

# HRA Reformation Voice

The Voice of the Heidelberg Reformation Association  
October 2008

## **THIS ISSUE:**

# **RECOVERING THE REFORMED CONFESSION**

## *TABLE OF CONTENTS:*

<i>WHY FOCUS ON THE CONFESSIONS</i> by R. Scott Clark .....	3
<i>THE BENEFITS OF PREACHING THE CATECHISM</i> by Ron Cammenga .....	4
<i>CONFIRMATION AND THE CATECHISM</i> by John Neiderhaus.....	8
<i>BOOK REVIEWS</i> .....	10
<i>NEWS, NOTES, AND PRAYER REQUESTS</i> .....	12

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# HRA Reformation Voice

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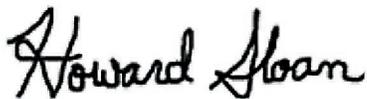
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Blessings and peace to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This month's issue is themed "Recovering the Reformed Confession." This theme was inspired by the upcoming book of the same name by Dr. R. Scott Clark. This issue includes a review of that book.

The reason for the existence of the HRA is the loss of Confessional identity and theology in churches that once held to the high standards contained in our cherished documents. The articles contained in the pages to follow are intended to encourage us in the use of the Heidelberg Catechism as a tool in the retention and reclamation of Reformed faith and practice. We ignore these documents designed to keep us from heresy and error at our own peril.

We also discuss two very important methods of keeping our confessional identity strong: Catechetical preaching and Confirmation courses. I realize that some of our readers are very familiar with these practices, while others are just rediscovering these lost gems. I pray that these articles will be a source of encouragement and wisdom wherever you find yourself on that continuum. Remember that our purpose is that we "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3).

In Christ,



Howard Sloan  
Coordinating Secretary  
Heidelberg Reformation Association

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# WHY THE FOCUS ON CONFESSIONS

by R. Scott Clark

A while back a couple readers of my blog (the Heidelblog) wrote to ask why it focuses so much on the Reformed confessions. Nancy writes:

*I am new to this reformed family. I'm just another out there like Echo mentions so I still have some questions and hesitations. WT expresses my thoughts well. I do trust that those who do often quote the confessions do sincerely subject them to the authority of scripture. I see no grounds for questioning the genuineness of those in reformed circles. But, like WT I do find the frequent references to confession over the Bible curious. This post is not necessarily a criticism but a curiosity about reformed culture.*

Nancy and others bring up an excellent point which applies not only to the Heidelblog, but also to the ministry of the HRA. Here are a few reasons we focus on confessions, catechisms, and creeds.

First, the Heidelblog, the HRA, and the Reformation Voice were established to encourage the recovery of the Reformed theology, piety, and practice.

Second, it is not as if it is possible to do without a confession.

All churches have a confession. Even those who confess “no confession” have a confession. Just try to teach “pro confession” in a no-confession church and see what happens. They will ask you to stop or leave. Why? Because they confess “no confession.” Confessions are inevitable.

Third, they come in two forms: written and unwritten. The Reformed confession is written so that we all know what we are confessing and what is the constitution of our churches.

Fourth, the question is not whether Scripture is the unique authority for faith and life. Of course it is. We confess that it is. The question is how we are to read the Scriptures. By using written confessions, we are reading the Scripture with the rest of the contemporary

and historic Reformed church.

Fifth, the confessions record those conclusions that the Reformed churches have decided are essential to the Reformed reading of Scripture. Think of it this way, if Reformed = “whatever anyone says that Bible teaches,” then the adjective “Reformed” is literally without any fixed meaning. In that case, then “Reformed” means everything to everyone and nothing to anyone. If that is the case, then why do we bother having Reformed churches at all?

Sixth, this does not mean that the confessions are incorrigible, but it does mean that the confessions

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define the Reformed reading of Scripture. If someone can show that the Reformed confession errs, the Reformed churches are bound by their own confession to revise it according to Scripture; but that is serious business done in the courts and assemblies of the churches and after serious research, time, and prayerful consideration of weighty arguments. After all, it is not as if we have never read the Scripture before. Remember, in the whole history of the church all heretics quote Scripture. The Socinians

(who ended up denying the Trinity) said that they were “just following the Bible.” The Arminians (who wanted to redefine our doctrine of salvation) were “just following the Bible.” Even the nineteenth- and twentieth-century liberals said that they were “just following the Bible.”

Seventh, the confessions are not and have never been superior to Scripture. The confessions themselves say this. Westminster Confession 1.10 says:

The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

We also understand Scripture to teach that ecclesiastical assemblies have real (if derived and ministerial) authority. The Westminster Confession 31.2 says:

*It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in his Word.*

Finally, my blog and the HRA focus on “recovering the Reformed confession” because we are convinced that they are true and that they form the best and proper boundary for what it is to be Reformed. To put it another way, I subscribe (endorse) the Reformed confessions because I think they are biblical. If I didn’t think they were biblical, I would not subscribe them.

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# THE BENEFITS OF PREACHING THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

by Ronald Cammenga

## The Origins of the Practice of Heidelberg Catechism Preaching

The Heidelberg Catechism has not only been subscribed to but also preached in Reformed churches the world over almost from the time of its first publication in 1563. Besides serving as a confession and as an instructional tool for the youth—one of its main purposes, as stated by Frederick III in his preface to the Catechism—it also very soon became the text of sermons. That practice has continued down to the present. Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism have been a regular part of the spiritual diet of Reformed Christians for decades, even centuries, in Germany, the Netherlands, the United States, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and in many other places around the world. Generations of Reformed Christians have lived out their seventy or eighty years listening to forty or more Catechism sermons every year. In a number of Reformed denominations, nearly half of the sermons delivered by preachers are Catechism sermons. The Heidelberg Catechism was first published in January of 1563.

Accompanying the publication of the Catechism was a preface written by Frederick III. Not only does this preface introduce the new catechism, setting forth the reasons for its composition, but it also indicates that

from the beginning Frederick envisioned the preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism in the churches of his realm.

We do herewith affectionately admonish and enjoin upon every one of you, that you do, for the honour of God and our subjects, and also for the sake of your own soul’s profit and welfare, thankfully accept this proffered Catechism or course of instruction, and that you do diligently and faithfully represent and explain the same according to its true import, to the youth in our schools and churches, *and also from the pulpit to the common people* [italics mine, RC], that you teach, and act, and live in accordance with it, in the assured hope, that if our youth in early life are earnestly instructed and educated in the word of God, it will please Almighty God also to grant reformation of public and private morals, and temporal and eternal welfare.

It was undoubtedly with a view to facilitating the preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism that its questions and answers were divided into fifty-two Lord’s Days. This structuring of the Heidelberg

Catechism took place late in 1563, the same year in which the Catechism first appeared in print. The third edition of the Heidelberg Catechism was included in the Church Order of the Palatinate, which the Elector Frederick issued on November 15, 1563. It was in this third edition that the Catechism was organized into fifty-two Lord's Days.

Not only did Frederick's new Palatinate Church Order contain the fifty-two Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism, but it also included a special prayer to be used by the ministers after the catechism sermon. This is significant. The incorporation of this special prayer in the Church Order is a clear indication that the Heidelberg Catechism was being preached in Heidelberg in 1563. The inclusion of the prayer was also very likely intended to underscore the Elector's desire, as well as the desire of the leaders of the church, that the Heidelberg Catechism be preached in the cities and villages throughout the Palatinate.

That the Heidelberg Catechism was being preached already in 1563, at least in Heidelberg, is indicated in a letter written by Zacharias Ursinus, the main author of the Heidelberg Catechism. In the letter, written in 1563, Ursinus complains that the authorities have added to his already heavy workload the preaching of the Catechism at the Sunday afternoon worship service. This letter shows that the Heidelberg Catechism was being preached even before the publication of the Palatinate Church Order towards the end of 1563. Early on, the distinction appears to have been made between the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism in the home by Christian parents, the teaching of the Catechism in the schools by the schoolmasters, and catechism preaching as a part of the official worship of the Reformed congregation.

### **Benefits of Heidelberg Catechism Preaching**

The tradition of Heidelberg Catechism preaching has been preserved in the Reformed churches because over

the years those churches have enjoyed the benefits that have been the fruits of such preaching. Among other benefits, Gootjes identifies three outstanding benefits. In his judgment, Heidelberg Catechism preaching prevents preaching that is one-sided, assures the preaching of the whole counsel of God, and guarantees that the preaching is going to be doctrinal, not shallow moralisms. Concerning the benefits of consistent Heidelberg Catechism preaching, Hoeksema writes:

The preacher, however, should not look upon Catechism preaching as an obnoxious obligation and a necessary evil. Nor should he allow either himself or his congregation to feel that Catechism preaching is burdensome and dry. The preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism is not only according to regulation,

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but ... is a blessing both for the congregation and the minister. It compels the minister to make systematic study of the truth of the Reformed faith and to apply it to the congregation. It opens the way for him to treat various subjects which he would otherwise probably rather easily avoid, but which he is now compelled to treat in connection with the Catechism. And in Catechism preaching the congregation has a guarantee that it will be instructed in the pure and complete doctrine of salvation. And we may emphasize that our Heidelberg

Catechism, both because of its method and its content, is admirably suited for this purpose. Let neither the minister nor the congregation minimize the value of this Reformed custom, therefore.

Van Dellen and Monsma also point out the positive benefits of systematic instruction in the Heidelberg Catechism:

Now by preaching the truth of God constantly and systematically according to the summary of the Heidelberg Catechism the congregation of God receives regular instruction in all the fundamentals of the Christian faith as

revealed in the Bible. It is true that apart from Catechism preaching a Minister might indoctrinate his congregation according to God's revelations. But Catechism preaching assures us that all Ministers will preach the whole truth of God, and that not according to their personal conceptions, but according to the common conception of all the Churches. We are safe in saying that if it were not for Catechism preaching, certain truths of God's Word would be seldom touched upon in our sermons. All Ministers are but men, and all men are apt to be one-sided and forgetful. The preaching of God's Word according to the summary of that Word found in the Catechism safeguards the Churches against the danger of partial and one-sided preaching. And at the same time it offers the Churches some security against unbiblical, erroneous presentations.

Further,

Catechism preaching ... is doctrinal preaching. We need doctrinal preaching. Every believer should be a well informed Christian. One who is not well informed as to the main teaching of Holy Writ cannot be a strong Christian. And especially in our day and age of shallow Christianity and self-conceived, self-constructed conceptions [the 1940s, R.C.], a thorough understanding of God's truth is very necessary. Besides, every doctrine of Holy Writ, rightly understood, is full of comfort for the believer. We need this comfort in this world of disappointments and conflicts.

Four main benefits of Heidelberg Catechism preaching may be identified. The first benefit is the grounding of the congregation in the doctrines of the Word of God. Heidelberg Catechism preaching assures that the faith of God's people is informed and that God's people know whom and what they have believed. Not to be overlooked here is the grounding of the minister, especially the young minister, in the truths of the Reformed faith. Making sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism is beneficial for the minister himself. Closely connected to this first benefit, Catechism preaching assures that the whole counsel of God is preached in the congregation. The Heidelberg Catechism summarizes the fundamental doctrines of

Holy Scripture. Preaching regularly on the Catechism assures that the congregation will be exposed to the breadth of apostolic teaching. A third benefit of Heidelberg Catechism preaching is that it prevents preaching from becoming one-sided. Not only is there the danger that doctrines are neglected, but there is equally the danger that a man's preaching becomes imbalanced. He begins to ride certain hobby horses and to repeat various pet teachings. Regular preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism minimizes the threat of this danger. And finally, regular Heidelberg Catechism preaching promotes the unity of the church. The fundamental basis for the church's unity is agreement in the cardinal doctrines of the Word of God, as the apostle makes plain in a passage like Ephesians 4. Heidelberg Catechism preaching promotes that doctrinal unity. It promotes unity within the congregation. It promotes the unity of the congregations of a denomination. It promotes the unity of the various Reformed churches the world over that are yet faithful to the timehonored tradition of Heidelberg Catechism preaching. And it promotes our unity and connection to the Reformed church of the past— something of vital importance for the church of our day. In view of these benefits, may the practice of regular preaching on the Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism be preserved in the Reformed churches. Where there has been laxity towards the practice, or where it has been abandoned altogether, may there be a return to the old and good paths. And may the great doctrines articulated in the Catechism be endeared to Reformed Christians today and in the future by means of such preaching. In that way may there continue to be in those churches a vibrant witness in the world to the truth of the gospel of Christ, as well as an enjoyment of the only comfort for living and for dying.

*Rev. Ronald Cammenga is Professor of Old Testament and Dogmatics at Protestant Reformed Theological School, Wyoming, MI. This is a digested version of the article entitled "The Homiletical Use of the Heidelberg Catechism: An Examination of the Practice of Systematic Preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism in the Dutch Reformed Tradition." From the November 2007 edition of the Protestant Reformed Theological Journal and is used by permission.*

# CONFIRMATION AND THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

by John H.C. Niederhaus

My 32<sup>nd</sup> birthday had come and gone before I first encountered *The Heidelberg Catechism*. It seems I've always been a bit late on the uptake, as it were, since I didn't become a Christian until just prior to my 24<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Upon accepting a call to the pastorate of a two-point charge in northeastern Indiana, I learned the churches expected the Pastor to lead a two-year Confirmation program for young folk. A further expectation was that *The Heidelberg Catechism* would be one element of the course. Thus, though it was a shotgun marriage, my pastoral ministry has been intertwined with *The Heidelberg Catechism* for some 28 years!

Despite the "urgency" of its beginning, the marriage has proved blessedly fruitful! For this brief article I would like to highlight six aspects of the relationship between Confirmation and *The Heidelberg Catechism* [hereafter noted as HC].

1) Through its use in the Confirmation program, the HC is a powerful means of shaping the pastor/preacher's theological vision. A presupposition at this point is that the Pastor is the person who teaches the Confirmation Class. Working with the text of the HC and helping adolescent students understand it requires significant interaction with the text. So, for instance, on such basic matters as that of the relation between the OT and the NT or the beginning date for, and the breadth of, the Church, the HC sounds distinct notes.

The answer to Q.19 states matter-of-factly that the gospel was revealed faithfully through all the times of the OT, beginning with the Garden of Eden and continuing through the patriarchs, law, and prophets. Continuity, not discontinuity, is the relationship

between OT and NT. Similarly, Q.54 declares the lines of demarcation for the Church stretch from the beginning to the end of the world chronologically, while embracing folk from the entire human race.

Consequently, I would suggest the first effect of the using the HC in the context of Confirmation is the ongoing, progressive forming and reforming of the Preacher's mind. That is a most salutary effect for all concerned, so Pastors should embrace this task and anticipate the Holy Spirit using the HC to teach them first, then they can teach the students.

**I would suggest the first effect of the using the HC in the context of Confirmation is the ongoing, progressive forming and reforming of the Preacher's mind. That is a most salutary effect for all concerned, so Pastors should embrace this task and anticipate the Holy Spirit using the HC to them first, then they can teach the students.**

2) In our congregation we understand the HC to be a component of Confirmation instruction, but not the sole, or even the most important, component. The *sine qua non* for the HC is the Bible. Without the Bible there is no HC.

As society has become more secularized, knowledge of basic Bible facts has deteriorated throughout our culture, meaning that even in "churched" families there can be a dearth of biblical knowledge. Our Confirmation classes have students from every point on the spectrum of biblical familiarity, including that of no knowledge or familiarity at all. That makes Confirmation teaching a very challenging endeavor! How can the Pastor not bore some, yet

not be too far over the head of others, but try to get everyone on the same page? As they say, it ain't easy!

That's why the first year of our Confirmation program is all Bible. The first official "act" of Confirmation is for each student to receive during the service of worship a leather-bound reference [not study] Bible with the student's name imprinted on the front while the name and the occasion is placed on the presentation page with quality calligraphy. The entire

first year of Confirmation Class is spent studying the Bible via weekly reading assignments accompanied by fill-in-the-blank worksheets the Pastor collects *and grades* diligently each week.

In thinking about the HC and Confirmation, the Pastor must seek to lay an adequate biblical foundation for the HC to be taught and caught!

3) The Confirmation program of our congregation includes between three and four months of study of the HC. Though we do not utilize fill-in-the-blank worksheets for this component, nonetheless, a major goal is to have the students *think* about the issues dealt with in the HC. Each week students are assigned a certain number of questions and answers to read and reflect on, while also being required to memorize some of the assigned answers.

Just as the Pastor's mind is shaped by reflecting on the HC, so are the minds of the students. For instance, when Q.3 teaches that we learn of our sin from the Law of God, it is a bit surprising for the student – or, we let the students know they should be surprised – when Q.4 enunciates the requirements of the Law by quoting from Jesus! Again, when Q.8 teaches one must be born again through the Spirit of God it doesn't say what that looks like. However, when the students come to Qq. 88 – 91 with their short, memorable answers they learn of what regeneration consists and how it ought to look.

One of the more penetrating sections of the HC for students is that dealing with the Ten Commandments. Each commandment is dealt with in positive and negative applications, yet all this is done in the context of how one shows gratitude to God, not how one earns points for salvation. For Pastor and students the answers can be disconcertedly specific, even applicable to 21<sup>st</sup> century life!

As students and Pastor work their way through the HC, the questions will multiply about crucial subjects. The answer to Q.37 invariably brings on a discussion about the extent of Christ's atonement. Q.94's answer in the translation we use [the one done by Miller and Osterhaven for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the HC] includes the phrase, “. . . because of the risk of losing my salvation.” You can imagine the questions.

Through interaction with the text of the HC, Confirmation is a time when students can be challenged

and helped to think through thoroughly what constitutes a Christian worldview.

4) While the mind is important, the HC stresses the affections of the heart just as much. It begins already in Q.1 which deals with *comfort*. Of course, *gratitude* is one of the great themes of the HC. Indeed, *gratitude* is the motive for godly living. Such positive affections flow from the necessary and more negative emotions of *misery*, *wretchedness*, and *sincere sorrow*.

Confirmation is a time when the Pastor can use the HC to demonstrate that Christianity is a passionate faith. Q.21 provides a classic example. “True faith” is not just a matter of knowledge, though it certainly includes that, but it also is a *whole-hearted trust* which the Holy Spirit creates in the heart of the believer. Similarly, Q.90 speaks of the new birth as *complete joy in God*. While the mind is engaged, the HC insists the heart must also be aflame!

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The question to ask the Confirmation student is, “Has your heart been filled with trust in God? Do you ever experience complete joy in Christ?” Such questions are not asked in an inquisitorial fashion, but with joyful anticipation while pointing

the student to the present, active work of the Holy Spirit.

Through interaction with the text of the HC, Confirmation is a time when students can be challenged and encouraged to seek and expect the reality of passionate Christian living.

5) Here's a short, simple aspect of the HC and Confirmation: don't forget the questions! Sometimes we put all the emphasis on the answers of the HC, but the answers are given to very good questions.

While students ought to memorize the answer to Q.62, it is just as important for them to know what the question is they're answering. That sounds simple, but I've found it very easy to overlook. The answer to Q.12 is fine, but really makes very little sense unless one knows the question part of Q.12.

Sometimes teachers, like students, can get so focused on the answers they forget the questions. It's a good thing to remind the students that the questions posed in the HC are the very same questions they and their friends and folk down through history have asked. They may not be asked in exactly the same words, but they are human, down-to-earth, everyone-asks-it types

of questions.

6) As in point one, this last point highlights how utilizing the HC in Confirmation informs the life and ministry of the Pastor. The HC is a piece of pastoral literature and is wonderful to use in varied aspects of pastoral work.

Much of my work has been done among folk who come from a United Church of Christ background. Some have never heard of personal assurance of faith, or, they think such assertions of personal assurance are presumptuous or proud. Q.21 with its clear statement of what constitutes true faith has wonderful medicinal powers for the human soul in such instances! As a Pastor, I don't try to convince anyone of my way of thinking, but simply point them to and engage them with the teaching of the HC, an acknowledged standard among UCC folk. They can still resist and reject such teaching, but they know it's not just some aberrant teaching of a radical preacher they're rejecting, but something Christians have taught and believed for centuries.

Qq.26,27,28 are particularly well-suited for helping folk deal with tragedies or, sometimes, outlandish prosperity. Every couple of years it's good for the Elders to review in depth Qq.83,84,85 about the opening and closing of the kingdom of heaven. When talking with unbelievers, Qq.12-18 provide clear testimony about the need for and the effectiveness of Christ's atonement.

Regular use of the HC in Confirmation training is good preparation for daily pastoral ministry.

Thirty years ago the prospect of having to teach adolescents from an antiquated document of the 16th century would have seemed daunting at best and thoroughly distasteful at worst. What good could possibly come from it? The answer: more than you could ever have imagined or thought! Sometimes shotgun marriages prove to be enduringly fruitful.

*Rev. John H.C. Niederhaus is the pastor of Immanuel Leidy's Church in Souderton, PA.*

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## JOHN CALVIN ON TRUE CONFIRMATION

*How I wish that we might have kept the custom which, as I have said, existed among the ancient Christians before this misborn wraith of a sacrament came to birth! Not that it would be a confirmation such as they fancy, which cannot be named without doing injustice to baptism; but a catechizing, in which children or those near adolescence would give an account of their faith before the church. But the best method of catechizing would be to have a manual drafted for this exercise, containing and summarizing in simple manner most of the articles of our religion, on which the whole believers' church ought to agree without controversy. A child of ten would present himself to the church to declare his confession of faith, would be examined in each article, and answer to each; if he were ignorant of anything or insufficiently understood it, he would be*

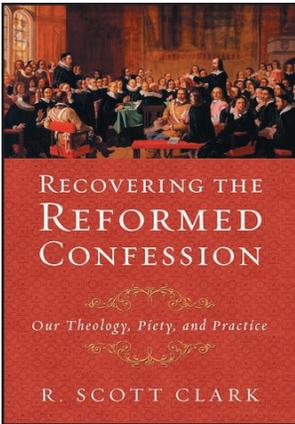


*taught. Thus, while the church looks on as a witness, he would profess the one true and sincere faith, in which the believing folk with one mind worship the one God.*

*If this discipline were in effect today, it would certainly arouse some slothful parents, who carelessly neglect the instruction of their children as a matter of no concern to them; for then they could not overlook it without public disgrace. There would be greater agreement in faith among Christian people, and not so many would go untaught and ignorant; some would not be so rashly carried away with new and strange doctrines; in short, all would have some methodical instruction, so to speak, in Christian doctrine.*

*Institutes 4.19.13*

# Book Reviews



A REVIEW OF  
RECOVERING THE  
REFORMED CONFESSION  
Author; R. Scott Clark (2008,  
P&R)

Do not read this book unless you are willing to be challenged by what you think it means to be Reformed! I am serious. If you think you have it all together, then do not read

this book. You will only be frustrated. HOWEVER, if you are willing to be challenged, then definitely read this book. I will state from the very beginning that this book is not going to be a light read. This book will take some deep thought and your undivided attention for it to do its job.

The first problem that Clark tackles is what he calls QIRC, or the Quest for Illegitimate Religious Certainty. Simply put, it is a kind of rationalism that tends to make things a test of Reformed orthodoxy that are not confessional. Clark takes on six twenty-four hour day creation, theonomy, and covenant moralism as examples of Reformed QIRC-iness. I will not even try to summarize his points, as that would be a great disservice to Dr. Clark. His historical treatment of creation is lengthy but provides great insight.

The next problem that Clark deals with is QIRE, or the Quest for Illegitimate Religious Experience. Clark provides well-needed challenges to his readers to reconsider some of the "experiential" aspects of the theology and piety of Jonathan Edwards. We are called back to knowing God through the due use of the ordinary means of grace, rather than seeking or creating a religious experience. I personally have seen the undue anguish of soul that an emphasis on the extraordinary can cause for the believer who begins to doubt their salvation or faith because they have not had some spectacular experience. Clark does not advocate against the extraordinary, only that our piety and Christian experience should be measured by it. Clark puts it this way.

*Judging by confessional Reformed piety, religious subjectivism (e.g., revivalism or pietism) is illegitimate because it seeks what is by definition an extraordinary providence of God, which is not promised in Scripture. This desire for the extraordinary tends not only to devalue the ordinary providence of God but also the expressed promises of God. He is most free to work all manner of wonderful things, e.g., instances of an intense sense of the divine presence, a surprising understanding of the application of Scripture to a given situation or some other blessing; but they cannot define the Christian life, and they are no proper standard by which to measure sanctification or Christian maturity. It is a significant mistake to make the religious experience envisioned by revivalists the organizing principle for Reformed piety. (p. 120)*

Fortunately Clark does not leave us stuck in a situation without a solution. Section two of the book is called "The Recovery"

Clark engages in a lengthy historical discussion of the archetypal/ectypal distinction in theology. To be honest, it was a discussion that I did not follow very well. The big point is to recover the distinction between the Creator and the creature. This means that we can never know things the way God knows them. We know things as he has revealed them to us. His conclusion I understood very well. *"The Reformed understanding of things is that we do not have immediate access to God's being. We have mediated access through God the Son incarnate and through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. The goal of our theology is to think God's thoughts after him, as his image bearers, as analogues."* (p. 163) To Clark this has implications in our dealing with creation debates and Federal Vision type issues.

In chapter 5, the value and use of our confessions and catechisms is discussed. Clark conducts a historical survey of confessional subscription tracing the drift from strict subscription to looser models of adoption by contemporary denominations. His conclusion

is that we must return to the use of confessions as boundary markers. Secondly, that we need a confession that can be subscribed to without exception that is biblical. Clark raises an important question, is it time for a new or revised confession for the Reformed community? I think there is merit in that idea.

In chapter 6, Clark presents us with "The Joy of Being Confessional" stating five good reasons for being confessional. Without stating those points for you (Clark does that well enough), his main concern in this chapter is why many are drifting to other forms of Christianity (including back to the Roman Catholic church). Clark presents for us a solid, biblical ground for remaining (or perhaps even coming back to being) confessional.

Chapter 7 is entitled "Recovering Reformed Worship." I imagine this chapter will generate some healthy debate. Dr. Clark's intention is clear from the outset of the chapter.

*"The fact that many Reformed Christians alive today have never seen or participated in a worship service that Calvin, the Heidelberg Reformers, or the Westminster Divines would recognize does not bode well for the future of Reformed theology, piety, and practice. ...I argue that an essential part of recovering the Reformed confession is to recover the Reformed principle and practice of worship" (p. 241)*

What Clark advocates is the return to the regulative principle of worship. He believes that even in Reformed churches today, this principle (that of only doing in worship what is required by scripture) is either being ignored or is being used differently than our Reformation forefathers. Clark gives the reader a lengthy historical tour of the developments and redevelopments regarding the regulative principle's use in the church. Clark's major theme regarding the regulative principle is how the church in large measure has abandoned "exclusive psalmody" and introduced the use of musical instruments. While I do not share Dr. Clark's conviction regarding the use of only inspired texts for singing in corporate worship, I do find his argument useful. I also find his position regarding the singing of texts from the entirety of Scripture a much more personally agreeable position than psalms only. While I have not fully come to Dr. Clark's position, this chapter has caused me to be more

intentional in the inclusions of Psalms and inspired texts in our congregational singing. Clark concludes the chapter with recommendations of what would be necessary to recover the regulative principle, a task he admits would not be easy. If you have not considered why we sing what we sing, give Dr. Clark's chapter a careful read.

Clark's final chapter is entitled "Whatever Happened to the Evening Service?" In this chapter, Clark believes that in order for us to recover the Reformed practice of the second service we need to recover a Biblical view Sabbath and the means of grace. If you already have a high view of the Sabbath, you may find some of the Biblical background a bit unnecessary. Clark also provides historical background on Sunday Sabbath keeping which I found interesting. Clark also includes an interesting section of comparison and consensus of the Reformed confession on the Sabbath. In the section on the means of grace, Clark says, "It is the contention of this book that the antidote for the QIRE is to restore the means of grace to their proper place." (p. 340) As Clark wraps up this chapter, he makes the following statement which sums up his argument regarding the second service and his whole reason for writing this book.

*As our churches realized in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so too we must again realize that the Reformed theology, piety, and practice must be intentionally, conscientiously, patiently, and thoroughly taught to our congregations, to families, to children, to singles, to newcomers, and to those who have been Reformed for generations, or our theology, piety, and practice will be quickly lost and assimilated into the American mainstream religious admixture of pietism and fundamentalism. (p. 352)*

In summary, this is not a book about recovering the Reformed doctrine of predestination or election. This is a book intended for the those who call themselves Reformed. It is a call to re-examine what it really means to be Reformed and whether we are really following the Reformed confession we claim to hold as standards. You may not agree with everything Clark has to say, but do not miss his call to examine our faith and practice in the light of the Reformation standards. Take the time and effort to challenge yourself with this book.

# News, Notes, and Prayer Requests

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## NEWS AND NOTES

• Central Ohio Reformation Studies Conference  
October 28-30, 2008 Sponsored by ADVOCATE Enterprise  
<www.advocateenterprise.org>  
Location: Camp McPherson Lodge (between Loudonville & Mount Vernon)  
For more details see their website.

• Officer elections will take place at the Annual meeting on October 11. We will also begin the planning for the Spring 2009 Bible Conference to be held once again in Bedford, PA at St. Paul's Reformed Church.

• The next edition of the Reformation Voice will be December 2008. The theme will be Advent/The Incarnation. Articles are due by November 1. Book reviews, news items, and prayer requests are due by November 15.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

• Pray for the executive committee and others involved in planning the Spring 2009 Bible Conference.

• Pray for those churches who are seeking to recover or maintain their Reformed and Confessional heritage.

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## Noteworthy Dates & Events



HRA ANNUAL MEETING  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2008  
ST. PAUL'S REFORMED CHURCH  
BEDFORD, PA

**NEXT ISSUE: DECEMBER 2008**

## ADVENT AND THE INCARNATION

### Editorial Policy for the Reformation Voice

1. The Executive Committee shall serve at the editorial committee for the Reformation Voice. They shall have the right to select or reject any content for inclusion in the Reformation Voice.

2. Content may be submitted by members, pending members, or members of member churches. The Executive Committee may also solicit the right to (re)print articles from other authors or reviewers whose writings may be of value to the membership of the HRA.

3. In keeping with the purposes of the Association, books reviews in the Reformation Voice shall be reflective of the purposes and standards of the Association.

4. The Reformation Voice shall not be used as a platform to voice views and positions that are particular to a denomination or group. Rather, it should seek to promote those theological positions which are held in common by all who hold to the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort.