filing cabinets in the home of the synodical stated clerk. In 1977, synod appointed a committee to microfilm all the synodical records (an estimated 16,000 pages at that time) and to place the same in safety deposit boxes.

These synodical archives are currently part of a more general collection of documents of historical interest. The archives are stored in a special, climate-controlled room located in the lower level of the Protestant Reformed Seminary. The concept of denominational archives was approved by the synod of 1978, acting on a proposal that arose out of the faculty of the seminary and was brought by the Theological School Committee.

Today the archives include a wide variety of items. The records of Classis East and Classis West and of synodical committees are stored there. Documents from various individual Protestant Reformed Churches, including but not limited to minute books, are kept in the archives. In addition, personal papers of deceased ministers have been given to the archives. A complete set of the magazine *Concordia*, later *Reformed Guardian*, is pre-

served there, as well as Reformed Witness Hour material, photographs, sermons, and much more.

One interesting and significant set of documents in the Protestant Reformed archives is the minutes of the combined consistories in the early days of the Protestant Reformed Churches (1925 and 1926). To call them the Protestant Reformed Churches is not accurate. During those first two years they called themselves the "Protesting Christian Reformed Churches." In November of 1926 they would form a classis and adopt the name Protestant Reformed Churches. The minutes of the classis continue through 1939. In 1940 the churches began meeting as a synod, and from that time on the (printed) Acts of synods are the record of the broadest body in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

All the minutes from 1925 to 1939 were written in Dutch, and for many years were stored in various places, mainly in the home of the stated clerk. Eventually it reached the point that no one ever referred to them, due not only to their inaccessibility, but also to the fact that few members were fluent in the Dutch.

Providentially, however, they were (largely) preserved, and Rev. Cornelius Hanks, in his later years, gave a significant gift to the PRC — he translated these minutes and the supplements into English. His son, Prof. Herman Hanks, then undertook the painstaking work of checking and editing the translation. The result is that a copy of the early minutes is available in English — stored in the archives.

For a member of the PRC, the minutes of the combined consistories make fascinating reading! Much of the early history is recounted by Herman Hoeksema in his book *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America*. His account encompasses far more than these minutes. Yet the minutes convey something of the stern reality of the events and circumstances. They record the concrete struggles, the hard decisions, the daily, monthly, and yearly effort required by faithful men whom God raised up to shoulder the burden of establishing, building, and maintaining what would, by the grace of God, become the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

This article arises out of the conviction that there is value in

giving public exposure to some of the documents in the PRC archives. Some denominational archives have regular publications designed to publicize the content of the archives by publishing articles based largely on the historical documents in the archives. The PRC have no such publication. Hence, the *Journal* will be used for that purpose on this occasion, and probably in the future.

The following article will trace the record of the meetings of combined consistories, a small band of churches that called themselves the “Protesting Christian Reformed Churches,” from the first record in March of 1925 through November of 1926, when they decided to form a classis and adopt a new name, thus officially acknowledging their separation from the Christian Reformed Churches.

Minutes of the combined consistory

The “Minutes of the combined consistory meeting held in Grand Rapids, Mich., March 6, 1925” read as follows:

Article 1. After the singing of Psalm 89:7 this meeting was opened with prayer by Rev. H. Hoeksema.

Article 2. The minutes of the previous meeting were hereupon read, as also the report of the committee appointed at the previous meeting to draw up a common agreement.

Article 3. It is moved and supported to discuss the report seriatim. Article 1 is read and adopted.

Articles 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are read and adopted.

Thereupon the resolutions a, b, c, and d were read and adopted.¹

Article 4. The committee proposes to regard this meeting as the first meeting of these combined consistories of Kalamazoo I, Hope, and Eastern Ave. This proposal was taken over by the gathering and, after being discussed, was adopted.

1. The complete “Act of Agreement” (cf. Appendix 1, p. 21) is found in Herman Hoeksema, *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America: Their Origin, Early History and Doctrine*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: 1947), pp. 256-7. The quotations from this document that follow are taken from this source.

So begins the first preserved record of the meetings of the consistories of Hope, Kalamazoo I, and Eastern Ave. — at that time, Christian Reformed Churches all. Each of these churches was in conflict with its respective classis over the “Three Points of Common Grace” adopted by the Synod of 1924. The classes demanded of all the pastors in these churches — Rev. George M. Ophoff in Hope, Rev. Henry Danhof in Kalamazoo, and Rev. Herman Hoeksema in Eastern Ave., what the Synod had not, namely that these men formally express their agreement with the “Three Points.” Upon their refusal to do so, and having the support of their consistories, they were disciplined by their classes. The classes suspended the ministers and eventually declared that all the ministers and any of the consistory members that supported the ministers were officially deposed. (Classis Grand Rapids East met on January 28, 1925 to depose Herman Hoeksema, and took that decision on January 29.)

These first entries above indicate that this was not the first meeting of these consistories. In fact, Hoeksema writes that on January 29, 1925, “the various consistories of the expelled churches held their first combined meeting in the basement of Eastern Avenue Church. The matter of organization was discussed. The Consistory of Kalamazoo I favored immediate formation of a classis. With a view to maintaining the appeal to synod, however, the majority proved to be in favor of forming a union of combined consistories. No definite action was taken at this meeting, but a committee was appointed to consider the matter and to outline a program for future action.”² This report, the minutes indicate, was adopted.

The three churches existed in an awkward and unsettled position for a year and a half. As they themselves acknowledged in their “Act of Agreement,” the pastors, elders, and deacons of the three churches, “together with their congregations are actually expelled from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Churches.” Convinced that these actions of the classes were both unjust and contrary to Reformed church polity, the consistories agreed that

2. *Protestant Reformed Churches*, pp. 255-6.

they could not “simply submit themselves to the action of said Classes until such time as Synod shall have considered their appeal, which they made in a legal way to Synod, but were forced by circumstances to continue to function in their respective offices.” Expelled from the churches, yet appealing their unjust treatment to synod; barred from office by classis, yet having congregations that needed preaching and pastoral care; prohibited from preaching, yet being compelled by their convictions to preach the truth over against common grace and the well-meant gospel offer. These churches functioned for two years in these difficult circumstances.

At the same time, these churches were not willing to take care only of their own respective congregations. In the tumultuous circumstances, they adopted the name “Protesting Christian Reformed Churches,” voted to bring their united appeal to the Synod of 1926, and even determined to speak out on the doctrinal and church political issues. Concerning this latter, the first set of minutes reveals that the three consistories as a body,

having heard of the various invitations that came to them from Hull, Iowa, to hold a lecture there concerning the present controversy, has decided to send one of its ministers, Rev. H. Hoeksema, to Iowa, Wisconsin and Chicago, for the following purpose:

I. To give information concerning the things that have taken place among us of late, and also to present our position in regard to those matters in the form of lectures for our people.

II. To inform those who are interested of our actions, and if that is desired, to allow them to read our “Resolution of Agreement.”

III. If it should prove that the interest is of such a nature, that the interested parties desire organization, then to serve them with advice how to proceed.

IV. And further to give to Rev. Hoeksema the authority to deal with every situation according to his best judgment.

Rev. Hoeksema soon visited northwest Iowa, where he preached and lectured indefatigably. After three weeks, a congregation was formed in Hull. B. J. Danhof, the nephew of Rev. Henry Danhof who had been refused entrance into the Christian

Reformed Church for his stand against common grace, received the call from Hull to be her first pastor.

That forced the combined consistories to grapple with another question, namely, how should B. J. Danhof be properly ordained and installed in the office of minister? This was faced at the next combined meeting, held May 6. The consistories agreed to examine him as a group. Delegates were present from Eastern Ave., Hope, Hull, and Kalamazoo. The examination is recorded as follows:

Article 3. Candidate Danhof, who will be examined at this meeting, is given the opportunity to present his sermon. The text given to him was Rev. 3:20. After the sermon the question arose as to further procedure, whether to judge the sermon or to proceed with the examination. It is moved to proceed with the examination and later to say something about the sermon. This motion was adopted.

Article 4. Rev. H. Hoeksema will examine in the first three loci of dogmatics and Rev. Danhof in the last three loci. Rev. Ophoff will examine in the knowledge of the Confessions & Scripture. Thereupon Rev. Danhof will question the candidate on Polemics, and S. Bylsma [an elder from Eastern Ave., RJD] will examine him in Practica.

The consistories approved the examination of B. J. Danhof, and instructed Hull to continue with the installation/ordination of B. J. Danhof. His uncle, Rev. Henry Danhof, was appointed by the consistories to ordain the younger Danhof.

It is evident from the above that the three consistories had a firm resolve in the conflict to stay the course and go on alone if need be. The cause was not, first of all, the church-political offenses. The unjust depositions were grievous and, unless they would be reversed, set up insurmountable barriers to reconciliation with the denomination. However, the real impetus for all these activities by the three churches was the concern for the truth of sovereign and particular grace. The very first resolution adopted by the combined consistories demonstrates this. It reads:

Whereas the Synod of 1924, assembled in Kalamazoo, Mich., adopted three points of doctrine which, according to our most sacred

conviction, are in direct conflict with our Reformed Confessions and principles;

These men were convinced that their stand for the truth justified their binding together and performing various actions that would normally be performed by a classis. These officebearers had made it plain to their respective classes that they could not but maintain sovereign and particular grace and condemn common grace. Their consciences were bound by Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

It is also plain that they could not see the actions of the Christian Reformed Church classes being reversed. Only in that light can one understand that they would send Rev. Hoeksema to north-west Iowa and that he would there organize a congregation.

Another immensely significant decision, this one concerning seminary education, further demonstrated the resolve of the consistories to maintain a separate existence as needed. At the January 1925 meeting, the combined consistories appointed a committee to prepare advice in the matter of training students for the ministry. At the May 6 meeting, the consistories adopted the following program of pre-seminary and seminary instruction:

I. Elementary Course

- A. Holland. Reading. Writing. Speaking.
- B. Greek. Grammar. Reading.
- C. English. Reading. Composition. Speaking.
- D. Hebrew. Grammar. Reading.
- E. Old Testament History.
- F. New Testament History

II. Advanced Course

- A. New Testament.
 - 1. Greek. Reading. Forms.
 - 2. Exegesis. Proper. Introductory. Questions.
- B. Old Testament.
 - 1. Hebrew. Reading. Forms.
 - 2. Exegesis. Proper. Introductory. Questions.
- C. Dogmatics.
 - 1. Dogma Geschichte (History of Dogma.)
 - 2. Dogmatics.
 - 3. Confessions.

In both departments, essays and sermons would be assigned. It was decided that the “various courses... would be divided among the three ministers Hoeksema, Danhof, and Ophoff.”

These were not empty plans. The word evidently went out into the churches that seminary training would be offered. Concrete action followed at the June 4, 1925 meeting when the combined consistories considered numerous applicants for the seminary. The consistories interviewed twelve applicants, most of whom hailed from Grand Rapids, though some were from Kalamazoo and Chicago. It is noteworthy that the consistories granted student aid only to the unmarried students, thus setting a precedent that would continue in the Protestant Reformed Churches for decades.³ Hoeksema reported that the seminary started classes immediately that June, with eight students.⁴ Of those, five would be among the first ministers in the Protestant Reformed Churches, namely C. Hanco, R. Veldman, W. Verhil, L. Vermeer, and G. Vos.

At the August meeting, the combined consistories agreed with the recommendation of Eastern Ave. that a congregation be organized in Byron Center. All seventeen families of this group were already members of Eastern Ave., as were all but one of the fourteen additional individuals. In addition, the consistories agreed to organize a group of twenty families in Waupun, Wisconsin. This would bring the number of Protestant Christian Reformed Churches to six.

The minutes reveal a developing conflict over what to do with Ralph Danhof, a second nephew of Rev. Henry Danhof. He had attended Calvin Theological Seminary, but had expressed disagreement with the Christian Reformed synod's decision on common

3. This prohibition against aid to married students was written into the constitution of the Student Aid Committee of the PRC. In 1964 the churches amended the constitution of the Student Aid Committee to allow aid to married students to an extent not greater than that allowed to single students. In 1980, this restriction on the amount that could be granted to married students was eliminated.

4. *Protestant Reformed Churches*, p. 262.

grace. Already at the June 4 meeting of the combined consistories, he had expressed an interest in becoming a candidate in the Protestant Christian Reformed Churches, but no action had been taken. The consistory of Kalamazoo came to the meeting in August of 1925 with a proposal “to appoint an extra minister for the now existing churches, who can take the place of one of the other ministers, who then would have a free hand to preach in other places.” The minutes record that “a long discussion followed, the pros and the cons were discussed. A motion is made to adopt this proposal of Kalamazoo, namely, to call a communal pastor. This motion is defeated.” Instead, the decision was made to hire Ralph Danhof for \$2000 to assist with pulpit supply in the churches as needed.

The matter was far from finished, however. The consistories of Kalamazoo and Hull both brought separate proposals to the November meeting that the churches should examine R. Danhof and make him a “common minister” in the churches, for he had no call from a congregation. The combined consistories, however, did not accede to these requests, but continued his status of candidate and unordained pulpit supply, especially for the vacant churches.

In connection with R. Danhof, the following interesting — and odd — minute is recorded.

Article 16. Rondvraag is held.⁵

The remark is made that Candidate Danhof become a member of one of our churches. He is now no member and if he will continue to work it will be necessary that he become a member somewhere. Moved and adopted to treat this matter accordingly.

That indicates something of the unsettled situation. R. Danhof was serving as stated supply for the churches without himself be-

5. *Rondvraag* is literally “round question” and apparently refers to a practice of the chairman asking each delegate in turn whether he has anything to bring to the attention of all the delegates. It would be similar, then, to the manner in which *censura morum* is often conducted in the meeting of a local consistory.

ing a member of the churches, though one could argue that he was a member of the Christian Reformed Church, of which the Protestant Christian Reformed Churches were still officially a part. This was soon rectified, and it was reported to the February 1926 meeting of the combined consistories that "Cand. R. Danhof has become a member of Eastern Ave."

Another important topic was broached in the *rondvraag*, namely:

In connection with our protest which we intend to send to the next synod, it is proposed to prepare a protest and to study the matter and report at the next meeting. Adopted. The four ministers and three elders are to be appointed as committee.

This committee reported to the combined consistories meeting of February 3, 1926, as follows:

Article 9. The committee appointed to draw up a protest which we intend to send to the next synod has not met in its entirety. However the three ministers have discussed this matter together, as became evident from the report of Rev. Hoeksema. They had not had time to meet. The brothers advise that each consistory present its own protest to classis and synod. This report is received for information after elders Gritters and Lemmers, also members of the committee, have expressed that they did not agree with this advice. The consistories which were deposed, as also Rev. B. Danhof, will provide their own protest. For the consistories which have joined us later a protest will be prepared by the ministers Danhof, Hoeksema and Ophoff. This protest will also serve for all of us.

At the meeting of February 3, 1926, Hull requested that a group of families in Doon, Iowa be organized immediately. This was approved, and Rev. Ophoff went out as appointed to organize the seven families and several individuals.

In connection with Hull's request to organize a church in Doon, though prior to it, a letter from the clerk of Eastern Ave. gives a glimpse into a significant turn of events in the continued conflict between Eastern Ave. and about 92 members of Eastern Ave. who had protested the actions of their consistory in supporting Rev.

Hoeksema. Up to this time, the consistory, with the overwhelming majority of the congregation, had continued to use the church building on Eastern Avenue. The courts ruled against the consistory, giving the church building to the 92 members who did not want to be part of the Protestant Christian Reformed Churches. Note the clerk's description of these events in Grand Rapids, in this letter to the families in Doon, Iowa.

Grand Rapids, Mich. December 28, 1925

Highly esteemed brethren and sisters
in the Lord at Doon, Ia.

The request for organization at Doon came into our possession through Hull's minister, with his request to call a special combined consistory meeting. At our consistory meeting of December 18 it was decided that we as consistory express, that it is desirable that Doon be organized.

Moreover it was decided to promise you a collection.

Then also that we request Hull's consistory to organize a church at Doon.

We shall also write the other churches to see whether they agree with our action, and thereupon we can proceed toward organization. In as far as this is possible we will reckon with you with preaching appointments. Nevertheless it would be well if you bear in mind that the schedule for preaching appointments for the three months ending February already has been made, and how many extra appointments can still be added to help you out is not to be said with any certainty. The committee will however without doubt do their best.

I deem it important to give you the reason why this letter reaches you so late. We are in the middle of family visitation and therefore do not have much time. And to our amazement the decision of the Supreme Court came suddenly, which granted to our opponents the buildings. The outcome as such did not surprise us so much, but to our regret the opposition decided to take immediate possession of the buildings. The decision came on Tuesday, December 22. They broke into the church, placed a sheriff at the doors and we could not enter any more. What to do? We had to have a place for the Christmas services and program, and also for Sunday. And since we had to have enough space for approximately 1200 people, you can imagine

what a bustle that caused. But thanks be to the goodness of our God over us, we got matters settled. Especially thanks to Him that He kept us from wrong things, and that He strengthened the bond of unity that makes us one. We had an overflow crowd on Christmas and on Sunday. That which they intended for evil the Lord directed for our good. We are stronger now. The lax ones were awakened and we are going ahead into the future with renewed courage, trusting that He will make all things well.

With all this there was involved much work, and therefore you had to wait.

It is the desire and prayer of the consistory that the Lord may crown your efforts with His indispensable blessing, and that before long we may hear of the organization of Doon, Ia.

In the name of the consistory, I remain, with hearty, brotherly greeting,

Your brother in Him,
Clerk of consistory
[Eastern Ave.]

Returning to the matter of a united protest, it was noted (above) that the ministers reported their inability (for lack of time) to meet in order to prepare a protest. It seems exceedingly strange that they would not be able to find time to meet for something as vital as writing the protest to the Synod of 1926!

However, there is more here than the minutes reveal. The Danhofs and their consistories (Kalamazoo and part of Hull) were frequently at odds with the other ministers and consistories. Rev. Hoeksema describes in some detail the various conflicts.⁶ The May 4, 1926 minutes of the combined consistories indicate trouble in the school, since a committee is appointed to deal with difficulties there. As a result, two students were expelled (one from Kalamazoo, and one from Iowa), and classis adopted a censure of Rev. B. J. Danhof for his involvement in the matter. Another committee was appointed to deal with Candidate Ralph Danhof, and Eastern Avenue objected to his being given another three-month assignment to assist the churches — more indications of continued conflict.

6. *Protestant Reformed Churches*, pp. 269-287.

The result was that the minutes, filled with such unedifying details, omit any reference to the protest to the Synod of 1926. It should be noted that the minutes of the combined consistories meeting of August 3, 1926 are missing. However, from the extant supplements of that meeting, it is evident that the consistories appointed a committee to make recommendations for organizing the Protesting Churches. Rev. Hoeksema relates that after the meeting in August, Rev. Henry Danhof resigned from his position in the seminary. Both he and Rev. B. J. Danhof resigned from their editorial positions in the *Standard Bearer*.⁷

The end was near for all three of the Danhofs. The curatorium of the school reported to the meeting of November 3, 1926 that they were unable to convince Rev. Henry Danhof that he should return to teaching in the seminary. R. Danhof, subsequent to the November 3 meeting, wrote a letter to all the consistories informing them that he had resigned from the churches. In September, Rev. B. J. Danhof wrote a public notice in a northwest Iowa paper that he and his congregation were no longer part of the Protesting Christian Reformed Churches. This would bring matters to a head.

Members of Hull lodged protests against this action of Rev. B. J. Danhof with the consistory of Hull, and, failing to receive satisfactory answers, they appealed to the combined consistories meeting in Kalamazoo on November 3, 1926. Astounding it is, but Rev. B. J. Danhof not only came to the November 3 meeting, he opened the meeting as the chairman, leading in devotions before turning the chair over to the next minister in the rotation. Several more churches had been organized in the last six months, and the churches represented were Byron Center, Doon, Eastern Ave., Grandville Ave., Hope, Hudsonville, Hull, Kalamazoo, Munster, and Waupun. Near the start of the meeting, the following article is recorded:

Article 6. An instruction from Hull was presented. Rev. B.J. Danhof and F.J. Scholten demand that this instruction is treated before the matters in the minutes are dealt with. Decided to proceed with the

7. *Protestant Reformed Churches*, p. 280.

treatment of the minutes. Scholten says, "The consistory of Hull is through, if they cannot have the floor." Danhof and Scholten leave the meeting, and R. Kooiker remains as the only elder from Hull.

The instruction was as follows:

Instruction from Hull

The consistory of Hull has decided that if all disharmony that exists between the ministers is not taken away, Hull's delegates will not participate in any discussion, nor may they share in any decisions.

And moreover that Hull's consistory, as long as the desired harmony does not exist, will not appear at the combined consistory meetings through its delegates.

Since two of the three delegates from Hull left the meeting, the instruction from Hull was not discussed. Neither was the instruction from Grandville Avenue, namely: "The consistory of Grandville Ave. requests of Rev. B.J. Danhof an explanation in regard to his *position* that he *takes* toward our church group." [Emphasis in the original, RJD.] As it turned out, Rev. B. J. Danhof was finished with the "Protesting Christian Reformed Churches." He publicly renounced the "Protesting Churches" and took much of the Hull congregation with him back to the Christian Reformed Church.⁸

The combined consistories did treat the protests/appeals against the article written in the public newspaper by Rev. B. J. Danhof, and the actions of the Hull consistory for supporting him. The combined consistories decided as follows:

1. The combined consistory meeting declares, that the article written by Rev. B. J. Danhof is not true in as far as it relates to an independent existence as the congregation of Hull.
2. Notify the consistory of Hull of this decision and request further explanation.
3. To give a copy of this decision to the brothers and sisters who are protesting.

8. Confer Appendix 2 — B. J. Danhof's letter in *De Wachter* of Dec. 29, 1926.

4. To advise the consistory of Hull to retract the decision to erase certain members, and that this is contrary to the exercise of discipline in the Reformed Churches.

The consistories turned to the committee report on organization. The minutes record the following:

Article 11. The committee for permanent organization and adopting a name for our churches reports through Rev. G.M.Ophoff. The committee advised to proceed to form a classis. Two names are given for consideration. Received for information.

At this point in the minutes, the following appears, apparently at the insistence of Rev. H. Danhof and Kalamazoo's elders:

An instruction is read from Kalamazoo requesting that a broad committee be appointed to try to remove all the differences among us. Received for information. (supplement 3)

However, the combined consistories chose not to treat this instruction from Kalamazoo immediately, as the same minute continues:

The matter of permanent organization is now discussed.

By majority vote it is decided to proceed at once toward permanent organization and the forming of a classis. Which for the present will be the broadest gathering with two delegates from each consistory.

When voting was still done by consistories, the following consistories voted in favor of organizing as classis before the next meeting: Eastern Ave., Hope, Waupun, Doon, Grandville Ave., Hudsonville, and Hull. Against: Kalamazoo and Munster. Byron Center did not express itself.

The names for our churches as proposed by the committee are now discussed. Two more are added to the floor. After some discussion out of these four the name adopted was: The Protestant Reformed Churches.

It is noteworthy that Rev. Henry Danhof, who had pushed for the organization of a classis at the first meeting of the combined

consistories, opposed the same a year and a half later. Rev. Hoeksema relates that Rev. Henry Danhof and some of the Kalamazoo elders soon left the meeting, never to return.⁹ (The minutes do not record their leaving.)

However, the combined consistories did act on the instruction of Kalamazoo mentioned in Article 11 above. The consistory of Kalamazoo wrote as follows:

Instruction from Kalamazoo.

Kalamazoo proposes that because of the tension a broad committee be appointed, consisting of the ministers and two elders from Eastern Ave., two from Kalamazoo, and one from each of the other churches, having as its purpose to try to remove the mutual differences, and also to lead into proper channels with the help of the Lord, the matters that we all have in common, and which will report to the next combined consistory meeting the results thereby attained.

The consistories adopted the following:

Decided to appoint a committee for this purpose, two from Kalamazoo, two from Eastern Ave., one from Hope, one from Byron Center, one from Hudsonville and one from Grandville Ave. The consistories will appoint the members from their own number and send the name and address to Mr. C. Lemmers, 318 John Ct., Kalamazoo, Mich., who will call the meeting.

Unfortunately there is no further mention found of this committee because the minutes of the February 3 meeting are missing. Rev. Hoeksema relates that at the February 1927 classis this committee reported "complete failure" in trying to resolve the differences. He wrote further:

The classis then decided to express that as long as the Reverend H. Danhof would not change his attitude, it was neither possible nor desirable to seek his co-operation. A copy of this decision was sent to the consistory of the Kalamazoo Church.

9. *Protestant Reformed Churches*, p. 286.

Since that time the Church of Kalamazoo has led a separate life. It is known as the Protesting First Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo.¹⁰

Rev. Hoeksema adds, “Thus, amid strife and trouble, the new denomination of Protestant Reformed Churches was born.”

The first two years of the combined consistory meetings was indeed a tumultuous period. Not only did the little band of churches face denominational and family pressures for standing for the truth of sovereign grace, endure loss of church property, and experience financial hardships, they had to deal with these bitter internal disagreements besides. Clearly, it is only by the grace of God that the movement did not disintegrate. Like the apostle Paul who in I Corinthians 15:8 described himself “as one born out of due time (literally: out of an abortion or miscarriage), so the Protestant Reformed Churches were “born out of due time” — despised and hated. Yet, adds Paul, “But by the grace of God I am what I am.” Likewise the Protestant Reformed Churches. ●

Appendix 1

Act of Agreement

1. Whereas the Synod of 1924, assembled in Kalamazoo, Mich., adopted three points of doctrine which, according to our most sacred conviction, are in direct conflict with our Reformed Confessions and principles;
2. Whereas, by the actions of Classis Grand Rapids East and Classis Grand Rapids West, we are denied the right to discuss and interpret said three points of doctrine of said Synod;
3. Whereas, by the actions of said Classes, the pastors, elders and deacons of Kalamazoo I, Hope and Eastern Avenue, together with their congregations are actually expelled from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Churches;

10. *Protestant Reformed Churches*, p. 287.

4. Whereas it follows necessarily from the action of said Classes, that said office-bearers and their congregations cannot simply submit themselves to the action of said Classes until such time as Synod shall have considered their appeal, which they made in a legal way to Synod, but were forced by circumstances to continue to function in their respective offices as pastors, elders and deacons of their respective congregations;

5. Whereas they are informed and know positively, that hundreds of our people outside of our own congregations share our convictions and with us cannot acquiesce in the actions of Classes and Synod, neither from a doctrinal nor from a Church-political viewpoint;

6. Whereas the above-mentioned matters concern us as appealing churches in common, and demand our cooperation and united action;

Therefore, be it resolved by the Combined Consistories of Kalamazoo I, Hope and Eastern Avenue, assembled March 6, 1925 in the Eastern Avenue Church:

a. That we adopt as our common basis the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of the Reformed Churches;

b. That at the same time we stand on the basis of our appeal and intend to address our appeal to the Synod of 1926;

c. That we unite as Consistories for the following purposes: (1) To unitedly bring our appeal from the actions of Classes Grand Rapids East and West to the Synod of 1926. (2) To decide on such matters as have reference to the interests of our congregations in common; (3) To decide in all matters that pertain to the furnishing of information and advice to others, outside of our own congregations.

d. That whatever shall be decided by said combined Consistories by a majority-vote, shall be considered firm and binding.

Appendix 2

Rev. B. J. Danhof's Letter to *De Wachter*, December 29, 1926
Source: *Protestant Reformed Churches*, pp. 283-4.

Of a few things I must unburden my heart.

I must acknowledge that after proper consideration and constant deliberation I cannot be satisfied with the standpoint of Reverend H. Hoeksema and others. To my consciousness there are elements in Holy Scripture for the which they cannot find a place in their theological system, not, at least, the proper place according to Scripture. Therefore, I have a desire to confess that I went too far in my condemnation of the Christian Reformed Churches, also with respect to the decisions of the Synod of 1924, namely, with regard to the Three Points. And since in the past I slandered persons and churches, therefore I also make a public confession and at the same time seek forgiveness.

To my consciousness the views of Hoeksema and others can only end in dead orthodoxy and philosophical determinism. Many psychological conceptions have been discarded and I have experienced that this is true not only from a theoretical, but also from a practical viewpoint.

I am sorry that I ever went along and thus became schismatic. My prayer is that all the involved brethren and sisters in the Protestant congregations will follow my example, as several members of my own congregation already did, and return to the Christian Reformed Churches.

Asking you, Mr. Editor, to allow this a place in *De Wachter*, and thanking you for its publication, I am with loving regards,

B.J. Danhof.

A Review Article

David J. Engelsma

The Federal Vision, ed. Steve Wilkins and Duane Garner. Monroe, Louisiana: Athanasius Press, 2004. Pp. 299. \$21.95 (paper).

Written by several of the leading proponents of the heresy now solidly entrenched in most of the reputedly conservative Presbyterian and Reformed churches, and spreading, *The Federal Vision* brazenly defends justification by works; universal covenant grace to every child of believing parents, if not to every person sprinkled with water in the name of the triune God; an election unto grace that fails to save; baptismal regeneration; and the falling away of many who were once united to Christ. Among the authors are Steve Wilkins, John Barach, Rich Lusk, Peter J. Leithart, Steve Schlissel, and Douglas Wilson.

Justification by Works

The movement that calls itself the “federal vision” teaches justification by the obedience of the sinner. “The presuppositions undergirding Paul’s statement [in Romans 2:13] include the facts that the Law is ‘obeyable,’ that truly responding to the Law (the Word) in faith does justify” (Schlissel, p. 260). Romans 2:13 states that “the doers of the law shall be justified.” Schlissel’s comment on the text, that the “Law is ‘obeyable,’” affirms justification by deeds of obedience to the law.

Schlissel denies that Romans 3:28 has any and all human works in view when it speaks of the “deeds of the law”: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Rather, the reference is only to “Jewish” deeds, that is, ceremonial works done with the motive of meriting salvation (pp. 260, 261). According to Schlissel, the apostle merely excludes “Jewish” deeds from justification. Other deeds, deeds performed by the believer in the power of true faith, are included in justification. The apostle Paul concluded that a man is justified by faith *without* deeds—any deed and all deeds. Steve Schlissel concludes

that a man is justified by faith *with* deeds—deeds performed by faith.

Peter Leithart charges the Reformation with distorting the truth of justification: “The Reformation doctrine of justification has illegitimately narrowed and to some extent distorted the biblical doctrine” (p. 209). The distortion is the Reformation’s sharply distinguishing justification and sanctification and its insistence that justification is a verdict (pp. 211, 213). Leithart argues that justification in Scripture has “a much wider scope of application than the strictly judicial” (p. 209). In fact, according to Leithart, “justifying is never *merely (sic)* declaring a verdict” (p. 213; the emphasis is the author’s). Justification is also the sanctifying work of God within the sinner enabling him to perform good works, which then become part of his righteousness with God, as Rome has been teaching for the past five hundred years.

Resistible Grace

The “federal vision” teaches that the saving grace of God in Christ is universal within the sphere of the covenant, but that this grace can be resisted and lost. Everyone who is baptized, particularly every child of believing parents who is baptized, is savingly united to Christ, although many later fall away and perish.

Non-elect covenant members are actually brought to Christ, united to Him and the Church in baptism, receive various gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, and may even be said to be loved by God for a time.... In some sense, they were really joined to the elect people, really sanctified by Christ’s blood, and really recipients of new life given by the Holy Spirit. The sacraments they received had objective force and efficacy (Lusk, p. 288).

God truly brings those people into His covenant, into union with Christ. They are “in Him,” to use Jesus’ words in John 15. They share in His blessings (think of Hebrews 6). They experience His love, but that covenant relationship is conditional. It calls for repentance and faith and new obedience. God’s *choice* was not conditional, but life in the covenant is (Barach, p. 37; the emphasis is the author’s).

The new covenant theology in the Reformed and Presbyterian churches teaches that election fails to save many whom God chooses. It teaches that the *eternal election of Ephesians 1:4 and Colossians 3:12* fails to save many who are the objects of this gracious choice. "And yet not all who are united to the Elect One, Jesus Christ, remain in Him and fulfill the high vocation that election brings with it. It is still to be seen who will persevere and who will fall away from within the elect people" (Lusk, p. 294).

The movement teaches baptismal regeneration. The ceremony of sprinkling with water in the name of the triune God effects the temporary regeneration and salvation of everyone baptized. It effects regeneration by the power of the Spirit, but the ceremony regenerates and saves everyone who is baptized, particularly every infant of godly parents. This regeneration and salvation can be lost. "The threshold into union with Christ, new life in the Spirit, and covenant membership in the family of God is actually crossed when the child is baptized" (Lusk, p. 109).

The advocates of the "federal vision" teach the falling away of covenant saints from saving covenant grace. They teach the falling away of saints aggressively. The falling away of covenant saints is one of their favorite doctrines.

Those who ultimately prove to be reprobate may be in covenant with God. They may enjoy for a season the blessings of the covenant, including the forgiveness of sins, adoption, possession of the kingdom, sanctification, etc., and yet apostatize and fall short of the grace of God (Wilkins, p. 62).

Clearly, then, Hebrews 6:4-8 teaches the possibility of a real apostasy. Some people do indeed fall away, and it is a *real* fall *from* grace. Apostates actually lose blessings they once possessed. Apostasy is so terribly heinous precisely because it is sin against grace (Lusk, p. 274; the emphasis is the author's).

Rich Lusk manages to incorporate all of the false doctrines mentioned above in a paragraph that could have been written by James Arminius or Cardinal Bellarmine.

All covenant members are invited to attain to a full and robust confidence that they are God's eternally elect ones. Starting with their baptisms, they have every reason to believe God loves them and desires their eternal salvation. Baptism marks them out as God's elect people, a status they maintain so long as they persevere in faithfulness. By looking to Christ alone, the preeminently Elect One, the One who kept covenant to the end and is the Author and Finisher of the faith of God's people, they may find assurance. But those who take their eyes off Christ, who desert the Church where His presence is found, who forsake the external means of salvation, will make shipwreck of their faith and prove to have received the grace of God in vain (p. 289).

The "federal vision" rejects sovereign grace in the sphere of the covenant. In the sphere of the covenant, particularly among the children of believers, election fails, Christ died for all, grace is resistible, justification is by works, saved saints fall away to perdition, and salvation depends on the will of the sinner.

A Conditional Covenant

The root of the heresy is an erroneous doctrine of the covenant. The "federal vision" is covenant doctrine through and through. The doctrine of the covenant being developed by the movement teaches that God graciously makes His covenant with all the children of believers alike. In the sphere of the covenant, regarding all baptized babies without exception, grace is universal. The movement is one of covenantal universalism. But the covenant is conditional. Whether the covenant is continued with a child, whether a child continues in the covenant, whether a child continues to enjoy union with Christ and covenant grace, and whether a child is finally saved by the grace of the covenant depend upon the child's faith and obedience. The movement is full-fledged Arminianism in the realm of the covenant.

In short, the error whence all the denial of sovereign, particular, irresistible grace springs is a covenant doctrine that refuses to permit God's election to control covenant grace and salvation.

[Hebrews 6 and similar] passages simply speak of the *undifferen-*

tiated grace of God (Lusk, pp. 275, 276; the emphasis is the author's).

God truly brings those people into His covenant, into union with Christ. They are "in Him," to use Jesus' words in John 15. They share in His blessings (think of Hebrews 6). They experience His love, but that covenant relationship is conditional. It calls for repentance and faith and new obedience. God's *choice* was not conditional, but life in the covenant is (Barach, p. 37; the emphasis is the author's).

To be in covenant is to have the treasures of God's mercy and grace and the love which He has for His own Son given to you. But the covenant is not *unconditional*. It requires persevering faithfulness.... The covenant is dependent upon persevering faith (Wilkins, pp. 64, 65; the emphasis is the author's).

Our salvation covenant with the Lord is like a marriage. If we persevere in loyalty to Christ, we will live with Him happily ever after. If we break the marriage covenant, He will divorce us (Lusk, pp. 285, 286).

Contempt for the Creeds

The Reformed creeds mean nothing to these men, all of whom loudly protest that they are Reformed. The Canons of Dordt reject the Arminian heresy that "there is one election unto faith and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith without being a decisive election unto salvation." The reason is that this teaching is "a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the Scriptures, whereby the doctrine of election is corrupted, and this golden chain of our salvation is broken: 'And whom He foreordained, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified' (Rom. 8:30)" (Canons of Dordt, I, Rejection of Errors/2). Contradicting the Canons and breaking the "golden chain of our salvation" bother Rich Lusk not at all. With (undocumented) appeal to Augustine, he distinguishes a "predestination unto grace," which is only temporary and does "not lead to final salvation," from "predestination unto perseverance," which does issue in final salvation (p. 275).

With cavalier disregard for the teaching of the Reformed creeds, James B. Jordan denies that Jesus *merited* salvation for His people. "Nowhere [in Scripture] is Jesus' accomplishment spoken of as earning salvation" (p. 192). "What we receive is not Jesus' merits, but His maturity, His glorification" (p. 195).

Absurdity and "Fuzzy-edged Mystery"

The presence in the book of James Jordan is significant. Jordan is one of the old-guard Christian Reconstructionists, involved, if I am not mistaken, in the fiasco of Tyler, Texas, where an early attempt to bring in Christian Reconstruction's earthly kingdom died aborning. Jordan connects the original movement of Christian Reconstruction with its contemporary manifestation. It should not be overlooked that most of the men of the "federal vision" are zealots on behalf of postmillennial Christian Reconstruction.

James B. Jordan is the wildest hare started by Christian Reconstruction. His speciality is allegorical, fantastical exegesis. In comparison with Jordan, Origen and Harold Camping are pikers. According to Jordan, in his essay in *The Federal Vision*, Adam in Paradise would eventually have eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with God's approval. Adam would then have died a "good-death." By this "good-death," he would have been glorified, maturing into eternal life. This would have enabled Adam to fight the dragon for a while in the unfallen world at large. But Adam would have needed help. Help would have appeared in the form, not of St. George or Frodo, but of the incarnate Son of God. The eternal Son would have become incarnate even if Adam had remained obedient. But the incarnate Son likewise would have passed through the "good-death" of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so that He too could "mature."

This fantasy is further embellished by Jordan with mind-boggling theories about garments and distinctions among animal, vegetable, and mineral (pp. 151-200).

If James Jordan is the exegete of the "federal vision," the movement is not only heretical but also absurd.

The absurd is unintelligible.

Theological unintelligibility does not trouble Rich Lusk. Bravely drawing the inevitable conclusion from his premise that the Bible is not logical, Lusk is content to “live with fuzzy-edged mystery” (p. 279). “Fuzzy-edged mystery” is “federal vision” language for ignorance. The specific area in which Lusk is content to live in his “fuzzy-edged mystery” is the biblical doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Lusk readily admits that his doctrine of an illogical Bible, which is full of contradictions, particularly concerning the perseverance of the saints, derives from his “biblical-theological/redemptive-historical” method of interpreting the Bible, in opposition to what Lusk calls a “systematic/dogmatic” method (p. 280).

In fact, Lusk’s “fuzzy-edged mystery” is due to his denial that Holy Scripture as the inspired Word of God is non-contradictory and logical, as non-contradictory and logical as the God whose Word it is. As the written Word of God, Scripture is clear, sharp-edged, and certain revelation, particularly of God’s preservation unto glory of every recipient of His grace. Scripture is clear, sharp-edged, and certain *to faith*.

“Luther’s Malady”

It falls to Steve Schlissel to make the most despicable attack on the gospel of grace. Schlissel calls Luther’s knowledge of himself as a guilty sinner before a just God, out of which Spirit-worked knowledge came his understanding of the Bible’s gospel of justification by faith alone, “Luther’s malady” (p. 255). Luther’s sickness! Justification by faith alone, therefore, is a diseased doctrine. Since justification by faith alone is the cornerstone of the entire Reformation gospel, the entire Reformation gospel of sovereign grace is sick.

This “malady,” the men of the “federal vision” are determined to cure by a massive infusion of works-righteousness into the theology of Presbyterian and Reformed churches and into the spiritual lives of Presbyterian and Reformed people. The device by which works-righteousness is injected into the bloodstream of the churches and people influenced by the “federal vision” is a conditional doctrine of the covenant.

The heresy of the “federal vision” is deep and broad. It penetrates to the heart of the gospel, and it extends to all the doctrines of grace.

It can be refuted and rooted out only by the doctrine of a covenant of unconditional, particular grace.

And this is why the Presbyterian and Reformed churches where the heresy is boldly taught are both unwilling and unable to resist it. ●

Should the Mass Really Be Condemned?

Clayton W. Spronk

Introduction

Question 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks: “What difference is there between the Lord’s Supper and the popish mass?”¹ This question has always been controversial because of its sharp conclusion that the mass is “nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry.” This paper intends to study this controversial question by facing the simple question: Should Q. 80 be a part of the confession of the Reformed churches?

In answering the question of whether or not Q. 80 should remain a part of the Catechism, I will begin by looking at how important this question was historically and is today for Reformed Christians. The importance of the teaching of Q. 80 sheds light on whether or not the question ought to be confessed by Reformed Christians. Secondly, I will look at how Q. 80 fits in with teachings of the Heidelberg Catechism. This is an important issue because there are some who argue that Q. 80 is out of harmony with the rest of the Catechism. Finally, I will examine the accuracy of Q. 80’s teachings concerning the mass. Specifically I will look at Q. 80’s charge that the mass is a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Christ and an accursed idolatry.

The Importance of Q. 80

In the 1500s

The difference between the Lord’s Supper and the mass was an important issue in the sixteenth century, when the Catechism

1. *The Creeds of Christendom*, ed. by Philip Schaff, vol. 3: *The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), p. 335. All of the quotations from the Heidelberg Catechism come from *The Creeds of Christendom*.

was written. This question was so important that it was the one question that was added to the Catechism after its original publication. Somewhere around February of 1563 the Catechism appeared in its first edition in German. In that first edition this question was absent. The question was added as part of the second German edition and the first Latin edition — both published in March of 1563.²

Zacharias Ursinus, one of the two authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, explained the importance of this question and why it must be included in the catechism.

This Question is necessary on account of the errors, and horrid abuses which the mass has introduced into the Church. It is otherwise asked, Why is the mass to be abolished? This question, however, is contained in the above; because the differences which exist between the Lord's supper and the Popish mass, constitute the reasons why the mass is to be abolished.³

Ursinus shows that the purpose of the Catechism is not simply to explain how the mass and the Lord's Supper differ from each other, but to show that, because of these differences, the mass must be abolished.

Ursinus' exposition of the Catechism points out three differences between the Lord's Supper and the mass. First, the Lord's Supper teaches that forgiveness is accomplished only by Jesus' death on the cross. Secondly, in the mass Christ is bodily present in the bread and the wine, whereas the Lord's Supper teaches that He is in heaven. Thirdly, in the Lord's Supper Christ is worshiped in heaven above, whereas in the mass He is said to be worshiped in the elements.⁴ Based on these three differences between the

2. Cf. *The Creeds*, p. 336, fn. 1. Cf. also the Christian Reformed Church's *Agenda for Synod 2004* (Grand Rapids: CRCNA, 2004), p. 279.

3. Zacharias Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*. Tr. G.W. Williard. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, no date), p. 417.

4. *Commentary on the Heidelberg*, pp. 417-418.

mass and the Lord's Supper, Ursinus gave nine reasons why the mass ought to be abolished.⁵

Ursinus' explanation points out that it is important to recognize the differences between the Lord's Supper and the mass, not just so that Rome is condemned, but so that Reformed churches and believers are warned against corrupting the Lord's Supper. It is often pointed out that Q. 80 was added after the Council of Trent published its condemnation of Reformed teachings. Thus, it is argued that Q. 80 is "a counterblast to the anathemas of the Council of Trent."⁶ One is left with the impression that especially Emperor Frederick simply wanted to condemn the Roman Catholic Church since Rome condemned the Reformed churches. Though it *may* be true that this question and answer was added in response to the Council of Trent, it certainly is not true that the significance of this question and answer in its sixteenth century context is limited to its condemnation of Rome. Reformed Christians living in the sixteenth century needed this explanation of the differences between the Lord's Supper and the mass. More than just being taught the differences between the two, many in that day needed to be taught that the mass must be condemned. In Q. 80 the Catechism is following the lead of John Calvin in counseling the people against dishonoring Christ and worshiping an idol by participating in the mass.

In Calvin's Geneva, a city dominated by the Reformation, it was relatively easy for those who converted to the Reformed faith to shun the mass and celebrate the Lord's Supper. But for those who converted to the Reformed faith and lived in regions that were dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, unpleasant consequences were attendant with rejection of the mass. These people faced the strong temptation to compromise their convictions with regard to the mass.

From the relative safety of Geneva, Calvin sympathized with Reformed believers who struggled with the issue of whether or

5. *Commentary on the Heidelberg*, pp. 421-423.

6. *The Creeds*, p. 336, fn. 1.

not they could participate in Roman Catholic ceremonies, including the mass. To a brother who lived in France, Calvin wrote, “I feel extremely sorry on your account, and, as in duty bound, pity your situation, in not being able to come forth out of Egypt in which so many Idols and so much monstrous Idolatry are daily presented to your eyes.”⁷ Calvin recognized that this brother and others lived in situations that made living according to the Reformed faith difficult, “unless they make a pretence of indulging in Idolatry.”⁸

Participation in the mass was not just a temptation, but a reality, for Reformed Christians who lived in Roman Catholic strongholds. These people came up with many arguments to justify their actions. Calvin summarized their main argument:

Their language is to this effect: Since neither the sacrilegious idea of Sacrificing Christ, nor the absurd opinion of the change of Bread into God, nor any of those Superstitions which make the Mass impious, have any place in our minds, the external rites by the exhibition of which we are compelled to satisfy the unjust demands of men, be they what they may, are of no great consequence, as they cannot prevent us from celebrating the Holy Supper of the Lord instead of the Mass.⁹

People who claimed to be converts to the Reformed faith argued that they could properly partake of the Lord’s Supper by participating in the mass. They admitted that there were unbiblical ceremonies attached to the mass, but they argued that whether or not one participated in these ceremonies belonged to the area of Christian liberty. Indeed, some who were clergymen in the Roman Catholic Church, according to Calvin, asked to be excused for administering the mass. Calvin responded sharply, saying this was “Truly a shameless request! They are to be allowed to preside at Mass, though I

7. John Calvin, “On Shunning the Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly, and Preserving the Purity of the Christian Religion.” In *John Calvin’s Tracts and Treatises*, vol. III, tr. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), p. 360.

8. John Calvin, “On Shunning...,” p. 361.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 387, 388.

have long been maintaining on the strongest grounds that Christian men ought not even to be present at it!"¹⁰

Calvin recognized that there were areas of Christian liberty, or what he called "things indifferent." One could observe some of Rome's rites, *as long as these rites did not violate his conscience*. For example, Calvin did not accuse anyone of sinning if he abstained from meat because the pope forbade eating meat on a certain day. These and other rites of Rome could be observed without becoming guilty of false worship. However, Calvin denied this was the case with other rites, of which he wrote, "Those which bear the smallest impress of sacrilege, you are no more to touch than you would the venom of a serpent." Calvin went on to point out which rites were not to be observed by Reformed Christians: "Under this latter head I include the Worship of Images, the receiving of Extreme Unction, the Purchase of Indulgences, the Sprinkling of Water...and several other rites in themselves damnable."¹¹ The mass is left out of this list, not because Calvin sees it as an acceptable rite, but because he treats it later as the most abominable of all of Rome's rites. Calvin viewed the mass as the most clear example of the type of ceremony that a Christian may not partake in even though it is said to be performed in the service of God.¹² In another place Calvin called the mass "that head of all abominations.... In it every imaginable kind of gross profanity is perpetrated."¹³ From this it is clear that Calvin believed that partaking of the mass was a more evident form of false worship even than image worship! Therefore, he taught that anyone who partook of the mass was guilty of taking part in idol worship.

From Calvin's treatment of the mass, we see how important it was for the Reformed churches not only to teach the differences between the mass and the Lord's Supper, but also to delineate those differences in their confessions. Reformed Christians needed

10. John Calvin, "On Shunning....," p. 387.

11. John Calvin, "On Shunning....," p. 379.

12. John Calvin, "On Shunning....," pp. 379, 380.

13. John Calvin, "On Shunning....," p. 360.

to see that partaking of the mass was not an acceptable way to partake of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, the Heidelberg Catechism spelled out the differences and condemned the mass in Q. 80, making this teaching binding for all Reformed Christians.

For Reformed churches, Q. 80 draws a sharp line between the Reformed churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Believing that Rome has corrupted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the proper administration of which is one of the marks of the true church, and has become guilty of worshipping a false god, Reformed churches denounce Rome as a false church in Q. 80. Q. 80 shuts off ecumenical relations between Reformed denominations and the Roman Catholic Church. Q. 80 eliminates the possibility of Reformed Christians and Roman Catholics worshipping together.

What is at stake regarding the Reformed churches' confession of Q. 80 is that, on the one hand, by maintaining this question as part of their confession, Reformed churches sharply distinguish themselves from the Roman Catholic Church and, on the other hand, if the Reformed churches repudiate this question and answer, they blur the distinction between themselves and the Roman Catholic Church.

Today

The importance of Q. 80 is the same today as it was in the sixteenth century. Today Reformed churches are interested in establishing relations with the Roman Catholic Church. Especially the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) has worked toward establishing relations with the Roman Catholic Church in recent years. The CRC has recognized that in establishing these relations with the RCC it must deal with Q. 80, since confessing this question and answer forbids such relations. For this reason the CRC synod has decided that Q. 80 is no longer binding.

That Q. 80 was an obstacle for ecumenical relations was not one of the grounds that the CRC synod gave for rescinding this question; nevertheless, that this is the underlying reason is evident in several ways. First, the synod assigned the study of Q. 80 to its Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC). That synod would

assign a matter of official church dogma to a committee that has to do with ecumenicity indicates that the goal of studying this issue was to establish relations with the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁴ Second, when the IRC reported to synod 2004 that it had begun dialoguing with the RCC, it exclaimed that this is “an ecumenical breakthrough for the CRCNA that we should not lose sight of. It also represents an opportunity for further dialogue that should not be lost.”¹⁵ Third, the synod endorsed the IRC’s enthusiasm for this dialogue with the RCC, instructing the IRC to include a point in its prefatory statement that says, “the dialogue with the Catholic bishops was fruitful and represents an effort to promote the unity of the church that is consistent with Christ’s prayer for the unity of the church and with our own ecumenical principles.”¹⁶ Fourth, Lyle Bierma, a member of the IRC, in his analysis of the CRC’s examination of Q. 80 admits that this examination is part of a conscious effort on the part of the CRC to establish official relations between the CRC and the RCC.

Bierma wrote, “These dialogues [between the IRC and Roman Catholic bishops] represent a larger shift taking place in CRC ecumenical relations.” Bierma noted that the CRC’s ties with conservative Presbyterian and Reformed denominations had been severed. With those old ecumenical relations severed, the CRC has made ties with more liberal Reformed churches. “The CRC’s willingness finally to reexamine HC 80 and to dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church can be explained in part by these other changes in its ecumenical posture,” explained Bierma. Accord-

14. The CRC actually first dealt with question 80 in 1975 (cf. Acts of Synod 1975, pp. 106, 646). Back then, the synod sent this issue to its “New Confession Committee,” which seems to be a somewhat more appropriate committee for studying a confessional statement. This committee reported back to synod in 1977 and recommended that synod not change the catechism (cf. Acts of Synod 1977, p. 658). The synod adopted this committee’s recommendations. Although in 2004 the IRC in effect recommended that synod overturn its decision of 1977, it inexplicably ignores this decision in its reports.

15. Acts of Synod 2004 of the Christian Reformed Church, p. 627.

16. Acts of Synod 2004, pp. 568, 569.

ing to Bierma, the CRC's conversations with the RCC concerning Q. 80 is an important effort in manifesting the visible unity of the church.¹⁷

Based on its desire to establish relations with Rome, the CRC has modified the Catechism. Q. 80 still appears in the CRC's official printing of the Catechism, but it appears with two footnotes. The second footnote explains,

The synod of 2004 concluded that the Mass, when celebrated in accordance with official Roman Catholic teaching, neither denies the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ nor constitutes idolatry. The same synod also concluded that Q. and A. 80 still contains a pointed warning against any teachings, attitudes, or practices related to the Eucharist that either deny the finality and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on the cross or contribute to idolatrous worship. Therefore, Q. and A. 80 was not removed from the text but retained in a smaller font.¹⁸

This explanation of Q. 80 effectively opens the door not only for the CRC to establish ecumenical ties with the RCC but also for members of the CRC to participate in the mass. This is true despite the CRC synod's statement that though it had modified the Catechism, "these modifications to the catechism do not imply an endorsement of Roman Catholic sacramental theology. In fact, significant differences remain between the Reformed and Roman Catholic understandings of the Lord's Supper."¹⁹ Although synod 2004 declared that there are differences between the CRC's understanding of the Lord's Supper and the RCC's understanding, these differences are not explained in or as part of the confession. The confession of the CRC is that Q. 80 is no longer binding and is wrong in its assessment of the mass. Thus, even though the CRC does not endorse the RCC's "sacramental theology," it has

17. Lyle D. Bierma, "CRC Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church," *Calvin Theological Seminary Forum* Winter 2004, p. 8.

18. Agenda for Synod 2004, p. 305.

19. Acts of Synod 2004, p. 568.

removed the confessional ground for condemning and abolishing the mass.

It may not happen overnight that members of the CRC will partake of the mass, but Bierma's discussion of the future fruit of the CRC's dialogue with the RCC shows the direction the relationship between the two churches is headed. He asks, "Where might this next round of discussion lead? To certificates of baptism that officially recognize a common baptism in both traditions? To some movement toward participation in each other's celebration of the Eucharist?"²⁰ Bierma is not just speaking about what he will do in the future but about what the denomination will be doing in the future. Bierma's language indicates that he, and those in the CRC who think like him, could just as well already participate in the mass. For Bierma no longer distinguishes between the popish mass and the Lord's Supper, but he refers to both as the celebration of the Eucharist. But no matter what language Bierma may use, it is evident that the way is open for members of the CRC to participate in what Q. 80 calls "the Popish Mass."

Whether it has done so rightly or wrongly, the CRC's decision to "modify" the Heidelberg Catechism has serious implications. First, it means, at the least, that the CRC has lost part of the distinctiveness that separates Reformed churches from the RCC. Secondly, it means that the CRC no longer condemns Rome's view of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This, along with the fact that the CRC desires ecumenical relations with Rome, indicates that the CRC no longer views Rome as a false church, as Reformed churches have historically viewed Rome. Thirdly, the CRC now condemns Reformed Christians, past and present, who confess Q. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Synod 2004 cited Heidelberg Catechism question and answer 112, which treats the ninth commandment, in order to explain that it believed that it had to modify the Heidelberg Catechism so that it could confess the truth and promote the name of its neighbor, the RCC.²¹ This means that the CRC confessed that it had sinned against the ninth

20. Bierma, p. 8.

21. Acts of Synod 2004, p. 568.

commandment because Q. 80 bore false witness against Rome. Therefore, in order to stop bearing false witness, the CRC dropped Q. 80. By implication, the CRC now accuses every Reformed church and every Reformed Christian who still confesses Q. 80 of breaking the ninth commandment. Thus, the CRC's repudiation of Q. 80 is a matter of great interest for the whole Reformed church world.

Q. 80 is just as important a practical question today as it was over 400 years ago. Is the mass to be sharply distinguished from the Lord's Supper? May Reformed Christians celebrate the mass? Should the RCC be viewed as a false church? Are Reformed Christians who condemn the mass as a denial of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ and as an accursed idolatry guilty of bearing false witness? These and other questions are at stake with regard to Q. 80.

Does Q. 80 Fit into the Catechism?

Those who want to drop Q. 80 from the Heidelberg Catechism often assert that Q. 80 does not fit in with the tone of the catechism. This assertion is intended to show that the question's position in the confession is dubious at best. Though this assertion is not intended to prove that Q. 80 is inaccurate, it is used to show that Q. 80 does not fit in the Catechism and could easily be dropped from it. Therefore, this assertion has become part of the debate surrounding Q. 80.

The basic assertion is that the Catechism is on the whole a positive document, and Q. 80 is a negative question that was added later and does not fit in with the tone of the Catechism. I first heard this assertion as a sophomore at Dordt College in a theology class in 1997. Already then a professor at a Reformed college that is tied to the CRC was teaching about eighty students that Q. 80 really did not fit in the Heidelberg Catechism. That this assertion had legs is evident from the fact that it found its way into the IRC's report on Q. 80.

The section of the IRC's report that sets forth the Catechism's teaching concerning the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper begins with this statement: "In its predominantly irenic spirit, the Heidelberg Catechism presents its teaching on the Lord's Sup-

per in questions 75-79.” Later the report says, “Then, in an uncharacteristically polemical manner, the Heidelberg Catechism proceeds—in Q. and A. 80—to single out and contrast certain aspects of its teaching with their counterparts in the Roman Catholic Church regarding the mass.”²² The IRC asserts that Q. 80 does not fit in with the “predominantly irenic spirit” of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Since the IRC does not attempt to make this assertion into an argument, it may seem like a minor point, but it is an important point because this assertion dishonestly poisons the waters against Q. 80. It is not true that Q. 80 is uncharacteristically polemical. Q. 80 is indeed the only question that explicitly names Rome, by calling Rome’s ceremony the “Popish Mass.” But there are many other questions in the Catechism that explicitly and sharply condemn doctrines taught by the RCC.

For example, Lord’s Day 11 asks, “Do such then believe in Jesus the only Savior, who seek their salvation and welfare of saints, of themselves, or anywhere else?” The Catechism is looking squarely at Rome in this question when it speaks of seeking salvation and welfare of saints. The Catechism sharply condemns Rome in the answer to this question. The Catechism says that by looking to saints, Rome denies Jesus as the complete Savior! The Catechism also explicitly condemns Roman Catholic doctrine in Lord’s Day 34, question 94. The Catechism condemns Rome’s practice of praying to saints as a violation of the first commandment. Again in question 98 the Catechism condemns Rome for its use of images as books to the laity as a violation of the second commandment. Other examples may be used, but these suffice to prove that the Catechism is just as polemical in other questions as it is in Q. 80. Certainly it cannot be argued that charging Rome with denying that Jesus is the complete Savior and with breaking the first two commandments is any less serious than condemning the mass to be an accursed idolatry. There is no ground for the assertion that Q. 80 does not fit with the tone of the Catechism. If

22. Agenda for Synod 2004 of the Christian Reformed Church, p. 290.

Q. 80 is going to be removed from the catechism, its teaching must be proved to be inaccurate in condemning the mass for denying the one sacrifice of Christ and for being an accursed idolatry.

Does the Mass Deny the One Sacrifice of Christ?

In distinguishing between the Lord's Supper and the mass, Q. 80 states,

The Lord's Supper testifies to us that we have a full pardon of all sin by the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which He Himself has once accomplished on the cross; and that we by the Holy Ghost are ingrafted into Christ, ...but the mass teaches that the living and dead have not the pardon of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is also daily offered for them by the priests.

The point of difference set forth here between the Lord's Supper and the mass concerns the basis for forgiveness of sins and union with Christ. According to the Catechism, the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper is that it is a sign and seal to the believer that his sins have been fully paid for by Christ's one sacrifice on the cross. The Catechism then teaches that, in the mass, pardon of sins is said to be accomplished for the living and the dead by the daily sacrifices of the priest.

With regard to Christ being sacrificed in the mass, Q. 80 accurately explains official Roman Catholic teaching. The 22nd session of the Council of Trent, meeting in 1562, is entitled the "Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass." Throughout this section the Council sets forth and vehemently defends the view that Christ is sacrificed in the mass. In chapter 2 the Council compares the sacrifice of Christ on the cross with the mass when it says, "For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests who then offered Himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different." In Canons 1 and 2 the council anathematized those who teach that "in the mass a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God," and who deny that Christ ordained priests who "...should offer His (Christ's) own body and blood." Vatican II, the last major council of the RCC,

repeated Trent's teaching in connection with Christ's being sacrificed in the mass by quoting chapter 2 of the 22nd session and speaking of the "Sacrifice of the Mass."²³

For John Calvin Rome's view of the mass as a sacrifice was a fundamentally important issue. He wrote, "I only say, that every believer should be aware that the mere name of Sacrifice (as the priests of the mass understand it) both utterly abolishes the cross of Christ, and overturns his sacred Supper which he consecrated as a memorial of his death."²⁴ Calvin and the Reformers argued that offering Christ repeatedly in the mass denies the efficaciousness of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Accordingly, the Catechism condemns the mass as "a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ."

The IRC argued that the Catechism's judgment that the mass denies the one sacrifice of Christ is wrong. The IRC explained: "The *one* sacrifice, the *same* victim, is indeed offered but in an entirely different way, namely *sacramentally*."²⁵ According to the IRC, it is important to recognize the different manners in which, as Rome officially teaches, Christ was sacrificed on the cross and is sacrificed in the mass. They argue that the mass is not a repetition of the sacrifice on the cross, but a reenactment.

At first the IRC did not see that simply stating that the manner in which Christ is sacrificed is different proves that the mass does not detract from the cross. The committee saw that the forgiveness of sins is also an important issue with regard to Christ's cross and the mass. They told the bishops with whom they met that by mediating forgiveness as a reenactment of Christ's death the mass detracts from the cross of Christ. The IRC reported,

To this the Roman Catholic representatives responded: Since the Mass is a re-enactment of *the one final, sufficient, and unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ on the cross*, the Mass by its very nature as a sac-

23. *The Documents of Vatican II*. Tr. by Joseph Gallagher (Translation Editor). Edited by Walter M. Abbott (General Editor). (American Press, 1966), p. 4.

24. John Calvin, "On Shunning..." p. 383.

25. Agenda for Synod 2004, p. 283.

rament of that once-for-all event cannot detract from the one sacrifice of Christ.²⁶

In their response, the Roman Catholic bishops simply reaffirm what the Roman Catholic Church has always said in arguing that the mass does not detract from the one sacrifice of Christ. In Session 22, Canon 4, Trent anathematizes “anyone who says that by the sacrifice of the mass a blasphemy is cast upon the most holy sacrifice of Christ consummated on the cross or that the former derogates from the latter.” The response of Rome to the charge that the sacrifice of the mass denies the one sacrifice of Christ is that this is impossible because the mass is a different manner of sacrificing Christ. The implication is that the only way the one sacrifice of Christ can be denied is if someone nails a priest to a cross, calls him Christ, and teaches that this crucifixion will earn pardon for sins. Since this kind of sacrifice does not take place in the mass, according to Rome, the mass does not deny the one sacrifice of Christ.

The IRC’s report gives no indication that it was dissatisfied with Rome’s argument that the mass does not detract from the cross of Christ because it is a different manner of sacrifice. In his summary of the meetings between the IRC and the Roman Catholic bishops, Lyle Bierma indicates that the committee accepted this argument. He wrote,

Throughout the dialogue, the Roman Catholic representatives insisted that Heidelberg Catechism 80 does not accurately portray the mass. They pointed out, for example, that the claim that Christ must be offered up daily for the forgiveness of sins and that “thus the Mass is nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Christ” contradicts official Roman Catholic teaching. The Eucharist is not a re-sacrifice of Christ but a re-presentation or making present to us again of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross.²⁷

26. Agenda, p. 283.

27. Bierma, p. 7.

Bierma tacitly endorses the argument that Q. 80 is wrong because Christ is not crucified on a cross in the mass, but His crucifixion is merely made present again.

John Calvin also heard Rome's argument that the mass was only a re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice. Calvin wrote, "They say that the mass is not a new sacrifice, but only an application of the sacrifice of which we have spoken."²⁸ Calvin called this a "quibble" on their part. He did not accept this argument for two reasons. In the first place, he argued that Christ fulfilled all of the sacrifices by His one sacrifice.²⁹ Thus, to speak of a sacrifice of Christ offered by a priest, according to Calvin, necessarily detracts from the one sacrifice of Christ. Secondly, Calvin saw that even as a supposed re-enactment, the mass was seen by Rome as a sacrifice that has the same power as the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross—the power to obtain pardon for sins.³⁰

Calvin shows that the Reformed tradition interprets Scripture as teaching that Christ's one sacrifice paid for sins and fulfilled all of the Old Testament sacrifices, abolishing them forever. Hebrews 10:26 teaches that "there remaineth no more sacrifices." It is clear from Hebrews 10:1ff. that the sacrifices that remain no more are the Old Testament sacrifices. Verses 10 and 12 state that these sacrifices remain no more because Jesus made the one sacrifice that paid for the sins of His people forever. Verses 3 and 4 teach that the Old Testament sacrifices were repeated often because it was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. From these passages it is clear that if the Old Testament sacrifices remained, then the sacrifice of Jesus would not have once for all paid for our sins. But Hebrews teaches the superiority of Christ over the Old Testament types of bulls and goats in that His sacrifice actually paid for sins, and for that reason had to be made only once. According to John Knox, Hebrews "contends not only that there is no other sacrifice for sin, but also that

28. John Calvin, "Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ." In *John Calvin's Tracts and Treatises*, edited by T.F. Torrance, vol. II. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1958), p. 184.

29. Calvin, "Short Treatise...", p. 183.

30. Calvin, "Short Treatise...", p. 184.

the selfsame sacrifice, once offered, is sufficient, and *never may be offered again* [emphasis mine].”³¹

Based on Scripture’s teaching that Christ died once to pay for the sins of His people, abolishing all sacrifices, Q. 80 is accurate when it says that the Popish mass denies the one sacrifice and sufferings of Christ. Regardless of the manner in which the sacrifice is said to occur, any sacrifice that still exists after the sacrifice of Christ denies the one sacrifice of Christ.

Hebrews teaches that the manner of the sacrifice does not matter because any sacrifice that remains denies the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice. The sacrifice that remains denies the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice because the sacrifice that remains must pay for sins that Christ’s sacrifice did not pay for.

The IRC attempted to deny that Rome officially teaches that the mass is a sacrifice that pays for sins by asserting that Rome teaches that the mass sanctifies sinners but does not justify sinners. The IRC recognized that if the mass contributes to the justification of a sinner in the sense that one’s sins are forgiven on the basis of the sacrifice that takes place in the mass, then the mass would indeed deny the sacrifice of Christ. But the IRC argued that this is not taught by Rome. For example, the IRC explained that Rome teaches that the benefit of the mass for those who are supposedly in purgatory is that they are sanctified, not justified. The IRC explained,

The eternal state of those who die in the Lord is not in question. They are simply being purified for the state of full glorification. One might say, therefore, that in Roman Catholic teaching the effect of the mass on those who die in the Lord lies not in the area of justification but of (final) sanctification.³²

Based on this explanation of the mass’ benefit for the dead in purgatory, the IRC explained that Rome is not guilty of teaching a

31. John Knox. *True and False Worship, A Vindication of the Doctrine That the Mass Is Idolatry* (Dallas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1988), p. 20.

32. Agenda for Synod 2004, p. 284.

gross heresy that denies the basis of justification in the cross of Christ alone, but is guilty of teaching the minor error that the dead need to be sanctified. The committee argued: "Just as the Protestant affirmation of sanctification as a continuing process in the lives of believers does not detract from the finality or sufficiency of the cross, the belief that this process extends beyond death does not detract from the once-for-all sacrifice."³³

In the light of the Council of Trent's teaching in Chapter II of Session 22 that "the sacrifice of the mass is propitiatory both for the living and the dead,"³⁴ it is shocking that the committee could conclude that the mass merely sanctifies but does not justify. The committee was aware of this chapter in Trent but was convinced it does not officially teach that the mass justifies. The committee was convinced by the Roman Catholic bishops who told them that what Trent means when it says that the mass is "propitiatory" is "that in the Mass the fruits of Christ's propitiation become ours (a transfer that only happens in the context of faith)."³⁵

The IRC is wrong in its conclusion that Rome teaches only that the mass sanctifies, not that it justifies. Trent does not simply mean by "propitiatory" that Christ's propitiation is appropriated by the believer in the mass. Trent explains what it means by "propitiatory" when it says: "For, appeased by this sacrifice, the Lord grants the grace and gift of penitence and pardons even the gravest crimes and sins." "This sacrifice" does not refer to Christ's sacrifice on the cross, but to the sacrifice of the mass. The sacrifice of the mass appeases God so that He *pardons* sins. God's act of pardoning sin on the basis of a sacrifice is not sanctification; it is *justification*.

Insofar as Rome officially teaches that in the mass God justifies sinners by pardoning their sins, the mass denies the one sacrifice of Christ. Thus, Q. 80 is accurate when it states that the mass denies the one sacrifice of Christ.

33. Ibid.

34. Documents of the Council of Trent, p. 149.

35. Agenda for Synod 2004, p. 283.

Is the Mass an Accursed Idolatry?

The second difference that Q. 80 points out between the Lord's Supper and the mass concerns the presence of Christ and the manner in which He is to be worshiped. Q. 80 says that "Christ...according to His human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven at the right hand of God His Father, and will there be worshiped by us—but the mass teaches...that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and therefore is to be worshiped in them."

The IRC reported that the "Roman Catholic theologians with whom the committee met affirmed that the Heidelberg Catechism is substantially correct in its presentation of the Roman Catholic teaching regarding Christ's bodily presence in the consecrated bread and wine."³⁶ The Catechism correctly points out that Rome teaches that Christ is bodily present in the elements after they have supposedly been consecrated by the priest, and that Christ is to be worshiped in the elements.

The one problem that was found in the eyes of the IRC and the Roman Catholic bishops regarding Q. 80's presentation of Rome's teaching is,

When the Catechism adds the statement, "where Christ is therefore to be worshiped," it sets up a misleading contrast between worshiping Christ in heaven and worshiping him in consecrated bread and wine. The Roman Catholic Church holds that the ascended Christ is to be worshiped *through* the adoration of his body and blood, which is what it believes the consecrated bread and wine have become.³⁷

The Roman Catholic bishops further voiced their objections to Q. 80 when they "insisted along with Trent, that the holy sacrament is to be venerated with the worship of latria, and, second, that this worship does not constitute idolatry inasmuch as, in the adoration

36. Agenda for Synod 2004, p. 290.

37. Agenda for Synod 2004, pp. 300, 301.

of the consecrated bread and wine, Christ is being worshiped, not the elements.”³⁸

On the basis of this argument of the bishops that the ascended Christ is being worshiped through the elements, the IRC concluded that “it seems inappropriate to charge Roman Catholics with idolatry when they are worshiping the ascended Christ through the consecrated elements.”³⁹

The IRC recognizes that Rome misinterprets Matthew 26:26, where Jesus says “this is my body,” by taking these words literally. Nevertheless, the IRC does not view Christ’s bodily presence in the elements as an important point. For the IRC the question is, does Rome worship the ascended Christ? If Rome says it does, then we cannot charge Rome with idolatry.

The IRC fails to see that whether or not Christ is bodily present in the sacrament is of utmost importance. For on the one hand, if Christ is bodily present in the elements, then adoration of the elements is not idolatry, but on the other hand, if He is not bodily present, then the adoration of the elements is idolatry.

The Reformers candidly admitted that if Christ is bodily present in the elements, then He must be worshiped there. Calvin wrote,

Let Christ, then, be present in the Supper in a true and natural Body; let him be handled with the hands, crushed with the teeth, swallowed by the gullet, let him, moreover, place his Divinity there, such as when it dwelt in an ineffable manner in his flesh, how right and lawful is it to adore it?⁴⁰

Calvin here is asking a rhetorical question, by which he intends to say that, if Christ is indeed present bodily in the bread and wine, then it is only right that the elements be worshiped, just as much as Christ was worshiped in the flesh during His earthly ministry. Ursinus also made this argument, writing, “For as in former times, before the ascension of Christ into heaven, it was not only lawful,

38. Ibid., p. 295.

39. Agenda for Synod 2004, p. 304.

40. John Calvin, “On Shunning...,” p. 384.

but even necessary to worship Christ in whatever place he was; so now if he is in the bread, he must be worshipped in the bread, whether we see him or not.”⁴¹ Thus, if we grant for the sake of argument that Christ is present bodily in the elements, then the Roman Catholics need not try to explain that in adoring the elements they are actually worshipping Christ in heaven. The IRC should have responded to the Roman Catholic bishops, “If Christ is bodily present in the sacraments, then, by all means, worship Him where He is in the elements.”

In this connection it can also be pointed out that the Catechism in no way sets up a misleading contrast between Christ’s presence in heaven and Christ’s presence in the elements. The confusion belongs to Rome, which tries to say that the answer to where Christ is, is that He is both in heaven and in the elements. Regardless of how Rome tries to explain its doctrine, the simple fact is that if Christ is present in the bread and wine bodily, then He must be worshiped there.

Granting that the bodily presence of Christ must be worshiped, the Reformers refused to grant that Christ is bodily present in the mass. According to the Reformers, Rome did not worship Christ, but mere bread and wine.

Calvin plainly proved that Christ is not bodily present in the mass. He explained, “Were we to grant that this (Christ’s bodily presence) applies to the Holy Supper of Christ — though there is nothing we are less disposed to grant — yet it has no application to the Mass!”⁴² Calvin argued that if Christ is bodily present in the bread and wine, then this is not affected by the consecration of the elements by priests. Calvin explained that in the Lord’s Supper a promise is “given to the faithful and pious, not to the derision of the ungodly.” Calvin pointed out that in the mass everyone who partakes of the consecrated elements supposedly eats and drinks Christ’s body and blood, whereas in the Lord’s Supper only believers partake of Christ. Thus, Calvin argues that if Christ were somehow bodily present in the elements, that presence would

41. *Commentary on the Heidelberg*, p. 420.

42. John Calvin, “On Shunning...,” p. 384.

be real only for true believers. So Calvin argued that even if Christ were bodily present in the Lord's Supper, this presence is not brought about in the manner that Rome teaches, nor is His body partaken of by the ungodly. Calvin concluded, "It is plain, therefore, that the god whom the gesticulating Priest keeps exhibiting whenever he turns round his altar, is not brought down from heaven, but is the kind extracted from a cook-shop!"⁴³

As was stated earlier, the IRC also recognized that there is no bodily presence of Christ in the mass or the Lord's Supper. The IRC pointed out that Rome's doctrine is based on a misinterpretation of Matthew 26:26. When Christ says, "this is my body," this does not mean that the bread and wine became His body. The IRC is correct in pointing out that Scripture uses many similar figures of speech that do not literally identify the subject with the predicate. But the IRC refused to condemn the worship of what it admitted was only bread and wine because Rome claims to worship Christ through adoring these elements.

Once again the IRC fell for an argument that John Calvin refuted. Calvin showed on the basis of Scripture that the type of worship that Rome claims to offer to Christ in the mass is to be condemned as idolatry.

Calvin pointed to three examples in Scripture where the people of Israel were guilty of trying to worship God through earthly images. He pointed to the golden calf that Aaron built, the brazen serpent, and the calves of Jeroboam. Calvin showed that, in each of these instances, the people who worshiped these images did not claim that these images were themselves divine. Also, the people who worshiped these images did not claim to be instituting the worship of a new God. With regard to Jeroboam's setting up of the golden calves, Calvin wrote, "He did not intend to adopt new gods, nor any thought of openly revolting from the true God."⁴⁴ Yet, in all of these instances the ones who worshiped these images were clearly guilty of worshiping an idol. Calvin argued that these three instances of idol worship condemn the

43. John Calvin, "On Shunning...", p. 385.

44. John Calvin, "On Shunning...", pp. 391, 392.

worship of the elements in the mass. He exclaimed, "But unless we are too much disposed to flatter ourselves, the iniquity of bending the knee before a little bit of bread is not less flagrant than was that of bending it before the serpent!"⁴⁵ Calvin proves that Scripture itself condemns the mass as idolatry. Thus, Q. 80 is not only correct in stating that Christ is worshiped in the elements by Rome, but it is also correct in concluding that because of this worship the mass is an accursed idolatry.

Conclusion

It is clear that the CRC's rejection of Q. 80 is not based on Scripture. It is also clear that the CRC's new position concerning the mass directly contradicts the historic position of the Reformation. Instead, the CRC's view of the mass is now determined by how Rome views the mass. To be fair, it must be stated that the CRC has not endorsed everything that Rome teaches concerning the mass. Nevertheless, it is clear that the CRC would not accept the IRC's report unless it was endorsed by Rome! The IRC submitted the report to the Roman Catholic bishops that it met with before it submitted it to synod. The IRC even allowed the Roman Catholic bishops to dictate certain changes to the report. The IRC reported to synod that "the revised report of the IRC was confirmed to be accurate by Roman Catholic bishops."⁴⁶

The CRC left the early Reformers, such as Calvin and Ursinus, as well as the Reformed churches today, out of the debate. The CRC plans on bringing its decision to the attention of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, but there is no evidence that the CRC discussed Q. 80 with members of any other Reformed church.

Yet, the CRC did not hesitate to condemn all Reformed Christians who confess Q. 80. Not only did the CRC condemn Reformed Christians who are living today, but the CRC condemned everyone who has ever confessed Q. 80. At the same time the CRC exonerated the RCC of the sixteenth century as well as today. The IRC report read,

45. Calvin, "On Shunning...", p. 391.

46. Acts of Synod 2004, p. 627.

Since official Roman Catholic teaching regarding the Mass has remained quite stable from the sixteenth century to now, the Catechism — if taken to be describing and evaluating that official teaching — is either accurate both now and in the sixteenth century or inaccurate in both time periods. The above analysis leads to the conclusion that the Heidelberg Catechism must be regarded as wrong, both now and in the sixteenth century, *if* it is taken as describing and evaluating official Roman Catholic teaching.⁴⁷

Since the CRC felt it was necessary, out of love for its so-called Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, to dialogue with them to make sure that they were not falsely condemning them, one wonders why they would not deign to dialogue with fellow *Reformed* brothers and sisters before condemning them of breaking the ninth commandment!

In any case, it is not Q. 80 and those who confess Q. 80 who are guilty of breaking the ninth commandment. Q. 80 accurately points out and condemns, on the basis of Scripture, the false doctrine of Rome. By denying that Rome's doctrine of the mass is false, the CRC has itself become guilty of accepting Rome's false doctrine and is itself guilty of breaking the ninth commandment.

The CRC has ignored the difference between the Lord's Supper and the mass by deciding no longer to confess Q. 80 of the Catechism. The result is that the way is now open for the members of the Christian Reformed Church to join in worship, including the mass, with Roman Catholics. In effect, the CRC has turned its back on the Reformation and gone back to Rome.

For Reformed Christians who want to maintain the historic Reformed faith it is vital that they maintain and confess Q. 80. In this way they sharply maintain the truth that in the Lord's Supper they are brought into spiritual union with Christ on the basis of His one sacrifice and sufferings and properly worship the one true God. ●

47. Agenda for Synod 2004, p. 301.

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Book Reviews

Martin Bucer: A Reformer and His Times, by Martin Greschat. Tr. Stephen E. Buckwalter. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004. Pp. xii + 334. \$34.95 (paper). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

This is a well-written, authoritative account of the life, work, and theology of the important, if secondary, Reformer, Martin Bucer. Bucer was an early convert of Martin Luther, an instructor in important respects of John Calvin, and a Reformer in his own right. Greschat's work, originally published in German in 1990, is the first biography of Bucer in seventy years.

The author, a leading Bucer scholar, does justice to the fascinating life and important work of the Strasbourg Reformer. Bucer lived and worked at the center of the developing sixteenth century Reformation of the church. The book examines Bucer's prominent role in the reform at Strasbourg, his influence upon Calvin, his deep involvement in the controversy

among Protestants over the Lord's Supper, his efforts on behalf of the unity of the church, and his work in England at the end of his life to bring about the kingdom of Christ there.

To follow Bucer in this book is to come into close contact with almost every major figure in all the churches, to attend virtually every important conference, and to plunge into every controversy, during the early, heady, crucial days of the Reformation.

Bucer's distinctive theology is outlined. Sharing the gospel of salvation by grace alone with all the Reformers, Bucer had his own emphases, including the law as the demand for love of one's neighbor and the pervasive work of the Holy Spirit in church and state to build the kingdom of Christ.

Regarding Bucer's grievous faults and sins, the author is uncritical, if not sympathetic. These include Bucer's compromise of the truth for the sake of outward church unity and his atrocious doctrine of the lawfulness of divorce and remarriage for almost any reason. Accord-

ing to Bucer, husbands and wives may divorce if they are not happy in their marriages. John Milton seized on this teaching to justify his own divorce as an escape from an unhappy marriage. Greschat sees in Bucer's doctrine of marriage the influence of Erasmus.

Bucer showed his love for Luther, as well as his own commitment to the gospel of grace that Luther proclaimed, in his comments on Luther's death. Despite the fact that Luther had violently condemned him for his doctrine of the Supper and for his readiness to compromise, as well as having notoriously referred to him as "a chatterbox" on account of his garrulousness, Bucer wrote the finest obituary of Luther I have ever read.

I know how many people hate Luther. And yet the fact re-

mains: God loved him very much and never gave us a holier and more effective instrument of the Gospel. Luther had shortcomings, in fact, serious ones. But God bore them and put up with them, never granting another mortal a mightier spirit and such divine power to proclaim His Son and strike down the Antichrist. If God so accepted him and drew him near to Himself in spite of his being a sinner—a sinner, of course, who abhorred evil like no other—who am I, a wretched servant and miserable sinner who shows so little zeal in pursuing justice, to reject him and turn him down on account of his failings, which we, of course, should not condone? Do we not often ask others to tolerate even greater failings in ourselves? (pp. 207, 208). ■

The Two Reformations: The Journey from the Last Days to the New World, by Heiko A. Oberman. Ed. Donald Weinstein. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003. Pp. xix + 235. [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

Although suffering from the defect of being made up of chapters of an unfinished book and of several lectures on Calvin, *The Two Reformations* has worth. It is reflections on Luther, Calvin, and the Reformation by a notable historian of the

Reformation. Until shortly before his death in 2001, Heiko Oberman had been working on a book comparing the influence of Luther and Calvin on the modern world. At Oberman's request, Donald Weinstein edited the chapters Oberman had finished for publication. Also at Oberman's request, Weinstein included in the book four lectures on Calvin that Oberman had given in commemoration of Abraham Kuyper.

Oberman's concern is the contributions of Luther and Calvin to our modern world. This was not the concern of Luther and Calvin. Their concern was the reformation of the church. Because Oberman sees Luther as "grounding the modern quest for moral man in an immoral world," he emphasizes the continuity of Luther and the Middle Ages (p. 19). One who views Luther as reforming the church by the gospel of grace, as Luther demands to be viewed, will insist on the discontinuity—the *radical* discontinuity—of Luther and the Middle Ages.

So little does the reformation of the church live in Oberman's thinking, at least in these essays, that his description of the Reformation includes not

a word about the church. Rather, the movement originating in Wittenberg consisted of "novel forms of thinking and experiencing, of seeing the surrounding world, and of interpreting the course of events" (p. 62).

Oberman's attempt to rehabilitate predestination, or election, is a sorry failure. He acknowledges the centrality of predestination in Calvin's theology. He observes, rightly, that the modern church so unanimously and vehemently rejects predestination that "Calvinists who still cling to this dogma are as scarce as hens' teeth" (p. 147). Oberman does not observe that professing Calvinists who reject predestination are, by virtue of this fact, not Calvinists at all. Oberman then sets about to restore respectability to predestination, at least as it appears in Calvin's theology. Oberman proposes that predestination be regarded as the last-ditch refuge of the church in times of exile and persecution. As the explanation why some are saved, whereas others are not saved, which, of course, was Calvin's own view of predestination, predestination is, according to Oberman, "an abomination" (p. 150). Such, explic-

itly, is the doctrine as it occurs in the Canons of Dordt (p. 149).

Oberman has some sound, helpful insights into the Reformation. The truth of the covenant was crucial to Luther's theology from the beginning. "Covenant theology was firmly rooted in the thought of the earliest Luther."

By focusing on covenant, Luther was able to proceed to his discovery that God is not the Thomistic highest being but the bonding God who acts in history, not an unmoved mover but the highly mobile

grantor of testament and promise, the God of faith and fidelity (p. 47).

There are powerful quotations of the Reformers. Here is Calvin on the calling to engage in church reformation, even though the success of a true reformation seemed to him to be "a miracle on the order of the resurrection of the dead": "'Yet, ours is not the task to assess the chances of success,' but to pray and sweat. 'Ours is the task to preach the Gospel, let the chips fall wherever they may, and face the consequences'" (p. 112). ■

The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory, by Donald G. Bloesch. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2004. 336 pages. \$27 (cloth). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

With *The Last Things*, Donald Bloesch completes his seven-volume systematic theology. The preceding six volumes have been reviewed in this journal.

As is true of the entire series, this last volume on eschatology has its worth for the Reformed minister. It gives a comprehensive survey of the territory. It indicates the areas of controversy. It brings a wide-ranging spectrum of theological opinion to bear on the leading themes of eschatology. It represents modern evangelical thinking. If for no other reason, the Reformed theologian would read the volume, and series, to

inform himself concerning the theological state of contemporary evangelicalism.

The work is not a thorough, biblical explanation of the themes of eschatology. The treatment of the second coming itself of Jesus, for example, consists of three pages and two lines (pp. 75-78). In these three pages, the actual description of the second coming amounts to part of one line: "the visible appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of time" (p. 76).

Similarly, the sign of antichrist is summarily dealt with in one paragraph (pp. 73, 74).

A dogmatics ought to explain the truths of the Christian religion. The explanation should include interpretation of the texts of Scripture and of the pertinent articles of the creeds upon which these truths rest. Such explanation on the basis of the interpretation of Scripture is lacking in Bloesch.

This lack is glaringly evident in the chapter on the "millennial hope." As Bloesch notes at the outset, the issue of the millennium is divisive among Protestants. In addition, right understanding of the millennium of Revelation 20 is fun-

damental to all of eschatology. Bloesch quotes various theologians. He offers his own unique opinion. But there is no exegesis of Revelation 20. What Berkouwer and Grenz think about the millennium is interesting. Bloesch's "new statement" is intriguing. They fall short, however, of establishing, or even attempting to establish, the truth of the Word of God concerning this basic element of eschatology.

It is a notable feature of Bloesch's theology that, with the rare exception, it can never reject a teaching as false doctrine. Regarding premillennial dispensationalism, "the wider evangelical community can appreciate dispensationalism" in important respects (p. 98). Not only cannot Bloesch condemn the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory as heresy, but he also finds "the truth in the doctrine." Significantly, the effort to find truth in purgatory is "an ecumenical imperative" (p. 152).

At times, Bloesch leaves the impression that the life-and-death struggle of truth and false doctrine is nothing more than the Hegelian development of thesis/antithesis/synthesis. With specific reference to the

struggle between the doctrine of sovereign grace and the lie of the freedom of man's will, Bloesch writes: "In contradistinction to a rationalistic theology, which allows for only two options in interpreting the mysteries of faith, a dialectical theology presses toward a third option—between thesis and antithesis" (p. 289). Nothing is ever the truth. Nothing is ever the lie. Everything is always tolerable development towards truth. The judgment of Scripture on this theory, and those who practice it, is "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7).

Even Karl Barth, in most other respects Bloesch's teacher, warned, "If we do not have the confidence of *damnamus* [we condemn], we ought to omit *credimus* [we believe], and go back to doing theology as usual."

There is an exception to Bloesch's aversion to saying "*damnamus*." The confession of the sovereignty of God in the decree of predestination, election and reprobation, incurs Bloesch's sharp, strong, and sustained condemnation. Bloesch raises the subject of predestination in his consider-

ation of hell. Bloesch denies hell as the place of everlasting punishment of devils and some humans. "Hell [is] a sanatorium (*sic*) for sick, incurable souls" (p. 224). "Hell is ... preparatory to heaven." "[Hell] is a means [of] grace." "Hell is ... in heaven" (p. 238).

Bloesch does not dare to demolish hell outright. He remodels it. The blueprint for the reconstruction of hell is the universalistic sentiments of modern evangelicalism. Bloesch's "hell" is a hospital, uncomfortable to be sure, but a hospital for the sick. It is remedial. Many who suffer for a time in Bloesch's "hell" will eventually be saved by the grace of God, which, although it failed to save them during their life, will be successful after their death. Perhaps all will be saved, so that in the end Bloesch's hell will be emptied of all humans: "We cannot categorically deny the possibility of a universal restoration" (p. 297).

The ground in Bloesch's neo-orthodox, evangelical theology for the rejection of hell as punishment and for the proposal of universal salvation is powerful, indeed conclusive: a universal love of God in Jesus

Christ desiring the salvation of all (human) sinners without exception. This universal love expresses itself in a universal election unto salvation, a universal atonement, and a universal grace in the gospel. The texts on which this doctrine of universal love bases itself are Ezekiel 18:23 and II Peter 3:9, explained as teaching a loving desire of God for the salvation of all humans without exception (p. 236).

The ground of a universal love of God in Jesus Christ is decisive against everlasting punishment. If God loves all men without exception, there is no hell, and can be no hell, that is, the hell of the Bible and of Christian orthodoxy. The love of God for a person will not allow that person to suffer the ultimate evil. The love of God for a person will, no, *must*, deliver the beloved person into the good of heaven.

Bloesch's fellow evangelicals who are as insistent on a universal love of God in Christ and in the gospel as Bloesch is, but who at present also teach everlasting hell are guilty either of disparaging the power, the very nature, of the love of God—as grievous a sin as de-

nial of hell—or of inconsistency. Their disciples will straighten out the inconsistency. They will straighten out the inconsistency by adopting Bloesch's rejection of hell.

The Reformed, Christian doctrine of predestination, election and reprobation, is the condemnation of the teaching of universal love and universal salvation. Bloesch is well aware of the enemy of his, and modern evangelicalism's, universalism. Against predestination, he speaks out firmly, unequivocally, and quite unparadoxically. No Hegelian thesis/antithesis/synthesis with regard to predestination. Predestination is simply wrong, a doctrinal error. And for Donald Bloesch, there is one "rigid Calvinist," who teaches hell as the place of punishment for humans whom God hates according to an eternal decree of reprobation, worthy of Bloesch's rare "*damnamus*": Herman Hoeksema (p. 221).

An unintended benefit of the book is Bloesch's frank admission that the device of "paradox" in theology does not work. As a disciple of Kierkegaard and Barth, Bloesch advocates the "paradox." The "paradox" consists of teaching as true two

flatly contradictory doctrines. Bloesch extols, and professes to use, the "paradox" at the point of his treatment of the love of God in Jesus Christ. According to Bloesch, there are two contradictory strains of doctrine concerning the love of God in the Bible: particularism and universalism. "There are two strands in the Bible—one universalistic and the other particularistic" (p. 240). The faithful, paradoxical theologian is committed to teaching both strands equally. However! "It is my firm conviction that we are closer to the truth when we read the particularistic texts in light of the more comprehensive or universalistic texts" (p. 240). Like the equal comrades in a Communist state, one member of the "paradox" is more equal than the other. Universalism obliterates particularism.

"Paradox" does not work in theology. "Paradox" is not intended to work in theology. "Paradox" is a ploy. "Paradox" is the ploy by which the false doctrine that the Bible does not teach, but which the theologian prefers, may overcome in the church the truth that the Bible does teach, but which the theologian hates.

At the root of Bloesch's universalism, which annuls the clear biblical warning of "everlasting destruction" for those who "know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 1:8, 9), is Bloesch's rejection of Scripture as an inspired book, the very Word of God written. Bloesch feels free to criticize and revise Scripture by the higher standard of a Jesus Christ who exists in Bloesch's mind apart from Scripture. The Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture taught hell as everlasting punishment for some humans. "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43, 44). "And these [the goats] shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46).

There are some startling, even strange, passages in the book. The Puritan Samuel Rutherford fancied himself caught up, like the apostle, into Paradise, where he saw his own little deceased daughter and heard

her singing. There he saw another child. This sight was his comfort to the father of the other child (pp. 163, 164). To such foolishness, indeed ungodly mysticism, did the emphasis of the Puritans on experience expose them. Bloesch apparently accepts Rutherford's fancy.

Twice, we learn from Bloesch, the dead C. S. Lewis "appeared visibly" to J. B. Phillips, author of *The New Testament in Modern English*, in order to comfort Phillips, who was in some distress. Bloesch takes this nonsense for gospel truth (p. 164).

Christians may pray for the salvation of those who have died outside of Christ with the hope of their eventual salvation (p. 168).

Bloesch quotes Norman Grubb approvingly, who goes

the legendary Frisian king one better: "Save them [every human], or damn me with them! If I cannot go to heaven with them, I'll go to hell with them!" (p. 235).

The theology of Donald Bloesch is that of modern evangelicalism: critical of Scripture; paradoxical; open to every religious opinion under heaven, from Roman Catholicism to mysticism (with the notable exception of the confessional Reformed faith); universalistic; and increasingly strange.

Damnamus!

Credimus the Christian faith as revealed in inspired, logical Scripture and as authoritatively set forth in the ecumenical and Reformation confessions. ■

The Reformation: A History, by Diarmaid MacCulloch. New York: Penguin Books, 2005. Pp. xxvii + 832. (Paper) [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

The author of the definitive biography of Thomas Cranmer has written an outstanding one-

volume history of the Reformation.

The work is divided into three main sections. The first, "A Common Culture," sets the stage for the Reformation in the culture and theology of that time and describes the onset of the Reformation, as well as the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation.

The second section, "Europe Divided," traces the development of the Reformation in both its main branches, Lutheranism and Calvinism. This section includes the struggle between Lutheranism and Calvinism and the violent efforts of Rome to destroy its enemies by every means at its disposal, especially the sword of friendly magistrates, and to regain the power it had lost. It is evident that Lutheranism has always hated the Reformed faith and church more than it has hated Roman Catholicism. MacCulloch remarks that to a large extent Lutheran theology after Luther was determined by the resolution of Lutheran theologians to adopt whatever Calvinism rejected and to reject whatever Calvinism adopted. "It was what Calvin or the Reformed believed that decided what mainstream Lutheranism would pronounce as orthodoxy. If Calvin had affirmed it, then they were against it (although naturally this was not how they argued in public or in print)" (p. 351).

The third section of the book, "Patterns of Life," examines various social, intellectual, and ethical issues involved in the Reformation. These include

the views of the last days, the worship of images; love, sex, and family; and tolerance, or lack thereof, of differing religious convictions.

The benefit of a one-volume history, admittedly a large volume—more than eight hundred pages of comparatively small print—is that it demonstrates the inter-relatedness of all the many aspects of the Reformation as one great movement. The disadvantage is the inability to treat the various aspects of the Reformation in detail and in depth. Nevertheless, MacCulloch covers all the important aspects of the history of the Reformation, including the Roman Catholic opposition to the Reformation at every turn and in every country, as well as the Protestant advance. And MacCulloch's analyses are penetrating and shrewd.

Particularly helpful is the account of the early successes of the Reformation in eastern Europe, an aspect of the Reformation often overlooked. "Hungary and Transylvania had also willingly adopted the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563." The leaders of the Reformed church in Transylvania criticized the Puritans for "privileging 'heart

knowledge' or emotion over 'head knowledge,' reflective understanding of religion" (p. 461).

MacCulloch's insights into the doctrinal heart of the Reformation are sound. The gospel recovered by Luther taught that "God put aside his wrath as judge for human beings whom he chose as his elect. They received a gift of faith that had nothing to do with their own sinful actions. It was entirely in the will of God to grant this gift—to declare someone to be righteous: that was divine grace" (p. 120). For Luther and the Reformation, rather than being meritorious, "good works come naturally to the saved Christian as an expression of love and gratitude for God's saving and loving nature, as naturally as it is to be good and loving to the person whom we love passionately" (p. 130). "The logic of double predestination [is] implied by Luther's doctrine of justification by faith" (p. 349).

But Diarmaid MacCulloch is no friend of the Reformation and its gospel. An admitted skeptic regarding doctrine, MacCulloch treats the Reformation with a cool cynicism. He is evenhanded in his disparagement of both the

Protestant cause and the Roman Catholic resistance to Protestantism. He suggests that the Reformation amounted to nothing more than two bald men fighting over a comb.

But MacCulloch shows a special bias against Calvin and Calvinism. Calvin was a "but-toned-up French exile who wanted to stop the citizens of Geneva dancing." "He did, however, relish getting his own way, which he identified with doing the will of God" (p. 241). Calvinist theology is "determinism," which flourishes in the "bleak shadow" cast by Augustine. The Canons of the Synod of Dordt are an "extreme version of Calvinist predestination" (p. 485).

The historian gets the Arminian attack on Calvinism right, however. The essence of Arminian theology is the denial of "the irresistibility of God's grace: in other words, to say that alongside those whom God has eternally decreed to be elect to salvation there are those who choose to reject the offer of God's grace, and fall away into damnation" (p. 376). Thus, unintentionally, is exposed the real allegiance of the defenders in the Reformed sphere of the doctrine of a well-

meant offer of grace to all hearers of the gospel alike.

MacCulloch's style of writing is lively and provocative. The fault of Galileo, the great scientist who ran afoul of the Roman Catholic Church, was that he "suffered from a fatal inability to suffer fools gladly, a gift entertaining to the detached observer, but rarely appreciated by fools" (p. 687).

There are delightful anecdotes. We have all heard the tale of Jenny Geddes and her milkstool at the time King Charles and Archbishop Laud were forcing the Roman Catholicizing Prayer Book on the presbyterian Church of Scotland. But who knew the story of Bishop Whitford of the cathedral church of Breskin during those exciting days? "Bishop Whitford led the service from the new book glowering at the cathedral congregation over a pair of loaded pistols, just in case they tried to rush him in his desk—a remarkable case of episcopal tough love" (p. 522).

Significant, and ominous, is MacCulloch's statement of the fundamental challenge to biblical authority in our day by the homosexual movement.

Protestantism is faced with

[a] ... momentous challenge to its assumptions of authority: the increasing acceptance in western societies of homosexual practice and identity as one valid and unremarkable choice among the many open to human beings. This is an issue of biblical authority. Despite much well-intentioned theological fancy footwork to the contrary, it is difficult to see the Bible as expressing anything else but disapproval of homosexual activity, let alone having any conception of a homosexual identity. The only alternatives are either to try to cleave to patterns of life and assumptions set out in the Bible, or to say that in this, as in much else, the Bible is simply wrong.... Homosexuality has become the chosen battle-ground. The issue is now the front-line between those modelling their view of biblical authority on the general assumptions of western society as expressed before or after 1700: a deeply symbolic matter which threatens to split many Churches in the western tradition.... The outcome of that debate remains one of the defining open questions of western culture for the coming century (pp. 705, 706). ■

Evangelicals Then and Now, by Peter Jeffery. Evangelical Press and Services Ltd., 2004. Pp. 128 (paper). [Reviewed by Herman Hanko.]

This small paperback book was of special interest to me because it concentrated on the state of the evangelical church in Wales; and I have had the privilege of speaking and preaching in both South Wales and North Wales on more than one occasion. This gave me opportunity to come to know something about the church in Wales in past centuries and today. The analysis of the church there by Peter Jeffery was of personal interest.

It is not surprising that the author of this small book finds the situation in the churches of Wales at a very low point in its history. So indeed it is. Churches close with remarkable regularity, chiefly because, for many years, they have been composed mainly of older people. Evangelical churches are few in number, and many of them are Baptist. Religion in general is on the decline throughout the land, and the churches that still attract people are for the most part contempo-

rary churches with a contemporary church government, a contemporary method of worship, and a contemporary preaching — where “contemporary” means “unbiblical.”

It is the burden of the author, however, not simply to diagnose the church’s ills, but also to prescribe cures. His prescribed cures are curious. If we may follow the list he himself gives in chapter 7 of the book, the cures include: “We need a greater vision of God’s greatness.” “We need a deeper conviction of the authority of scripture.” “We need a more biblical love for Jesus.” “We need a growing love for all believers.” “We need to feel for the condition of the lost.” “We need a passionate desire to please God.” Listed in a separate chapter is the need for revival. This latter was on the foreground in the years 2004-2005, for it was the one hundredth anniversary of the Welsh revival of 1904-1905.

While the elements listed as cures may very well reflect accurately the weaknesses of the church, they are not cures, but a treatment of symptoms. If one does any reading at all in the history of the Welsh church, one

soon discovers that in the seventeenth century a strong Calvinistic church existed in Wales, with strongly Calvinistic preachers. It was called the Calvinistic Methodist Church, indicating that, although the church was once Calvinistic in doctrine, its church government was surely not "Calvinistic," but independentistic. This may have been a factor in its decline.

However, the church soon lost its Calvinistic doctrinal bearings, and, interestingly, the chief doctrinal controversy was over the extent of the atonement of our Lord. There were those in the church who promoted a certain universalistic aspect to Christ's death. While this view was heatedly rejected by many, the opposition to a universal atonement gradually disappeared, chiefly because the proponents of a general atonement appealed to the well-meant and gracious offer of the gospel as requiring a universal atonement. From that doctrinal departure the Calvinistic Methodist Church never recovered. Known also as the Presbyterian Church of Wales, it has become modern and liberal.

Its very modernism and liberalism became the occasion for

the charismatic preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones to call the faithful out of the apostate Presbyterian church. Many came out, and the evangelical union was established. However, the "reformation" under Lloyd-Jones, a man still held in highest esteem in Wales, was less than a complete reformation. Lloyd-Jones did not establish a federation of churches but a loosely knit organization in which congregations were independent. He did not insist on a creedal basis for the movement, but was content with a very broad and vague doctrinal basis for union. Further, and more seriously, Lloyd-Jones did not insist on the doctrine of infant baptism, had a wrong view of the covenant and of conversion, and was open to the charismatic movement. This openness to the charismatic movement was especially evident in his emphasis on revival, which he preached regularly.

The concerned people in Wales have followed this emphasis and are still hoping and praying for revival, and pinning all their hopes for the future of the church in Wales on revival. They are fastening their hopes on a mirage.

There is one hope and one hope only for the church in Wales. That hope rests in powerful, sound, biblical, confessional, and doctrinal preaching. And that is a rare commodity in the land. Reformation in the sixteenth century came by way of preaching (most emphatically, not by revival). Reformation, whenever it takes place in the church, comes through preaching. If, rather than praying for revival, the faithful would insist on the lively preaching of the Word, if only the seminaries would teach men to preach, if

only fiery and faithful preachers would instruct the people in sound doctrine by way of expository preaching, and if only congregations of the faithful would be established according to the principles of church government and the worship of the church would be according to Scripture, then, and then only will a faithful church arise out of the ashes of the Welsh church.

It may be too late on God's clock for that, although there are here and there faithful saints who thirst for pure preaching. But their numbers are few. ■

The Psalms in Israel's Worship, by Sigmund Mowinckel. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004. Pp. xvii + 608 (paper). [Reviewed by Herman Hanko.]

A few quotes from the blurb will introduce the book and its author to us.

One of the most important contributions to our understanding of the psalms, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* by Sigmund Mowinckel has largely provided the framework and suppositions of modern psalms study. Fully

revised from the original Norwegian edition and now featuring a substantial new foreword by James Crenshaw, this classic work (two volumes in one) argues that the psalms originated in actual temple worship and were used regularly to add drama to Israel's adoration of Yahweh.

Sigmund Mowinckel (1884-1965), widely regarded as one of the most important biblical scholars of the twentieth century, was professor of Old Testament at the University of Oslo, Norway.

Perhaps no book of the Bible is loved and read more than the Psalms. Certainly, in churches that practice exclusive Psalmody the Psalms constitute an important part of the worship of the church. They are learned when little children of the covenant can only lisp the words of Psalm 23, and they are on the lips of aged saints as they face their last enemy in death. They are in the heart and soul of families that bring dear ones to the cemetery, and they ring in the thoughts of God's people amid all the trials and struggles of life. They are the handbook of the Christian pilgrim. They are all these things to the child of God because they are given by God as a spiritual biography of every believer. He seems himself reflected in every facet of his spiritual life in the sweet songs of Israel.

One who sees a book on the Psalms eagerly lays hold on it and seeks its instruction and help in understanding more fully this wonderful book. But to page through this work of Mowinckel, so highly praised, is to be filled with bitter disappointment, and finally disgust. It is, from beginning to end, a devastatingly critical explana-

tion of the Psalms that robs the book of all its power and beauty.

Higher criticism seeks to understand how the Scriptures came into existence in the history of religion. The believer knows the answer to this question in a flash: they came into existence by the wonder of divine inspiration. But this is not what the critics are talking about. They consider the Bible a human book, and they wonder how, from the human perspective, the Bible came to exist. This book limits that question to the Psalms. But higher critics are no more interested in God's authorship of Scripture than they are in God's authorship of *Macbeth*.

Let me briefly recite the main ideas which the book presents.

The Psalms originated in form and content from Egyptian, Canaanite, and Babylonian culture and from the contacts Israel had with these nations. "The style of Israelite Psalmody is directly derived from Babylonia" (p. 194). They were, however, adapted to the worship of Yahweh, Israel's God.

Interestingly, Prof. Ralph Janssen was dismissed from his teaching post in Old Testament

studies in Calvin Theological Seminary for teaching a similar idea. Janssen taught that Israel derived its religion in part from pagan influences, although it had unique features about it that came from Israel's unique history. Janssen defended this viewpoint on the grounds of common grace, that is, following Kuyper's doctrine of common grace, on the grounds that the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of pagans produces elements of true religion that can be and were retrieved and "purified" yet further within the nation of Israel.

But that by way of a parenthesis.

The purpose of the Psalms, according to Mowinckel, was to enrich Israelite festivals with music and to give meaning and content to these festivals. They are of many kinds: epiphany festivals, harvest festivals, enthronement festivals that salute Yahweh as king, and even lamentation festivals when the emphasis was on national or individual sorrow for various calamities that came on the nation.

This purpose of the Psalms rules out the authorship of David and others listed in the

Psalms' headings: "The headings 'by David,' 'by Moses,' 'by Solomon' tell us nothing, therefore, of the real authors. The heading 'by David', however, confirms that in days of old the psalms were destined to be used by the *king* when he was representing the community in the cult or taking part in it in some other way" (vol. 2, p. 103).

In fact, most of the Psalms were not written during Israel's wanderings in the wilderness (as Psalm 90, written by Moses), nor during the reigns of David and Solomon, nor by the musicians in Israel, such as Asaph and Ethan, in preparation for the worship of God in the temple. They were written after the captivity and belong to that era of Judah's life.

Nor are the Psalms in any sense Messianic, not even such Psalms as 2, 22, 72, 110, etc. In fact, they can never be prophetic, for no such thing as prophecy, in the sense of foretelling future events, is possible. (The author holds, for example, to a double authorship of Isaiah because chapters 40-66 are almost entirely prophetic in character and could not have been written by Isaiah, a pre-exilic prophet.)

And so the book wends its

weary way through the Psalms, destroying God's Word, robbing God's people of their Psalter, and doing all this in the name of scholarship.

The Psalms hold a special place in the lives of the people of God and in the worship of God in the church. For this to be true, however, the Psalms must be divinely inspired. The church is fundamentally uninterested in ancient literature of man's making as an expression of praise to Jehovah God. The church is interested in confessing her faith, and her faith is God's revelation.

The Psalms are Messianic. Some directly and explicitly so; some as they reflect the spiritual life of the child of God as he lives out the salvation that he has received from Christ. The Psalms, therefore, express the hope of the old dispensational church for the coming of the Messiah. The Psalms express that hope as they are inspired by the Spirit of Christ in the consciousness of the psalmists, and as the same Spirit of Christ causes these Psalms to echo in the consciousness of every believer.

The Psalms are a complete biography of every child of God

in his own spiritual pilgrimage in the world in all life's experiences. If one would take the general division of the Heidelberg Catechism as his roadmap for the earthly pilgrimage of the believer, one could say that all of the experiences of the Christian are summed up in the three main divisions of the knowledge of our misery, the confession of our deliverance in Christ, and the great gratitude we give to God in praise and adoration for what He has done. Nothing is missing. No matter what way the child of God is led through life, no matter what his God-ordained circumstances, there is a Psalm to instruct and comfort, admonish and reprove, encourage and renew the weary pilgrim.

The Psalms always lead us to the cross. The Psalms make us contemplate what God has done for us and for all the creation in the matchless work of grace. The Psalms show us our terrible sins that we may more fully appreciate what Christ did for us. The Psalms tell us of the power of our enemy that we may know the power of the conquering Christ. The Psalms help us understand our struggles and trials, our failures and

God's chastisement, so that we may rejoice in our victory in Christ and our hope of heaven.

If Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 refer to the Hebrew Psalter, then the Psalms also enrich immeasurably the fellowship and communion of the saints. In them, as we sing together in church and sing in the consciousness of being part

of the company of redeemed, we admonish each other, encourage each other, and comfort each other in the difficult way of this life.

There is no child of God who would ever be willing to sacrifice such a precious bundle of songs on the altar of higher criticism. ■

Word Pictures of the New Testament: Volume 1, The Gospel According to Matthew; The Gospel According to Mark. A.T. Robertson, Revised and Updated by Wesley J. Perschbacher. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2004. 412 pages. (Hardcover).

Word Pictures of the New Testament: Volume 2, The Gospel According to Luke. A.T. Robertson, Revised and Updated by Wesley J. Perschbacher. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2005. 311 pages. (Hardcover). [Reviewed by Russell J. Dykstra.]

Word Pictures of the New Testament is a solid work on the New Testament intended to ex-

plain the Greek text. The author, Archibald Thomas Robertson, was a proficient and recognized Greek scholar. This six-volume work focuses on the meaning of the Greek terms, the Greek grammar, and the nuances found in the Greek. In the author's own words, it is not intended to be a formal commentary, for "nowhere is the whole text discussed." Rather, he explains: "everywhere those words are selected for discussion which seem to be richest for the needs of the reader.... My own remarks will be now lexical, now grammatical, now archaeological, now exegetical, now illustrative, anything...that may throw light here and there on the New Testament words or idioms." An extremely valuable tool for Greek students and for

ministers, it is highly recommended by this reviewer.

The original volumes, first published in the 1930s, as well as subsequent reprintings, had some unhappy features. Among them was this, that, though the work was intended chiefly for those who know the Greek language, all the Greek terms were transliterated, using the English alphabet.

Kregel's has committed to reprinting these six volumes as revised and updated by Wesley Perschbacher. The main improved features include: "a new page header system, actual Greek text, updated translation, improved textual notes, Americanized spellings, more complete footnotes, and Arabic reference numbers."

For any student of the Greek who has used *Word Pictures* in the old format, most of these features will be a very welcome change. This is particularly the case with the Greek text and the new page headers. The page headings of the old version simply informed the reader of the book of the Bible. The new version gives book and chapter.

The improved format also breaks up Robertson's comments into paragraphs at the

point where a new Greek term is discussed. This is also an excellent change.

Some of the endnotes are very helpful additions to the comments of Robertson. One particularly helpful kind of note is an occasional specific reference to A. T. Robertson's own book of grammar, where points of grammar are more fully discussed.

The only question that remains is this: How much revising did Perschbacher do to Robertson's translation and comments? In this regard, I have some reservations. Some of the revision is clearly a matter of improving sentence structure. Sometimes new information is added — all to the good. However, there are times when, in my judgment, the revision goes too far. Often times the translation is changed, it seems, simply to make it fit a modern Bible version. For example in Matthew 1:2, where the Greek has ἐγέννησεν, Robertson himself translated it with the literal meaning, *begat*. The revised edition has *was born*, a strange translation for the active form of the verb, but one that is defended on the basis that some modern versions so translate the

verb. Sometimes also, in my opinion, an omission of Robertson's words was a loss. Concerning the endnotes, I found that many were indeed helpful. However, I did not appreciate the very frequent notes providing the reader with the translation of the NIV. The NIV is not a good study Bible, since it follows the principle of dynamic equivalence in translation.

Endnotes that are not helpful are a distraction.

Overall, I found the new volumes to be excellent as far as formatting is concerned. Supplemental comments are also good and helpful. However, I would hope that in the future volumes, the revision would attempt as much as possible to keep A.T. Robertson's translation and comments. ■

Puritan Papers, Volume Five, 1968-1969. J. I. Packer, Ed. Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing Company, 2005. 251 pages (paper). [Reviewed by Russell Dykstra.]

This volume of *Puritan Papers*, like the previous four, is a collection of papers read at Puritan and Reformed Studies Conferences in Westminster Chapel, London. The current volume contains the papers of the two conferences held in 1968 and 1969. The six papers of the 1968 conference were previously published under the title *The Manifold Grace of God*. Five papers from the 1969

conference were previously published in a volume with the title *By Schisms Rent Asunder*. The current work is published by the denDulk Christian Foundation and by P & R Publishing.

These papers are worthy of being reprinted. Generally, they are well written and informative and they contain solid material. This review will highlight a few of the chapters.

The first group is headed with a paper by John R. deWitt entitled "The Arminian Conflict and the Synod of Dort." The best part of the paper is a good overview of the history of the conflict in the Netherlands. In

contrast, the evaluation is weak. Although deWitt sides with the orthodox, he has too much sympathy for the Arminians. He writes, "One can appreciate the plight in which the Arminians found themselves" (16). DeWitt overlooks the fact that the Arminians were bound by the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession. By their teaching heresy contrary to the confessions, they brought the trouble on themselves.

DeWitt's treatment of the Canons of Dort lacks precision. He maintains that the Canons did not "cancel out the free offer of the gospel" (20), without making it clear that though the Canons did reject the Arminian conception of the well-meant (free) offer, they did not condemn the open (free) and promiscuous presentation of Christ in the preaching. In addition, deWitt tends to view the doctrines of the Arminians as differences from Calvinism, even important differences, but not a flat denial of the Reformed and biblical doctrine of salvation. To his credit, he did maintain that "one cannot be Reformed unless he holds to" the five Canons of Dort (23).

J.I. Packer's first contribu-

tion ("Arminianisms") is a fascinating description of the difference between the Arminianism of Jacob Arminius and the Remonstrants in the Netherlands on the one hand, and the Arminianism of John Wesley on the other. The branch of Arminianism in the Netherlands he calls Rationalistic Arminianism, indicating that it was humanistic and that it contained a logically developed theology. Packer calls Wesley's Arminianism "Evangelistic." According to Packer, Wesley was raised on Arminianism, but reacted against the notion that fallen man had a free will to choose God and salvation. Wesley emphasized the need for works, and the great grace of God that saves sinners. The Remonstrants pretended to be Reformed and Calvinistic. Wesley openly showed his hatred of all the teaching of Calvinism.

The essential theological difference between Arminius and Wesley, maintains Packer, is that Arminius and his followers maintained the ability of a free will in fallen man to choose salvation, and thus denied the total depravity of fallen man. Wesley, on the other hand, emphasized the total depravity of

fallen man, and man's inability to be saved apart from God's grace. Packer claims that by this Wesley magnified God's grace. However, in reality Wesley made that grace pitifully weak with the teaching that God gives a non-saving prevenient grace to every person, which grace frees his will, thus enabling him to accept or reject the offer of salvation.

Packer's evaluations are interesting and worthwhile for distinguishing between these two theologies. However, both are Arminian, and therefore heretical. Both deny the sovereignty of God in salvation, starting with a conditional predestination (election only), going on to a resistible grace, to a universal atonement, and the potential failure of saints to persevere to the end.

Packer's concluding analysis of Arminianism is disappointing. He views Arminianism as "an impoverishing reaction to" Reformational teaching (40) — a far cry from the Canons of Dort's condemnation of Arminianism for bringing "again out of hell the Pelagian error" (Canons II, Rejection 3).

David Fountain provides a good overview of John

Wycliffe's life and work ("John Wycliffe: The Evangelical Doctor"), which climaxes in striking quotations from Wycliffe on the importance and power of the preaching.

The first section also includes a paper by Peter Toon on "Puritan Eschatology," another by David R. Smith on John Fletcher, and one by D. Martin Lloyd-Jones on the topic "William Williams and Welsh Calvinistic Methodism."

The second section contains a very different selection of papers, as the title would indicate — "By Schisms Rent Asunder." Some of the contributions are particularly pertinent for the church today. One such paper is "The Doctrine of Justification among the Puritans," by J.I. Packer. After setting forth the basic element of the "Reformers' exposition of justification," Packer described the orthodox Puritan development of the same over against the continued attacks of Rome. The third area of development, he maintains, was "the covenant context of justification" (154). According to Packer, the Puritans "valued" the covenant concept for three reasons, the third one being that "it brings into sharp focus the

saving ministry of Christ, as mediator and federal head of His people."

Packer (rightly) ascribes the subsequent decline in the doctrine of justification by faith alone to the influence of Arminianism. The Arminians denied some of the essential elements of the Reformed faith, which led to a weakened position on justification by faith. Interesting indeed is Packer's position that one of the Reformed truths denied "was that the covenant of grace is a relationship which God imposes unilaterally and unconditionally, by effectual calling, saying to His elect, 'I will...and you shall....'" The Arminian alternative, writes Packer, is conditions, specifically "that the covenant of grace is a new law, offering present pardon on condition of present faith and final salvation on condition of sustained faith" (156). History repeats itself in modern-day Arminians masquerading as Reformed covenantal theologians who are denying justification by faith alone on the theology of a conditional covenant.

Strikingly, Packer touches on the same common element in his description of Arminian in-

roads into the Puritans. This occurred in the teaching of Amyrauldism, introduced by John Cameron and picked up by Richard Baxter. The common element, says Packer, is the Arminian view of the covenant (conditional) and a universal redemption. Packer's description of Richard Baxter's view of justification could likewise describe the views of the present-day conditional-covenant heretics — "our salvation requires a double righteousness: Christ's ... and our own, in obeying that new law by genuine faith and repentance" (158).

Hywel R. Jones' offering had the most striking title — "The Death of Presbyterianism." By this he refers to the demise of the Presbyterian church in England. He traces the history of the Presbyterian movement in England from the emergence of the ideals in the 1570s to its ascendancy in the first half of the seventeenth century. Then follows "the exclusion of Presbyterianism," that is, the rejection of one established national (Presbyterian) church in England in the latter 1600s. Jones then describes the "Disintegration of Presbyterianism." It was due, he insists, primarily

to the toleration of false doctrine and, closely related, to a failure to discipline erring ministers. By the term "death," Jones does not mean "extinction." Yet he defends this term in that the Presbyterian church in England "became utterly helpless in the areas where it persisted, to recover itself. The Presbyterianism to be seen in England today is the result of resuscitatory measures of the Scots in the nineteenth century" (178).

The final chapter of the section is a very revealing essay by D. Martin Lloyd-Jones with the intriguing title "Can We Learn from History?" His specific reference is to the divisions that splintered the Protestant movement after the Reformation. His answer is "Yes," and the essential lesson is that division is the great evil to be avoided at all costs. For Lloyd-Jones, the only legitimate division is that between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism. In his judgment, the other divisions were due to such causes as the notion of a national church, politics, tradition, and trouble over defining the fundamentals of the faith. In this article Lloyd-Jones reveals his low regard for the confessions of the church.

He proposes that the solution to the many divisions in Protestantism is that all the branches settle their differences and agree on a brief list of beliefs. Lloyd-Jones points with approval to Oliver Cromwell's idea of toleration. In accordance with Cromwell's view, a committee was appointed to draw up a list of the fundamentals "on which, and on which alone, true fellowship is possible between Protestant evangelical people" (239). The list is given below. It is striking that it omits any reference to the doctrines of sovereign grace.

1. That the Holy Scripture is that rule of knowing God and living unto Him which whoso does not believe cannot be saved.

2. That there is a God who is the Creator, Governor and Judge of the world, which is to be received by faith, and every other way of the knowledge of Him is insufficient.

3. That this God who is the Creator is eternally distinct from all creatures in His Being and Blessedness.

4. That this God is one in Three Persons or subsistences.

5. That Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God

and Man without the knowledge of whom there is no salvation.

6. That this Jesus Christ is the true God.

7. That this Jesus Christ is also true Man.

8. That this Jesus Christ is God and Man in One Person.

9. That this Jesus Christ is our Redeemer, who by paying a ransom and bearing our sins has made satisfaction for them.

10. That this same Lord Jesus Christ is He that was Crucified at Jerusalem, and rose again and ascended into Heaven.

11. That this same Jesus Christ being the only God and Man in One Person remains for ever a distinct Person from all saints and angels notwithstanding their union and communion with Him.

12. That all men by nature were dead in sins and trespasses, and no man can be saved unless he be born again, repent and believe.

13. That we are justified and saved by grace and faith in Jesus Christ and not by works.

14. That to continue in any known sin upon what pretense or principle soever is damnable.

15. That God is to be

worshipped according to His own will, and whosoever shall forsake and despise all the duties of His worship cannot be saved.

16. That the dead shall rise, and that there is a day of judgment wherein all shall appear, some to go into everlasting life and some into everlasting condemnation.

Lloyd-Jones goes on to make the following astounding observations.

Now these articles were designed and intended to exclude not only Deists, Socinians, and Papists, but also Arians, Antinomians, Quakers, and others. What I am asking is this: Cannot we accept those as the fundamentals? Are those not sufficient? We remember, of course, that bishops, deans, and so forth, had been abolished at that time, and therefore did not need to be mentioned; and also that they did not have to contend with a "higher critical" attitude to Scripture. They were agreed also in their attitude toward "tradition." Their object was to define the irreducible minimum on which evangelical people could work together. We, today, need to elaborate some of these statements in view of our peculiar

circumstances; but, still, I suggest, we should seek the minimum definition and not the maximum. Then, united on that basis, we can as brethren work together, and meet together for discussion of the matters on which we differ, and for our mutual edification.

The tragedy is that modern evangelicals have followed the proposal of Dr. Lloyd-Jones in the mad pursuit of ecumenism — go for the minimum ... of truth (!). However, contrary to the contention of Lloyd-Jones, Rome could agree to this list. And many have discovered that if the list be made a bit more

general in certain parts, the door is opened to many more religions. Eventually all will be welcome. But then you have the church of the antichrist.

The book is recommended, not because the Reformed reader will agree with all that he reads, as this review indicates. Nonetheless, it contains much worthwhile material on the Puritans, even as it also reveals some of the serious weaknesses on the part of those participating in the conferences that promote the Puritans. Weaknesses, I believe, rooted in the Puritan theology itself. ■

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