

Eduardo Echeverria

Berkouwer and Catholicism. Disputed Questions (Studies in Reformed Theology 24, Leiden: Brill, 2013), viii + 550 pp. ISBN 9789004245587 (hbk). €176,00, \$245.00.

Echeverria's substantial tome is an impressive work. Its aim is to research the Dutch Reformed Berkouwer's engagement with Roman Catholic theology before and after his participation in the Second Vatican Council as an invited observer. Echeverria himself is positioned as a member of the North American ecumenical initiative 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together' and serves as Professor of Philosophy and Systematic Theology in the Graduate School of Theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit, Michigan. The book contains a preface by Thomas G. Guarino, the Roman Catholic co-chair of the 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together' movement.

The six chapters of the book discuss the following topics: 'The Renewed Church and the *Nouvelle Théologie*', 'Revelation, Faith, and the Knowledge of God', 'On the Dynamics of Faith and Reason: The Differentiated Unity of Natures and Grace', 'scripture and Tradition in Relation to Revelation and to the Church', 'scripture, Tradition and Theological Authority', and 'The Development of Dogma'. As can be easily imagined, all of these topics concern major and largely fundamental theological areas of theological disagreement between Reformed theology and Roman Catholic theology. Echeverria takes up the corresponding challenges by Berkouwer to Roman Catholic theology and seeks to discuss them in the light of his own understanding of Roman Catholic theology. In doing so, he considers Berkouwer as someone who, at least eventually, should not be seen as an 'essential' but as an 'accidental' Protestant, i.e. someone for whom the Reformed Churches are the result of a particular protestation and who does not need the Roman Catholic Church as a (negative) vis-a-vis in order to define his identity, but rather understands church disunity as something that needs to be overcome in a profound way. By addressing Berkouwer's questions, Echeverria intends to contribute to the (re)discovery of this deep unity by revisiting both the Reformed and the Roman Catholic traditions.

The result of Echeverria's engagement with Berkouwer's questions to Roman Catholic theology is a detailed discussion of both Berkouwer and the Roman Catholic theology with which he wrestled. While it may remain for Berkouwer specialists to decide whether he always does full justice to the work and legacy of this eminent Reformed theologian, reading through Echeverria's interaction with him is certainly an instructive experience, not in the last place because he achieves a measure of systematization of Berkouwer's often fragmentary work. In the process, one cannot escape being impressed with Echeverria's command of Dutch, the language in which Berkouwer wrote most

of his work. His approach to Roman Catholic tradition and theology is also apparent throughout the work – and gives rise to historical questions. Throughout the volume, Echeverria clearly intends to show the continuity of the Roman Catholic theological tradition, hardly allowing for any discontinuities. A historian of theology may well wonder, however, whether the extent of historical and theological continuity that Echeverria sees between, for example, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Roman Catholicisms, is indeed there. Nonetheless, the encounter with this hermeneutics of continuity is instructive. Equally instructive is Echeverria's ability to identify differences and to discuss them in a profound and irenic way. The volume can be recommended for those interested in Berkouwer and in Reformed – Roman Catholic dialogue. For the more general student of systematic theology, Echeverria's work is a good case study in theological dialogue that invites emulation in analogous projects on other theologians and traditions.

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