

A REFORMED CATHOLIC

*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*

BY WILLIAM PERKINS

With an Introduction by Joseph A. Pipa

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INTRODUCTION

William Perkins' *A Reformed Catholic* is as timely today as it was when he published it in 1597. Many evangelical Christians recognize little difference between Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism. After all, the Roman Catholics hold to the Apostles' Creed and accept the Bible as the Word of God. We have often stood shoulder to shoulder with them in the battle against abortion. At the end of the day, we all are Christians and that is what matters. Is that conclusion valid? Many protestants in Elizabethan England were equally confused about Roman Catholicism.

Perkins wrote this book as an apologetic for Reformed (Reformation) Christianity to demonstrate that Reformed Protestantism was not a new religion, but the corrected progression of the Ancient Church. He desired to prove that English Protestantism was clearly in line with what the church had confessed and that it was the Roman Catholic church that had departed. He states his thesis in the title: "A Reformed Catholic or 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.”

Some will object that such a book is not necessary today, after Vatican II. Vatican II changed the Roman Catholic church, and she is not what she once was. Admittedly, there are liberalizing tendencies in the Roman church, but she is as committed to the doctrines of the Council of Trent as she was in the sixteenth century.¹

In this introduction, I will give some biographical information on Perkins and the circumstances in which he wrote, as well as an overview of the treatise.

William Perkins: The Man and His Times

Little is known about the early life of William Perkins. He was born in 1558 to Thomas and Anna Perkins in the village of Marston Jabbett, in Bulkington Parish of the county of Warwickshire. Since he enrolled as a pensioner at Christ's College, we may assume his family was fairly well to do;² and, more than likely, they had Puritan sympathies, as Christ's College was known for having many Puritan teachers.

He enrolled, June 1577, at Christ's College, Cambridge and studied under the famous Puritan Laurence Chaderton, who became his lifelong friend.³ He remained in Cambridge all his life, taking a B.A. in 1581 and an M.A. in 1584. At this time,

1. The Council of Trent was the product of the Roman Catholic counter-reformation. It met in Trent (Trento), Italy from 1545 to 1563. It produced the irreducible doctrines of the Roman Catholic church.

2. A pensioner was a student at Cambridge who paid his expenses out of pocket.

3. Ian Breward, *The Works of William Perkins*, vol. 2 of the *Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics* (Berkshire: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970), 3.

DEDICATION

To the right worshipful, Sir William Bowes, Knight, etc.

Grace and Peace

Right Worshipful, it is a notable policy of the devil, which he has put into the heads of sundry men in this age, to think that our religion, and the religion of the present Church of Rome are all one for substance; and that they may be reunited as (in their opinion) they were before. Writings to this effect are spread abroad in the French tongue, and respected of English Protestants more than is meet, or ought to be. For, let men in show of moderation pretend the peace and good estate of the Catholic Church as long as they will; this union of the two religions can never be made, more than the union of light and darkness. And this shall appear, if we do but a little consider, how they of the Roman church have razed the foundation. For though in words they honor Christ, yet in deed they turn Him into a pseudo-Christ and an idol of their own brain. They call Him our Lord; but with this condition, that the servant of servants of this Lord may change and add

to His commandments, having so great a power that he may open and shut heaven to whom he will, and bind the very conscience with his own laws, and consequently be partaker of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Again, they call Him a Savior, but yet in us—in that He gives this grace unto us, that by our merits we may be our own saviors, and in the want of our own merits we may partake in the merits of the saints. And they acknowledge that He died and suffered for us, but with this caveat, that the fault being pardoned we must satisfy for the temporal punishment either in this world or in purgatory. In a word, they make Him our Mediator of intercession unto God; but withal, His mother must be the queen of heaven, and by the right of a mother command Him there. Thus, in word they cry “Hosanna,” but indeed they crucify Christ. Therefore, we have good cause to bless the name of God that has freed us from the yoke of this Roman bondage and has brought us to the true light and liberty of the gospel. And it should be a great height of unthankfulness in us, not to stand out against the present Church of Rome, but to yield ourselves to plots of reconciliation. To this effect and purpose, I have penned this little treatise, which I present to your worship, desiring it might be some token of a thankful mind for undeserved love. And I crave withal, not only your worshipful (which is more common) but also your learned protection; being well assured, that by skill and art you are able to justify whatsoever I have truly taught. Thus wishing to you and yours the continuance and the increase of faith and good conscience, I take my leave. Cambridge, June 28, 1597.

Your worship's in the Lord, William Perkins

THE AUTHOR TO THE CHRISTIAN READER

By a Reformed Catholic, I understand anyone that holds the same necessary heads of religion with the Roman Church; yet so as he pares off and rejects all errors in doctrine whereby the said religion is corrupted. How this may be done, I have begun to make some little declaration in this small treatise, the intent whereof is to show how near we may come to the present Church of Rome in sundry points of religion, and wherein we must ever dissent.

My purpose in penning this small treatise is threefold. The first is to confute all such politics as hold and maintain that our religion and that of the Roman Church differ not in substance, and consequently that they may be reconciled. Yet my meaning here is not to condemn any pacification that tends to persuade the Roman Church to our religion. The second is, that the papists which think so basely of our religion may be won to a better liking of it when they shall see how near we come unto them in sundry points. The third, that the common Protestant might in some part see and conceive the points of difference between us and the Church of Rome and know in

what manner and how far forth we condemn the opinions of the said church.

I crave pardon for the order which I use in handling the several points. For I have set them down one by one, as they came to mind, not respecting the laws of method. If any papist shall say that I have not alleged their opinions aright, I answer that their books be at hand, and I can justify what I have said.

Thus craving your acceptation for this my pains, and wishing unto you the increase of knowledge and love of pure and sound religion, I take my leave and make an end.

REVELATION 18:4

And I heard another voice from heaven say, "Go out of her, my people, that ye not be partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues."

In the former chapter, Saint John sets down a description of the whore of Babylon, and that at large as he saw her in a vision described unto him. In the sixteenth verse of the same chapter, he foretells her destruction. And in the first three verses of this 18th chapter, he goes on to propound the said destruction yet more directly and plainly; withal alleging arguments to prove the same, in all the verses following. Now in this fourth verse is set down a caveat, serving to forewarn all the people of God, that they may escape the judgment which shall befall the whore. And the Word contains two parts: a commandment, and a reason. The commandment, "Come out of her, my people," that is, from Babylon. The reason, taken from the event "lest you be partakers, etc." Touching the commandment, first I will search the right meaning of it and then set down the use thereof and doctrine flowing thence. In history, therefore, are three Babylons mentioned: One is Babylon of Assyria standing on the river

Euphrates, where was the confusion of languages, and where the Jews were in captivity, which Babylon is, in Scripture, reproached for idolatry and other iniquities. The second Babylon is in Egypt, standing on the river Nile, and it is now called Cayr; of that mention is made in 1 Peter 5:13 (as some think) though indeed it is as likely and more commonly thought that there is meant Babylon of Assyria. The third Babylon is mystical, whereof Babylon of Assyria was a type and figure; and that is Rome, which is without question here to be understood. And the whore of Babylon, as by all circumstances may be gathered, is the state or regiment of a people that are the inhabitants of Rome and appertain thereto. This may be proved by the interpretation of the Holy Ghost, for in the last verse of the seventeenth chapter the woman, that is, the whore of Babylon, is said to be “a city which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”¹

Now in the days when Saint John penned this book of Revelation, there was no city in the world that ruled over the kings of the earth but Rome; it then being the seat where the emperor put in execution his imperial authority. Again, in the seventh verse she is said to “sit on a beast having seven heads and ten horns,” which seven heads be “seven hills” (v. 9), whereon the woman sits; and also they be “seven kings.” Therefore, by the whore of Babylon is meant a city standing on seven hills. Now it is well known, not only to learned men in the church of God, but even to the heathen themselves, that Rome alone is the city built on seven distinct hills, called Caelius, Aventinus, Exquilinus, Tarpeius (or Capitoline), Viminalis, Palatinus, Quirinalis. Papists, to help themselves, do allege that old Rome stood on seven hills, but now it is removed further to Campus Martius. I answer, that howsoever

1. This paragraph break is not in the original.

the greatest part of the city in regard of habitation be not now on seven hills, yet in regard of regiment and practice of religion it is; for even to this day upon these hills are seated certain churches and monasteries and other like places where the papal authority is put in execution. And thus, Rome being put for a state and regiment, even at this day it stands upon seven hills. And though it be come to pass that the harlot, in regard of her later days even changed her seat, yet in respect of her younger times in which she was bred and born, she sat upon the seven hills. Others, because they fear the wounding of their own heads, labor to frame these words to another meaning, and say that by the whore is meant the company of all wicked men in the world wheresoever, the devil being the head thereof. But this exposition is flat against the text—for in the second verse of the seventeenth chapter, she is opposed to the kings of the earth, with whom she is said to commit fornication. And in the last verse she is called a city standing on seven hills and reigning over the kings of the earth (as I have said), and therefore must needs be a state of men in some particular place. And the papists themselves, perceiving that this shift will not serve their turn, make two Romes: heathenish Rome, and that whereof the pope is head. Now (say they) the whore spoken of is heathenish Rome, which was ruled by cruel tyrants, as Nero, Domitian, and the rest, and that Rome whereof now the pope is head is not here meant. Behold a vain and foolish distinction, for ecclesiastical Rome in respect of state, princely dominion, and cruelty in persecuting the saints of God, is all one with the heathenish empire, the see of the bishop being turned into the emperor's court as all histories do manifest. But let the distinction be as they suppose, yet by their leave, here by the whore must be understood not only heathenish Rome, but even the papal or

ecclesiastical Rome. For, [in] verse 3 of this chapter the Holy Ghost says plainly that she “hath made all nations drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” Yes, it is added “that she hath committed fornication with the kings of the earth,” whereby is signified that she has endeavored to entangle all the nations of the earth in her spiritual idolatry and to bring the kings of the earth to her religion. Which thing cannot be understood of heathenish Rome, for that left all the kings of the earth to their own religion and idolatry. Neither did they labor to bring foreign kings to worship their gods. Again, chapter 17, verse 16, it is said, “that the ten horns which be ten kings, shall hate the whore, and make her desolate and naked”; which must not be understood of heathenish Rome, but of popish Rome. For, whereas in former times, all the kings of the earth did submit themselves to the whore, now they have begun to withdraw themselves and make her desolate; as the king of Bohemia, Denmark, Germany, England, Scotland, and other parts. Therefore, this distinction is also frivolous. They further allege that the whore of Babylon is drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs (chap. 17:6) shed not in Rome, but in Jerusalem, where “the Lord was crucified,” and the two prophets being slain “lie there in the streets” (Rev. 11:8). But this place is not meant of Jerusalem, as Jerome has fully taught, but it may well be understood of Rome.² Christ was crucified there, either because the authority whereby He was crucified was from the Roman Empire, or else because Christ in His members was and is there daily crucified, though locally in His own person He was crucified at Jerusalem.³

And thus, notwithstanding all which has been said, we must here by the whore understand the state and empire of Rome,

2. In the margin: Epist. 17. Eusto. & Paulae: *ad Marcellam*.

3. This paragraph break is not in the original.

not so much under the heathen emperors as under the head thereof, the pope. Which exposition, besides the authority of the text, has the favor and defense of ancient and learned men. Bernard says, "They are the ministers of Christ, but they serve Antichrist".⁴ Again, "The beast spoken of in the Apocalypse, to which a mouth is given to speak blasphemies, and to make war with the saints of God, is now gotten into Peter's chair, as a lion prepared to his prey."⁵ It will be said that Bernard speaks these latter words of one that came to the popedom by intrusion or usurpation. It is true indeed, but wherefore was he a usurper? He renders a reason thereof in the same place—because the anti-pope called Innocentius was chosen by the kings of Almaine,⁶ France, England, Scotland, Spain, Jerusalem, with consent of the whole clergy and people in these nations, and the other was not. And thus, Bernard has given his verdict, that not only this usurper, but all the popes for this many years, are the beasts in the Apocalypse, because now they are only chosen by the college of cardinals. To this agrees the decree of Pope Nicolas II, anno 1059, that the pope shall afterward be created by the suffrages of the cardinal bishops of Rome, with the consent of the rest of the clergy and people, and the emperor himself.⁷ And all popes "are excommunicate and accursed as antichrists," that enter otherwise, as all now do [2 Thess. 2].⁸ Joachimus Abbas says, "Antichrist was long since born in Rome, and shall be yet advanced higher in the apostolic see." Petrarch says, "Once Rome, now Babylon." And Irenaeus *lib. 5, cap. last*, said before all these, "that Antichrist should be *Lateinus*," a Roman.

4. In the margin: *Serm. in Can. 33.*

5. In the margin: *Epi. 125.*

6. *Almaine*: Germany.

7. In the margin: *c. in nomine dist. 23*

8. In the margin: *Referente Juello.*

Again, this commandment must not so much be understood of a bodily departure in respect of cohabitation and presence, as of a spiritual separation in respect of faith and religion. And the meaning of the Holy Ghost is that men must depart from the Romish Church in regard of judgment and doctrine, in regard of their faith and the worship of God.

Thus then, we see that the words contain a commandment from God, enjoining His church and people to make a separation from Babylon. Whence I observe, *that all those who will be saved, must depart and separate themselves from the faith and religion of this present Church of Rome.* And whereas they are charged with schism that separate on this manner; the truth is, they are not schismatics that do so because they have the commandment of God for their warrant. And that party is the schismatic in whom the cause of this separation lies; and that is in the Church of Rome, namely the cup of abomination in the whore's hand, which is their heretical and schismatic religion.

Now touching this duty of separation, I mean to speak at large, not standing so much to prove the same, because it is evident by the text, as to show the manner and measure of making this separation. And therein I will handle two things: First, how far forth we may join with them in the matter of religion. Second, how far forth and wherein we must dissent and depart from them. And for this cause, I mean to make choice of certain points of religion, and to speak of them in as good order as I can, showing in each of them our consent and difference. And the rather, because some harp much upon this string, that a union may be made of our two religions, and that we differ not in substance, but in points of circumstance.

The first point wherewith I mean to begin shall be the point of free will, though it be not the principal.

THE FIRST POINT

Of Free Will

I. Our Consent

Free will, both by them and us, is taken for a mixed power in the mind and will of man whereby, discerning what is good and what is evil, he accordingly chooses or refuses the same.

Conclusion 1. Man must be considered in a fourfold estate: as he was created, as he was corrupted, as he is renewed, as he shall be glorified. In the first estate, we ascribe to man's will liberty of nature in which he could will or nill either good or evil; in the third, liberty of grace; in the last, liberty of glory. All the doubt is of the second estate; and yet therein also we agree, as the conclusions following will declare.

Conclusion 2. The matters whereabout free will is occupied are principally the actions of men, which be of three sorts: natural, human, spiritual. Natural actions are such as are common to men with beasts, as to eat, drink, sleep, hear, see, smell, taste, and to move from place to place. In all which we join with the papists and hold that man has [a] free will, and ever

since the fall of Adam, by a natural power of the mind, freely performs any of these actions or the like.

Conclusion 3. Human actions are such as are common to all men, good and bad, as to speak and use reason, the practice of all mechanical and liberal arts, and the outward performance of civil and ecclesiastical duties, as to come to the church, to speak and preach the Word, to reach out the hand to receive the sacrament, and to lend the ear to listen outwardly to that which is taught. And hither we may refer [to] the outward actions of civil virtues; as namely, justice, temperance, gentleness, liberality. And in these also we join with the Church of Rome and say (as experience teaches), that men have a natural freedom of will to put them, or not to put them, in execution. Paul says [in] Romans 2:14, "The Gentiles that have not the law, do the things of the law by nature," that is, by natural strength. And he says of himself, that before his conversion, touching the righteousness of the law, "he was unblameable" (Phil. 3:6). And for this external obedience, natural men receive reward in temporal things (Matt. 6:5; Ezek. 29:19). And yet here some caveats must be remembered: 1. That in human actions, man's will is weak and feeble and his understanding dim and dark; and thereupon he often fails in them. And in all such actions, with Augustine I understand the will of man to be only wounded or half dead. 2. That the will of man is under the will of God, and therefore to be ordered by it, as Jeremiah says in chapter 10:23, "O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself. Neither is it in man to walk or direct his steps."

Conclusion 4. The third kind of actions are spiritual, more nearly concerning the heart or conscience, and these be twofold: They either concern the kingdom of darkness or else the kingdom of God. Those that concern the kingdom of darkness are sins properly, and in these we likewise join with the papists and teach that in sins or evil actions man has freedom of will. Some

“we have lost our free will to love God by the greatness of our sin.”⁵ Sermon 2 on the words of the Apostle: “Man, when he was created, received a great strength in his free will, but by sinning he lost it.” Fulgentius [says]: “God gives grace freely to the unworthy, whereby the wicked man, being justified, is enlightened *with the gift of goodwill* and with a *faculty of doing good*. That by mercy preventing him, he may *begin to will well*, and by mercy coming after he may do the good he will.”⁶ Bernard says, “It is wholly [by] the grace of God that we are created, healed, saved.”⁷ Council Arausic. 2, *cap.* 6: “To believe and to will is given from above by infusion and inspiration of the Holy Ghost.” More testimonies and reasons might be alleged to prove this conclusion, but these shall suffice. Now let us see what reasons are alleged to the contrary.

III. Objections of Papists

Objection 1. First, they allege that man—by nature—may do that which is good, and therefore will that which is good; for none can do that which he neither wills nor thinks to do but first he must will and then do. Now, say they, men can do good by nature—as give alms, speak the truth, do justice, and practice other duties of civil virtue—and therefore will that which is good. *I answer*, that a natural man may do good works for the substance of the outward work, but not in regard of the goodness of the manner. These are two divers things. A man without supernatural grace may give alms, do justice, speak the truth, etc., which be good things considered in themselves as God has commanded them, but he cannot do them well. To think good things and to do good things are natural works. But to think good things in a good manner and to do them

5. In the margin: *Epist.* 105.

6. In the margin: *Fulg. lib. praed.*

7. In the margin: *Bernard li. de liber. arbitr.*

well, so as God may accept the action done, are works of grace. And therefore, the good thing done by a natural man is a sin in respect of the doer because it fails, both for his right beginning—which is a pure heart, good conscience, and faith unfeigned—as also for his end, which is the glory of God.

Objection 2. God has commanded all men to believe and repent. Therefore, they have natural free will by virtue whereof (being helped by the Spirit of God) they can believe and repent. *Answer.* This reason is not good, for by such commandments God shows not what men are able to do, but what they should do and what they cannot do. Again, the reason is not well framed; it ought rather to be thus: Because God gives men [the] commandment to repent and believe, therefore they have power to repent and believe, either by nature or by grace, and then we hold with them. For when God, in the gospel, commands men to repent and to believe, at the same time, by His grace, He enables them both to will or desire to believe and repent as also actually to repent and believe.

Objection 3. If man have no free will to sin or not to sin, then no man is to be punished for his sins—because he sins by a necessity not to be avoided. *Answer.* The reason is not good; for though man cannot but sin yet is the fault in himself and therefore he is to be punished. As a bankrupt is not therefore freed from his debts because he is not able to pay them, but the bills against him stand in force because the debt comes through his own default.

THE SECOND POINT

Of Original Sin

The next point to be handled is concerning original sin after baptism—that is, how far forth it remains after baptism. A point to be well considered, because hereupon depend many points of popery.

I. Our Consent

Conclusion 1. They say natural corruption after baptism is abolished, and so say we, but let us see how far it is abolished. In original sin are three things: 1. The punishment, which is the first and second death. 2. Guiltiness, which is the binding up of the creature unto punishment. 3. The fault or the offending of God, under which I comprehend our guiltiness in Adam's first offence as also the corruption of the heart, which is a natural inclination and proneness to anything that is evil or against the law of God. For the first, we say that after baptism in the regenerate, the punishment of original sin is taken away. "There is no condemnation (says the apostle) to them that be in Jesus Christ" (Rom. 8:1). For the second, that is the guiltiness, we further condescend and say that [it] is also taken away in them that are born anew. For

considering there is no condemnation to them, there is nothing to bind them to punishment. Yet this caveat must be remembered, namely, that the guiltiness is removed from the person regenerate, not from the sin in the person. But of this, more afterward. Third, the guilt in Adam's first offence is pardoned. And touching the corruption of the heart, I avouch two things: 1. That the very power or strength whereby it reigns in man is taken away in the regenerate. 2. That this corruption is abolished (as also the fault of every actual sin past) so far forth as it is the fault and sin of the man in whom it is. Indeed, it remains until death, and it is sin considered in itself, so long as it remains, but it is not imputed unto the person. And in that respect it is as though it were not, it being pardoned.

II. The Dissent or Difference

Thus far we consent with the Church of Rome. Now the difference between us stands not in the abolishment, but in the manner and measure of the abolishment of this sin.

Papists teach that original sin is so far forth taken away after baptism that it ceases to be a sin properly, and is nothing else but a want, defect, and weakness, making the heart fit and ready to conceive sin. Much like tinder, which though it be no fire of itself, yet is it very apt and fit to conceive fire. And they, of the church of Rome, deny it to be sin properly, that they might uphold some gross opinions of theirs, namely, that a man in this life may fulfill the law of God, and do good works void of sin, [and] that he may stand righteous at the bar of God's judgment by them.

But we teach otherwise, that though original sin be taken away in the regenerate, and that in sundry respects, yet it remains in them after baptism, not only as a want and weakness, but as a sin—and that properly—as may by these reasons be proved:

THE THIRD POINT

Certainty of Salvation

I. Our Consent

C*onclusion 1.* We hold and believe that a man—in this life—may be certain of salvation; and the same thing the Church of Rome teaches and holds.

Conclusion 2. We hold and believe that a man is to put a certain assurance in God's mercy in Christ for the salvation of his soul, and the same thing by common consent holds the foresaid church. This point makes not the difference between us.

Conclusion 3. We hold that, with assurance of salvation in our hearts, is joined doubting; and there is no man so assured of his salvation but he at some time doubts thereof, especially in the time of temptation. And in this the papists agree with us, and we with them.

Conclusion 4. They go further and say that a man may be certain of the salvation of men—or of the church—by catholic faith. And so say we.

Conclusion 5. Yes, they hold that a man by faith may be assured of his own salvation through extraordinary revelation, as Abraham and others were. And so do we.

Conclusion 6. They teach that we are to be certain of our salvation by special faith in regard of God that promises; though in regard of ourselves and our indisposition we cannot. And in the former point they consent with us.¹

II. The Dissent or Difference

The very main point of difference lies in the manner of assurance.

Conclusion 1. We hold that a man may be certain of his salvation in his own conscience even in this life, and that by an ordinary and special faith. They hold that a man is certain of his salvation only by hope. Both of us hold a certainty; we by faith, they by hope.

Conclusion 2. Further, we hold and avouch that our certainty by true faith is infallible. They say their certainty is only probable.

Conclusion 3. And further, though both of us say that we have confidence in God's mercy in Christ for our salvation, yet we do it with some difference. For our confidence comes from certain and ordinary faith—theirs from hope, ministering (as they say) but a conjectural certainty.

Thus much of the difference. Now let us see the reason to and fro.

III. Objections of the Papists

Objection 1. Where there is no word, there is no faith, for these two are relatives. But there is no word of God saying, "Cornelius, believe," [or] "Peter, believe, and you shall be saved." And therefore, there is no such ordinary faith to believe a man's own particular salvation. *Answer.* The proposition is false, unless it be supplied with a clause on this manner: "Where there is no word of promise,

1. In the margin: *Bellar. l. 3. p. 1129. cl.*