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A Critique of The "Reformed Faith"
Per The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

After study of the website presentation, I believe the word orthodox cannot nearly apply to the entire publication. In fact, it only seems to relate to the high points of Calvinism, and even then the adoption of those true gospel principles appears to be more doctrinaire, or intellectually advocated, than spiritually.

It is especially questionable as related to the Reformed Faith's claim that their expression of Christianity is the most consistent form of it that exists! In fairness, there are good statements made of various doctrinal subjects that are consistent with related scripture.

But, the statement is made that their position is nothing more or less than the teaching of the bible, consistently expressed. Yet, that does not account for the effect of various contradictory comments they make, including an extra-biblical philosophical venture into the theory of unlimited divine predestination.

How, or why do they formulate deterministic, and fatalistic exaggerations of the doctrine, when nothing in scripture reveals, or even implies it, rightly interpreted! Therefore, it is very strange speculation--far beyond the scope of literal doctrinal interpretation!

Even their confession source, the WCF (The Westminster Confession of Faith), in its explanations of their own belief in that predestination concept, does not, and cannot substantiate the extreme position. The scriptures only relate to salvation doctrine, not to an unlimited view of total divine ordination of everything else that occurs in the universe, including "all creations, actions, and things", as the OPC states.

Apparently, the awesome reality of God's sovereignty as creator, with unlimited control of the cosmos, including all its life forms, leads them to implicitly ascribe to God, even the cause of things that are evil, with the misguided caveat that all things that happen glorify God in one way or another. Negative things do

glorify God, by their contrast, but the evilness of an action cannot be linked to God, personally!

The OPC refers bad happenings to "second" causes, when they originate with man. Technically, when considered in the context of "cause and effect", the real cause is the life principle involved. For bad results, they are attributable to the carnal, unspiritual nature of both fallen, and redeemed man, and good results are produced by the new, spiritual nature of redeemed man. That is, that Christ's righteousness is imputed to man for his faithful actions or conduct.

Under the "whatsoever comes to pass" predestination view, there can be no such thing as totally free will decisions originating with man. Which makes man nothing but an instrument, or device for God to use to carry out his will for every aspect of universal life matters.

I know that the Reformed Faith is not alone in their specious theory of extreme universal predestination. It was disappointing to me to also have read similar beliefs of two or three reputable pastors, and theologians.

There is always a danger of going beyond scriptural revelation, and assuming something that as they say, "pushes the envelope" beyond the boundaries God has established. An especially applicable admonition is the advice and warning of Deut. 29:29, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and our children for ever.....".

Those words should teach us not to venture beyond what is definitively revealed, and especially not to declare suppositions or presumptuous beliefs, as facts. What would be the Reformed Faith's scriptural basis for the statement that "God from all eternity did,unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass", and that, "God the great creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things....."?

Which means to them, simply, that nothing can happen that does not originate with God! Such a controversial assumption would make human free will (natural, or spiritual) impossible. I wrote an article about predestination extremism,

disputing the concept, and indicating how illogical and untenable I believe the proposition is.

The subject confuses the correct understanding of God, and man, and violates the biblical prohibition against adding to, or taking away from scripture. Rev. 22, etc. Nothing extraneous to the clear and provable teaching of the word of God, can be called orthodox, but is rather, heterodox or even heresy!

There is, then, the apparent oversimplification of God's will, that nothing can hinder it, or keep him from doing it. That is, of course, true about the direct, authoritative disposition of his will, but not of his permissive will, which is subject to conditions imposed upon man, requiring obedience to do something particular.

And, relating to God's predestination decrees, for man to either inherit eternal life, or be consigned to everlasting condemnation, there seems to be the inference that God preordains man's destiny, and not only in relation to the rescue of elect ones from condemnation to hell, or leaving the rest of mankind to eternal punishment decreed for their organic inclusion in Adam's original sin.

Again, on the subject of man's freedom, the OFC notes certain restrictions on man's liberty, such as heredity, environment, family training, and opportunity. It is further stated that these limitations have been imposed by God. I don't doubt that many times God may arrange the circumstances of the elect's lives, prior to their conversion. But, it may not always be so, even though he would always be in control of their lives, but without the OPC claim of being the ultimate cause of everything that occurs, in people's lives in general.

The illogical, imaginary belief that God continually causes and controls everything in the universe, is more the stuff of science fiction, even possibly cultism, than any conceivable real theology of the nature and will of God.

Intended respect and reverence for God, in our words relating to him, never justifies any form of misrepresentation of him! The Psalms are full of words of praise and adoration for God, and his marvelous works, which are all true, but David, inspired by God, made no fantastic claims that would support the extreme

theory in question. Some of the OPC's comments on human liberty are not rational, either, or of any spiritual value to natural man. How can a man be free to do something that he is unable to do? It is an empty argument, overstating the questionable worth of restricted freedom.

While I do not doubt God's infinite ability to do anything, if it made sense, why would he want to be preoccupied and engaged in the management of the myriad of details in every human life; much of which is the product of the natural realm, under the law of sin and death, from which nothing honors, or is acceptable to God?

Nor, contrary to the OPC claim, does God "determine human destiny" of the mass of mankind, who except for the elect, sealed their own destiny in Adam's fall. Again, it is another illogical, wrong theological conclusion.

Given the OPC's disposition in some areas, their claim of doctrinal orthodoxy might well be better classified as more intellectual than spiritual, its followers having "bought into" the historical Reformed Faith, which no doubt was genuine in its early years. That is, they may like the Pharisees of old, outwardly conform to the letter of the word, but not inwardly to the spirit of it! At least, they cannot rightly be considered to be the vanguard of the model New Testament church (which today, however, is practically nonexistent).

Yet, there is a faithful, but small, remnant of the true gospel faith: the legitimate Calvinists, who might be better identified as monergists, or originalists--being essentially gospel purists, as compared to the liberalized, adulterated gospel concept of the vast majority of the church who are of the Arminian, free will indoctrination. The latter situation emanated from the false teachings of Pelagius in the third century, and his successors, i.e., Arminius, the Wesleys, Graham, and most all church leaders, missionaries, and evangelists, since the first few centuries of church history.

The OPC article states that "There are doctrines in Holy Scriptures that boggle the mind". Boggle is somewhat of a poor word to use. In one very prevalent common case, it is true as it applies to most Christians, because they do not "walk

(think and act) in the Spirit", and who try to understand spiritual truths, intellectually or with their natural minds only, which unfortunately is the way they live most of their lives!

But, to the minority of Christians who do "walk in the Spirit", which is the life principle of the new nature, the word predestination and other gospel terms are understandable when they are properly studied; that is, "rightly divided" (spiritually discerned). When I said that most believers do not "walk in the Spirit", it is particularly proven by the fact that the great majority of the church has capitulated to the misinterpreted version of the gospel (Arminianism), which is not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the gospel according to man.

And a sad part of the problem is that they don't even know that they are deceived in their gospel beliefs, because they basically don't know the difference between the old, natural man, and the new, spiritual man! And, because they think unspiritually, they are generally unreceptive to any attempts to help them see the error of their gospel beliefs, or other resulting doctrinal issues.

I speak from experience, because I was of the same Arminian, free will persuasion for more than ten years, but after coming to understand the literal biblical gospel, I have been involved for some forty years in the work of "defending and confirming the truth"--yet, as noted, with little positive response that would indicate repentance and reformation from the deception and delusion of false gospel beliefs, which has predominated and prevailed in the universal church for centuries.

The lack of interest and favorable reaction doesn't bother me unduly personally, because if those ones have not listened to and heeded God directly in his word, to prove or disprove their doctrinal assumptions, why should they listen to me, indirectly? Except that God has given spiritual gifts: "to one.....the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another discerning of spirits (false teaching, etc.)", i.e., to expound on doctrine.

The latter includes basic, foundational teaching, growth of knowledge, and when required, discerning the truth of doctrinal controversy. All of which is

valuable, and helpful, but in deference to God, obviously no one can state the essential truth of scripture better than he has revealed it! A fact which many pretentiously eloquent, self-oriented preachers, etc., need to be humbled by!

The thrust of the OPC statement that "those things that are necessary to be known for salvation, are clearly propounded so that any man may clearly understand them--is misleading in any pre-salvation context, because technically nothing has to be known, or can be understood before becoming a Christian, whose regeneration is all accomplished by God; man being entirely passive, with no assent, or anything cooperative being involved.

But, the false concept of salvation principles is where the confusion and deception takes place--spreading the leaven of false doctrine, neo-evangelically filling the churches, by "sowing tares among the wheat", virtually ruining the church, by turning it into the degenerated, unfaithful condition described in the end-time prophecy being fulfilled today by the proto-type of the Laodicean church in Rev. 3, as not only "lukewarm", but "miserable, wretched, poor, blind, and naked".

It probably wouldn't be far-fetched, or inaccurate to say that as much as 95% of the contemporary church is in that deplorable state today! It is a self-imposed tragedy, second in gravity and destruction to the eternal devastation of original sin! It has been an unconscionable large-scale betrayal of the Lord, by being disloyal to his gospel truth, which is the doctrinal foundation of the Christian life! God being the sole builder, in the laying of that foundation, without any cooperative action by man!

Another broad statement made by the OPC is that, "Any man who hears the gospel is commanded by God to accept it". How? God does not direct it to the non-elect anyway, and no one can knowingly accept, or comprehend it, until they receive the Spirit of God, upon conversion!

The remark is made that "It is impossible for those who are dead in sin to receive Jesus Christ, as he is freely offered (?) in the gospel." First off, he is not offered to man, but he offered himself sacrificially to God for the sins of the elect,

who are converted from the natural, unspiritual state described in the quotation, becoming "a new creation in Christ", endowed with a new, spiritual nature.

Under the subject of His Glory, there may be an unwitting omission in one paragraph, where it says that, "Because he (God) is so wonderful, he deserves our constant praise and worship, and that the glory we are to give God is nothing else but lifting up his name, magnifying him, and consciously acknowledging his perfection."

Which is right, but not quite complete. One word, or act describes what brings glory to God, more than anything, and that is obedience to his word, or his will, which constitutes the most important testimony we can have: faithfulness! If we possess that quality of conduct, as much as reasonably possible, it would seem to cover the whole scope of what our relationship to our heavenly Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, ought to be!

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant", should be the most desirable words we would ever want to hear about our Christian life, when we meet the Lord, in heaven. Since obedience or faithfulness is the main key to commendation and rewards from the Lord, what would the opposite behavior engender, but censure, or negative judgment, and loss of rewards, which is what most Christians will face, if they stay in their present condition of gospel infidelity!

Majority consensus of a misrepresented gospel won't do a thing to excuse the failure to learn the pertinent doctrinal truth involved. If earthly "ignorance of the law" is no excuse in civil and criminal matters, then how much more critical, and inviolable are scriptural principles--which, it should be added, do not allow for any differences of opinion, commonly maintained in the church world.

In other words, the specific meanings God intended for his word are both fully knowable, and required to be learned with "oneness of mind" by the entire church in all ages. That is the way it was in the original church, and technically is the way it should be today! Anything less, is subject to judgment, which will be rendered in one way or another, either now or later!

So, all the various confessions of faith, and other beliefs of scripture maintained in the world are subject to one invariable standard: a uniformly correct interpretation of biblical truth! Which is virtually impossible, given the vicissitudes of human nature among Christians, as well as the rest of the world. But, the inherent requirement is permanently incumbent upon every believer. No ifs, ands, or buts are acceptable!

Anything else, or less is subject to certain reproof, and rebuke at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This will include world famous evangelists, and any other pastors, missionaries, and teachers who have promoted the false gospel doctrine that prevails in the worldwide church. Why won't there be, "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth", by all believers guilty of gospel unfaithfulness, instead of anticipated joy and rejoicing for "assumed" faithful service?

A statement is made in the section, His Triune Salvation, that "the Reformed faith (i.e., the OPC) stands in the mainstream of the historic Christian faith". But, the just criticism I have concluded from reading the OPC confession statement, leads me to believe that instead of standing in the mainstream, as they say, the RFC has drifted off course, into uncharted waters!

I regret having to disagree with some of the OPC claims, but the critique reveals the fact that they aren't what they are assumed to have been in their early years, because over time they appear to have made claims that can't be scripturally, or logically supported.

The most incredulous assumption is the radical philosophy that God administratively controls, and micro-manages the world, so that nothing ever happens that he does not technically cause! Such an extreme position contradicts the many scriptural references to God's purpose of creating man in his image--to have dominion as lords over the earth, and its creatures, and resources to be utilized personally, and in the developing of industries, and otherwise enjoying the opportunities that would abound in the world.

Except for the effect that the advent of sin had to diminish man's superior mental capacity and abilities, he would never have been created with such

exceptional powers (possessed before the fall), if he wasn't designed to use them to the full, unimpeded extent possible, or necessary--always subject to God's will and approval, but normally without his intervening control, or overruling.

The extreme meaning that the RFC, or OPC confession accords to divine predestination, or sovereign administration of life on earth, makes man effectively robotic, unable to originate anything, or independently manage the affairs of earth, personally or mutually, that he was created for, to God's glory!

When, in their publication they go from established biblical doctrine, to something of science fiction fantasy, it tends to raise serious doubts that they really understand and believe all the principles of theology, of which they claim conviction.

Their declaration that (1) God "ordains whatsoever comes to pass", and (2) completely controls "all creatures, actions, and things", is so radically conceived, and unscriptural, and illogical, that it reminds me of some of the imaginary, ridiculous elements of Mormon doctrine. That doesn't make the OPC members otherwise comparable to Mormons, but do they have to let their theological imaginations run away with them, like the Mormons do?

Reference is made under Election to the phrase, "gospel offer". Those words, or terms don't really go together, because the gospel is not offered to man for his "possible" acceptance. As noted previously, the "offer" is to God of Christ's sacrificial death for the sins of the elect. Neither can the lost sinner seek the Lord in repentance and faith, because those two acts are part of the conversion process of spiritual regeneration--which I think the OPC does allude to elsewhere in the commentary.

The OPC application of John 6:37 to lost sinners, being able to repent and come to the Lord in faith, is erroneous, and can only refer to redeemed ones as further assurance of their eternal security. Nor, as further implied, can anyone "be driven to his knees in utter self-despair and helplessness", as being "only such that will ever be truly saved." Even the elect do not become Christians that way! It is not part of the true gospel process, to involve any human cooperation; nor, is a

self-acting response possible.

Linking divine election with human responsibility is a moot argument, because natural man does not have "response-ability". Man did have that capacity in Adam! But, he lost it in the act of disobedience to God's command, or conditional test in the garden of Eden. Hence, whatever spiritual matter is raised in natural man's life, he is unable to react to it, knowingly! 1 Cor. 2:11-15.

Another comment needing to be corrected is, "All who refuse to obey the gospel, have only themselves to blame." No one is required to obey the gospel! No one can obey the gospel! "Obey" is the wrong word for what happens to a prospective, or even actual convert. A Christian, in his new spiritual nature is a partaker of all the blessings and benefits of the gospel. The efficacy of those principles is applied to them, through the righteousness of their savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

If obeying, to the OPC, is synonymous with believing, it still is not possible for natural man. That is the universal common misconception of all but Calvinistic, literal gospel believers. It is not unbelief that causes the non-elect to be unsaved. It is an inability due to their lack of a spiritual faculty, which is proof of their permanently decreed condemnation for original sin, in Adam!

As for infant, or youth baptism, which has been historically maintained by much of Christianity, it cannot be rightly supported from scriptural references to the subject of baptism. Whenever it occurred in biblical cases of households being baptized, it is assumed that there were infants, or young children included, but there is no proof of such, and even if there were, they might not have been counted as believing members. In any case, it does not establish any doctrinal principle of salvation value, for that is not ever the purpose of baptism.

Baptism is an after-the-fact affirmation and testimony of salvation, which is an act of faithfulness symbolically following the Lord, in his death, burial and resurrection! Also, in a word, there is no "covenant" authority for validating infant baptism as a regenerative factor in salvation. The subject can be an emotional issue, but God has only established one way to be saved. That is, by being given

spiritual life, through Jesus Christ alone. And age, therefore, is not a factor!

As for Jesus Christ being "king" of the whole world, Christians can respectfully think of him that way, affecting every area of their lives. But, there is the dispensational factor of Satan having dominion over the secular world (which is his temporary domain, under the "law of sin and death"). But, the Lord will become king of all the earth during the millenium period (the kingdom age), and will rule with believers over the earth with great authority and order.

Finally, official observance of a sabbath is out of order under this dispensation. Some of the principles are worth consideration as self-imposed separation guidance, but it is confusing to carry over an aspect of the "law of works" into the church age of grace. The Jewish Christians have always had a hard enough time making the transition from law to grace, without the church adding confusion and difficulty to it!

In submission to the Lord, may the words of this commentary be a substantially accurate analysis of the Reformed Faith confession of beliefs, as contained in the OPC report cited.

Everett Falvey