

BOOK REVIEW

Making Shipwreck of the Faith: Evangelicals and Roman Catholics Together

Kevin Reed

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96 pages, paper

Reviewed by Ronald Hanko

This book is a response to the document published in 1994, entitled “Evangelicals and Roman Catholics Together.” That document, with its ecumenical emphasis, has been widely criticised, and those evangelicals who signed it, the most notable of whom is Dr. J. I. Packer, have also received their share of criticism.

Kevin Reed has written and published this book because, as he says, “Most of the critics of ECT take aim at areas where Rome is an easy target; but they avoid critical aspects of doctrine and practice where modern evangelicals exhibit remarkable similarities to Rome” (p. 7). He is right on target.

Reed mentions especially three areas where both Romanists and evangelicals have rejected Scripture teaching: “(1.) the essence of the gospel, (2.) divinely instituted worship, and (3.) the marks of the true church.” Indeed, Reed goes on to show that many evangelicals have not only rejected Scripture teaching, but have actually adopted the doctrines of Rome. The Romish doctrine of free will, so widely believed today by evangelicals, is a good example.

Of this Reed speaks particularly in pages 21-28. He points out that invitations and altar calls, the recitation of the “sinner’s prayer,” mass evangelism, and the exhortation to “accept Christ into your heart” are all forms of this error, and mentions the Synod of Dordt which condemned these very errors as “Pelagianism brought again out of hell.”

Reed also points out rightly, that in its manner of worship, its use of images of various kinds, its mutilation of the sacraments, and in its failure to understand the Biblical teaching regarding the church, evangelicalism is not really very far from Rome. He says, for example: “One suspects that contemporary evangelical writers are reluctant to press the issue more forcefully because of the embarrassing implications. A due regard for the marks of the church would not only unchurch Rome, but a major part of modern evangelicalism” (p. 63).

As usual Reed pulls no punches in his condemnation both of Rome and of evangelicalism. But as he says, “The issues which fostered the Protestant Reformation are not simply matters for academic debate. They are great and eternal matters respecting the way of salvation and the proper worship of God (p. 84). The book, though it addresses a specific issue that has largely been forgotten, continues to be of great relevance and is highly recommended.