

ght out communication of the good news of Christ with the expectation that the Spirit of God will bring about new life in those who will believe. Litfin's work is an important contribution both to an understanding of 1 Corinthians 1-4 and to Christian preaching and is thankfully one that can be put to use both by academic theologians and Christian practitioners alike.

Greg Thellman

Gregg Allison and Chris Castaldo

The Unfinished Reformation: What Unites and Divides Catholics and Protestants After 500 Years

Grand Rapids, Michigan USA, Zondervan, 2016, 171.

Since this year marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, it was to be expected that this round number would arouse special interest of theologians of all persuasions to think and write about the consequences that the Protestant Reformation had brought to Christianity and the world at large, but also to ask the question: Is the Reformation over?

This book was written by two very accomplished authors. Professor of historical theology at the *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, Dr. Gregg Allison, wrote, among other books, *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice: An Evangelical Assessment* several years ago, which gave us a fresh perspective on modern Catholic theology. Dr. Chris Castaldo is a pastor and also an author of several books, including an autobiographical book, *Holy Ground: Walking with Jesus as a Former Catholic*.

Allison and Castaldo's book, *The Unfinished Reformation*, answers the question "Is the Reformation over" right from its cover. Nevertheless, this does not mean that since we know the simple answer, we can just skip the book and find something else to read. This is one of those books which we could almost describe with the saying "the journey is more important than the destination."

In their Introduction, authors bring forth a historical overview of the Reformation. We need to differentiate between different movements of the Reformation (for example, the Lutheran Reformation, Radical Reformation etc.) and the reformation as "a widespread desire for, and movement toward, greater fidelity in the areas of theology, pastoral care, and overall piety" (20).

Thinking through the question "Is the Reformation over?" helps us to grasp more clearly practical issues, like possible conflicts in families with both sides represented, the question of "Nicodemism," a growing number of conversions from Catholicism to Protestantism and vice versa, and cooperation between these traditions in social engagement (22-29).

In the first chapter, the authors point out that there are two fundamental issu-

es separating Protestants and Catholics: *authority* and *salvation* (40). Things have changed in the last 500 years, but there are still basic differences between them. For example, even though nowadays the Catholic Church considers Protestants to be Christians, it still considers itself to represent “Christ on earth with divine authority to forgive sins and impart sanctifying grace” (41). This leads them to downgrade Protestant gatherings as “ecclesial communities” and not churches (101).

In the following five chapters, the authors undertook a task of explaining “the ways Catholics and Protestants continue to stand together and where they stand apart” (42).

The second chapter explains that Catholics and Protestants share many common beliefs. Their analysis follows the contours of a systematic theology. Both Catholics and Protestants believe in a Triune God (43); both agree upon God’s nature and attributes as described in the Scriptures (46-48); both communities confirm God’s revelation, general revelation, and special or divine revelation (49); both agree with regards to the Person of Jesus Christ as defined by ecumenical councils and ancient creeds (50-51), against Christological heresies (52). Moreover, despite divisions on the doctrine of salvation, they agree about many things regarding Christ’s salvific work (53-55). They comply concerning the Person and the work of the Holy Spirit (55-57); furthermore, there is a substantial overlap about the dignity and sinfulness of human beings (58-60). Some might indeed be surprised that they even join hands in agreement that “the initiative in salvation lies completely with God” (60), both with regards to the accomplishment of salvation (61) and its application (62). There is also a general agreement about the nature of the Church, while we need to keep in mind that “while Catholics and Protestants present these points using similar language, they often have different nuances and definitions of them” (63). Finally, they agree about “the living hope” of eternal life, Christ’s bodily return and the last judgment (65-66).

Chapters three through six delineate the major points of division between the two traditions. Chapter three reflects upon “*Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation*.” Catholics and Protestant disagree how does God speak to His Church. Protestants hold to the principle of *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone), while Catholics assert that God speaks through Tradition also (68). The Scriptures, they believe, are not necessary for “the *being* of the Church,” because even if they were lost, the Church would still have Tradition as a part of divine revelation. They also disagree how many books there are in the Bible, because Protestants reject the Apocrypha, since those books were not part of the Hebrew Bible (77), New Testament writers never quoted from them (79), and even some of the early church leaders, including Jerome, did not consider them to be a part of the canon (78).

Who has the authority to interpret the Bible is another point of contention (82), together with how many meanings can a Scripture have. According to Cat-

holic hermeneutics, the Scriptures may have up to four different meanings (literal, allegorical, topological, and anagogical), while Protestants persist that there is only one “literal, grammatical and historical meaning” (83). Authors closed the chapter exclaiming that Catholic attitude towards the Bible has indeed changed since Vatican II (84), nevertheless, we can see that Protestants have a greater emphasis on the Bible from the fact that “the vast majority of Bible translation work worldwide has been and is carried out by Protestant groups” (85).

Chapter four deals with questions of “the image of God, sin, and Mary.” Although both traditions believe that God created man in His image, they interpret it differently. Catholics consider this divine image as “divine gift of human reason, which rules over the passions and the body by means of a supernatural gift of righteousness,” while Protestants claim that it refers to “human beings in their wholeness” (91), and to their “function of exercising dominion over the rest of the created order” (89). These views about the image of God in man transfers to their view about the Fall. According to Catholics, the Fall “resulted in a loss of supernatural righteousness with a consequent disruption of the soul’s (or reason’s) governance of the passions and body,” (92) while Protestants regard that it was “far more extensive and intensive: a devastation rather than a disordering” (93). It is therefore natural that these two views gravitate towards different ideas of salvation also. Salvation is, according to Catholics, “by God’s grace that, infused into human nature, enables people to work to merit eternal life,” while Protestants hold that “salvation is solely by God’s grace and ... the righteousness of Christ (imputed) to people’s account” (95).

Mary is cherished by both groups in different ways. She is the *theotokos* in the sense of “the one who gives birth to the one who is God” (165). Both respect her as an incredible example of faith, obedience, and call her blessed (96). Nevertheless, their view of Mary differs, as Catholics regard her as “the sinless, ever-Virgin, second Eve who plays an essential role in the incarnation of Christ and is the mother of the Church as Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix,” while Protestants think that those special roles would necessarily “undermine the sufficiency of Christ” (100).

Chapter five explains the polemics about the Church and the Sacraments. As noted before, Catholics regard Protestants to be Christians, but they do not hold that their gatherings are real churches, but call them “ecclesial communities” (101). This is because their understanding of their Church is “rooted in two key principles: the nature-grace interdependence, and the Christ-Church interconnection.” Basically, this means that the Church represents Christ on earth and serves as a mediator between grace and earthly elements (water, oil, bread and wine) through which it conveys this grace to believers (102-103), and this is possible because of her hierarchy (107). Protestants, of course, disapprove these

basic assumptions and regard the church as “the assembly of Christians in which the gospel is communicated and embraced, the baptism and the Lord’s Supper are celebrated (and, according to some varieties, church discipline is administered” (107).

These two traditions have discordant view about the sacraments, both with regards to their number and purpose. According to the Catholic view, their seven sacraments enable believers “to cooperate with God to merit eternal life” (112). Even though there are differing views among the Protestants about the purpose of the sacraments or rites, all agree that the two sacraments/rites work on the basis of faith and not merit (114-124).

Chapter six reflects about salvation and is divided upon four parts. In the first part, we encounter the question, “Why are people accepted by God?” (125) Because “grace infused through the sacraments enables them to do good works and become righteous in God’s sight.” Catholics affirm, while Protestants claim that this is solely “because of the finished work of Christ on the cross, the righteousness of which is imputed to the believer, accessed by faith alone” (128). What about good works? Protestants do not deny that believers should do good works. Calvin wrote that faith and works should go together just as “the heat and light of the sun are together” (129). Catholics agree with Protestants that “nothing that precedes justification can formally merit the grace of justification” (130). Nevertheless, after initial justification by good works a believer can “merit for oneself and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life” (131). Protestants reject this outright, because “[a]ny claim to merit obscures divine grace, devalues the cross of Christ, and inevitably promotes human pride” (130).

Assurance of salvation is another disputable question among Protestants themselves. There is, nevertheless, a foundational difference between these two traditions, because all Protestants agree that salvation does not depend upon merit (133), but upon Christ’s finished work and God’s enablement to persevere in faith (134-135). Lastly, Protestants and Catholics disagree whether Purgatory exists and is it needed. In Catholic theology, Purgatory is a place where those believers who performed venial sins, for which they did not do penance, are “cleansed and made acceptable to God.” One can anticipate that Protestants would reject this, since they reject that God accepts people because of their “internal renewal” (137), but on the basis of “the finished work of Christ and his righteousness attributed to believers by grace through faith alone” (138).

This brings us to the final chapter where the authors ask two interesting questions. First, is it possible to regard Catholics as born-again believers. The Bible, our authors claim, does teach that we are saved by faith alone, but it does not necessarily mean that we are saved by belief in faith alone. They cite John Owen, who wrote that people can be saved “by that grace which *doctrinally they do deny*

... by the imputation of that righteousness which *in opinion they deny to be imputed...*” (140). Our authors agree with this notion and answer with a firm “Yes” (141).

The second question is not so easy to answer, “whether the institution of the Catholic Church constitutes an orthodox body” (141). Reformers themselves, on the one hand, “commonly identified the papacy as the Antichrist” but on the other hand, “continued to recognize that the Church has a Christian foundation” (141). Calvin considered Catholic churches to be the “Churches of Christ” (142). Hence, the authors propose we should view Protestants and Catholics as “a divided family.”

In the last part of this chapter, Allison and Castaldo discuss how much did the Catholic Church change its doctrine of salvation. They think that this change was not dramatic, but is still significant (144). The Catholic Church can never “disown its past,” nevertheless its teaching “may evolve into a new form” since it “reinterprets it in a new light.” For example, there is a new emphasis on *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone) among some of its theologians, like Fitzmyer, as well as in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* signed by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church. Authors do not reject the value of this emphasis, but they think that it does not mean that the Reformation is over. In the final analysis, the Catholic church is still far from the teaching of Reformers on salvation, as it “presents a deficient gospel” (148).

In their Conclusion, authors’ answer to the question “Is the Reformation finished?” reads: “Yes. No. No, but...” *Yes*, the Reformation is finished in one sense, since today Protestants and Catholics, once involved in open war against each other, may “cherish each other as friends” (150). *No*, the Reformation is not over since there are still “many basic doctrinal differences” between these traditions. In the end, *No*, the Reformation is not completed, *but* “we have made progress” (151). Catholics and Protestants today understand far better what divides them, but also what brings them closer in the pluralistic and materialistic world in which we are living. Nevertheless, while Protestants expect the Catholic Church to undergo a radical reform according to the Scriptures, Catholics regard that for the Reformation to end, the Protestant churches need to “‘return home’ to Mother Church” (151). In light of this, our authors recommend that our approach to Catholics around the gospel should be “intentional.” This does not mean “adversial or crotchety,” but that “[i]n our engagement with Catholic friends and loved ones, we wish to convey the fragrance of Christ – peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, sincere, full of grace and truth” (152).

As I already noted, not all of the Reformation’s children will agree with every conclusion in this book. Some will think that the authors were too gentle in light of the aforementioned heterodoxies of the Catholic Church. Others will say that

they are splitting hairs. Still, others will pose their own questions. For example, they may ask where does the *New Perspective on Paul* fit into this picture, or whether this book almost totally disregarded the Radical Reformation and its tradition? In any case, this book will certainly prompt some fresh questions and contemplations, maybe even some new books and studies. Personally, I think that Allison and Castaldo produced a fine work that is neither superfluous nor pretentious. I recommend their work heartily!

Miroslav Balint-Feudvarski