

Grace and Assurance by Martyn McGeown
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Reviewed by Philip Harbach

Why do churches, especially Reformed churches, adopt creeds? And why study a creed such as the Canon of Dordt? These and many more questions are answered in the book *Grace and Assurance* by Rev. Martyn McGeown. He explains that his purpose in this commentary is to make the Canons more accessible to young readers, and that non-reformed people might know that most of what they've heard about the Reformed faith is based on caricature. And even unbelievers ought to read the book because they will find in it a clear explanation of the gospel and a clear call to believe in Jesus Christ.

A brief history of the Synod of Dordt is given. This is followed by a discussion of the importance of the creeds, where Rev. McGeown answers common objections to creeds, such as the familiar "no creed but Christ" idea, and the objection that creeds are divisive. He stresses the importance of the Formula of Subscription and shows how that is being compromised in Reformed circles.

All throughout the book, biblical doctrine as expressed in the Canons is shown in stark contrast with Arminianism. This book could be used as a handbook to defend Calvinism over against Arminianism. And it becomes clear that the truths expressed in the Canons are not merely academic but personal and pastoral. An example is on page 311, "The Canons are realistic and experiential, in that they reflect the real experiences of God's children in this world. ...the Canons never praise doubt, which they view as sin, but they still reckon with it as a sad reality, which requires a pastoral approach."

At the end of each chapter are thought-provoking questions that would be very suitable for discussion groups or society meetings. Also very useful is a list of proof texts. After the Second Head is a list of texts on the concepts of atonement, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, sacrifice, washing.

Are you intimidated by "difficult" or "heavy" doctrines such as reprobation, the existence of evil and God's sovereignty, or infra vs. supralapsarianism? The author makes these concepts understandable to the average reader in the light of Scripture. Many other concepts are dealt with, such as how to understand the image of God, the (free?) will of man, and what the Bible means by the terms "all men" and "world."

Often the author addresses the reader with a personal question or comment such as, "Believing reader, you have come to Christ to be cleansed from your sins. You are a great debtor to the grace of God. Do not rob God of his glory by attributing your salvation to anyone else but him." Page 170.

The Canons are very sharp in their condemnation of heresy. After the articles of each head of doctrine, there follows a "Rejection of Errors" section. The Arminian views of election, the cross, and regeneration are equated with Pelagianism which was already condemned by the ancient church centuries before. Whereas the Arminians resorted to subterfuge, lies and slander, the doctrine of the Canons is clear, simple, and straightforward.

I highly recommend this book and would encourage young people to read it. I'd also recommend joining the RFPA book club.

To order, contact our church's book club agent, Ed Lotterman.
Regular price: \$31.95
Book club price: \$20.77