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EDITORIAL

We are now six. Entering our seventh year, *The Confessional Presbyterian* journal has two new editors. The Rev. James J. Cassidy and the Rev. Dr. C. N. Willborn have agreed to take on the task of overseeing the large Articles section of the journal.

Dr. Willborn is Adjunct Professor of Historical Theology at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Greenville, South Carolina, and pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Dr. Willborn's 2003 Ph.D. Dissertation was *John L. Girardeau (1825–98): Pastor to Slaves and Theologian of Causes*. His writings and publications include: "Adoption: A Historical Perspective with Evangelical Implications," in *Sanctification: Growing in Grace* (2002); "The Diaconate: God's Office of Temporal Affairs," in *Confessing Our Hope* (2004); "The 'Ministerial and Declarative' Powers of the Church and In Thesi Deliverances," in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 1 (2005); "Gilbert Tennent," in *Colonial Presbyterianism* (2007); "Presbyterians in the South and the Slave: A Study in Benevolence," in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 3 (2007); "Biblical Theology in Southern Presbyterianism," in

The Hope Fulfilled (2008) and "The Deacon: A Divine Right Office with Divine Uses," in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 5 (2009). He is currently working on what would be the first critical biography of John L. Girardeau, the famous Southern Presbyterian preacher to slaves.

James J. Cassidy is the pastor of Calvary Church (OPC), Ringoes, New Jersey, and is currently in the Ph.D. program at Westminster Theological Seminary, focusing on the study of Systematic Theology. He is a contributor at the Reformed Forum (reformedforum.org) and has written articles including "Critical-Realism & the Relation of Redemptive Act to Revelatory Word," in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 2 (2006) and; "Francis Turretin and Barthianism: The Covenant of Works in Historical Perspective," in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 5 (2009).

Both men have been enthusiastic contributors since the journal's inception in 2005, and join the work along with the Rev. Lane Keister who took up management of the Reviews section in 2009. The assembling of this fine team of editors will ensure this publication continues offering quality material on issues of concern and interest from a confessional Presbyterian and Reformed point of view. In the balance of this editorial, the editors will survey and highlight the contents of our sixth issue, which while not quite as long as our longest issue to date last year, is a far larger compilation than

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REVIEWS & RESPONSES

REVIEW: Joseph C. Morecraft, III, *Authentic Christianity: An Exposition of the Theology and Ethics of the Westminster Larger Catechism*, 5 volumes (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision Press, and Minkoff Family Publishing, 2009). xxix+927, 954, 897, 973, 855 pages (4635 pages total). ISBN 978-0-9840641-3-7 (5 Volume set, cloth). \$199.95. Chris Coldwell, *The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly: A Transcription of the Surviving Manuscripts with Notes* (Dallas, TX: Westminster Letter Press, 2009). 140 pages. ISBN 978-0-941075-50-3 (Regular edition, cloth), 978-0-941075-51-0 (Deluxe edition, cloth), 978-0-941075-52-7 (Limited Slipcase edition, cloth). \$65 (Regular edition), \$225 (Deluxe edition), \$750 (Limited Slipcase edition). John R. Bower, *The Larger Catechism: A Critical Text and Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010). xii+287 pages. ISBN 978-1-60178-085-0. \$40. Reviewed by Lane Keister.

After a monumental dearth of activity on the Westminster Larger Catechism (the last significant publishing on the Catechism was Johannes Vos's commentary, published in 2002, but written in the late 1940's), a veritable flurry of publishing activity has arisen on this vitally important, but usually neglected, document of the Westminster Assembly (1643–1649), and all in the last two years. Dr. Joseph Morecraft III has published a five-volume commentary on the Catechism (hereafter abbreviated LC). Chris Coldwell has issued a foray into the world of fine book publishing with beautifully deluxe editions of the two manuscripts of the LC. Finally, John Bower has given the world the first fully critical text of the

RESPONSES critical of articles and reviews may be submitted for consideration for publication by sending drafts to the editorial address. Please contact the Reviews editor, Lane Keister (ReviewEditor@cpjournal.com), beforehand to obtain submission requirements and preferences. When possible, the subject of a negative or possibly controversial review may be contacted beforehand for any appropriate response for publication along with the review, and the reviewer will be given an opportunity for a response. If required, responses and replies may continue in subsequent issues.

1. Joseph Morecraft, III, "An Introduction to Authentic Christianity," unpublished paper, p. 1.

2. The bibliographic information for Vos is given above. For Ridgely, see Thomas Ridgely, *Commentary on the Larger Catechism* (Edmonton, AB: Still Waters Revival Books, 1993, from the 1855 edition, and originally published in 1731).

LC. It is unfortunate that all these wonderful publications could not always take one another into account, although, as we will see, there is some helpful interdependence of sources here. Morecraft's work, by virtue of how it arose, could not take into account the work of either Coldwell or Bower; but Coldwell made use of an earlier dissertation form of Bower's work, and Bower, in turn, consulted Coldwell's work. I will examine Morecraft's work first, followed by a comparison and contrast of Coldwell and Bower.

My overall impression of Morecraft's offering is that this is a very impressive and informative (not to mention enormous!) work. It encompasses all the *loci* of systematic theology, and so will certainly be regarded as Morecraft's *magnum opus*. Dr. Morecraft kindly provided to me an additional introduction to the work not included in the work itself, wherein he explains the title: "The reason for its title—Authentic Christianity—is to identify biblical and historical Christianity in its purest human expression in contrast to all the counterfeit and synthetic expressions of the Christian Faith that swirl around us today, deceiving so many."¹ The subtitle helpfully delineates the two main spheres in which the work moves: theology and ethics. The ethics of the Catechism are treated primarily in the exposition of the Ten Commandments, which runs from the end of Volume 3 all the way through Volume 4 and partway into Volume 5.

It is important to mention that Dr. Morecraft is comfortable calling himself a theonomist. However, this should not make anyone hesitate to use this work. Unlike other theonomists I have read, Morecraft is anything but ingrown, only quoting other theonomists. He has greatly increased the usefulness of his work by drawing from most of the major Reformed authors throughout history. *Authentic Christianity* feels much more mainstream Reformed than many other theonomic writings.

Thirdly, a word about how this commentary came about is in order. Morecraft writes that these volumes grew "out of four hundred sermons on the Larger Catechism preached at Chalcedon Presbyterian Church from the early 1990's to mid-2006. I have yet to preach on the second through the tenth commandments at this date in late summer of 2008. (paragraph break, LK) The following chapters were not originally given as lectures in a classroom, but as sermons before a congregation on Sunday evenings" (xxvii–xxviii). Because this commentary arose from catechetical preaching over a period of approximately twenty years, it is an expository rather than a technical commentary.

How does this work compare to those by Vos and Ridgely, the only other commentators on the LC?² *Authentic Christianity* is quite a bit more detailed on the actual text of the LC than either Vos or Ridgely. Morecraft comments on every single phrase in the LC, whereas Vos will often skip phrases

he thinks are clear. Ridgely's work is not actually a phrase-by-phrase commentary on the LC, but rather a body of divinity based on the LC (see its original title). So Morecraft fills a very large gap in the literature on the LC: a comprehensive, phrase-by-phrase commentary that takes into account the proof texts (especially in his treatment of the Ten Commandments, which features a commentary on every proof text). Morecraft takes both Vos and Ridgely into account, in addition to the major commentaries on the Shorter Catechism and the Confession.

Morecraft gives his outline of the LC on pp. 73–99 of Volume 1. He delineates three major sections: questions 1–5 are foundational principles, questions 6–90 are the revelation of God's perfections and works in creation and redemption, and questions 91–196 are the revelation of God's perfect will (see the helpful chart on p. 73). Of these sections, Morecraft spends 119 pages on the first, 2156 pages on the second, and 2215 on the third. In addition to this general outline given in the introduction, each volume is outlined extensively in its table of contents. This reviewer found this feature exceptionally helpful, as it enables the reader to locate a subject quickly. More specific searches can be done using the cd-rom (included with the set), which contains the entire work and serves in the place of indices. Rather than going into great detail on this work, I will attempt to highlight some things from each volume that would be of interest. Any criticisms I have (these are relatively small) I will note as we go along.

The first volume contains an introduction by William Potter (of whom Dr. Morecraft spoke very highly to me in terms of his knowledge of church history) on why the LC is important. He mentions that "every Christian has a creed" (p. xxiii.). He quotes Thomas Watson, who said that "one reason why there has been no more good done by preaching, has been because the chief heads and articles in religion have not been explained in a catechetical way" (p. xxv). This is a good argument for at least using the LC in church, regardless of whether a preacher agrees that one ought to preach on it.

Morecraft gives a very detailed history of the Westminster Assembly. It should be noted that this history is not designed to be neutral history writing. Rather, it is intended to show the believer why he should study the LC. The impact of the LC on the family, the individual, and on society is noted. One could have wished for slightly more than two lines on how the LC can function as an evangelistic tool, a rather intriguing idea (p. 15). But even a five-volume commentary on the LC cannot address everything!

While he does not place the LC on the same authoritative level as the Bible, Morecraft nevertheless makes the salutary emphasis, often forgotten or ignored today, that "the Church's creed may not be separated from the Bible. The Bible is the inerrant truth of God, the Church's creeds, confessions and catechisms are the accepted interpretations of that Divine truth.

The Bible is interpreted by the confession and catechisms of the church. The real standard is not the confession or the catechisms but the Bible as interpreted by the confession and catechisms" (emphasis original, p. 17). He draws an analogy between the creeds and sermons, concluding that the "confession is no more guilty of adding to the Word of God than the sermon" (pp. 17–18). What follows is a history of the Westminster Assembly that gave rise to the LC (pp. 18–59). One can detect a hint of theonomy here and there in Morecraft's account, although this does not diminish the helpfulness of this section in setting the LC in its historical context.

Volume 1 examines the following areas of doctrine: the ultimate purpose of man, divine revelation, the perfections and trinitarian nature of God, the plan of God, angels, creation, providence, the covenant of works, sin, the covenant of grace, and the Holy Spirit.

The commentary is very helpful on the first question of the LC, noting that our purpose in life has a much more elevated and comprehensive scope than merely the *locus* of salvation. If we start with the question of salvation, "we place ourselves in danger of assuming that God exists for our benefit" (p. 116). He also notes that the first question presupposes God's revelation to humanity (p. 118). The glorifying of God is what leads to the enjoying of God as a means to an end (p. 117, quoting Alexander Paterson). The two clauses of the answer to question 1 can also be explained this way: "Our ultimate purpose with reference to God is to glorify Him. Our ultimate purpose with reference to ourselves is to enjoy God" (p. 130).

Questions 2–5 have to do with the concept of revelation, a doctrine that Morecraft spends a great deal of time and care explaining. This is especially timely today, given the recent attacks on the biblical doctrine by those who call themselves evangelical. His treatment is vanilla Reformed theology, though insightful. He especially stresses the sufficiency of special revelation in the Word (rejecting continuing revelation). His treatment of the canon in relation to the church could have been expanded in the light of Roman Catholicism (p. 198), although he points in the right direction (especially by referencing William Whitaker, whose *Disputations* on the subject every minister needs to read), and he provides an appendix addressing some of the points of controversy between the Reformation and Roman Catholicism on the doctrine of Scripture (pp. 207–234). He ties faith in God to belief in the Word in a helpful way: "Our faith in the Bible is inseparable from our faith in Jesus Christ. The faith that receives Christ is the same faith that receives the Word of Christ. Believing in Christ is inseparable from believing Christ" (emphasis original, p. 199).

Morecraft offers some very helpful insights on the nature of the covenant of works. After briefly explaining the three mandates of the covenant of works (dominion, marriage, and Sabbath), he explains the nature of this covenant. He prefers

the term “covenant of life,” though he does not reject the idea of works. He plainly says that “Adam was placed in a position in which he might have secured everlasting life by obedience” (p. 633). However, Morecraft also wants to distance himself from the Klinean position, and so he argues that “*The reward promised to Adam’s obedience was far more generous than his obedience deserved*” (p. 632, emphasis original). In fact, Morecraft partially overstates his case when he says that “even the Covenant of Life, commonly called the Covenant of Works, is a covenant of Divine grace” (p. 634). The Westminster Standards prefer the term “voluntary condescension” (WCF 7). Even so, Morecraft has preserved the understanding that the means of justification is by works in the covenant of works, and by faith in the covenant of grace (with Christ having earned our salvation, as he says on p. 640). He ably explains the necessity for *justification* and *representation* in the covenant of works. He says that the former is “probation limited by time,” while the latter is “probation limited as to persons” (pp. 630–631). Otherwise, *all* humanity would be in a state of probation, and every human being would be on probation forever, which would not be consistent with the goodness of God. These two factors operate in the life of Christ, who “*has accomplished for us the same blessings (same in kind, greater in degree), which Adam would have accomplished for his posterity had he passed the test*” (p. 633, emphasis original).

In the last appendix in Volume 1, Morecraft turns his attention to the Federal Vision controversy and the New Perspective(s) on Paul (pp. 884–927). This is a very helpful treatment in general. It is marred by one small problem, which is that the benefits the FV claims belong to those who eventually fall away are not said by the FV to be the same (qualitatively speaking) as those enjoyed by the elect. This does not affect the cogency of his arguments, as the difference between what Morecraft believes about the FV and what I believe about the FV is rather inconsequential. FV proponents have never been able to identify what the qualitative difference is between the benefits that the elect enjoy and the benefits the non-elect enjoy. The best they have come up with is a qualitative difference based on whether the set of benefits perseveres or not. However, as was said, Morecraft’s understanding of the FV’s teaching about these benefits does not impair his arguments against the position. He makes several points in connection with this controversy that I have not seen before. He notes that “union with Christ involves a reciprocal action” (p. 894). This would preclude union with Christ happening at baptism, since the union has to be “consummated on both sides” (Dabney’s expression, quoted on the same page). Also, in relation to Titus 3:5, a much debated text in the controversy, he argues that “Some adherents of this new view of the objectivity of the covenant use Titus 3:5 to support ‘baptismal regeneration’ because it speaks of ‘the washing of regeneration.’ However,

in order for their interpretation to ‘hold water,’ it would have to say ‘the regeneration of washing,’ presuming that ‘washing’ refers to baptism” (footnote 58 on p. 904).

However, this reviewer cannot agree with Herman Hoeksema’s definition of covenant, which denies that it is an agreement between two parties, and argues instead that covenant is relationship. Morecraft appears to agree with Hoeksema on this point, while issuing the caveat that he does not agree with those views of Hoeksema that are distinctive to the Protestant Reformed Church (p. 913).

In Volume 2, Morecraft treats the doctrines of the Mediator, redemption accomplished and applied, the church, union and communion with Christ, and justification. His discussion of justification by faith alone (pp. 719–954) is worth highlighting. It is fuller than many treatises on the subject. He states, “You and I are not what we *think* we are, nor what we *say* we are, nor what we are even *convinced* we are. WE ARE WHAT GOD SAYS WE ARE” (emphasis and caps original, p. 722). This fact underlines the importance of the declaration of God in justification, since it is His declaration regarding our state that makes us what He declares us to be. Furthermore, Morecraft’s statement concerning the relationship of God’s declaration to our actual state underlies his entire discussion of the doctrine.

This reviewer is not convinced that Morecraft expressed himself in the clearest way possible with regard to the dispute with Rome. He says that “Roman Catholicism emphatically rejects the doctrine that the righteousness of Christ is the righteousness imputed in justification” (p. 745). While it is certainly true that they reject the doctrine of imputation, Rome does not reject the idea of Christ’s righteousness becoming ours. I would phrase it this way: both Rome and the Reformation believed that we obtain Christ’s righteousness (although whether that alone is sufficient for justification is of course another subject of debate between the two parties). The difference is that Rome believes we get Christ’s righteousness through infusion, thus producing in us works of righteousness, which, together with the infused righteousness of Christ, results in our justification on the final day. The Protestant view is that the righteousness of Christ becomes ours by imputation, and is not mixed with our works in any way, shape or form, and that justification happens at the time-point of faith, not on the last day. Morecraft would, of course, agree with all this (and indeed he states these doctrinal elements elsewhere, even hinting at them immediately after making the above statement). It is a mere lack of clarity here that I point out.

Morecraft approves of the idea of Christ’s active and passive righteousness being imputed to the believer, although he argues that the “language can be misleading” (p. 758). As Dabney points out (quoted on pp. 758–759), it is not so easy to separate out the strands of what is active and what is passive, given that Christ was actively engaged in His suffering,

and that His active obedience to the law involved a passive acceptance of suffering.

Morecraft is careful to distinguish between the instrument of justification (faith) and the cause and basis of justification (Christ's blood and righteousness, see pp. 770–771). This careful distinction makes it easy to contrast the Reformed position with that of Rome, which teaches that baptism is the primary instrumental cause, and penance the secondary instrumental cause (p. 779).

The age-old difficulty of situating Pauline theology of justification next to the statements in James 2 is something Morecraft addresses helpfully in the context of Roman Catholic objections to the doctrine (pp. 781ff). He uses the standard two-fold definition of “justify” to help us understand the difference: Paul is talking about the *declaration* of God concerning the state of the believer, while James is speaking of the *demonstration* of true faith (p. 784). Paul is arguing against legalism, while James is arguing against antinomianism (p. 83). Morecraft offers exegesis of many passages to support the Reformed doctrine of justification, including Romans 4, James 2, Romans 3:19–31, and Galatians 2:15–3:14 (the last named passage in direct opposition to and dialog with the New Perspective(s) on Paul).

Volume 3 treats adoption, repentance, sanctification, preservation of the saints, assurance, communion in glory with Christ, biblical law, the Decalogue in general, and the first commandment (Volume 4 continues the exposition of the Ten Commandments).

Readers will want to know at this point how Morecraft approaches the subject of law. He does argue for the continuing validity of OT case law for today (pp. 626ff), although this claim receives some nuance later on, as he grants that “the case-laws are to be applied wisely and progressively as the historical situation allows” (p. 640). He is careful to exclude the ceremonial laws from consideration, although he does say that even the ceremonial laws have “underlying gospel-principles” (p. 626), surely something with which all can agree. Some of the ‘theonomists’ named here will raise a few eyebrows. This reviewer is not convinced that Morecraft has distinguished carefully enough between people who think that modern societies should govern themselves in accordance with the Ten Commandments (but not according to the theocratic case law of the OT), and people who think that the case law of the OT still applies as well. I am also not convinced that the former class of thinkers can be used in support of the latter. For instance, he says that the validity of case-laws continues today, and quotes R.C. Sproul as an example of a theonomist (p. 640). Sproul does use the word “theonomy” (see the quotation on p. 640), but only in the broader sense of adhering to God's law (by which Sproul means the Ten Commandments), not man's

law. Sproul would not agree with theonomists who hold that the case-law of the OT applies today.³

Morecraft's reading of WCF 19.4 is evidence of differing interpretations of the phrase “general equity.”⁴ Theonomists, Morecraft included, tend to define general equity as including all the case-law of the OT (though they may sometimes state this in a more nuanced fashion). Morecraft quotes Bahnsen at this point, who says that general equity refers to “the underlying moral principle which is illustrated by the particular cases mentioned in the judicial laws” (p. 629). Bahnsen further states that “[e]xpired’ cannot mean, in Confessional context, that modern Christians are free from obligation to the judicial laws.... Their equity was taken to be perpetually binding.” If this is true, then the word “expired” is incorrect in the Confession, and the phrase “do not require of us any further obligation than the general equity thereof may require” has no meaning. The plain intent of the phrase is to limit the applicability of the case-laws to the principle of general equity, which must, in turn, be narrower than the judicial law itself. In fact, the general equity must be tied to the moral law.⁵

With this caveat in mind, Morecraft's treatment of the Ten Commandments is still masterful and helpful, and those who are non-theonomic would be foolish to ignore his insights. One of the most helpful features of his treatment is his exegesis of every phrase of the LC questions, and also of every single proof text the divines attached to the questions.

Volume 4 is an exposition of the second through ninth commandments. Since every phrase is listed in the table of contents, as is the location of the beginning of the treatment of each question, it is a very simple thing to find his discussion on any given point. As some of his treatments are exceedingly lengthy (the second commandment alone is 238 pages!), this is an added boon.

On the second commandment, Morecraft is thoroughly confessional, arguing against images of any person of the Trinity, even mental images. His thoughts on mental images are helpful: “Mental pictures of images of God are idolatrous. God is to be perceived in His perfections and works, not in terms

3. For confirmation of this interpretation of Sproul, see Sproul's own careful distinctions in *Truths We Confess: A Layman's Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2007), vol 2, pp. 266–267.

4. The best treatment of this phrase is now that of Chris Coldwell and Matthew Winzer, “The Westminster Assembly & the Judicial Law: A Chronological Compilation and Analysis,” in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 5 (2009), pp. 3–88, especially pp. 70–72. Chris Coldwell wrote the chronological compilation, and Matthew Winzer wrote the analysis.

5. Cf. Matthew Winzer, who says, “general equity is connected in a specific way to the moral law of the ten commandments” (p. 69). Winzer's conclusions are easily proven from the original sources he quotes, thus showing that this was the general view of the Westminster divines.

of a specific form or shape, even mentally” (p. 130). He argues for the regulative principle of worship in its standard form, although this reviewer was somewhat disappointed not to find any treatment of Psalms and instruments. He rejects all holy days (including Christmas and Easter) except the Sabbath.

His treatment of the Sabbath Day is also right in line with the Puritan understanding of the fourth commandment. He argues, as do the Puritans, that “in light of the change of day in the New Testament from the seventh to the first day, that the fourth commandment does not speak of the seventh day ‘of the week,’ but of the seventh day of a rhythmic cycle, beginning at creation, after six days of working” (p. 462). In arguing for the abiding nature of the fourth commandment, he argues that no ceremonial ritual carried with it a capital punishment, unlike the breaking of the Sabbath, which shows the Sabbath to be abiding in nature. He writes, “If God has abolished the Sabbath principle, the era of the New Testament is less blessed than the era of the Old Testament!” (p. 464). The Sabbath has changed from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week, based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ (pp. 466–473). He includes some careful exegesis of Hebrews 4 (pp. 478–479), and answers objections to this doctrine (pp. 480–491). He takes no exception to the “no recreation” clause either, and his interpretation of Isaiah 58:13–14 is very similar to mine.⁶ Morecraft does not forget to inspire us to appreciate the Sabbath in its Puritan rigor as freeing, not inhibiting. The quote from Alexander Whyte is helpful here: “Wear off by meditation [on Christ] any worldly soil contracted in the week” (quoted on p. 498). Furthermore, Morecraft makes the important connection between rest and worship (p. 499).

Volume 5 finishes the treatment of the Ten Commandments, and also examines man’s inability to save himself, the saving power of the reading and preaching of God’s Word (summarized below), the Sacraments (262 pages), and prayer, including the Lord’s Prayer (his treatment of the Lord’s Prayer is about 250 pages).

Morecraft has a high and exalted view of the preaching of the Word of God, in line with the Reformers, and not so much in line with many modern opinions concerning preaching, which often regard it as out of date and irrelevant. He starts his treatment (pp. 155–222) with the importance of a true understanding of sin, for without such an understanding, a true appreciation of the need for preaching is impossible (p. 158). From there, he emphasizes the significance of the connection of Word and Spirit (pp. 161–162). Later on, he will say that

6. See Lane Keister, “The Sabbath Day and Recreations on the Sabbath: An Examination of the Sabbath and the Biblical Basis for the ‘No Recreation’ Clause in Westminster Confession of Faith 21.8 and Westminster Larger Catechism 117,” in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 5 (2009), pp. 229–238.

the preaching of the Word is the Word, but only if the Spirit is working (p. 215). In this way he exalts preaching, and yet puts safeguards in place lest the preacher think too highly of himself. He is but the emissary. Unless the Spirit should anoint his preaching, it is but empty words. The application of the preached word is very helpfully explained (pp. 172–173). The most helpful section of all is his exposition of question 160, where he spells out how people are to prepare to listen to the Word preached, as well as how to use the preached Word. We must be diligent in listening to good preaching, prepare ourselves to hear it, listen prayerfully, examine what is preached, receive the truth with faith, hear it with love, meekness, and readiness of mind, meditate on the preached Word, converse about the preached Word, hide it in our hearts, and bring forth the fruit of the preached Word in our lives. When the Holy Spirit works in the Word, a weapon of indescribable power comes into being, one that destroys sin and strongholds erected against the gospel.

In conclusion, Morecraft’s set is an exhaustive commentary on the Larger Catechism. This reviewer had, in fact, been contemplating writing a commentary of similar scope and depth, given that nothing of the kind had ever been written before. I will refrain from embarking on this project and will instead make grateful use of Joseph Morecraft’s labor of love, and will recommend it to pastors and students of the Word, who wish to have an excellent explanation of every phrase of the Larger Catechism. Even when disagreeing with Morecraft’s conclusions, as I did on occasion, I did not feel that the usefulness and magnificence of the accomplishment was in any way diminished. There is much profitable gold here to be mined.

Chris Coldwell has long been working on projects relating to the Westminster Assembly. He has now combined that passion with another passion of his, namely, fine book-binding and production, in order to produce heirloom quality transcriptions of the two surviving manuscripts of the Larger Catechism. Coldwell used the Rialto typeface family and the letter press method on Mohawk Superfine paper to produce these editions. The Authors’ edition of ten numbered copies sold out quickly. The other three editions will be reviewed here. The text is the same in all three editions.

The binding on all three editions is in signatures with durable boards. The regular edition is bound in archival quality boards, while the deluxe edition has the feel of silk moire sheets. The limited slipcase is similar to the deluxe, except that it has a quarter leather spine, as well as a slipcase made of the same silk moire boards as the deluxe edition. The binding is a rich emerald green, with brown leather also, in the case of the slipcase edition.

The foreword is by J. Ligon Duncan, III. He gives some helpful bibliographical information on recent scholarship on

the LC, as well as some thoughts on the importance of the LC for today. He writes:

[T]he *Larger Catechism* provides a helpful complement to the *Shorter Catechism* in its stress on the public and ordinary means of grace, and the doctrine of the church. Interestingly, the *Larger Catechism* also more closely approximates the proportions of Calvin's *Genevan Catechism* (than either the *Heidelberg Catechism* or the *Shorter Catechism*) in its treatment of the person and work of Christ, and the law of God, and exceeds it in questions pertaining to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the church. It also in many instances confirms or makes clear the full intent of the Divines on topics also covered in the *Confession of Faith*. This is why in interpreting the Assembly's intent, all their productions must be consulted and treated as a whole, rather than looking at each in a vacuum without regard to one another (pp. viii–ix).

We may ask why these manuscripts have been printed. For one thing, they have never been transcribed before the work of Coldwell and Bower. Indeed, they were only recently rediscovered. Secondly, they are important in the establishment of a critical text of the *Larger Catechism*, which has also not been done until recently (see below on the work of Bower).

The text is based on the two surviving manuscripts of the *Larger Catechism*, found in the Bodleian library by Chad Van Dixhoorn. They are called manuscripts A and B, and the text is printed with one manuscript on each facing page in a parallel fashion. A second foreword by Chad Van Dixhoorn tells us the exciting story of how he rediscovered these manuscripts in the Bodleian library at Oxford University in “the winter of 2002, or perhaps the autumn of 2001” (p. xi). The discovery of these manuscripts led to his recommendation to Chris Coldwell that he produce a transcription, with this production being the result. Van Dixhoorn commends this production as “carefully produced” (p. xvi).

In the introduction, Coldwell explains the provenance and historical context of the manuscripts. He argues that there “were probably at least as many as four official manuscript copies” (p. xviii). The Assembly retained a copy that was distinct from the two they sent to Parliament (presumably one to the House of Lords, and the other to the House of Commons). He writes that “where the two differ, the printed text sometimes follows one, and sometimes the other, which may indicate the existence of this Assembly master copy, unmarred by the unique variants in each copy not appearing in print” (ibid.). Coldwell also explains the relationship of his work to that of Bower: “Mr. Bower is working to refine his work for publication, for which he has gone back to the originals. Such work may well clear up a few issues of punctuation raised in the notes of this present work: for example, evaluating what

may be discolorations in the original, and what may be inks of a different color or by a different hand” (p. xix). Further on he says, “Since, at this writing, Mr. Bower's thesis contains the only other text work on the catechism MSS, these differences and notations on what I consider may be errors in his text, have been given in the footnotes” (p. xx). Coldwell has thus been able to supplement and correct Bower's original thesis, and the results are evident in Bower's published work (see below).

Holding Coldwell's beautiful productions in my hands feels like holding history in all its splendor. My favorite version is the deluxe edition with the feel of silk moire. Seeing the original punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and grammar helps me to feel more connected to the tremendous heritage that all adherents to the Westminster Standards possess. These productions are heirlooms to help people pass on the heritage of the Westminster Standards to their children and grandchildren. Highly recommended!

In comparing the work of Coldwell to Bower, we must notice one odd thing from the start: the name of the manuscripts is reversed going from Coldwell to Bower. To be clear, manuscript A in Coldwell is manuscript B in Bower, and manuscript B in Coldwell is manuscript A in Bower. Bower explains his reasons for doing this: “The order of the manuscripts used here is reversed from Coldwell arising from an earlier form of this critical edition, as well as the order of their appearance in Nalson 22” (footnote 3, p. 47). Nalson 22 is the name of the folio which is the provenance of these manuscripts in the Bodleian Library. Bower describes Coldwell's work in general as follows:

A transcription of the two manuscripts has been recently published in a letter press edition by Christopher Coldwell, *The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly* (Dallas: Westminster Letter Press, 2009). Coldwell's work on the *Larger Catechism* and its manuscripts is also discussed in Coldwell “Examining the Work of S.W. Carruthers: Justifying a Critical Approach to the Text of the Westminster Standards & Correcting the 18th Century Lineage of the Traditional Scottish Text,” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 1 (2005): 43–64. While very accurate, Coldwell's transcriptions relied on manuscript facsimiles. For the purposes of this critical text the manuscript transcriptions (sic) are new and collated with the original documents at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The manuscript designation used here follows the order of their folio numbering and appearance in Nalson MSS 22 and is reversed (sic, “reversed”) from Coldwell's order.

This reviewer carefully compared the texts of the manuscripts in both Coldwell and Bower. Almost all of the differences between Coldwell and Bower had to do with

capitalization of words (difficult to discern even in the best of circumstances). Furthermore, in almost every instance where Coldwell had noted an error in Bower's original thesis, Bower had corrected the error for publication. This is due, however, not only to Bower's use of Coldwell, but also Bower's continual recourse to the original manuscripts, access to which Coldwell, unfortunately, did not have.

Bower's work is surely salutary in its production, at last, of a critical text of the Larger Catechism, the first ever to be produced. The critical edition is, mercifully, printed with the proof texts, although these are not printed out in full, but only by reference. The critical edition retains the spelling, punctuation and grammar of the originals.

Regarding the question of authoritative published texts of the Larger Catechism, Bower's opinion is that only editions 1 and 4 (1647 and 1648, respectively) are acceptable as authoritative editions. His criteria are clear: "Designating a text as authoritative requires strong circumstantial evidence that the Assembly scribes were involved in its production" (p. 51). These two authoritative editions are then reproduced in parallel with the two manuscripts for the reader to compare.

Included in this edition is a substantial history of the making of the Larger Catechism (pp. 3–45). This information is exceptionally valuable in putting the work in its historical context. It should be noted that this work is the first published volume in a new series being edited by Bower and Van Dixhoorn, entitled "Principal Documents of the Westminster Assembly." Their aim is to produce critical texts of the WCF, WLC, WSC, the Directory for Public Worship, the Directory for Church Government, and the Psalter. These texts will not be included in Van Dixhoorn's publication of the minutes of the Westminster Assembly (to be published by Oxford University Press).

This reviewer has only two small criticisms of the work. Firstly, there are a number of typos, two of which were noted in the same footnote above. These typos fortunately do not create any serious confusion anywhere, although it is to be

hoped that more careful editing will prevent future errors, especially in a work designed to be a definitive critical edition of the work in question. Secondly, an index of names would perhaps have helped increase the usefulness of the work.

However, these shortcomings do nothing to hinder the timely influence of this work. This text should be used by the church to create a new edition that will be adopted by Presbyterian churches. I would like to see Bower's text used as the basis for a new edition that would have modernized spelling and the proof texts written out in full. Until then, this critical text should be the basis for all future scholarship on the Larger Catechism. Bower is to be commended for his work. ■

REVIEW: Jay E. Adams, *Keeping the Sabbath Today?* (Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, 2008). Paperback, 103 pages. ISBN 978-1-889032-61-0. \$13.99. Reviewed by W. Gary Crampton, Ph.D.

Jay Edward Adams was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1929. He received his formal training in Christian theism at Johns Hopkins University (AB), Reformed Episcopal Seminary (B.D.), Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary, Temple University School of Theology (M.ST.), and the University of Missouri (Ph.D.). He has pastored several churches and taught at Westminster Theological Seminary. He was the founder of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation in Philadelphia, the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors, and Timeless Texts (which now publishes his writings). Dr. Adams is a distinguished scholar, author, and speaker, who has written and lectured extensively on biblical, "nouthetic" counseling as well as a number of other subjects. He is unapologetically devoted to defending the Reformed faith against all gainsayers. The present reviewer has profited immensely from Dr. Adams' theological labors, through reading many of his books and listening to numbers of his taped lectures.

It is with this in view that the present reviewer finds it somewhat extraordinary that Jay Adams has written *Keeping The Sabbath Today?*,¹ a book in which the author takes a stance outside of the confessional Reformed faith. In this review/essay *Keeping The Sabbath Today?* will be used as a foil, as well as a springboard alongside of the Westminster Standards,² the subordinate standards (allegedly) adhered to by Reformed Presbyterians such as Dr. Adams, to study the doctrine of the Christian Sabbath.

In the year 1853 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA declared that "A church without the Sabbath is apostate."³ Modern day theologian Robert Reymond refers to the Sabbath as one of those "lines in the sand that strengthen the church," wherein neglect of the Sabbath is seen as perilous.⁴ The Sabbath intended by both the nineteenth century Presbyterian Church and Professor Reymond is the

1. Jay E. Adams, *Keeping The Sabbath Today?* (Stanley, South Carolina: Timeless Texts, 2008). The pagination found within the body of this review is from Dr. Adams' book.

2. All references to the Westminster Standards, comprised of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, along with the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*, are from *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994). The English has been modernized.

3. Cited in Ryan M. McGraw, "Jay E. Adams, *Keeping the Sabbath Today?*," *Puritan Reformed Journal*, edited by Joel R. Beeke (July 2009), Volume 1, Number 2, 275. Mr. McGraw's analysis of Jay Adams' book has been very helpful to the present reviewer.

4. Robert L. Reymond, "Lord's Day Observance: Mankind's Proper Response to the Fourth Commandment," in *Contending For the Faith: Lines in the Sand That Strengthen the Church* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 165–186.