

THE STANDARD BEARER

October 15, 2008

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Special Reformation Issue:

Rome's Present Dangers

The last time the *Standard Bearer* paid special attention, in her annual Reformation Issue, to the great threat of Rome was almost 20 years ago.

We begin, this time, with part of a sermon from John Calvin, in which he compares Ishmael's abuse of Isaac to Rome's persecution of the true church (a sermon worth reading, in spite of its old style). Then Rev. Koole's striking editorial makes very clear why such a special issue is necessary again. Start there. But you will want to read every article to prepare yourself (and your children) to resist the ever-powerful allure of Rome, and to prepare yourself for the persecution from the false church. A certain boldness is required even to name Rome such on the front page of the magazine.

Contents:

- ◆ *Ishmael and Rome* 26
- ◆ *The Road to Rome Is Paved...* 28
- ◆ *Chameleon Catholicism—Rome's Different Faces* 30
- ◆ *Faith Alone* 33
- ◆ *The Supreme Authority of the Holy Scriptures* 36
- ◆ *Rome and Politics (1)* 40
- ◆ *What Has the CRC Done with Q/A 80?* 42
- ◆ *Our Reformed Witness to Roman Catholics* 44
- ◆ *Report of Classis East* 47

Volume 85 ◆ Number 2

Ishmael and Rome*

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."

Galatians 4:29-31

And hereupon Saint Paul saith, *that it is so even yet still at this day, according as Moses declareth under the figure which he did set forth this morning: For in Abraham's house (saith he) there was an elder son called Ishmael, and he persecuted*

Isaac which was the lawful son. Now then, it behooveth us to be so handled and dealt withal that such as have nothing but dissimulation and hypocrisy in them, which are but as bastardships, and which are utterly corrupt and become strangers, may nevertheless crake [brag] and boast their fill, and set up their bristles [show fight] against us as though we were unworthy to kiss their feet.

Such manner of men then must perk up in all pride and persecute us, but yet let us be constant, saith Saint Paul, and let not our faith be shaken down by such loftiness, nor by the wiles that are cast in our way by those hypocrites and falsifiers which have perverted God's doctrine. For in the end the same will happen to them

(saith he) which is reported of the house of Abraham, namely, *drive out the son of the bondwoman, for he shall not be heir. All they then that vaunt themselves to be faithful,*

and will needs be taken to be of God's household, shall be cut off as rotten members and not have any part or piece of inheritance there.

And it is moreover a right excellent lesson, which containeth a very profitable admonition, even to confirm the thing which I have touched already, which is that the poms of this world must not blear our eyes, to carry away at a gaze when we see great solemnities and gorgeous deckings. If a man should believe no further than he sees when the Pope were in his Pontificalibus [vestments], he might be taken

for a God, he hath so many knick-knacks glistening about him. And no marvel though many be amazed at it, as though one had knocked them on the head with a club, and become as good

as brute beasts. For why? Men are so given to judge fleshly, that they be worse than little children in things that concern God's kingdom.

Men are so given to judge fleshly, that they be worse than little children in things that concern God's kingdom.

* Excerpted, by permission, from *Sermons on Galatians, Old Paths Publications, 1 Bittersweet Path, Willow Street, PA 17584.*

Although Calvin did not give titles to his sermons, we suggest that this, indeed, was his 'theme' of this part of "The Thirtieth Sermon...."

The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prof. Barrett L. Gritters
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Grandville, MI 49418
(e-mail: gritters@prca.org)

BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
Mr. Timothy Pipe
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
PH: (616) 457-5970
FAX: (616) 457-5980
(e-mail: tim@rfpa.org)

Postmaster:

Send address changes to
The Standard Bearer
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428-7137

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(e-mail: benjwig@juno.com)

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
c/o B. VanHerik
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE

c/o Mr. Sean Courtney
78 Millfield, Grove Rd.
Ballymena, Co. Antrim
BT43 6PD Northern Ireland
(e-mail: cprfaudiostore@yahoo.co.uk)

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

\$21.00 per year in the U.S., US\$25.00 elsewhere.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. Announcements should be sent, with the \$10.00 fee, to the editorial office: SB Announcements, 4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW, Grandville, MI 49418 (e-mail: doezema@prca.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org
Website for PRC: www.prc.org

But yet for all this, behold, Saint Paul saith, that they which have the primacy, and are all in all, and are dreaded of every man, and finally which bear the title of first begotten, are oftentimes but Ishmaelites, so as they be but bastards, allege they their eldership never so much. But if Saint Paul were alive at this day, that one text of his were enough to make him to be burnt a hundred times. For let men write and speak as much as they list [please, wish], and they cannot more lively decipher or bewray [reveal] that the Pope and all his clergy are a heap of Ishmaelites and filthy bastards which fight against God and all his true and right begotten children, according also as Moses hath reported it. For what else allege the Papists for themselves, save that it is not a day or twain ago, or a hundred years ago, that they have had possession, but that they have kept their traditions and Ceremonies these eight or nine hundred years? But surely even in this behalf also they lie, and are past shame.... [The] eldership of theirs which they allege is not better nor of greater value than was the eldership of Ishmael.

Again, unto their eldership they add also multitude, saying that we be but a handful of folk in comparison to them; they have kings and Princes on their side, the whole world agreeth with them, both great and small say as they say, and the largeness of their kingdom stretcheth out far and wide throughout all Europe well near, and into a piece of Africa. When they have all this for themselves, very well, it is even as the eldership of Ishmael.

Nay, it were more meet for them to have begun at the other end, that is, to wit, at the holding fast of the pure doctrine of the Law and the Gospel, without mingling anything at all with it, for else it is a general conclusion that there is nothing in them


but corruptness and bastardy. But they will not enter into this discourse that men might know whether they be basebegotten [humbly born] of God's word or no, for it is seen too manifestly already. And in good faith (as I have said already) under the name of the Church, they have boldly taken upon them to disannul and falsify the whole word of God....

Now we for our part had need to be armed with patience: for it is a right hard temptation, that they which are God's deadly foes should after a sort possess the highest rooms in his house, and that we should be hidden under them like corn under chaff upon a barn floor. This is a hard and irksome plight.

And surely we see many that give over the Gospel through infirmity. When the poor simple souls hear these so brave titles of Catholic Church, of Apostolic See, of Vicar of Christ, of Successor of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, of Prelates, and of Bishops—I say, when all this gar geer [whimsical mockery] is flashed out before the silly souls, they are amazed at it, and conclude by and by, then must we needs stick to it. For they be ravished at the sight of these visors that serve to scare little children. But they that have any firmness in them, and judge according to that which God showeth them, are not at that point....

And so let us mark what is told us here by Saint Paul, that is, to wit, that it was not once only that there was an Ishmael in God's Church to persecute Isaac, but that we see the like at this day, and that the children of God shall be borne down and trampled underfoot, by such as

have no more but the bare title of Eldership, and under that shadow beguile the simple sort, cloaking all their filths and foulness under the pretense of gay colors. But howsoever the world go, let us prepare ourselves to battle (saith Saint Paul) and let not our faith quail [wither, fall away] at the sight of the price of the enemies of God's truth, yea even of the household enemies of it, which are not as Turks and heathen men, but keep a garrison in the Church, and yet will needs be Prelates and more than great pillars of it. Howsoever the world go (I say) let us not be abashed for it, sith [since] we be fenced with the example of our father Isaac, to the intent we should hold out stoutly, forasmuch as we be regenerated by the pure seed which God alloweth, whereby we be made his lawful children and heirs of his heavenly kingdom....

...Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, praying him to make us feel them in such wise as it may lead us to true repentance, that we may mourn continually before his majesty, and be so abashed in ourselves, as yet notwithstanding we may not doubt but that he accepteth us for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and that we shall always obtain sure forgiveness of our sins, if we seek it in true faith without swerving to the right hand or to the left, but only following the path which he hath showed us, as indeed we can never go amiss when we have the daysun of righteousness shining upon us. That it may please him to grant this grace, not only to us, but also to all people and nations of the earth, etc. 

...for it is a right hard temptation, that they which are God's deadly foes should after a sort possess the highest rooms in his house.

The Road to Rome Is Paved...

Why a special issue devoted to Rome and her Catholicism and its errors?

Because as the twenty-first century opens, the current of ecumenicity moves with increasing force, and, as is becoming increasingly clear, all the tributaries flow towards Rome.

On the ecclesiastical scene, old Rome has taken shape again with a new vigor and in a more attractive form, and more and more evangelical voices of influence are pointing towards Rome as the last real hope of Western Christianity, if it is going to withstand and save itself from the assault of our post-Christian world and its amoral, anti-Christian society.

You want voices of men of influence? Try on J. I. Packer, John Stott, and Chuck Colson for size. Add to them the decades of influence of Dr. Billy Graham, and as well, for the last half a century, the better-known Bishops of the Anglican Church (the Archbishops of Canterbury in particular). These are but a few of the better known names.

One cannot ignore the irony of it—in the hopes of saving a weak, apostatizing Christianity from the anti-Christian assault of our modern-day world on everything that carries even the odor of Christian morality, the leaders of modern-day Protestantism turn us towards ROME, of all institutions, ROME, who is herself, according to the unanimous testimony of the great Protestant leaders of the past, the very embodiment of Antichrist's kingdom in its ecclesiastical form. The Reformers, to a man, identified Rome with her pope as the Babylon spoken of in Revelation

13-18, Babylon that great whore (cf. WCF XXV, 6). But now, we are being told, Christianity's only hope for salvation from the present anti-Christian forces loose in twenty-first century Western society is ecumenical relations with the Antichrist of the Christian church, the pope, and his false, apostate church.

This is modern Protestantism's 'wisdom': the one who dwells in the seat of Antichrist, together with his Magisterium, is to save us from being swallowed up by the evils of Antichrist that threaten Christianity.

What can one say?

The Devil's ability to deceive men within Christ's church is phenomenal. I think sometimes he is surprised himself with just how gullible and pliable the Christian segment of the human race proves itself to be over and over again.

I am reminded of a refrain from a poem of a well-known trilogy that has become popular in the last few decades, a book that centers in a fellowship seeking to destroy a certain ring of dark, controlling power.

One Ring to rule them all,
One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and
in darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where
the Shadows lie.

Tolkien could not have better described the self-serving and enslaving power of Papal Rome throughout Western history if he had tried.

What is interesting about the great ecumenical developments of the past fifty years is that, while Rome has proved keenly

interested in the movement and has become an active participant, Rome did not initiate this interest in ecumenical ties between herself and Protestants. To be sure, by means of the sweeping liturgical changes made by Vatican II in the early 1960s, Rome made herself more accessible to those outside her ecclesiastical structure, and the language of the late charismatic Pope John Paul II became increasingly ecumenical as his papacy progressed. Still, the movement towards Rome found its impetus within Protestantism itself, evangelical Protestants seeking out Rome and making conciliatory gesture after gesture to Rome.

This must be kept in mind.

The movement has been all towards Rome—concessions to Rome, becoming more and more like Rome, praising the stability and enduring presence of Rome—not Rome conceding one essential thing to its 'erring, separated, brethren.'

This can be demonstrated (and will be, in a following editorial).

The history of evangelical Christianity's rapprochement with Rome is interesting and instructive. It began decades prior to what is known today as ECT (Evangelicals and Catholics Together). It began with promises and reassurances by ecumenically-minded evangelicals of the 1950s and 1960s (in England in particular) that what they had in mind was merely cooperation between Protestants of diverse persuasions. Concerned conservatives could be reassured it would never have anything to do with seeking contact with Rome.

How soon this church political promise was broken was as-

tonishing even by the standards of the politicians of the world.

Ian Murray spells this out in some detail in his excellent book *Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to 2000*. The book is a detailed record of the disastrous concessions evangelical Protestants made during these decades, concessions made first of all to mainline liberal churchmen (in particular what took place in the 1960s in England), concessions made in the misbegotten hope that by making common cause with influential creed-denying liberals they could revive biblical Christianity as a force to be reckoned with again in England and their own dying Protestant churches as well.

And one is surprised that, working from this premise, revival of a vibrant English Protestantism has fizzled? How naïve can intelligent churchmen be?

What is interesting is that, while it's true that the present ecumenical climate dominated by the ECT movement can be traced back in large measure to events that took place at alliance conferences sponsored by English evangelicals in the 1960s, it was none other than an American, the young Billy Graham, with his crusades (which hit England in the mid-1950s) and his personality and contacts, who proved to be a fundamental catalyst in getting the ecumenical movement moving in the direction it has.

We tend to assess the damage Billy Graham has done to gospel truth and the church in terms of his Arminianism and 'Easy Believism' — "Just walk down the aisle and accept Jesus as your Savior." It becomes plain, however, that the damage inflicted by Dr. Graham goes much deeper than that.

The evolution of Billy Graham from insisting that his crusades be associated only with those who maintained fundamental

biblical doctrines to his becoming a broad-minded Universalist took place rather quickly. In the late 1940s he stated, "We do not condone nor have fellowship with any form of modernism" (*Evangelicalism Divided*, p. 29). And yet in the mid-50s, in the Great London Crusade, the Archbishop of Canterbury, well known for his Bible-denying modernism, was invited to share the podium with Billy and gave the closing benediction at one of Graham's last climactic rallies.

In the early 1950s Graham twice declined invitations to take his crusades to NY City because he was concerned that they were to be sponsored by men of modernistic and liberal convictions. Yet, in 1957 Graham accepted an invitation to take his crusade to Manhattan, NY, knowing full well that it meant "cooperation with a group that was predominantly non-evangelical and even included out-and-out modernists" (*Ibid.*, p. 29). His position now was "We should be willing to work with all who were willing to work with us" (*Ibid.*).

Even then, assurances were given: this ecumenical mentality would never include involving Rome. As late as 1958, a leading member of the Graham organization, Dr. R. O. Ferm, wrote a book entitled *Co-Operative Evangelism*. It was written to defend Graham's cooperation with churchmen of liberal persuasion and to deflect criticism of what 'appeared' to be a compromising of basic biblical doctrines of grace. In Murray's words:

[Dr. Ferm] insisted...that Roman Catholic participation in their work was excluded. Referring to crusade services, he replied to the inquiry of a Kansas minister, "Certainly Catholic priests do not attend.... [They] have not been invited to participate in any way. Nor would they do so if they were invited."

This was all to change (*Ibid.*, p. 67).

In the 1970s Graham became one of the embattled President Nixon's 'spiritual' advisors. As Murray relates:

Graham himself shared a White House service with Rabbi Edgar Magnin and John Cardinal Krol. In his autobiography he refers to such meetings in terms of his "ecumenical strategy".

What Ferm had formerly called his [own] "emphatically Protestant theology" was clearly no longer operative in 1977 when he shared with Graham in a crusade on the campus of Notre Dame, the premier Catholic university in the United States.

...Years earlier [Graham] had said, "I have no quarrel with the Catholic Church," and now it was plain for all to see. Speaking of the difference between evangelicalism and Roman Catholicism he could further say, "I don't think the differences are important as far as personal salvation is concerned." Graham could now say: "I feel I belong to all the churches. I am equally at home in an Anglican or Baptist or a Brethren assembly or a Roman Catholic church.... Today we have almost 100 per cent Catholic support in this country. That was not true twenty years ago. And the bishops and archbishops and the Pope are our friends."

In 1987 Graham agreed to share a service in Columbus, South Carolina, with Pope John Paul II. He was already on record as affirming, "He is a wonderful pope" (*Ibid.*, pp. 68-9; Note: For much of his information on Graham, Murray acknowledges his indebtedness to W. Martin's book, *Prophet With Honor*, the best biography on Graham).

The above is a decidedly different perspective from where Graham began his public career. As Graham himself stated in defense of his theological evolution, "The ecumenical movement has broadened my viewpoint" (*Mitchell, Billy Graham: Saint or Sinner*, p. 272).

For the record, Graham's ecu-

menical viewpoint has become so broad that just prior to the end of the century (in 1997), in an interview by Dr. R. Schuller, of Crystal Cathedral fame, Graham went on record as stating that knowledge of and faith in Christ Jesus is not the only way of salvation. Having stated that Muslims, Buddhists, and non-believers could also be members of Christ's body as they were, he went on to say,

They may not know the name of Jesus but they know in their hearts that they need something they do not have, and they turn to the only light they have, and I think that they are saved and they are going to be with us in heaven (Murray, op. cit., p. 74).

Not even Schuller was sure he had heard right. Seeking clarification, Schuller exclaimed,

What, what I hear you saying, that it's possible for Jesus Christ to come into human hearts and soul and life, even if they have been born in darkness and have never had exposure to the Bible. Is that a correct interpretation of what you are saying?

"Yes, it is", Graham responded in decided tones. At which point his television host tripped over his words in his excitement, and exclaimed, "I'm so thrilled to hear you say this. There is a

wideness to God's mercy". To which Graham added, "There is. There definitely is" (Ibid.).

A wideness of God's mercy indeed! So wide, it does not even require Christ.

This is universalism of the crassest sort. It raises the fundamental question, why preach the cross to unbelieving sinners at all? Such is folly personified. According to this 'wisdom,' all missions does (and has done) is to make Christians of a few souls in heathen lands, which in turn riles up the heathen unnecessarily, causing division and untold religious turmoil in those lands. Those countries would have been better off without the Christian gospel ever having been introduced into them. The converts, as spiritually troubled and sincere heathens, would have been saved anyway by the wideness of God's mercy, despite their ignorance of Christ, and with a lot less grief to themselves and those whom their faith and their Christ antagonized. Christ was mistaken. Knowledge of and faith in Himself were not so sorely needed by the Gentile unbelievers lost in darkness after all.

We say again, even Satan must find astonishing what pro-


fessing Christians can be led to say about the dispensability of the crucified Son of God they claim to believe and love.

But such is the record of Graham's ecclesiastical pilgrimage.

We trace it because it is basically the biography of twentieth-century American Protestantism.

We trace it because Dr. Billy Graham, without a doubt, has been the most influential evangelical protestant in the last half century. Graham publicly has made his peace, not only with Scripture-denying liberals, but also with Rome's hierarchy. And where Graham has led, countless millions of admiring, trusting souls have followed. He is the anti-Luther and one of the chief anti-Reformers of the twentieth century. He has been used as an agent of the Enemy of all scriptural truth. And, sad to say, all too willingly.

A second major contributing party to the road back to Rome (and the ECT movement of our day) is to be found in England of the 1960s, namely, the English evangelicals. Significantly, Graham had a hand in influencing them as well to make their peace with Rome via peace with the liberals first of all.

We intend to treat that along with concessions made to Rome in a second editorial, D.V. 

Rev. Ron Hanko

Chameleon Catholicism – Rome's Different Faces

Has Rome Changed?

Has Roman Catholicism changed? Is it even possible for Roman Catholicism to change, in view of Rome's insistence on the infallibility of the Pope? Rome's own unofficial motto is *Semper Idem*, "Always

the Same." Yet, many point to the Second Vatican Council, held in 1962-1965, as proof of Rome's willingness to change. A blurb on the back cover of a volume of the documents of that council calls Vatican II "the Ecumenical Council that changed the Catho-

Rev. Hanko is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington.

lic Church—and possibly all of Christianity—forever.”¹ To even a casual observer it seems as though Rome has changed and continues to change in many ways since the Reformation. What appear to be real changes in Romanism are used to justify ecumenical relations with Rome.² Where does the truth lie?

Romanism Essentially Unchanged

In its fundamental teachings and beliefs, Rome has not changed and will not change. Boettner says, and we agree:

What sometimes looks like change is merely a policy of caution which she has been forced to adopt because of public opinion. She changes her methods, but not her spirit. Her Canon Law has not undergone any essential change, nor has her ancient policy of suppressing or persecuting those who differ with her....³

A good example of Rome’s unwillingness to change for good in any important matter is found in Vatican II’s “Decree on Ecumenism” (I, 3), in which Rome shows that her attitude toward Protestantism has not changed:

Nevertheless, our separated brethren, whether considered as individuals or as Communities and Churches, are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those who through Him were born again into one body, and with Him quickened to newness of life—that unity which the Holy Scriptures and the ancient Tradition of the Church

proclaim. For it is only through Christ’s Catholic Church, which is “the all-embracing means of salvation,” that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation. We believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, in order to establish the one Body of Christ on earth to which all should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God.⁴

Rome still views itself as the only true and catholic church, and while Vatican II does not anathematize Protestantism as the older Council of Trent did, it nevertheless condemns Protestantism as being outside the true church and the means of grace and salvation.

On the mass, the seven sacraments, the authority of the pope, the immaculate conception and worship of Mary, the priesthood, purgatory, justification, tradition, celibacy, and many other key matters, Rome’s teaching has not changed one iota, but has been reaffirmed by Vatican II. The chameleon remains a chameleon even when the color of its skin changes.

Rome prides herself in being the same, and she finds in that sameness proof of her being the one true church of Christ. Rome’s arrogance on this point is unsurpassed. In reference to the seeking of ecumenical relations with Protestants, Vatican II in the Decree just quoted said (I, 4):

Such actions, when they are carried out by the Catholic faithful with prudent patience and under the attentive guidance of their bishops, promote justice and truth, concord and collabo-

rations, as well as the spirit of brotherly love and unity. The results will be that, little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only Church, which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.⁵

Romanism Endlessly Adaptable

Yet in other respects Roman Catholicism is as variable and changeable as the color of a chameleon’s skin. Protestants are often puzzled by this and wonder how North American Roman Catholicism can be so different from South American Roman Catholicism, or European from African. Alan Morrison, in his book *The Serpent and the Cross*, recognizes this:

In many ways, it is impossible to identify, in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, what the Roman Catholic religion actually consists of. It appears to be all things to all people, depending on what they want to believe and practise. It can be supportive of gun-toting guerilla warfare, arm-waving Charismatic ecstasy, or incense-burning, goddess-worshipping high priesthood!⁶

Nor is this a new phenomenon. J. A. Wylie, in his definitive work on the papacy, spoke of this more than 100 years ago, long before Vatican II:

In few things is the genius of

⁵ http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html

⁶ Alan Morrison, *The Serpent and the Cross: Religious Corruption in an Evil Age* (K & M Books, 1994), 582.

¹ Austin P. Flannery, ed., *Documents of Vatican II* (Eerdmans, 1975).

² Mark Noll, one of the signers of the notorious document, “Evangelicals and Catholics Together,” published in 1994, justified his signing on grounds of “a greater tolerance in the area of theological issues.”

³ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 447.

⁴ http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html

The chameleon remains a chameleon even when the color of its skin changes.

Popery more conspicuous than in this combination of forces,—this combination of elements the most various; so that from the utmost diversity of action there is educed at last the most perfect unity of result, and that result is the aggrandizement of the Church. That Church provides convents for the ascetic and the mystic, carnivals for the gay, missions for the enthusiast, penances for the man suffering from remorse, sisterhoods of mercy for the benevolent, crusades for the chivalrous, secret missions for the man whose genius lies in intrigue, the Inquisition, with its racks and screws, for the man who combines detestation of heresy with the love of cruelty, indulgences for the man of wealth and pleasure, purgatory to awe the refractory and frighten the vulgar, and a subtle theology for the casuist and the dialectician. Within the pale of that Church there is work for all these labourers, and that too the very work in which each delights, while Rome reaps the fruit of all.... In this way the Church of Rome unites in herself all the strength of establishment and all the strength of dissent. With the utmost pomp of a dominant hierarchy above, she has all the energy of a voluntary system below.¹

Charismaticism,² evangelicalism,³ heathenism,⁴ open

¹ J. A. Wylie, *The Papacy: Its History, Dogmas, Genius, and Prospects* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1852), 413-15.

² The charismatic movement, with its emphasis on the special gifts of the Spirit, was explicitly condoned by Vatican II in its "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 12."

³ Cf. Stanley Mawhinney, "Evangelical Catholics, a New Phenomenon" (Christian Ministries, 1992). Evangelical Catholics claim to accept all the "evangelical" teachings of Protestantism while remaining Roman Catholics.

⁴ "The use of temples...incense, lamps and candles...the tonsure...turning to the East...perhaps the ecclesiastical chant and the Kyrie Eleison, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified

dissent with the Papacy on ethical and doctrinal matters,⁵ membership in the Mafia, freemasonry, practice of the occult,⁶ Marxism,⁷ Nazism,⁸ Liberation theology, left-wing radicalism, Zen Buddhism⁹ and Hinduism,¹⁰ Judaism,¹¹ the Muslim religion¹²—Rome tol-

by their adoption in the Church." John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Penguin Books, 1974), 369, quoted in Morrison, 562. Newman was a Roman Catholic cardinal who converted from Anglicanism.

⁵ The open dissent of American Catholicism, both lay people and clergy, on numerous issues, such as clerical celibacy, abortion, birth control, and marriage and divorce, is well documented.

⁶ For example, Umbanda, in Latin America and especially Brazil, is a combination of Catholicism and African spiritualism and occultism, and is widely tolerated among Roman Catholics.

⁷ Cf. the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jesuit and Marxist.

⁸ For information on Roman Catholic support for the fascist and Nazi regimes of Hitler and Mussolini, cf. John W. Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania* (Trinity Foundation, 1995), 161-173, and John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope* (Viking, 1999).

⁹ The Trappist monk and popular writer Thomas Merton was champion of a mix of Zen Buddhism and Christianity.

¹⁰ Mother Teresa's well-known "Universal Prayer for Peace" was published with the claim that it is "not confined to members of religions, but equally to humanists and agnostics and generally to those who believe in the power of positive thought" and was adapted from the Hindu Scriptures, the Upanishads, by a Hindu monk, Satish Kumar.

¹¹ "Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues" (Vatican II, "Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions, 4").

¹² "The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the

erates it all, though without necessarily approving of it all.

Rome is indeed a "syncretistic dustbin," and to speak of "chameleon catholicism" is only to touch on Rome's ability to adapt in different lands and circumstances to any and every situation.

Vatican II, in its "Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions,

Rome is indeed a "syncretistic dustbin..."

2," officially declared that "there is found among various peoples a certain perception

of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father," and that "the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions."

Romanism Always Dangerous

There are both doctrinal and practical reasons why Rome is so adaptive and changeable in these ways. Doctrinally Rome's Pelagian view of salvation, the teaching that men are able to take the initial and fundamental steps toward their own salvation, leads to a certain toleration of different practices and religions and Rome's willingness to adapt. Practically, it is simply the case that Rome is interested in nothing so much as earthly supremacy and power. Her only real goal is "to establish the one Body of Christ on earth to which all should be fully incorpo-

one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God" (Vatican II, "Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions, 3").

rated who belong in any way to the people of God" ("Decree on Ecumenism," I, 3). For Rome that means everyone.

Such ability to adapt makes Roman Catholicism dangerous. She may be as adaptable as a chameleon, but she is by no means as harmless as a chameleon. She is as dangerous as the great dragon on which she rides in Revelation 17. In her tolerance (for everything but the truth), she is like the beast from the earth, who has the horns of a lamb but speaks as a dragon (Rev. 13:11). Her adaptiveness is dangerous exactly because it lulls those to sleep who ought to be afraid of her. Witness, for example, the attitude of Robert Schuller, who said at the time of the Pope's visit to the USA in 1987, "It is time for Protestants to go to the shepherd and say, 'What do we have to do to come home?'"¹ He was not


¹ *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, Sept. 19, 1987.

referring to our Savior, but to the Pope.

Who can forget the betrayal of those prominent evangelicals who signed "Evangelicals and Catholics Together"? Lulled to sleep by the assurance that Rome had changed and was willing to dialogue with Protestants, such men as J. I. Packer, Chuck Colson, Bill Bright, Richard Mouw, Mark Noll, Pat Robertson, Gerald Bray, and Max Lucado betrayed everything the Protestant Reformation stood for.

Surely this same ability to adapt has led to the defection to Rome of Protestant ministers and leaders such as Scott Hahn and John Richard Neuhaus. Rome has a place for anyone who will join with her in her opposition to the true gospel and in her efforts to establish her own supremacy. Anyone who will acknowledge her as "Mother Church" and who will bow to her authority, even

while dissenting from some of her teachings, she welcomes.

It is only those who consider her to be chief in the kingdom of Antichrist, who rebuke her for her idolatry and heresy, and who will not submit to her deadly yoke, that she hates and persecutes. Nor must the smiling face of Rome, which she turns towards evangelicals to woo them under her wings, deceive us. She has never repented of her thousand-fold murders of the saints and of her endless efforts to root out the gospel. It is her willingness to adapt and to tolerate everything but true religion that will give Rome a prominent place in the end-times kingdom of Antichrist in which all nations will be gathered under one head and will together, Jews, Muslim, Christians, and heathen, worship the beast and persecute those whose allegiance and devotion is to Christ, the only head of the church. 

Prof. Ronald Cammenga

Faith Alone

Call it the watchword of the Reformation. It was one of the great *solas* of the movement. It is often referred to as the material principle of the Reformation. It is the heart of the gospel—the gospel recovered by the Reformers.

To what are we referring? But of course, to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Despite their diversity, this was the truth that united the Reformers and the various branches of the Reforma-

tion. This was the gospel that the Reformers trumpeted. This was the issue, more than any, that separated them from Rome. For the sake of this truth, not just Luther, but they all were willing to "Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also..."

At its heart, the Reformation was a doctrinal movement. The chief concern of the Reformers was truth—the truth of the Word of God. The Reformation aimed to "reform" the church by rooting out false doctrine and its attendant evil influences on morals and church life. The heresy that the Reformers unanimously rejected was the teaching of the doctrine of justification (salva-

tion) by faith *and* works. That error they vigorously opposed as contrary to the truth of the gospel. That error they rejected as a denial of the cross of Jesus Christ. That error they repudiated as the root out of which had grown so many evils in the church of their day.

The Struggle in Luther's Own Soul

Before the Reformation became a movement in the church, the Reformation was an experience in Luther's own soul. Apart from his own personal experience, Luther could never have been the Reformer that he was. As God used Moses' experience in

Prof. Cammenga is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

the deserts of Midian to prepare him to be the deliverer of His people, and as God used David's years tending his father's sheep as preparation for his becoming the king of Israel, so God used Luther's own personal experience to fit him to be the mighty Reformer of God's church.

"How can I be righteous before God?" That was the troubling question that vexed Luther's soul. The Roman Catholic Church answered Luther's question by saying that a man must *earn* his righteousness before God. By what we do, by our own works, we merit our standing before God. Our righteousness depends partly on the work of Jesus Christ, but also partly on our own work. Luther believed that teaching of the church. For that reason he entered a monastery as a young man. Becoming a monk or a nun was considered an especially good work. But just as he could not resolve his soul-struggles outside the monastery, neither could he do so after entering the closed world within the monastery. Try as he might, he could not quiet his accusing conscience. He could not come to assurance and peace before God.

It was, however, sometime after God had led Luther into the monastery that He also brought him to the resolution of his spiritual struggles. It was especially by Luther's study of the epistle to the Romans that God caused him to see that the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel is not our own righteousness. It is the righteousness of God, the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ *imputed*—a key word—by God as a free gift to all those who believe on Jesus Christ. The righteousness by which we are saved, therefore, is an *alien*—another key word—righteousness, not an inherent or acquired righteousness. We are saved not because of our works, but because of the work of Christ.

This has often been referred to as the "Tower Experience," because this truth came home to Luther on an evening as he studied in his cell in the tower of the monastery at Wittenberg. Luther later described the experience.

I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but one expression, "the justice of God," because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just [in Himself] and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant. Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that "the just shall live by his faith." Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies *us* through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the "justice of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet.... This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven... (Quoted by Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, p. 65).

At last Luther had found the answer to his question. Or, rather, God had given Luther the answer to his question. "How can I be righteous before God?" Not by works, but alone by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Peace at last!

Going Public

At the time that God brought Luther to the resolution of his own spiritual struggles, he could

not have imagined that he would be the instrument of God to restore the truth of justification by faith alone in the church. Soon enough, however, this became apparent. Through circumstances arranged in His providence, God moved Luther to go public with his defense of the truth of justification. The occasion was the indulgence-hawking of Tetzel. Luther blasted this crass form of salvation by works, the selling of the forgiveness of sins for money. He expressed his opposition publicly by nailing the Ninety-Five Theses to the chapel door in Wittenberg. In Theses #32 and #33 he wrote:

Those who believe that through letters of pardon, they are made sure of their salvation, will be eternally damned along with their teachers. We must especially beware of those who say that these pardons from the Pope are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to God.

In Thesis #52 he wrote: "Vain is the hope of salvation through letters of pardon, even if...the Pope himself were to pledge his own soul for them."

Justification by faith alone. This was the crux of the Reformation, the great hinge upon which the whole Reformation turned. Luther wrote in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*:

With these scruples Rome tortures poor consciences to death...one scourges himself with rods, another ruins his body with fasts and vigils, and all cry with the same mad zeal, "Lo here is Christ! Lo there!" For these monstrous things we are indebted to thee, O Roman See, and thy murderous laws and ceremonies, with which thou hast corrupted all mankind, so that they think by works to make satisfaction for sin to God, Who can be satisfied only by the faith of a contrite heart!

In another place he wrote:

A Capuchin [an order of monks] says: wear a grey coat and a hood, a rope around thy body, and sandals on thy feet. A Cordelier says: put on a black hood; an ordinary papist says: do this or that work, hear mass, pray, fast, give alms, etc. But a true Christian says: I am justified and saved only by faith in Christ, without any works or merits of my own.

Luther stood publicly for justification by faith alone apart from any works, because he (and the others) were convinced that this was the teaching of the Word of God. Of that we must be convinced if we are going to make the same bold defense of this doctrine today. The Bible teaches this great truth, which is the heart of the gospel, in Romans 3:21 and 22: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." The apostle adds in verse 26, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." And verse 28, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." This is also Paul's teaching in Galatians 2:16: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

The Reformers stood for justification by faith alone because of Scripture's clear teaching that salvation is by grace alone. Grace alone demands faith alone. This was what the Reformation

was and did. It restored to the church gracious salvation. Salvation does not depend at all upon man, but is the free gift of God to man—man who is totally unworthy of salvation and altogether unable to contribute to it. This is the gospel. Salvation by faith alone *because* salvation is of grace alone—that is what Paul proclaims in Romans 4:16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace...." Since man's salvation is wholly attributed to the grace of God, justification must be by faith, by faith alone, by faith apart from any and all works. Works, works of any kind, do not contribute to justification. They are neither the whole nor any part of our justification.

Justification by faith *alone*. This is the gospel! This was the Reformation! This is the heritage of the Reformation!

The Issue of the Day

The great issue that was at the heart of the Reformation remains today as great an issue as ever it was. The great need in the church today is the same as it was in the days of the Reformation. For there are many Tetzels gone out into the church, deceiving multitudes with another gospel that is not the gospel of sovereign grace.

Rome has never recalled Tetzel. He continues to hawk his doctrine of salvation by works as boldly as he did in Luther's day. And his pope and church remain as impenitent in their God-dishonoring, grace-denying, man-exalting teaching as ever. Rome at the time of the Reformation, and Rome today, repudiates the gospel truth of justification by faith *alone*. Rome does not deny justification by faith, at least not explicitly. Rome in

fact loudly affirms justification by faith. Along with that, Rome teaches that justification is a work of God, even a gracious work of God. But Rome vehemently denies that justification is by faith *alone*. Man is justified by faith *and* by works.

Rome's official teaching has been confirmed by her new pope, Benedict XVI. His Sunday address on August 26, 2007 was entitled "All can enter eternal life, but the door is narrow." In that address he declared that

[t]he path to eternal life is open to all, but is narrow because it's demanding, asks for commitment, abnegation, and the mortification of selfishness....it is not on the basis of alleged privileges that we shall be judged, but on the merit of our deeds.... Good works are the 'passport' that will let us enter eternal life.

At the Council of Trent (1545-1563), Rome made clear her rejection of the Reformation gospel of justification by faith alone and insisted on the false teaching of justification by faith and works. Among other things Trent declared:

If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified, in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will: let him be anathema (Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 2, p. 112).

Rome has never recalled Tetzel. He continues to hawk his doctrine of salvation by works as boldly as he did in Luther's day.

The anathemas of Trent have been reaffirmed in the more recently published *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Ominously the Catechism asserts that "Justification establishes *cooperation*

between God's grace and man's freedom" (p. 483). That assertion opens the door for a reaffirmation of Rome's teaching of justification by faith and works.

The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that *God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace*. The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful (p. 486).

In recent years various evangelicals have reached accords with Roman Catholicism on the doctrine of justification by faith. The mainline Lutheran denominations throughout the world, including the largest Lutheran denominations in the United States and Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, have reached agreement with Rome. The "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" is a sellout of the

doctrine of justification by faith alone.


The organization known as Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) is made up of prominent evangelical and Roman Catholic theologians in dialogue. They have publicly expressed basic agreement on the doctrine of justification. Both ECT I ("Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium") and ECT II ("Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Gift of Salvation") contain concessions—fatal concessions—on the part of evangelicals to Rome on the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

And then there is the insidious threat of the Federal Vision (Delusion) movement, the tenets of which are being enthusiastically promoted today in Presbyterian and Reformed churches. The basic error of the Federal Vision men is their teaching of a conditional covenant. This is just the teaching that, within the covenant, salvation is dependent initially and continually on the

fulfillment of certain conditions. In other words, the salvation of the members of the covenant is not by faith alone, which faith is the gift and work of God, but is dependent on man, and is due to man's cooperation with God. Which is to say, salvation is not by faith *alone*, but by faith and works.

This is the issue of the day. We must see this to be the issue of the day.

We have something to say on this issue. Something to say to the enemies who are attacking the truth. Something to say to those in the Reformed churches who are bringing in damnable heresies. Something to say to those who are tempted to be deceived. Something to say to ourselves by way of warning. What we have to say is nothing new. What we have to say the Bible says. What we have to say the Reformers said. What we say is that we are justified by faith, and by faith *alone*.

This is the truth. This is God-glorifying gospel. This is peace of conscience and assurance of heart. For now and for the future. 

Rev. Richard Smit

The Supreme Authority of the Holy Scriptures

As it was true at the time of the Reformation and as it continues to be true, one of the key points of conflict and separation between the Roman Catholic Church and the faithful children of the Reformation is the nature and extent of scriptural authority. In that conflict, there

are two distinct sides: either the church (or man) is the supreme authority in matters of life and doctrine, or Holy Scripture is the supreme authority in matters of life and doctrine. The Roman Catholic Church maintains that its Tradition and hierarchy are an authority above Holy Scripture. Faithful churches of the Reformation in the past maintained, and churches today who seek to be distinctively and soundly

Reformed must continue to maintain, the supreme authority of Scripture in all matters of life and doctrine.

Opposed by the Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church's view of the authority of Scripture is based on what we could call a historical argument. It is argued that since the New Testament books of the Bible were not

Rev. Smit is pastor of the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada.

completed until the end of the first century, the New Testament church existed prior to the existence of the complete Canon for many decades. As a result, it was the ancient catholic church that assembled these books together and gave to the world the Bible. It is argued, therefore, that the authority of Scripture rests upon the witness of the church.

Now, I suppose that no RCC theologian would ever be so bold to say that *verbatim*. You will find in their writings attempts to prove the Scripture's inspiration and authority. However, the RCC theologians deny the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture when they claim that only the witness of the church can provide us with any conclusive certainty regarding the inspiration and authority of Scripture. As a result, the orthodoxy that the Roman Catholic Church claims to maintain regarding the authority of Scripture is in fact completely denied when it maintains that Scripture possesses its regulatory authority on the foundation of the church and its Tradition.

This conclusion is confirmed in the writings of John A. O'Brien, a Roman Catholic theologian. He concluded, in his catechism book for youth and for converts to the RCC, that the Bible is not a safe guide for the believer in matters of doctrine and life because it does not have three necessary qualifications. He wrote,

From all of what [was argued before this conclusion, RJS] it must be abundantly clear that the Bible alone is not a safe and competent guide because it is not now and never has been accessible to all, because it is not clear and intelligible to all, and because it does not contain all the truths of the Christian religion.¹

¹ John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions: The Credentials of the Catholic Religion* (Huntingdon, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1938), p. 148.

The alleged deficiency in Scripture's ability to regulate all matters of doctrine and life requires the church, it is argued, to come alongside the Bible with its Tradition and its ability to interpret in order to make the Bible clear and authoritative in the life of the church. The result is that "...the Catholic Church is the living authoritative interpreter of the Bible."² In other words, the RCC claims that it must make Scripture an effective authority in the life of God's people.

A second aspect to this historical argument is the matter of its "sacred tradition." Since the Scriptures were not completed until the end of the first century, the RCC claims that there is a "sacred tradition" that existed prior to and independently from the revelation of God in Scripture. The RCC describes this Tradition in the catechism written under the watchful eye of the current pope (Benedict XVI) and approved by the former pope (John Paul II).

The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus' teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit. The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament, and the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition.³

What does this Tradition include? It is difficult to find a specific list of what is included. However, we are told that the tradition includes the gospel concerning saving truth and moral discipline that was communicated orally to the church. Orally, the apostles

...handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institu-

² *Ibid*, p. 148.

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), section 83, p. 26.

tions they established what they themselves received—whether from the lips of Christ, from His way of life and His works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit.⁴

We learn that this "sacred tradition" includes all manner of things that shaped the doctrine, life, church government, worship, and liturgy of the church. Nevertheless, whatever these things of Tradition might be, you will not find them written down in the Scriptures.

How high a place does this Tradition have in comparison to Scripture? For the RCC, these two are bound so closely together that faith and truth flow out of both Tradition and Scripture (in that deliberate order!) unto the church. For the church member to possess merely Scripture will not be sufficient. He must also be attached to the Tradition of the RCC (through the papacy) in order to know what must be believed and how he ought to live. That this Tradition is more important than Scripture is evident from the following quote:

There are certain truths which Christ and the Apostles taught which are not recorded in the Scriptures, but which are embodied in the life, practice, and ministry of the Church, in her written and unwritten traditions, which supplement the Biblical record. In other words, the church in her worship and religious and moral observances was a going concern before a word of the New Testament was written. She is not dependent on it for her existence, nor is she limited in her doctrines to it [i.e., to the Bible, RJS].⁵

It is evident that Tradition has the supreme place of authority over Scripture in the RCC.

However, in the final analysis,

⁴ *Ibid*, section 76, pp. 24-25.

⁵ O'Brien, p. 147.

Tradition does not have ultimate supremacy. What certain popes and men in the church have declared as truth has supremacy. When in 1870, at the First Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church finally cemented into its Tradition the infallibility of the pope in his *ex cathedra* statements, the supremacy of Scripture's authority was crucified, and the supremacy of man, particularly the pope, in all matters of doctrine and life, was enthroned, so that the papacy has fully presumed to take the place of God and the Scriptures on earth. Therefore, in the RCC the guide and foundation of one's faith must be, in the final analysis, the pope, Tradition, the clergy of the church, and Scripture, too, but only where it agrees with the hierarchy and its Tradition.

This denial of the authority of Scripture included an attack on the very nature of that authority. The Roman Catholic Church refuses to presuppose that the books of Scripture, particularly the New Testament books, are in any way self-authoritative. The Roman Catholic Church does not believe that Scripture itself provides certain and self-sustaining testimony to its own divine authority. They do not wish to prove from Scripture that Scripture is divinely authoritative, which is actually the argumentation of a true and child-like faith. They do not wish to do that because they believe such reasoning (proving Scripture's authority from Scripture) is a logical fallacy. Rather than do that, the RCC maintains that it must judge the authenticity of Scripture's claims to inspiration and authority. When the ancient church by its decisions finalized what books would be included in Scripture, then the Scriptures, it is argued, received their binding authority in the church. In other words, if the church did not furnish certainty concerning the Scripture's inspiration and authority, the child of God could never trust the author-

ity of Scripture. Therefore, on the condition of the declarations of past councils and its papacy, the RCC gives Scripture its binding authority in the church and she presumes to regulate that authority of Scripture through its interpretive pronouncements, papal statements *ex cathedra*, and Tradition.

We can conclude that the RCC is not "managed according to the pure Word of God" (Belgic Confession, Article 29), because it has rejected the supreme authority of Holy Scripture, which alone is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (II Tim. 3:15).

Confessed and Defended by the Reformation

In opposition to these errors regarding the inspiration and authority of Scripture, Christ raised up in His church faithful Reformers. These led the church back to the confession that the holy Scriptures are the supreme authority for the confession and daily life of the believer, and that whatever is not consistent with Scripture must be rejected.

The Reformation made its stand unambiguous. The creeds that the Reformed and Presbyterian churches wrote to summarize their confession of the truth of Scripture uphold the truth that the Scriptures possess supreme authority for its infallible regulation of all matters of doctrine and life.

For example, in the Belgic Confession, written in 1561, Reformed churches have embraced the authority of Scripture over against the error of the RCC. In Article 5, Reformed churches confess:

We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing, without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because

the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts that they are from God, whereof they carry evidence in themselves....

Then, in Article 7 of the same Belgic Confession, Reformed churches address specifically that matter of the Tradition of men and the worthiness and authority of the writings of church fathers or councils in comparison to Holy Scripture. After asserting the sufficiency of Holy Scripture to be the only rule of faith, Reformed churches confess:

...Neither do we consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees, or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule...."

The same regard for the supreme authority of Scripture is taught by the Second Helvetic Confession, published by the Swiss Reformed churches in 1566. At the very beginning of Chapter 1, the confession asserts that the authority of Scripture is divine and independent of men because it is the very Word of God.

We believe and confess the Canonical Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles of both Testaments to be the true Word of God, and have sufficient authority of themselves, not of men. For God Himself spake to the fathers, prophets, and apostles, and still speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures.¹

¹ The citations from the Second Helvetic Confession are taken from *Creeds of the Churches*, Edited by John H. Leith (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1982 [3rd edition]), pp. 132-192.

Then, in chapter 2, the Second Helvetic Confession addresses the issue of the relationship of the practices and writings of our ancient forefathers and of Scripture.

Wherefore we do not despise the interpretations of the holy Greek and Latin fathers, nor reject their disputations and treatises as far as they agree with the Scriptures; but we do modestly dissent from them when they are found to set down things differing from, or altogether contrary to the Scriptures. Neither do we think that we do them any wrong in this matter; seeing that they all, with one consent, will not have their writings matched with the Canonical Scriptures, but bid us allow them so far forth as they either agree with them or disagree. And in the same order we place the decrees and canons of councils.... Therefore, in controversies of religion or matters of faith, we cannot admit any other judge than God Himself, pronouncing by the Holy Scriptures what is true, what is false, what is to be followed, or what to be avoided. So we do not rest but in the judgment of spiritual men, drawn from the Word of God....

The Second Helvetic Confession makes a very significant observation. The supreme authority of Scripture is never man-made or man-dependent, but Scripture derives its authority from its only Author, God Himself. To submit to the authority of Scripture is to submit to God. To reject the authority of Scripture is to reject God's authority and to submit to man's authority and to what is right in the eyes of man. That rejection of God's authority results only in the fierce judgments of God, which Scripture by various examples makes plain.

Echoing the confessional statements of the Reformed churches throughout Europe, the Westminster Confession of Faith, in chapter 1 (in sections 4, 5, and 10), gives clear statements of Scripture's supreme authority

in all areas of life and doctrine. Therein is another clear testimony of the high honor and willing submission that the faithful heirs of the Reformation give to the Holy Scriptures.

Necessary for Reformed Churches Today to Maintain

That submission to the divine authority of Scripture must be maintained.

It is historically and distinctively Reformed to maintain that Scripture is the supreme judge and guide in all matters of doctrine, history, mathematics, chemistry, biology, geology, medicine, technology, entertainment, commerce, athletics, church government, church worship, sabbath observance, home life, courtship and dating, the lifelong bond of marriage, government, labor, and other things.

To confess otherwise is dishonoring to God and rebellion against the Word of God. To confess otherwise is spiritually disastrous to the hope and comfort of a church, household, or individual. In this regard, Herman Bavinck, in his extensive treatment of the authority of Scripture in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, makes a significant point concerning the intimate relationship between our faith (and our enjoyment of that truth in life and death) and the authority of Scripture.

Both the Christian faith and Christian preaching require divine authority as their foundation. "Faith will totter if the authority of the divine Scriptures begins to waver."¹

At the end of that quote, Bavinck was quoting from the church father Augustine. Hence, we learn from both of these forefathers, that if one begins to pick

¹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, translated into the English by John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Dutch Reformed Translation Society, 2003), p. 461.

away at the foundation of faith, soon he will make the whole of it come tumbling down. If we allow a church, a pope, a theologian, a highly-learned scholar, or even ourselves to chip and chop away and then to replace the foundation of the authoritative Scriptures, our faith will totter and crumble.

That conclusion of Augustine makes real, logical sense. If we question, with a view to undermining, God's authority in Scripture to tell us how the creation came into existence, to tell us how the worldwide Flood destroyed the earth, to tell us how the miracles of Scripture came to pass, to tell us the lifelong character of marriage, to tell us the ordinance of the headship of the man over the woman in all areas of earthly life, to tell us what is sin and what is acceptable in His sight, then inevitably we will begin to question God's authority to tell us that the only way of salvation is by grace alone in Christ Jesus alone through faith alone as revealed in Scripture alone. If we lose that, then what is left of our faith?

When we begin to question and reject the Word of God, our faith will shake and wobble. Then, before the howling winds of the errors of old and the present day, how shall such faith withstand the peril of falling headlong into error, evil, and ruin? Let us in a childlike faith be steadfast to uphold the truth of the supreme authority of the holy, inspired, infallible Word of God.

But how shall we be steadfast to esteem this jewel of our Reformed heritage? It is only possible by God's grace alone, another precious jewel of our Reformed heritage. Let us be earnest to seek God for His grace and the Spirit of Christ to remain steadfast in this foundational truth of the supreme authority of His Word.



Rome and Politics (1)

The key to understanding the political pretensions of the church of Rome lies in her understanding of herself as *the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church* headed by the pope, who is not only the “Successor of Peter the Prince of the Apostles” and the “Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church” but also the “Vicar of Christ” and the “Holy Father.” Is not the triune God the absolute sovereign of the universe? Has not Christ been invested with all authority in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18) as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16)? Therefore the pope, as the supreme representative of Almighty God and Jesus Christ, exercises this divine authority—the “plenitude of papal power.” Thus Leo XIII, in his 1894 encyclical *The Reunion of Christendom* (and referring to himself using the pontifical and capitalised “We”), stated, “We...hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty.” The sixteenth-century Council of Trent declared,

The pope is...not responsible to any earthly tribunal or power. He is the judge of all, can be judged by no one, kings, priests, or people. He is free from all laws, and cannot incur any sentence or penalty for any crime.... He is all in all, and above all, so that God and the pope, the Vicar of God, are but one.... He hath all power on earth, purgatory, heaven, and hell, to bind, loose, command, permit, dispense, do, and undo. Therefore it is declared to stand

upon necessity of salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff. All temporal power is his; the dominion, jurisdiction, and government of the whole earth is his by divine right.¹

Boniface VIII (1294-1303)

Boniface VIII's *Unam Sanctam* (1302) is probably the most famous statement of papal absolutism. Boniface claims that the visible, institute church of Rome alone possesses “one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” for it is the church built on Peter (appealing to Rome's self-serving interpretation of Matthew 16:18-19).² Rome is “that seamless shirt of the Lord which was not rent” and “the single ark of Noah which prefigures the one Church.” Just as there is “one fold,” so there is “one shepherd,” the pope (John 10:10). The papal bull concludes, “we declare, say, define and pronounce it to be altogether necessary for salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff.” Boniface here invalidates the whole Eastern Orthodox Church (whom he refers to as “the Greeks”), for it did not submit to his office, and, by extension, all Protestants.

Building upon these lofty ecclesiastical claims and turning to what are clearly political and civil matters, *Unam Sanctam*

appropriates Jeremiah 1:9 to the pope: “And to the Church, and the Church's power, Jeremiah's prophecy, i, 9, applies: See I have set thee this day over the nations and the kingdoms to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” If Rome and a civil power differ, the pope judges the state, but the state may not judge the pope. Here Boniface applies I Corinthians 2:15 to the pontiff: “He which is spiritual judges all things, but he himself is judged by no man.” He also cites Romans 13:1, not in support of the civil authorities but of Rome's political dominion: “Whoever, therefore, resists this power ordained by God, resists God's ordinance.” The pontiff's outrageous Scripture-twisting, staggering claims, and overweening vanity are simply breathtaking!

Boniface brings in another piece of politically-motivated exegesis: the two-swords theory:

...in this Church and within her power are two swords...the spiritual sword and the temporal sword. For when the Apostle said, Lo here—that is in the Church—are two swords the Lord did not reply to the Apostles, It is too much, but It is enough [Luke 22:38]. For, certainly, he who denies that the temporal sword is in Peter's power, listens badly to the Lord's words Put up thy sword into its sheath. Matthew xxvi, 52. Therefore, both are in the power of the Church, namely, the spiritual sword and the temporal sword,—the latter to be used for the Church, the former by the Church; the former by the hand of the priest, the latter by the hand of princes and kings, but at the nod and instance of the priest. The one sword must of

¹ Cf. John W. Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church* (USA: The Trinity Foundation, 1999), p. 131.

² All quotations from *Unam Sanctam* are taken from Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), vol. 2, pp. 605-607.

necessity be subject to the other, and the temporal power to the spiritual power.

The Triple Tiara

Boniface VIII also played a part in the development of the papal tiara. By the middle of the Middle Ages, the popes wore a crown to symbolise their temporal power over the Papal States (752-1870) in central Italy. Boniface VIII added a second crown to show that his authority was superior to any temporal authority. Soon after, a third crown was added, symbolising the pope's authority over all secular monarchs. At the pope's coronation the three crowns were placed upon his head with these words, symbolizing his triple power: "Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns and know that thou art Father of princes and kings, Ruler of the world, Vicar of our Savior Jesus Christ on earth."

Others claim the triple tiara signifies the pope's authority as "Universal Pastor" (top), "Universal Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction" (middle), and the "Temporal Power" (bottom) or his sovereignty over the celestial, human, and terrestrial worlds or his rule over the church militant on earth, the church suffering in purgatory, and the church triumphant in heaven. However, more recently it is suggested that the three crowns symbolise the pope as teacher, lawmaker, and judge, or as priest, prophet, and king.

At the end of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and in keeping with its more liberal and modernizing spirit, Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) descended the steps of the papal throne in St. Peter's Basilica and laid the tiara on the altar. His successors, John Paul I (the September Pope) and John Paul II (1978-2005) were inaugurated without a coronation ceremony, with the latter declaring, "This is not the time to re-

turn to a ceremony and an object [i.e., the triple tiara] considered, wrongly, to be a symbol of the temporal power of the Popes." Pope Benedict XVI (2005-) even removed the tiara from his Coat of Arms, replacing it with a mitre. However, the symbolism of the tiara is still in use in the Holy See's coat of arms and, just like in other kingdoms of this world, Rome retains the papal crown as a symbol of the pope's authority.

Aggiornamento

This relatively recent setting aside of the papal coronation ceremony is one of the most visible instances of *aggiornamento*, an Italian word meaning "updating." In today's modern, democratic, liberal, secular world, the papacy faces great challenges. It is widely regarded as an outdated, traditionalist, male-dominated, monarchical religious institution. Whereas in the nineteenth century, Rome was publicly and loudly opposing "progressive" ideas like the separation of church and state; freedom of worship, speech, and press; higher criticism of the Bible; ecumenism; the salvation of unevangelized heathen; etc. — most famously, in Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) — now it has either muted its criticisms or done an about-face. Papal theocratic claims to universal political sovereignty are especially offensive to the humanistic spirit of the age, and the Roman hierarchy feels them to be counterproductive, so they are either dropped or downplayed.

Outside pressures have resulted in internal divisions within Roman Catholicism. Alongside of, and much more serious than, for example, the centuries-old divisions between the various monastic orders (Benedictines, Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, etc.) have arisen liberal theologians (especially in North America and Europe), like Hans Kung, and liberation theologians (especially in Latin America), like Leonardo

Boff. Such men and such theologies have gained a significant number of followers. International Roman Catholic movement, "We are Church" (founded in 1996), advocates progressive ideas like the effective discipline of paedophile priests, married male priests, women priests, greater involvement of the laity, greater theological freedom, etc. Humanistic, western Roman Catholics want a Roman Catholicism with less clerical authority and fewer absolutes. Conferences of bishops complain about the centralization of power in Rome. Many third-world clergy resent Rome's western-style theology and ideology, and want a greater openness to syncretism. Malachi Martin (1921-1999), Roman Catholic priest and former Jesuit, wrote in his own lively and dramatic way of the "superforce" within the hierarchy working for the overthrow of traditional Romanism.¹

The Roman Catholic Church in the twenty-first century is a "broad" church, with the "faithful" now ranging from staunch advocates of the sixteenth-century Counter-Reformation Council of Trent (with a few even maintaining a geocentric universe!), all the way to western humanists who still reckon themselves "good" Roman Catholics despite disregarding all church teachings that they find inconvenient. How strong these various factions are within Roman Catholicism is very hard to say, and it would require great foresight to judge how Rome will continue to adapt to the spirit of the age. But rash would be the analyst who would write of Rome's impending demise or of the end of her political influence and desires.

... to be continued.



¹ E.g., Malachi Martin, *The Keys of This Blood: The Struggle for World Dominion Between Pope John Paul II, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the Capitalist West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).


What Has the CRC Done with Q/A 80?

Heidelberg Catechism

Lord's Day 30

Q. 80 What difference is there between the Lord's Supper and the popish mass?

A. 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, who 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 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; and further, that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and therefore is to be worshiped in them; so that the mass, at bottom, is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry.

ur controversy as Reformed believers with the Roman Catholic Church requires that we take note of what the CRC has done with Q/A 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism. There are other statements in the HC (and in the other Reformed creeds) that sharply condemn Roman Catholic errors, but Q/A 80 is widely recognized as the confessional statement that most sharply condemns Roman Catholicism. Removal of Q/A 80 goes a long way towards ending the controversy between Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. And by removing Q/A 80 from the Catechism, the CRC has declared that it is not Rome that needs to change its confession and accept the Reformed truth, but rather Reformed churches that must change their confession and tolerate Roman Catholic errors.

Is the CRC right? Should the

PRC also compromise and seek unity with Rome? Or should the PRC continue to confess Q/A 80, sharply condemning the errors of Rome, and demand that Rome repent and change its confession? The actions of the CRC raise these important questions. Therefore, we want to know—what has the CRC done with Q/A 80?

In 2004 the synod of the CRC determined that changes must be made to Q/A 80, when it voted in favor of this recommendation: "That synod declare Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession given our study of official Roman Catholic teaching and extensive dialogue with official representatives of the Roman Catholic Church."

The original, unacceptable form of the question and answer was replaced by a new form adopted by the CRC in 2006. In its new form the answer to question 80 appears with five paragraphs. The first two paragraphs set forth the Reformed view of the LS. The last three paragraphs explain the Roman Catholic view of the mass

and condemn the mass as "a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and a condemnable idolatry." These last three paragraphs are in brackets, and a footnote is included explaining that the brackets "indicate that [the last three paragraphs] do not accurately reflect the official teaching and practice of today's Roman Catholic Church and are no longer binding on members of the CRC." So in the CRC the part of the answer to Q. 80 that explains the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper is still binding, but the portion of the answer that explains and condemns the Roman Catholic mass is no longer binding.

Not only did synod declare the last part of the answer to be no longer binding for members of the CRC, but it declared also that it is *sinful* to confess this section of the answer. In 2008 this statement was officially adopted: "In sum, it would be inappropriate for the CRC to continue, by its confession of Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism, to suggest that it accurately describes

Rev. Spronk is pastor of the Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.

or fairly condemns either official Roman Catholic teaching or the practices that are in accordance with it." Presumably, that which is *inappropriate* to confess is *sinful* to confess. Though it is not stated in so many words, confessing the original form of Q/A 80 is a violation of the 9th commandment, according to the official decision of the CRC; confessing Q/A 80 is the sin of bearing false witness about the teachings of Rome.

How did the CRC come to the shocking conclusion that Q/A 80 inaccurately described and condemned the Roman Catholic mass? It listened to Rome. The decision was made, as noted above, after "extensive dialogue with official representatives of the Roman Catholic Church."

In 1998, synod decided that the best way to determine the accuracy of Q/A 80 is to ask Rome. This explains why the Interchurch Relations Committee was instructed to study this important confessional matter. This committee was directed "to make an attempt to dialogue with the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church to clarify the official doctrine of that church concerning the mass." The IRC reported in 2002 that it had met with Roman Catholic officials twice in 1999. In this report it is evident that the IRC allowed the Roman Catholic officials to have the last word. By adopting the report in its final form in 2008 the CRC synod also let the Roman Catholic officials have the last word.

The report does point out some differences between the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper and the Roman Catholic view of the mass, but on the two crucial points, whether the mass is a denial of Jesus' one sacrifice on the cross and whether it is nothing but a condemnable idolatry, Rome was allowed to have the last word.

This is how the discussion concerning the charge that the

mass is a denial of the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross took place:

As a *re-enactment* of the sacrifice of Christ which mediates forgiveness, the Mass detracts from the finality and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. To this the Roman Catholic representatives responded: Since the sacrifice of the Mass is a re-enactment and representation of *the one final, sufficient, and unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ on the cross*, the Mass by its very nature as sacrament of that once-for-all event cannot detract from the one sacrifice of Christ.

Rome's response was allowed to stand unchallenged. Nowhere in the documents is there any mention of the IRC pointing out the passages in Hebrews that speak of Jesus' sacrifice as the *only* sacrifice that pays for sins. Nowhere is it pointed out that these passages in Hebrews mean that *any* other sacrifice that "mediates forgiveness" is a denial of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Instead the CRC concluded that, though Rome is in error for teaching that the mass is a sacrifice, this error should not be condemned as a denial of the one sacrifice of Christ. For, the CRC says, the mass does not obliterate the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice but only obscures it. In the CRC's opinion, obscuring the sufficiency of the cross is not a denial of the sufficiency of the cross. In the end, Rome's position is allowed to stand unchallenged and uncondemned.

The second important issue is Q/A 80's condemnation of the mass as idolatry. Rome's doctrine of transubstantiation teaches that the consecrated bread and wine become the physical body and blood of Jesus. Since Jesus is to be worshiped, Rome teaches its followers to worship the bread and the wine. This worship of bread and wine is judged by Q/A

80 to be a condemnable idolatry. In their discussions on this issue, the Roman Catholic officials admitted that the "sacrament" is to be worshiped, but they refused to say that the "elements" of bread and wine are worshiped, because they are no more bread and wine but the very body and blood of Jesus. So the Roman Catholics argued, to no one's surprise, that they were not guilty of idolatry because they worship Christ not bread and wine. The CRC accepted this and concluded that if Roman Catholics believe they are worshipping the ascended Jesus Christ, not bread and wine, when they bow down and pray to the sacrament, then they are not guilty of idolatry.

Once again Rome was left unchallenged. None of the powerful arguments raised against Rome's position since the time of Luther and Calvin were addressed with the Romish officials. Just to point out one example, nowhere does the IRC deal with the argument that Rome's attempt to worship Christ through the bread and wine is no different from Israel's attempt to worship God through the golden calves made by Aaron and Jeroboam, and since Scripture condemns the worship of these golden calves as idolatry, it also condemns the worship of the bread and wine as idolatry. This and the other powerful arguments were not refuted in the time of Luther and Calvin. They are still unrefuted. Until they are refuted the charge that the mass is a condemnable idolatry stands. The CRC's theologians on the IRC and at synod knew about these arguments. They chose to let them go and let Rome be unchallenged.

Though the documents explaining what the CRC has done with Q/A 80 are very lengthy, a brief summary is this: the CRC asked Rome if Q/A 80 is accurate, Rome said it is not, and the CRC simply acquiesced.

By giving ear to Rome the IRC and the synod of the CRC simply reflected a pattern of seeking out fellowship with Rome established already by some of its members. Synod's decision to change Q/A 80 was initiated by an overture originating from First CRC of Detroit. First, the CRC sought to change Q/A 80 "due to our increasing association with our brothers and sisters of the Roman Catholic Church." It is impossible to prove that throughout the CRC the members are seeking more fellowship with Roman Catholics. Yet, the desire to change the teaching of the catechism concerning Roman Catholic errors arose out of an atmosphere in which there was already a warm relationship with Roman Catholics. This illustrates the point that doctrine and life go hand and hand, and in this case the life of the members of at least one CRC congregation increasingly included Roman Catholics and led to a change in one of the Reformed confessions—a change that may lead to closer ecclesiastical ties between the Christian


Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church.

Lyle Bierma, professor at Calvin Seminary and one of the members of the IRC, saw closer ecclesiastical fellowship as one of the possible results of the CRC's dialogue with Roman Catholics concerning Q/A 80. Bierma wondered in writing where this would lead in the future. "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?" The CRC's openness to moving ever closer to Rome was demonstrated this summer when Rev. Jerry Dykstra (as reported on the CRC's website) attended an ecumenical prayer meeting led by Pope Benedict XVI, "*representing the Christian Reformed Church in North America [emphasis mine].*" It does not seem too farfetched to see the decision to elide Q/A 80's condemnation of the mass as providing the opening needed for the CRC to send representatives to an official Roman Catholic Function.

By changing Q/A 80 so that it

no longer condemns the mass, the CRC is patching up its controversy with Rome by moving towards Rome. Sadly, the CRC has done this without sufficiently proving that Q/A 80 is inaccurate.

Q/A 80 still stands. The Reformed confession should not be changed. Rather, it is Rome that needs to repent of its sin of denying Christ's one sacrifice and of worshiping an idol. Also, Rome, not Reformed churches, ought to be embarrassed by and ought to change the sharp language found in its confession. Perhaps the CRC will remember as she moves towards Rome that she is moving toward the church that has also used strong language to condemn Reformed believers. Maybe the CRC, though she no longer condemns Rome's view of the mass, will remember that Rome, by its Council of Trent and still to this day, damns to hell everyone who confesses the Reformed view of the LS. Maybe the CRC will convince Rome to change.

To date, they have not. Q/A 80 is accurate. It need not be changed. 

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Our Reformed Witness to Roman Catholics

Satan wages war against the church of Jesus Christ. He does so by setting up his earthly kingdom of man in an attempt to displace the heavenly kingdom of God and Jesus Christ. The citizens of God's kingdom are

Rev. Bruinsma is Eastern Home Missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches, stationed in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

called by Jesus Christ to do battle against the kingdom of unbelieving man. This battle is to be fought not by means of a physical, earthly warfare, but by means of the gospel. The church and her members must go forth wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. She fights her spiritual warfare by means of her mission to the world: "go ye and make disciples of all na-

tions" (Matt. 28:19). The white war horse of the gospel must ride throughout the nations "conquering and to conquer" (Rev. 6:2).

But Satan is shrewd when exerting himself to set up his kingdom of man and unbelief in this world. He is shrewd in that he not only uses pagan nations to build this kingdom, but he also works within the confines of the church itself. Within the

realm of Christianity a division occurs—a division that crosses denominational lines. It is that which separates between the false Christian church and the true Christian church. Satan uses the false church to teach a counterfeit Christianity. This fake Christianity joins together with the unbelieving world, and eventually what will emerge is the final manifestation of the kingdom of man in this world in the kingdom of the Antichrist.

The battle that the true Christian church wages, therefore, is not only with those outside of the church, but also with those in the apostate church. This is why we as believers today are called to be witnesses to those who have been taken in by the horrible error of the Roman Catholic Church. The Belgic Confession, Article 28, clearly exposes the Roman Catholic Church as a false church. This church “ascribes more power and authority to herself and her ordinances than to the Word of God”; she does not “administer the sacraments as appointed by Christ in His Word”; she uses church discipline to “persecute those who live holily according to the Word of God, and who rebuke her for her errors, covetousness, and idolatry.” Satan has used this church to set up a counterfeit Christianity in the world, a false Christianity, against which we must apply the sword of the Spirit.

We well understand, of course, why our country speaks of religious toleration. Reformed believers may not try to force from their neighborhoods one who is of a different religion. We may not sign petitions or attempt to pass legislation that will outlaw the existence of those who disagree with the truth of Scripture. That is not the battle the church carries on. We are called as God’s people, as much as within us lies, to live peaceably with all men (Rom. 12:18). This means that we must show

ourselves friendly and approachable to the neighbor who has been “taken captive by him (the devil) at his will” (see II Tim. 2:24-26). Our battle against those who are lost in the bondage of the Romish church is spiritual. The Word of God is the weapon of choice in this battle. Not only must we be set for a defense against the error of this church, but we are also called to speak the gospel to them, “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me [Christ]” (Acts 26:18). This is why we address the subject of a clear, genuine, Reformed witness to those given over to the error of the Romish church.

Roman Catholic influence

During the Revolutionary War in America there were many who chose to ignore the war that was being waged on American soil. They sat comfortably in their own homes and refused to recognize that the war was real. Then suddenly the battles of this war were being fought in their own fields and backyards. Their houses were destroyed and their families killed or scattered. How many of us as Christians take this same attitude when it comes to the spiritual warfare that we fight. We sit in our comfortable living rooms dealing with the same people day after day. Although television has brought world news into our homes, we watch that news in a detached way. What we see and read is happening “out there somewhere” and really does not affect our own homes and families. We are lulled to sleep by our luxuries and recreation. Life is good! There is no threat to our faith! We are given religious freedom to worship the way that we want. There is no real danger to our spiritual lives! So we close

our eyes to the spiritual battle that we are called to fight, in ignorance failing to understand that the population of this world is rapidly becoming pagan or is embracing the error of false Christianity.

Over half of Christianity today belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. No Protestant denomination comes close to rivaling her in membership. Boasting of over half a billion members, this church makes up one sixth of the population of this world.

From the year 1300 to 1700 the Roman Catholic Church carried on a massive missionary enterprise. Much of the spread of Roman Catholicism in the world coincides with the imperialism of Spain and Portugal. By the time Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the doors of the chapel in Wittenburg in 1517, the Romish church had already embarked on a systematic spread of her error throughout the world. In 1292 she began her missions in China. In 1493 Portugal was given the right to spread the Roman Catholic religion to Africa and the East Indies, while Spain was given the right to spread the same to the New World. Franciscan missionaries accompanied Vasco da Gama when he discovered the sea route to India, and they began a labor there as early as 1498. By 1549 these same missionaries began a labor in Japan. By 1521 the Augustinians, another Roman Catholic society of missionaries, was laboring in the Philippines.

The Spanish pioneers to the New World carried their Romish faith to the islands of the Caribbean as well as to Central and South America. Already in 1513 Spanish explorers and settlers in Florida began Roman Catholic worship services. In each of these areas in the New World Roman Catholic missionaries were aggressive in establishing the Romish religion.

We mention these specific

dates in order that we might be fully aware that this work of Roman Catholic missions was being carried out *before and during the time of the Reformation* in Europe. It was not as if the Roman Catholic Church was standing still for a century during all of the religious turmoil in Europe. The Reformation was but a fly in the ointment of the Roman Catholic Church. It is true that its greatest losses took place during the Reformation. But between 1500 and 1700 the Roman Catholic Church won more “converts” in the pagan world than it lost to Protestantism in Europe.

The Roman Catholic church is a giant!

The horrible error of the Roman Catholic Church

It is not our intention to elaborate on the multitude of errors found in the Roman Catholic Church. Other articles in this issue deal with several of them. But there are two errors in particular we wish to point out. One can be summarized in one word: slavery. The other can be described best perhaps by the term externalism.

The first horrible error of Rome is her enslavement of her members to the Roman Catholic institute. She makes the bold claim that there is no salvation apart from her. Notice: she does not simply say that there is no salvation *outside* of her, but she makes the threatening claim to her members that salvation from sin is given by her and therefore cannot be obtained apart from her. In order to be saved a person must be in total submission to the Roman Catholic Church. In order to escape original sin one must be baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. In order to escape mortal sins one must confess these in every detail to a priest in a confessional. In order to escape venial sins a person must pay penance to the church. Members

must attend regularly the mass in order that the priest might repeatedly make sacrifice to take away the guilt of their sins. Even after one dies, his soul is in purgatory until proper indulgences are paid to the church and the priest releases that soul to heaven. The Roman Catholic Church owns the souls of her members. For that reason, anyone who leaves this church is doomed to everlasting damnation.

Where does Christ fit in all of this? The Roman Catholic Church speaks piously of Christ and His death on the cross. But where in all of this theology of Rome is there any *real* need for the cross of Jesus Christ? In all of this the Romish church teaches that salvation in Christ is incomplete. Christ’s death was not sufficient to take away the sins of the world. Perhaps the Romish church is not so bold as to say it, but its practices teach it: a person cannot rely on Christ for salvation, but on the Roman Catholic Church. How in light of Scripture dare this church teach such a horrible doctrine? Because the Bible so clearly refutes this denial of the true gospel, the Romish church disparages the study of Scripture and replaces it with the infallibility of the pope, who declares what is truth for the church.

No wonder members of the Romish church are afraid to break from her! This church has made them slaves to her rather than slaves to the cross of Christ.

These same errors of Rome have led to the externalism found in this denomination. In the Roman Catholic Church, faith is nothing more than adhering more or less faithfully to the

outward ceremonies and rituals of the church. Faith is not a matter of the heart. It is not knowing sin and sorrowing over such sin. It is not fleeing in faith to the cross of Christ, where alone is found salvation from sin. It is not living out of a true thankfulness of heart for the salvation freely given.

A devout Roman Catholic must do what the church tells him to do. Follow the prescribed ceremonies, and the guilt and punishment of sin will disappear! I can commit a mortal sin, go to the priest, confess it, and the priest—not God for the sake of Christ, but the priest—will absolve my sin. I need not worry about eternal retribution for the horrible sin I have committed because another man, a mere man, a sinful man like myself has informed me that my sin and its guilt are gone. Just that easy—no true sorrow of heart, no fleeing from sin.

It is true, of course, that the Romish church insists there must be true sorrow of heart when we make such a confession, but is not the admission of my sin to the priest sufficient proof of my sorrow? “Go your way, your sin is forgiven you.” Just make sure that you say so many “Hail Marys” and pay indulgences to the church. Salvation from sin is that easy! What horrible deception!

Yet, it is little wonder that a man does not wish to leave this kind of religion. It enslaves a person to the church, but it is also so convenient, since faith is not a matter of the heart but consists only in externals. A recent convert from Roman Catholicism explained to me his

...it is little wonder that a man does not wish to leave this kind of religion. It enslaves a person to the church, but it is also so convenient, since faith is not a matter of the heart but consists only in externals.

position when still lost under the error of the Romish church. "I stubbornly insisted," he said, "I was born a Roman Catholic and I would die a Roman Catholic."

Our Reformed Witness to the Roman Catholic

When we address the subject of our witness to the Roman Catholic we are not referring to the witness of the church as a whole. That witness is heard in the preaching. That witness is explicitly given in our Reformed confessions. Guido de Brés wrote the Belgic Confession as a personal witness to the Roman Catholic king, Philip II of Spain. Our witness as churches is read here in this very issue of the *Standard Bearer*. What we refer to, however, is the personal witness of the Reformed believer to that Roman Catholic who asks us of the hope that dwells within us. It refers to our personal witness to those whom we meet in life, those who in the way they live and in their very way of thinking assume the errors of Roman Catholicism that have become so much a part of our society and culture.

Our witness to the Roman Catholic (to the sincere Roman Catholic, and to the Roman Catholic in name only) is this: the only way into God's presence and favor, the only way into heaven, is through the cross of Jesus alone. Christ's death is all-sufficient to take away the sins of those for whom He has died. Roman Catholics think alike. They sincerely believe that performing good works: acts of charity, being a good neighbor, following more or less faithfully the prescriptions of the church, will earn for them a place in heaven. If they live a "good" life in this world, God accepts them on the basis of their good life. If they commit something that smites their conscience, then they can go to the priest and he will make it right. Whether devoutly Roman

Catholic or nominally so, this is the thought process of the Roman Catholic.

The only way to witness to a Roman Catholic is to challenge the way he thinks. Sin is not found in the mere outward action, but it is a matter of the heart. Sin is in us. Sin is inherited. No amount of good deeds can pay the price of one sin we commit. The only payment for sin is Christ. Only His death and resurrection can pay for our sin. We are justified before God on the grounds of Christ's meritorious work.


We are likewise justified *by faith*. The priest may not impart to us forgiveness of sins simply because we go to him. The guilt of sin is not taken away by the water of baptism and the bread and wine of the Eucharist. Sin cannot be paid for by performing any number of good works. Salvation is a matter of the heart! We must *believe* in Jesus Christ. We must embrace Him, love Him, depend on Him for all things. There is no other way into God's favor or into heaven. Christ is our Lord and Master. No church, no man, not even the pope may take His place in our lives. We are slaves to Christ and not to the Romish church.

The witness we bring to a Roman Catholic ought not to be a forced or superficial witness. We do not simply walk up to a person on the street whom we do not know, then, finding out he is Roman Catholic, proceed to act as if we are genuinely concerned about his lost state and now are attempting to persuade him of what his true need is. Such witness is not genuine. It does not take long for a Roman Catholic to see through what we are trying to do.

Rather, we witness to those whom God has placed in our path. Remember, half of Christianity today is Roman Catholic. Even Reformed believers who

live for the most part within their own "little" community of Reformed people (that community is minuscule in comparison to the world of Roman Catholicism) are more than likely going to become acquainted with Roman Catholics. When they get to know us and our life they will (or ought to) see that we are different in the way we talk and live. That will give rise to discussions. Then we give witness.

What is a proper and genuine witness? A proper witness is not to engage the Roman Catholic in an argument and try to win the argument. A proper witness is to reveal in our discussion with him or her the marvelous working of God's grace in our own lives. It is to speak of our own knowledge of sin and of our own need for the cross of Christ. It is to speak of our own salvation and the joy it gives us as we confront life and its difficulties. We are not arguing "religion." We are talking about salvation! Oh yes, questions will arise and arguments may be raised. But these can be dealt with calmly and in a manner befitting the child of God (remember II Tim. 2:24-26). And if, in the end, we are not able to make that Roman Catholic see or understand what God has done for us in our salvation, then we leave it in the hands of God. After all, as Reformed believers we confess that only God can change the heart. Who knows but that God will use our witness later on in the life of that same person.

This is the way we wage our battle against Satan and his influence on this world by means of the Roman Catholic Church. As churches we stand strong in our defense against the horrible error of Rome. As saints we are willing to share what God has done for us, in order to persuade others to share in the freedom that is ours through the precious Son of our heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus Christ. 

Report of Classis East

September 10, 2008
Trinity
Protestant Reformed Church
Hudsonville, Michigan

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 10, 2008 at the Trinity PRC, Hudsonville, MI. Each church was represented by two delegates; Rev. R. Kleyn was the chairman for this session. Special


welcome was given to the delegates from Providence PRC, which sent delegates to classis for the first time since their organization.

The business for this session proved to be routine. Reports from committees, construction of a classical appointment schedule for Grace PRC and Providence PRC, were handled with dispatch.

Classis did have an appeal from

a brother, which classis declared not to be legally before it on the ground that the consistory whose decision was being appealed was not informed by the appellant of this appeal.

Expenses of classis amounted to \$750.80. Classis will meet next on Wednesday, January 14, 2009 at the Grandville PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk 

Announcements

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of

GORDON and EILENE TERPSTRA

express our gratitude to God and congratulations to them on the 55th anniversary of their marriage on October 16, 2008. We give thanks for their faithfulness to each other and rejoice with them in God's faithfulness to them and to us as a family for these many years. It is our prayer that God's richest blessings may rest with them for all of their days together.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

❖ Suzanne Looyenga

Jim & Lisabeth VerHey
Elise, Colin, Caleb, Casey
Brendan & Kelly Looyenga
Mikaia, Lynnae, Carissa
Jason & Brianna Brands
Jaron
Darren & Caitlin De Boer
Meghan and Drew

❖ Tom and Luanne Schipper

Jason and Kim Schipper
Dirk, Nicole, Andrew, and Betsy

❖ Charles and Verna Terpstra

Corey & Brenda Terpstra
Carson, Laelle
David & Amber Decker
Chloe, Logan, Graeson
Matt & Kim Kuiper
Abbey, Gavin
Thad, Kyle, and Justin

❖ Todd and Valerie Terpstra

Gordon, Jillian, Ian, Madelyn,
and Jaclyn

❖ Jeff and Kathy Terpstra

Lindsey & fiancé,
Blake Wieringa
Kelsey, Michael, Melanie,
and Allison
Grand Rapids, MI

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Faith PRC expresses Christian sympathy to fellow officebearer Mr. Peter VanDer Schaaf, his wife Dorothy, and their children and grandchildren in the death of their father, grandfather, and great-grandfather,

MR. DOWIE VAN DER SCHAAF.

May the family find comfort in the words of Psalm 121:1, 2: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth".

Rev. Andrew Lanning, President
Andrew Brummel, Vice clerk

FAMILY CONFERENCE

The First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta is hosting a family conference.

July 2-5, 2009

"Calvin and the Christian Family Life"

Plan now to attend!

REMINDER

If you desire to have your own copy of volume 84 of the SB bound, please turn it in to the RFPA office in Jenison before November 1.

LECTURE

Join us for our
Reformation Day lecture!
Friday, October 31, at 8:00pm.

Our pastor,
Rev. Michael De Vries,
will speak on:
"THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL."

Note: this lecture will be held
in our new building:

Wingham PRC
292 Edward Street
Wingham, Ontario

Call 519-357-1082 or e-mail
mjdevries@sympatico.ca
for more information.