

Reformation Fellowship Discussion Outline:
Critique of the Ordinary Christian's Creed
Handout #8

Points #8-11 of "The Ordinary Christian's Creed" > My Critique

A. Ordinary Christian's Creed is based on faulty view of human freedom (as we have already discussed).

1. Creed assumes autonomy from God; there can be no human autonomy from God.
2. Adam and Eve's disobedience was scripted by God, the author of the Ages.
 - a. Adam and Eve's choice was indeed a "free, voluntary" act of disobedience; but it was not autonomous from God.
 - i. God "created" within their wills a free, voluntary choice to disobey him.*
3. God was not "surprised" by Adam and Eve's disobedience; they did not, by their choice, delay, interrupt, or spoil God's purposes.
 - a. The history of salvation is not the history of God trying to "fix" and "repair" what Adam and Eve had ruined.
 - b. From before the beginning of creation, God's purpose was to tell a story of redemption.
 - i. Adam and Eve's choice was not a choice that caused them to become evil; their choice revealed them to be evil creatures already.*

B. Traditional doctrine of "The Fall" is not a biblical teaching.

1. Adam and Eve did not "create" or "introduce" sin, evil, and imperfection into an otherwise perfectly righteous reality.
 - a. The Bible does not teach that created reality was originally created perfect, flawless, good, and incorruptible, and only became imperfect, flawed, evil, and subject to corruption because of the free choice of Adam and Eve that was outside of God's control.
2. The original creation was not created to be eternal; it was corruptible from its very origin.
3. Mankind was not created morally perfect; man was morally flawed from the very beginning of mankind.
 - a. Adam did not become a sinner because he chose to disobey God; Adam chose to disobey God because he was already inherently a sinner.

C. Traditional doctrine of "cosmic justice" is not a biblical teaching.

1. A prevailing view of "cosmic justice" is that it is an inviolable fact of created reality that leads to inexorable results beyond God's control.

- a. Niagara Falls analogy > Parent to child: "Don't jump in water."
 - i. *Mercy (forgiveness) alone cannot rescue the disobedient child from destruction.*
 - ii. *Rescue of child must involve snatching him out of the current that is sweeping him to his destruction.*
 - b. On this view, divine mercy is the divine choice to do whatever it takes to rescue a sinner from the inevitable destruction that awaits him due to his being subject to cosmic justice. He must be "snatched" from the current that is sweeping him to his destruction. Forgiveness alone is, of course, insufficient for that rescue.
2. The biblical view of "divine justice" is this: to rebel against God is inherently deserving of God's wrathful response; it would be perfectly just and right for God to sentence any rebel against him to death.
 - a. Writing on wall analogy > Parent to child: "Don't write on this wall."
 - i. *Mercy (forgiveness) alone CAN solve problem.*
 - ii. *Rescue can be brought about by forgiveness.*
 - b. On this view, divine mercy is the divine choice to forgo having his just wrath satisfied.

D. Traditional doctrine of "hell" as the penalty for sin is not a biblical teaching.

1. Hell, as everlasting torment, is not the clear and incontrovertible teaching of the Bible.
 - a. Hell seems to be a fiction introduced into Christian teaching.
 - b. It is contradicted by what the Bible explicitly teaches about the character of God as just.
2. The Bible teaches that the penalty for human sin is (i) "tribulation and distress" and (ii) death (destruction).
 - a. My best understanding is that we are to understand these as being sequential:
 - i. *The sinner is sentenced to and undergoes a just punishment, proportional to the deeds he has done.*
 - ii. *And, THEN, the sinner is destroyed by DEATH; he ceases to have personal existence.*

E. To the extent that the Ordinary Christian's Creed reflects a version of the traditional doctrine of "original sin," it is based on a faulty view of "original sin."

1. Traditional doctrine of original sin (version #1) [this is not reflected in the Ordinary Christian's Creed]: Adam disobeyed God and the guilt from that act was passed down to each and every one of Adam's offspring.
 - a. This is not taught by the Bible; proof-texts used to support it have misinterpreted the author's intent.

- b. It is philosophically incoherent to conceive of moral guilt (which can only attach to the actual perpetrator of an evil deed) as something that can be passed down to one's offspring.
2. Traditional doctrine of original sin (version #2): Adam created and initiated evil; his doing so resulted in his coming to have a SIN NATURE. Adam, then, passed down that sin nature to each and every one of his offspring (biologically, or however). This sin nature within Adam's offspring is what causes them to be sinners.
 - a. Traditional doctrine of a "sin nature" is not a biblical teaching.
 - i. *We do not have something IN us that causes us to choose sin and evil. (Hence, we were not "given" something by Adam that causes us to choose sin and evil.)*
 - (A) It is philosophically incoherent to conceive of something as causing (necessitating) us to do sin.
 - (1) Sin would not be "sin" if it were not free and uncaused in relation to any part of the created order.
 - (a) *That is, we could not be morally accountable for sin if a "sin nature" caused us to do it.*
 - ii. *The only concept of a sin nature that is both biblical and philosophically coherent is as a "model" of our behavior that predicts the moral tenor and worth of our future choices.*
 - (A) I have a sin nature = I am the sort of being who will, in fact, manifest a distinctive pattern wherein I frequently make evil choices.
 - b. Therefore, this traditional concept of "original sin" is unbiblical; it is philosophically incoherent and, therefore, a misreading of the biblical teaching.
 3. Biblical view of "original sin": Adam is the prototype of the sort of creature that God was going to create to constitute the human race. Hence, if Adam is an evil, disobedient, rebel against God, then every human being whom God will bring into the world will be that same sort of creature, for he will be like Adam, his prototype.

F. We begin to see the significant gulf between the biblical worldview and historic Christianity:

1. The typical Christian who organizes his worldview according to the template handed him by historic Christianity will and must "hang" his worldview on MOST (if not all) of the following traditional "pegs":
 - a. The doctrine of the Trinity.
 - b. An understanding of Jesus as having two essential natures—human and divine.
 - c. An understanding of God as on the same ontological plane as us.
 - d. An understanding of human beings as autonomous from God.
 - e. The traditional doctrine of the Fall.
 - f. The traditional doctrine of Cosmic Justice.

- g. The traditional doctrine of Hell.
 - h. The traditional doctrine of Original Sin.
 - i. And more to come! (e.g., traditional views of heaven, atonement, and faith)
2. Since Jesus would reject all of the above, it becomes impossible to think that Jesus would be a "Christian" in anything like what that means historically.