

3 Reasons I Don't Agree With This Common Heresy

Read my article from last week on the old heresies [here](#).

At the writing of Part 1 of this article I read about a survey published by *Christianity Today* that demonstrated how a large percentage of the Evangelical church unknowingly espouse doctrines that were condemned as heresies in the beginning centuries of the church.

The following quote shocked and saddened me—and confirmed that writing articles such as this one is a great need in the church because of the large amount of theologically illiterate evangelicals:

Strangely, while most evangelicals strongly believe in justification by faith alone, they are confused about the person of Jesus Christ. On one hand, virtually all evangelicals express support for Trinitarian doctrine. Yet at the same time, most agree that Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God, which was a view espoused by the ancient heretic Arius.

Arius was condemned at the Council of Nicaea in 325, and again at the Council of Constantinople in 381. Yet the number of American evangelicals who agree with his view has increased from 2016, when 71 percent agreed and 23 percent disagreed, to today when 78 percent agree and 18 percent disagree (CT).

What this alarming survey demonstrates is that many in church leadership sacrifice biblical orthodoxy through watered-down Sunday sermons to attract the most people. Jesus never built the church on crowds but on disciples (See Luke 14:25-35).

A Modern Strange Teaching

Open Theism (Also known as Neo-Theism): (The following is taken from a position paper I wrote entitled "The Case Against Open Theism.")

"The term 'open theism' was introduced in 1980 with Seventh-day Adventist theologian Richard Rice's book *The Openness of God: The Relationship of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will*. The broader articulation of open theism was given in 1994, when five essays were published by evangelical scholars (including Rice) under the title *The Openness of God*. Open theism is an alternative to some classical ideas about God, Classical Theism, stemming from a single crucial point of difference: Open theism asserts that the future exists partly in terms of possibilities rather than certainties. That is, there are aspects of the future that are believed to be indeterminate" (From , accessed Dec. 7, 2007).

This [open theism] is not only a rejection of predestination as it is understood by Calvinism, but also of most accepted alternative versions.

The controversial view of divine knowledge known as "open theism" is increasingly being taught, debated and proposed by serious men and women in the church. I have attended conferences, read papers and witnessed passionate arguments over this so-called "doctrine" for the past several years.

Presently, there are also variants of this teaching that claim to make it different from open theism; however, they all come from the same source as open theism, so if you refute one, then, like a domino effect, all its variant teachings also fall.

I strongly disagree with this view and, while I respect and honor some of the leaders who have advanced, argued, and taught open theism, I am greatly concerned that any movement that promotes this teaching will lose its credibility with the

rest of the Body of Christ. In my opinion, open theism goes against the historic views of the church with respect to omniscience—which is one of God’s main attributes.

Proponents of this view claim that the classical theistic view regarding God’s omniscience is wrong and that an honest reading of Scripture clearly shows that in certain instances, God limits his insight into the future so that He does not know everything that will happen. This new concept of God is similar to some aspects of pantheism (that God is one with His creation) and process theology (that God is still growing in knowledge and power with His creation, like a form of Darwinian divinity). It is an ultra-extreme form of Arminianism in regards to free will; thus, it is a threat to Christian orthodox belief.

Basically, the whole system collapses once it fails to answer the theological question demanded by Revelation 13:8 that teaches Jesus was slain before the foundation of the world. Obviously, this shows that God was not surprised by the fall of Adam but already had the cross in mind before He made Adam and the world. The fact that it seemed as though God was surprised by the fall of Adam (when you read Gen. 3) demonstrates that anthropomorphic language is often used as a divine bridge so man can relate to God as a person. Hence all the other similar passages proponents of open theism use to prove God does not know the future constitute a straw house that collapses under the weight of this and many other passages that show infinite divine foreknowledge.

Proponents of open theism believe their open view of the future alleviates God of the responsibility for evil in the world. But what they do not take into account is that even within their own system, God is just as responsible, because He created beings He knew were potentially going to sin, thus making God an accessory before and after the fact.

In spite of their denials, in the open theistic system, God is

still responsible for evil because He did not use His omnipotent power to stop His beings from sinning even though He knew the potential for it in the future.

In both these points it is shown, in regards to God, that His passive permission (in extreme Arminianism) is basically the same as proactive causality (hyper-Calvinism), thus rendering the essence of open theism basically no different from the hyper-Calvinistic views they oppose.

To conclude this section, my concern with open theism is summed up by these philosophical lines of reasoning:

First:

- 1) If God does not know all of the future, then He is not sovereign.
- 2) If God is not sovereign, then He does not control the universe. This means He reacts to contingencies and can be surprised.
- 3) If God responds to something with surprise, then something other than God is really God, which makes God subjective instead of objective in regard to Himself and the universe.

Second:

- 1) If God purposely limits his knowledge, then God is not powerful enough to know the future (which means He is not God), or
- 2) If He sovereignly limits His knowledge, then He is playing a mind game with Himself, because the word "sovereignty" assumes that He really does know the future, or
- 3) God is in some space-time matrix that actually influences Him, which makes this matrix the real deity He submits to, or
- 4) If it is impossible for God to know some things in the

future, then God is in space-time instead of outside it. Thus, space-time is greater than God and is the real determiner of the future.

Third:

1) If God does not know all of the future, then He is (like the rest of us) learning new things and is Himself growing.

2) This opens up the possibility that He can learn something either about Himself or creation that will change Him and His will for creation and humanity.

3) This could mean He would go back on what He promised us in the Scriptures about our eternal destiny!

4) This goes against Hebrews 13:8, which says Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, and

5) If God does not know all things, then He is not perfect. Thus, He cannot be omnipotent either, because ultimate power is inextricably connected to ultimate knowledge of the future.

In conclusion, I was reluctant to label this teaching a heresy—since there are some good people I know who hold to some form of this doctrine who are not full-blown heretics and who generally hold to orthodox beliefs about the Bible and the cardinal doctrines of the faith. However, friendships aside, I contend that this is a dangerous belief system akin to process theology that will eventually lead next-generation adherents into full-blown biblical liberalism and perhaps even universalism.

Please note: Next week, I will conclude this series with Part 3, when we will deal with some new strange teachings such as full preterism, hyper-grace, hyper-Zionism and “Christianity light syncretism.”