

Clark, R. Scott. *Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety, and Practice*. Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2008. Pp. xiii + 362, pbk \$25, ISBN 978-1596381100

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R. Scott Clark is professor of Church History and Historical Theology at Westminster Seminary California and associate pastor at Oceanside United Reformed Church. He holds an M.Div. from the seminary at which he currently teaches and a D.Phil. from St. Anne's College, Oxford University. He is also well-known in Reformed circles as a prolific blogger, disseminating his views online at the Heidelbergblog (heidelbergblog.wordpress.com). In *Recovering the Reformed Confession*, Clark provides a provocative challenge to Reformed Christianity today. He forces us to grapple with the interrelated issues of Reformed *unity* and Reformed *identity*, which both present pressing challenges. The former issue is internal to Reformed Christianity: one might point to the host of Reformed denominations and the seeming inability for Reformed people to get along. The latter is external: what identity ought Reformed churches to project in their North American context? What alternative does Reformed Christianity offer to the evangelical melting pot? Reformed denominations have a fraction of the membership of the evangelical denominations that dominate the Christian (sub)-culture. The question is pressing: why is this so, and what can Reformed churches do to articulate a coherent and consistent identity that is worth preserving?

In *Recovering the Reformed Confession*, Clark provides both his diagnosis as to what ails contemporary Reformed Christianity and his program for recovery. He does so primarily as a church historian, and consequently his book is filled with descriptions of past struggles in the Reformed world. While these are often interesting and illuminating, they are put in the service of very specific arguments in Clark's analysis. This review essay would be cumbersome and overly long were I to summarize and analyze all of Clark's historical overviews (something I am ill equipped to do). Rather, the focus of this review essay will be on the logic of Clark's arguments: does he present a compelling vision for Reformed Christianity today? Ultimately we will see that Clark advocates *unity* on matters that are non-essential, and therefore his construction of Reformed *identity* is somewhat unbalanced, placing undue emphasis on marginal issues. The essay will meander through Clark's arguments; however, we will return to the issues of Reformed unity and identity in the conclusion.

Defining the terms: "Reformed" and "Confession"

Foundational to the book is the question of what the phrase "Reformed confession" denotes. This, after all, is what needs recovering. Clark begins with the term "Reformed":

I contend that the word denotes a confession, a theology, piety, and practice that are well known and well defined and summarized in ecclesiastically sanctioned and binding documents. (3)

The term "Reformed" then, denotes a public and objective confession, which is summarized in what Clark creatively refers to as "the six forms of unity [Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort, Westminster Confession of Faith, Westminster Larger Catechism, Westminster Shorter Catechism]" (3). These documents provide the "narrow" sense of the term "confession"; however, Clark then moves on to a broader definition. For Clark, "confession" also

refers to “the understanding of those confessions as articulated by the classical sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theologians and by those who continued that tradition” (3). A third sense of the term is the “theology, piety, and practice agreed upon by our churches, held in common by them, which bind us together, by which we have covenanted to live and worship together” (3). “Confession,” therefore, is a “multilayered term” (3).

Clark’s attempt to find an objective and public basis for what is constitutive of a Reformed identity is to be welcomed. The Reformed confessions were written precisely in order to articulate a Reformed identity. However, the seeds of the eventual difficulties in *Recovering the Reformed Confession* lie in Clark’s ever-widening usage of the term, by which “confession” denotes also the understanding and application of the Reformed confessions throughout the centuries. As we will see, this leads Clark to insist that extra-confessional practices are part of what it is to be *essentially* Reformed, and so threatens to jeopardize the unity of the Reformed faith.

The Crisis

Clark reduces the problems that afflict contemporary Reformed Christianity to manifestations of one of two phenomena: the Quest for Illegitimate Religious Certainty (QIRC) and the Quest for Illegitimate Religious Experience (QIRE).

The QIRC

Clark defines the QIRC as “the pursuit to know God in ways he has not revealed himself and to achieve epistemic and moral certainty on questions where such certainty is neither possible nor desirable” (39). He suggests that the use of the King James Version as the only accurate translation, the forbidding of women to be in the armed forces, and the use of the Bible as a science textbook are examples of this phenomenon. However, he chiefly focuses on three “movements”: the debate over Genesis 1, theonomy, and covenant moralism. Clark places emphasis on the first issue, and this review will particularly engage him here.

The main question for Clark is the following: should the six-day, twenty-four hour young earth creationist (6/24 YEC) interpretation of Genesis 1 serve as a litmus test for Reformed orthodoxy? Clark argues that such an approach is due to the effect of fundamentalism (hence, the QIRC) on Reformed thought. As he says:

The irony of using the 6/24 interpretation as a boundary marker is that it threatens to let the wrong people in and keep the right people out. . . . One of the primary sources of the creationist movement is not orthodox Reformed theology but the Seventh Day Adventist movement, the distinguishing beliefs of which have little in common with the Reformed confession. (49)

Clark notes that such Reformed stalwarts as Hodge, Bavinck, Warfield, and Machen did not hold to a literalist position on Genesis 1, and their orthodoxy was never questioned or impugned.

The bulk of Clark’s discussion, however, is devoted to the historical example of the controversy over the heliocentric model of the solar system. This debate is frequently cited as a prior instance in which faith and science were in apparent conflict. However, Clark uses it in quite an original way. He documents the reactions to the new cosmology of Reformed thinkers such as Lambert Daneau (Beza’s colleague in Geneva), Gijsbert Voetius, and Wilhelmus à Brakel, who all opposed it on the basis of Scripture. Indeed, it was not only geocentrism that they

defended: Voetius was unable to accept modern scientific theories concerning corpuscular circulation of blood! Clark explains:

Voetius, finding himself in a difficult position, in an apologetic mode, found himself defending his categories and vocabulary in the interests of what was even more important to him, the truth of Scripture and the reality of God's tripersonal transcendence and immanence and providence. (58)

This position is encapsulated by the phrase "learned ignorance" (*doctrina ignorantia*).

Clark argues that we can learn something from both sides of this debate. Though we follow Galileo's hermeneutic, we can also learn from Voetius' "learned ignorance," which insists that "only God knows about 'can' and 'cannot'" (60). This historical review is certainly interesting; however, I wonder about the service to which it is being put. Voetius' views seem to provide a parallel to those who advocate a 6/24 YEC interpretation of Genesis 1: he rejected modern scientific testimony on the basis of his interpretation of Scripture. Clark attempts to make his more latitudinarian position the theological heir of both Galileo and Voetius: but it is evident that Voetius used "learned ignorance" to resist the scientific conclusions of his day, which seems on the face of it to provide a parallel to the 6/24 YEC position.

Despite my misgivings at how Clark has used the historical parallel, it remains a helpful reminder of how much our presuppositions influence our interpretation of Scripture. The fact that a Reformed stalwart like Voetius could make pronouncements about blood circulation that are unequivocally wrong, on the basis of Scripture, is a reminder of the interpretive humility we all need when approaching these difficult debates. I therefore agree with Clark's conclusion, which is that Reformed orthodoxy ought to be flexible enough to include a variety of interpretations of Genesis 1. However, Clark attempts to get to that conclusion by making the debate over Genesis 1 a matter of QIRC: seeking certainty when certainty is "neither possible nor desirable," as he puts it. This is where I part ways with Clark. Though it is undoubtedly true that Reformed exegetes will continue to differ on Genesis 1, this does not mean that certainty is *in principle* impossible. Genesis 1 is a part of God's revealed Word, and he did not give us that Word to confuse us. Would Clark say that certainty is impossible with respect to the question of geocentrism?

The same critique applies to Clark's other two examples of QIRC, theonomy (the application of the Mosaic Law to civil society) and covenant moralism, which we may deal with more quickly. Readers may find Clark's criticism of these movements persuasive; in particular, I agree with his discussion of theonomy, which he rightly distinguishes from theocracy of the confessions. However, it is unclear how these movements are manifestations of a more basic quest for illegitimate certainty. Indeed, I am quite certain that theonomy can be refuted on exegetical grounds. It hardly seems to me that the ongoing validity of the Mosaic Law is an issue on which certainty is "neither possible nor desirable," to return to Clark's phrase.

Furthermore, we need to reflect on the ramifications of setting up the debate in this way. Will Clark convince any proponents of these three interpretations by describing their position as the fruit of a misguided quest for certainty on issues that are in principle unknowable? Such a way of framing the debate implies that Clark is not on any "quest" of his own, but can critique others from a state of epistemological stability. This approach is convenient for rhetorical purposes, but hardly amenable for sincere and charitable theological dialogue. In fact, none of these debates are in principle *unsolvable*, what is needed rather is open discussion of the exegetical issues. I believe that the debates over Genesis, theonomy, and so-called covenant

moralism all result from honest attempts to grapple with Scripture. Within the Reformed community, there ought to be room for differing exegetical positions in matters that are not at the heart of our faith, and our exegetical discussions ought to be conducted from the standpoint of recognizing each other as Reformed on the basis of the confessions.

The QIRE

Clark then moves on to deal with the other major besetting sin of Reformed Christianity, that of the Quest for Illegitimate Religious Experience (QIRE). He defines the QIRE as “the desire to achieve an unmediated encounter with God” (74), and contrasts with this the mediated character of Reformed piety as focused on Word and sacrament. On the way Clark makes the daring move of critiquing not only the nineteenth-century Arminian revivalists but also Calvinist theologians such as Martin Lloyd-Jones and even Jonathan Edwards himself:

There were ways in which Edwards’ interesting experiment . . . established a trajectory that has been damaging to Reformed theology, piety, and practice, by turning our attention away from the objective saving acts and Word of God. (106)

There is much that is positive in this chapter. Providing a biblical alternative to the individualistic desire for an unmediated encounter with God lies at the heart of what distinguishes Reformed piety from generic evangelicalism. Clark devotes much attention to the phrase of the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) that expresses this piety: the “due use of the ordinary means” (WCF 1.7). It seems, however, that Clark overstates his case when he takes this phrase to mean that any revival (such as the Welsh revival of 1859) that displays an *extraordinary* manifestation of the Spirit is to be judged as unreformed. Clark essentially interprets the phrase “the due use of ordinary means,” which expresses the truth that *ordinarily* assurance of faith comes through Word, sacrament, and prayer, as though it says “the *exclusive* use of ordinary means.” From this standpoint any revival in which the Holy Spirit works in a way outside these means is judged as not Reformed. This is an overreaction that threatens to box in the Spirit of God unduly. For that reason, while I am very sympathetic to Clark’s concerns in this chapter, I would not make the same negative judgments he does about Martin Lloyd-Jones and Jonathan Edwards. Nevertheless, in this chapter I believe Clark touches on the heart of what the Reformed alternative ought to be within the individualistic, consumerist, subjective focus of much of contemporary evangelicalism (we will return to this in the conclusion).

The Recovery

Clark’s program for recovery occupies the attention of the remainder of the book. His argument may be sketched out quite quickly: he advocates a recovery of the archetypal/ectypal distinction in Reformed theology (ch. 4); a return to strict, full subscription (ch. 5); and a focus on the distinctive character of Reformed worship, which involves for him renewing our allegiance to the Regulative Principle of Worship (ch. 7) and the second service (ch. 8). In the midst of these detailed arguments, chapter 6, “The Joy of Being Confessional,” serves as a pep talk for those who are considering the Reformed faith.

Archetype and Ectype

This recovery program is somewhat idiosyncratic and eclectic, to say the least. This begins with Clark’s focus on archetypal and ectypal theology. The distinction relies on the basic divide between the Creator and the creature, between God and humanity. However, it goes beyond that

divide to say that God's *knowledge* is the archetype, while ours is the ectype (the copy). So there is even an entire theology that only God knows (archetypal theology), to which our theology stands in relation as ectypal. There are obvious problems with these terms, not least of which is the question of how we know our knowledge is analogous to God's in any way. But a more serious problem, for Clark's proposal at least, is that the Creator-creature distinction is not particular to *Reformed* theology as opposed to its Catholic or Lutheran counterparts. How can recovering this distinction be important to our Reformed identity?

Clark argues that the Reformed theologians pioneered a unique approach to the Creator-creature distinction. In contrast to Thomas Aquinas (whose philosophy allowed for a continuity of being between God and humanity, and therefore threatened to blur the Creator-creature distinction), the Reformers emphasized the ontological otherness of God in himself (*in se*). They utilized the terms "God hidden" (*Deus absconditus*) and "God revealed" (*Deus revelatus*) to express this truth. In Scripture, then, we do not meet God as he is in himself (*in se*) but God as he reveals himself to us. At this point Clark brings in Calvin's doctrine of accommodation: in Scripture God has to stoop down to communicate with us on a human level. The words of Scripture do not simply reveal God as he is in himself, but God-in-covenant with humanity.

There are good aspects to this discussion, and I do think that the notion of accommodation will have to play a central role in our doctrine of Scripture if we want to make progress in the exegetical debates that currently bog us down. As a side note, I am unsure whether Clark's critique of Thomas Aquinas is adequate or accurate, and would see more continuity between Thomas and Calvin than Clark cares to allow.¹ Again, problems emerge not with Clark's historical survey, but with the use to which he puts it. The Reformers' usage of the terms "God hidden" and "God revealed" actually runs counter to the existence of an archetypal and ectypal theology. Clark notes that these latter terms were called into question by William Ames in the 17th century, and do not appear with any prominence in Turretin, Edwards, Heppe, Hodge, Warfield, and Shedd. The reason these terms are out of favour in Reformed theology is not because these categories accurately maintain the distinction between God and humanity, but because they threaten to make God's knowledge—which is inscrutable—too much like ours. Archetypal and ectypal theology replaces an ontological continuity between God and humanity (Clark's criticism of Aquinas) with an epistemological continuity. Are we really sure that human knowing is *ectypal* in relation to God's knowing? One might as easily utilize the Reformers' notion of God as hidden (*Deus absconditus*) to argue against the archetypal and ectypal distinction in theology.

Confessional Subscription

Clark continues his prescription with a lengthy discussion of confessional subscription. Again, church history buffs will find many of the details intriguing. Briefly, *quia* ("because") subscription involves subscribing to the confessions *because* they are biblical, whereas *quatenus*

¹ Clark does not really understand Thomas' concerns in developing the doctrine of analogy between God and creation. Thomas is focused on *language* and the problem of *predication*. For example, to say "God is good" and to say "You have a good dog" are obviously two different things. Thomas wants to insist that the meaning of the word "good" in these sentences is neither completely different (equivocal) or completely the same (univocal) but *analogous*. It is a different thing for God to be good than for a dog to be good, but nevertheless that does not make the concept of "goodness" completely unknowable. This is also true for the concept of "being." Clark too quickly moves from Thomas' sophisticated discussion of analogy to the notion of an ontological continuity between God and humanity.

(“insofar as”) subscription is somewhat looser, and only involves subscribing to the confessions insofar as they are biblical. The latter has been dominant in American Presbyterianism since 1729, but Clark has serious reservations about this approach:

Every *quatenus* approach to subscription necessarily assumes some distance between the confession and Scripture. This way of relating Scripture and confession raises significant questions. . . . Why should a church not draft and adopt a confession she believes to be wholly biblical? (180)

Clark is correct that an unqualified usage of *quatenus* subscription is so loose as to be meaningless: it basically amounts to agreeing with one’s own private interpretation of Scripture. Nevertheless, Clark’s antidote—full *quia* subscription—is too strong, particularly for Presbyterians.² First, there certainly is “some distance” between the confessions and Scripture. Second, no one would argue that a Church should adopt an unbiblical confession. However, both in centuries past and today theologians differ from one another regarding various theological formulae: consider the debate over the appropriateness of the phrase “covenant of works,” which continues to cause undue discord. For Clark to assert that a church simply ought to be completely unified on what is biblical is somewhat naïve, and fails to take into account (as Clark seems to do in other parts of this book) the limits on our knowledge and the humble attitude with which we need to approach theological disagreement. On this issue, subjective judgments are unavoidable, and what is needed is a form of *quia* subscription that allows for exceptions to the confessions to be adequately registered. Clark resists this subjectivism, and believes that disagreement with the confessions ought to lead to a full process of attempted revision. We do more justice to the situated and historical character of both the confessions and contemporary theologians, however, when we allow for disagreement on non-essential matters.

Clark goes on to argue that the NAPARC churches ought to band together to draft a new confession. I found this proposal interesting because, were it to happen, matters that Clark insists are not confessional (interpretation of Genesis 1) might well become such. What objective would such a confession serve? Clark explains:

In the modern period we have faced the questions concerning the so-called death of God, open theism, the nature of humanity and the image of God, the historicity of Jesus, the nature of justification, the doctrine of the church, and the nature of the final state. . . . The question remains why we, the heirs of the confessional tradition, did not answer these questions in ecclesiastical confessions. (182-3)

Clark goes on to answer his own question: the existing confessions that we have provide adequate answers to these problems. But he says this response is insufficient: the churches of the Reformation era might have said the same thing (is this really the case?). For Clark, to be a *confessing* church is to be a *confession-writing* church. I personally am skeptical of the need for new confessions. Clark in his considerable ingenuity does not come up with a clear problem that the confessions do not address. I would prefer *confessing* churches to focus on learning to articulate and explain clearly the confessions which they hold already, without drafting binding documents in order to address every new theological fad.

² The different character of the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards ought to play more of a role in this debate. It is particularly within *Presbyterianism* that *quia* subscription is difficult to maintain, because of the comprehensive character of the WCF.

Recovering Reformed Worship

The remainder of Clark's book is focused on recovering Reformed worship. There is an essential problem to all that follows, which is simply that it is not explicitly confessional. Arguments over the use of instruments in the worship service, the permissibility of singing non-canonical songs, and the necessity of the second service do not arise out of the confessions themselves. This is why Clark needed to define "Reformed" as including the early interpretation of the confessional documents (see above). I think the essential thrust of these chapters detracts from the main point of Clark's book, which is that Reformed unity ought to be sought in the publically accessible confessional documents of the tradition. It ought not to be sought, therefore, in complete uniformity in disputed matters that go beyond the confessions.

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to look at some of Clark's arguments, since if he is right, most Reformed churches are worshiping unbiblically. Clark's first attempt to reform our worship involves the Regulative Principle of Worship. Clark takes this principle to mean that "unless one can demonstrate that Scripture requires that something be done, it may not be done" (229). Clark argues that this historically meant that musical instruments and the singing of non-canonical songs were forbidden in worship. Despite this, over the centuries, most Reformed churches have accepted hymns and instruments. This leads Clark to an impasse:

We are at something of a stalemate. Most of the Reformed community no longer practices in worship what it confesses, *at least as that confession was understood originally*. (264-5, emphasis mine)

What is the way forward?

Clark attempts to argue for a compromise: all Reformed churches ought to accept the singing of only canonical songs, with no instruments. Obviously this compromise is somewhat imbalanced: exclusive psalmists are asked to expand their repertoire to include NT hymns, while most Reformed churches are asked to give up their organs (or other instruments) and throw out many of their hymns. Is this a trade that the majority of Reformed denominations would want to make? Is it more faithful and biblical to sing only inspired songs, and to not utilize musical instruments in worship?

Clark recognizes that not all aspects of worship are clearly regulated by the Word of God. Therefore he distinguishes, following the WCF, between the *elements* and the *circumstances* of worship. The elements are the non-negotiable essentials (Word, prayer, sacraments), while the circumstances are the aspects that may vary according to culture (for instance, what constitutes appropriate attire). This, of course, is a version of the Regulative Principle of Worship that allows for some flexibility. The principle might be summarized as requiring that we worship according to Scripture. However, Clark operates with a stricter understanding of the principle: we must have an explicit scriptural command for everything we do in worship. For Clark, because Scripture neither requires the singing of uninspired songs nor the usage of musical instruments, they are forbidden. Operating on the basis of the *silence* of Scripture, however, leads Clark into some ridiculous debates; for example, he is forced to defend the usage of microphones in worship (269)—as though Scripture *could* even address such an issue! This ought to raise alarm bells for his readers: something in the logic must be amiss.

And indeed there is. In order to reject musical instruments, Clark first needs to insist that their usage falls under the category of *element* and not that of *circumstance* (because circumstances are variable). He claims that instruments are elements because of "the nature of the created relations between humans, sound, emotion, and religion" (270). Construing musical

instruments as *elemental* to the Old Covenant, and as fulfilled in the New Covenant, Clark concludes that they are forbidden in worship today. If Clark's argument was accurate, we should expect to find his opponents insisting that musical instruments *must* be used in worship. After all, if instruments are elements, and all elements are commanded, then clearly instruments are commanded. But no one argues this. This suggests that Clark has here confused his elements and his circumstances. In fact, instruments are clearly used as accompaniment to the element of singing. They are not an essential part of that element, but optional. Clark's objection to them depends on construing them as essential, something to which no one (to my knowledge) would assent.

What songs may be sung in worship? Clark wants to restrict the singing of the church to the canon. He notes, against the exclusive psalmists, that certain NT passages (e.g., Phil 2:5-11, Col 1:15-20) have been identified as early Christian hymns (272). However, Clark does not really grapple with the implications of his own argument here. If Phil 2:5-11 is an early Christian hymn which Paul quotes in his letter to the Philippians, then the only conclusion is that Pauline churches were singing non-canonical songs. After all, the hymn only became canonical when Paul quoted it. Prior to that, it was presumably sung in the churches, but could not be called canonical. So the New Testament church itself sang from more than strictly canonical songs.

Once again, Clark's rejection of all uninspired songs places far too much weight on the *silence* of Scripture. If we required an explicit command for everything in worship, I suspect that many of our current liturgical practices would need to be rejected (for example, where does Scripture require the vatum and salutation?). Based on the psalms of the OT and the hymns found in the NT, we may conclude that God desires his people to use the musical gifts he has granted them to praise him in every age. We know that God is pleased when his children offer praise to him in worship, and this is undoubtedly also true of the hymns they compose in their fallibility, which admittedly do reflect the particular theological concerns of their age (Reformed churches have therefore rightly emphasized singing the Psalms). Non-canonical hymns might be likened to confessions: both are fallibly composed by human authors, but nevertheless can reflect biblical truth. Clark believes that churches ought to use confessions that are wholly biblical: why then can we not write biblical hymns that reflect the wonder of what God has done for us in Christ, and sing them? Though he roundly rejects biblicism elsewhere, Clark comes close to it here.

Clark's final prescription involves a recovery of the second service. Clark wants to base this on two pillars: the Reformed view of the Sabbath, and a recovery of the doctrine of the means of grace. Clark's historical overview, however, goes on to show that there was no Reformed unanimity on the Sabbath. For example, Martin Luther held that "in principle, no day is better than another" (310), and Calvin followed suit. Illuminating here is the varied exegesis of Col 2:16 ("Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath" [ESV]) found among the Reformers. Ursinus (following Calvin) took this verse as referring to the weekly Sabbath, and so saw the fourth commandment as fulfilled. Turretin, on the other hand, thought that Paul was not here speaking about the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, but only about the minor sabbaths of the Jewish calendar. Clark attempts to mitigate the force of Ursinus' view by pointing out that attendance to worship on the Lord's Day was a matter of civil law in his day (315); however, it is hard to see how such a context would make Ursinus *less likely* to argue for the ongoing necessity of Sabbath observance.

So there is more diversity in the Reformed view of the Sabbath than the tenor of Clark's discussion suggests, which also finds expression in the ecclesiastical confessions. Clark attempts to reconcile the Heidelberg Catechism (HC) and the WCF on the "Christian Sabbath"; however, this involves a strained reading of HC Q&A 103. Clark says: "The catechism uses two nouns as synonyms to describe the Lord's Day, *Feiertag* and *Sabbath*" (321). In fact, these terms are not synonymous at all in Q&A 103. The first term, "feast-day" or "day of rest," describes the Lord's Day, and calls Christians to worship on that day. However, the second term, "Sabbath," occurs in the following context:

Second, that all the days of my life I rest from my evil works, let the Lord work in me through his Holy Spirit, and so begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.

How Clark can claim that the terms "Sabbath" and "Feiertag" are synonyms describing the Lord's Day is a mystery to me. The Catechism specifically calls this the "eternal" Sabbath which begins to take place "all the days of my life." It is significant that the HC does not use the term "Christian Sabbath," for—based on Ursinus' exegesis of Col 2:16—such a term is anachronistic. The Sabbath is an Old Covenant institution, which has been fulfilled in Christ so that believers now enter their Sabbath rest by fleeing from sin to Christ (cf. Hebrews 4).

As it happens, Clark's Sabbath piety is strongly reminiscent of my Canadian Reformed upbringing, and undoubtedly his view will strike a chord with many in that federation. For example, he opposes going to restaurants or playing sports on Sunday (324). This position does not grapple adequately, in my view, with Paul's words in Col 2:16 and Rom 14:5. If Clark had wanted to be convincing, he would have had to spend more time on these texts. As it stands, all we have is a disagreement between Calvin and Ursinus on the one hand, and Turretin on the other. Clark's focus is historical; however, in order to establish a point about what Reformed practice ought to look like today, he needs to delve more deeply into the Pauline texts himself.

Clark's discussion of the means of grace is in the main a repeat of the emphases in chapter 3, which argued against the QIRE. Clark then, very briefly, provides an argument from tradition for the second service, which has impressive force. Clark argues that the tradition goes back into the "morning" and "evening" pattern of Jewish prayer. As he says:

The entire Christian tradition, East and West, ancient and medieval, Roman and Protestant, has recognized the fundamental creational and re-creational pattern of morning and evening services. (338-9)

Perhaps the point would be clear if our services were called *matins* and *vespers*. In the end, it seems the strongest case one can make for the second service relies on tradition.

The Way Forward: Reformed Unity and Identity

What then, do we do with this label "Reformed"? Unlike Scott Clark, I would not advocate complete unanimity of opinion on disputed issues such as instruments in church, the permissibility of hymns, and the necessity of the second service. Rather, I would like to maintain Clark's "narrow" definition of Reformed, which is that measured by the ecclesiastical documents of the Reformation period. This may lead to greater diversity in practice than Clark wishes to have. However—and here I wish to register a basic difference between my approach and that advocated in Clark's book—our unity ought not to be predicated upon reaching agreement on all these smaller issues. Rather, instead of trying to convince everyone else that our way is the Reformed way and that they are on a variety of illegitimate quests, we ought to humbly realize that we are not going to agree on everything and seek to be unified in Christ despite the obstacles

that various exegetical disagreements present. For example, there will be those who advocate 6/24 YEC interpretation of Genesis 1, and there will be those who hold to the Framework hypothesis, and there are a variety of positions in between and beyond these two. What we need is not to come to complete agreement on the issue (though that is desirable, it is naïve to expect this will happen), but to hold our respective views in the context of affirming one another as Reformed brothers and sisters in Christ. Clark is quite right when he insists on exegetical freedom within the boundaries of the Reformed confessions; he is quite wrong when he attempts to over-determine the *praxis* of Reformed churches beyond what those confessions explicitly state.

Where ought the discussion to go from here? What can Reformed Christianity offer to the evangelical smorgasbord of North American Christianity? I would like to build on Clark's positive emphasis on the due use of the ordinary means of grace, namely, Word and sacrament. This focus provides an opportunity to articulate an ecclesiology that is focused not solely on the individual's private relationship with God, but rather on the covenant community as a whole. Grace is not administered solely or primarily through subjective channels; rather, it is through the objective channel of the church that believers experience the grace of God. (Here Clark might find Klaas Schilder's theology a perhaps unexpected ally. Schilder's struggle in the Netherlands was precisely against the subjectivism and inward-focused piety that was dominant at that time and was also fundamental to Barth's theology.) The sacraments are not merely testimonies to my private and individual faith, but are efficacious and *gracious* in character. All is of grace—that is the heartbeat of Reformed Christianity. This can and should work itself out positively in our ecclesiology, so that we emphasize the covenant community as the place wherein God administers his grace to us through Word and sacrament.

Articulating a vibrant ecclesiology that manifests itself in the day-to-day life of the local church is, I believe, the key to recovering the Reformed confession today. Take a topic that Clark strangely does not discuss, infant baptism. In the broader evangelical world, infant baptism seems bizarre and many Reformed people are not able to clearly defend this practice. What we need is to place this doctrine in the context of our covenantal theology, which ought in turn to express itself in a robust ecclesiology. One can say that if the Reformed churches were doing their job of clearly presenting a covenant community-oriented alternative to the subjective character of much that passes for evangelicalism, the emergent church movement would not have been necessary or seemed so compelling. That movement responds precisely to the lack of community in suburban Christianity. Cannot the Reformed offer an "emergent" focus on the community that is at the same time theologically rich and heir to a wonderful tradition? If many of Clark's positive insights are transposed into an ecclesiological key, we will truly begin to recover the Reformed confession.