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Reformed Catholike (1597) Subtitled: A Declaration Showing how near we may come to the present Church of Rome in sundry points of Religion, and wherein we must forever depart from them, With an Advertisement to all favorers of the Roman religion, showing that the said religion is against the catholic principles and grounds of the catechism.

The Legat/Oxford edition of 1597 was read, alongside of the 2019 Reformation Heritage Books edition. The Legat/Oxford edition had several smudges in the printing that made it difficult to decipher some of Perkins's words, making the RHB edition useful for a quicker read.

Summary of the Work

Reformed Catholike begins with a brief exposition of Revelation 18:4, "And I heard another voice from heaven say, "Go out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues."

"This verse is set down as a caveat, serving to forward all the people of God, that they may escape the judgment which shall befall the whore.... Now touching this duty of separation... I will handle two things: First how far we may join with them in the matter of religion. Second, how far forth and wherein we must dissent and depart from them." (RHB, 12)

The structure of Perkins's argumentation is basically four-fold, although the printer frequently misses the proper numbering of the arguments:

- I. Our Consent (Subpointed with conclusions)
- II. Dissent or Differences
- III. Reasons for our Dissent or Differences
- IV. Objections from the Papists

The points are not always given in the same order and sometimes they are conflated into one Roman numeral rather than divided, but the work is basically twenty-two "places of doctrine" divided into the above four categories of argumentation.

Perkins covers the following places of doctrine and the reader will notice the polemic that begins with areas of greater agreement and then at the fourteenth place of doctrine, Perkins divides more sharply into areas of disagreement.

1. Free Will
2. Original Sin
3. Assurance of Salvation
4. Justification of a Sinner
5. Human Merits
6. Satisfaction for Sin
7. Of Traditions
8. Of Vows
9. Of Images
10. Of the Real Presence
11. The Sacrifice of the Mass
12. Of Fasting
13. The State of Perfection

14. Worshiping of Departed Saints
15. Intercession of the Saints
16. Implicit Faith
17. Of Purgatory
18. Of the Supremacy [of the Pope]
19. Efficacy of the Sacraments
20. Of Faith
21. Of Repentance
22. The Sins of the Roman Church

Point of doctrine seven will serve as an example of Perkins's argumentation:

Of Traditions

Definition: "Traditions are doctrines delivered hand to hand, either by word of mouth or by writing, beside the written Word of God."

I. Our Consent

Conclusion 1: We hold that the Word of God has been delivered by tradition.

Conclusion 2: We hold that the prophets, our Savior Christ, and his apostles, spoke and did many things good and true which were not written in the Scriptures, but either came to us or to our ancestors only by tradition.

Conclusion two examples include Hebrews 12:1, Moses said, "I tremble and am afraid." In Jude the archangel "strove" with the devil over Moses's body. Isaiah was killed with a fuller's club. Mary "lived and died as a virgin."

Conclusion 3: We hold that the church has power to prescribe ordinances, rules, or traditions, touching time and place of God's worship and touching order and comeliness to be used in the same.

Conclusion three examples include I Corinthians 11:2 where Paul commends the church for keeping his traditions. Acts 15:29 commends the abstaining from "blood and things strangled" as long as "the offense of the Jews remained."

II. Differences

"Papists teach that beside the written Word, there be certain unwritten traditions which must be believed as profitable and necessary to salvation."

These are: 1. Apostolic 2. Ecclesiastical

III. Our Reasons ("Reasons" is not Roman numerated in the original Legat Oxford edition, but it clearly follows the same division of argumentation.)

Testimony 1: Deuteronomy 4:2: "Thou shalt not add to the words that I command thee, nor take anything therefrom." The Word of God is sufficient for all doctrines required for our salvation.

Testimony 2: Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and the testimony. If they speak not according to

this word, it is because there is no light in them.” “Here he commends the written Word is sufficient to resolve all doubts and scruples in conscience whatsoever.”

Testimony 3: John 20:31, “Those things were written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ and in believing might have everlasting life.” Perkins says, “Here is set down the full end of the gospel and the whole written Word, which is to bring men to faith and consequently to salvation.”

Galatians 1:8 is conflated into Testimony 3, although it ought to be Testimony 4. “If we or an angel from heaven preach unto you anything *besides that* [italics his] which we have preached, let him be accursed.

Testimony 4 (actually five): 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “The whole of Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teach, to improve, to correct, and to instruct in righteousness, that the many of God may be absolute...” This “testimony” is divided into two arguments: 1. “The sufficiency of Scripture without unwritten varieties.” 2. That which can make ministers perfect in all their duties is the same sufficient Word.

Testimony 5 (actually six): The judgment of the church. Perkins quotes Tertullian on Scripture alone. He quotes Jerome on how besides the Scriptures there is “nothing else that we are to believe.” He quotes Augustine from *De Doctrina Christiana* on how the Bible contains all the points for faith and manners for living well. He then quotes *Vicentius Lirinensis* (5th century) saying that the canon of Scripture is perfect for all things.

He goes on to give further reasoning:

Reason 1: The practice of Christ and the Apostles in never affirming any doctrine through tradition, only through the written Word of God.

Reason 2: If believing unwritten traditions were necessary to salvation, then we must believe all of the writings of the ancient Fathers because these traditions come from the Fathers, not the Apostles.

III. Objections for Traditions

Objection 1: The Catholic goes to 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and responds, “It is very unlikely this...was the first epistle.. and it might well fall out that some things needful to salvation were delivered by word of mouth... Yet the same things were afterwards set down in writing... (RHB, 68)”

Objection 2: The Scripture is Scripture is in itself a tradition. Perkins references that in the Scriptures “God is the author himself.” He goes on to say “it is divine, absolute, and full of piety.” He mentions the form of speech full of majesty and simplicity. The purpose of the Scriptures which is to glorify God... “the Scripture then proves itself to be Scripture, and yet we despise not the universal consent or the tradition of the church...”

Objection 3: The Catholic says that there are books of the Bible that have been lost: Book of the wars of God (Num. 21), “Book of the Just (Josh. 10), Books of Nathan, Gad, Iddo, etc. He says that it may be that there are canonical books lost—but what we have is sufficient. Then he says that if we say its lost then we call into question God’s providence. Perkins then goes on to explain the so-called lost books and disproves the theory that there are lost books.

Objection 4: Moses received a hidden tradition at Sinai and that came down to us through the Jewish Cabala. Perkins says that if it was required then Moses would not have said, “thou shalt not add anything thereto (RHB, 69).”

Objection 5: The Catholic will reference Hebrews 5 and talk about milk of the Word and the strong meat of traditions. It seems that Perkins is annoyed with this objection from the Roman Catholics and says that it is clearly obvious in the Scriptures that they are both found in the Word. “It is a conceit of man’s brain to imagine that some unwritten word is meant by strong meat.”

Objection 6: The Roman Catholic will say, “Sundry places of Scripture be doubtful, and every religion has his several expositions... Papists and Protestants.” Perkins answers, “It is not so.” He then divides his explanation into three parts: 1. The analogy of faith “gathered out of the clearest places of the Scripture. 2. Proper exegesis, including circumstances of the text and the meaning of the actual words. 3. “Conference of place with place” which is the general tenor of the Scriptures.

“And thus much of our dissent concerning traditions, wherein we must not be wavering but steadfast; because notwithstanding our renouncing of popery, yet popish inclinations and dispositions be rife among us. Our common people marvelously affect human traditions (RHB, 70).”

Summary of & Brief Annotations on Secondary Literature Related to the Work

Beeke, Joel and Greg Salazar, *William Perkins: architect of Puritanism*, RHB, 2019.

Chapter 4: The Wholesome doctrine of faith and love

Milton, Anthony, *Catholic and Reformed*, Cambridge, 1995.

Perkins’s Reformed Catholike is referenced in several chapters throughout the book.

Patterson, W.B., *William Perkins and the Making of a Protestant England*, Oxford, 2014.

Chapter 2: Apologist for the Church of England

Chapter 7: Attacked and Defended

Sedgwick, Peter, *The Origins of Anglican Moral Theology*, Brill, 2018.

Chapter 7: Ours is a True Church of God: William Perkins and the Reformed Doctrine of the Church

Schaefer, Paul, *The Spiritual Brotherhood*, RHB, 2011.

Chapter 2: The Good Fight of the Heart Redeemed.

Wright, Louis, *William Perkins: Elizabethan Apostle of Practical Divinity*, Huntington Library Quarterly, 3.2 (Jan. 1940), 171-196.

Several references and pages concerning practical divinity contra “Papists”

Research Topics for Further Doctoral Research

Analyze the English ecclesiastical shift from Perkins’s vision for reformed catholicity to the Westminster assembly’s English presbyterian apostolic image for the church.

Contrast the polemics used by Perkins in *Reformed Catholike* with that of his other work, *The Problem of Forged Catholicism and the Universality of the Romish Religion*, noting that the

fore-mentioned was dedicated to Sir William Bowes for the “learned protection” of the English religion; and the latter as an “introduction to young students in the reading of the Fathers.”

Importance for the Church Today

There is a movement among young evangelicals going back to Rome due to issues such as catholicity, history, and mystery. *Reformed Catholike* will aid in discerning where true catholicity lies.

Reformed Catholike presents a graceful polemic attempting to win rather than merely to divide. Current polemics in the church is either non-existent or venomous. Perkins presents a graceful way of interacting with ecclesiastical enemies.

Reformed Catholike demonstrates prioritization for reformation even of our own churches. Perkins spends about 200 pages showing agreement and minor differences before bringing out the major disagreements with Rome. How often do we lose our audiences when we make all things primary?

Topics for Further Discussion

Perkins says, “The feast of the nativity of our Savior Christ is only a custom and tradition of the church and yet men are commonly more careful to keep it than the Lord’s Day—the keeping whereof stands by the moral law (Legat/Oxford, 149; RHB, 70).” What traditions have developed within evangelicalism that we are more carefully to observe than that which is clearly prescribed or properly deduced from the Scriptures? How might this type of self-examination lead to a new puritanism within our reformed and evangelical churches?

Perkins says, “Though it may be granted that some books of canonical scripture be lost, yet the Scripture still remains sufficient (RHB, 68).” Later he says, “to hold that any books of Scripture should be lost, calls into question God’s providence (RHB, 69).” Does leaving the presupposition in order to bring along a hearer, serve the greater cause of the Gospel or does it harm our evangelical witness?

“The Virgin Mary lived and died a virgin (RHB, 65).” Perkins, as well as the majority of reformation and post-reformation thinkers confess the perpetual virginity of Mary as a tradition handed down from the church and “not against the Word.” Has the evangelical church, in attempt to elevate Christ, devalued the Virgin Mary, who was the Christ-bearer and—if you will—the Θεοτόκος.