

DISSIMILITUDE IN HIGH PLACES

On the official Reformed Episcopal Church (REC) website, there is a little article entitled:

The Reformed Episcopal Church

Declaration of Principles

Their Historical Context

If one reads this article,

(<http://rechurch.org/recus/?M1val=/recweb/foundations.html&display=dop>) ,

essentially a Declaration Denial, and compares it to the historic *Declaration of Principles*, (<http://www.trecus.net/downloads/declare.pdf>) one wonders what the state of mind of the unnamed author was at the time it was written. Certainly it lacks intellectual honesty.

The *Declaration of Principles of the Reformed Episcopal Church* is that short statement outlining the *raison d'être* adopted on the REC's very founding date. It is composed of four sections. The First and Fourth Sections outline bedrock beliefs as indicated by the terms "declares its belief" and "condemns and rejects the following erroneous and strange doctrines as contrary to God's Word". The Second and Third Sections outline *preferences* of the REC, not dogma, with terms such as "not as of Divine right" and "Retaining a liturgy which shall not be imperative".

This article is going to gloss over the middle Sections of the *Declaration of Principles*. The observations in the Declaration Denial regarding the Second and Third Sections are just as intellectually shallow and transparent as are the comments on the First and Fourth Sections. More can be said at another time. This post is designed to deal with the egregious revisionism aimed at First and Fourth Sections.

The irony of the Neo-REC is that the two imperative sections are taken as optional, while the two sections expressing preference (episcopacy and liturgy) are taken as requirements. To this point, note what the "official" RE position on the First Section as stated in the Declaration Denial is:

*First, the opening principle clearly recognizes Scripture as a primary authoritative document, **but not exclusively so.** (emphasis added)*

How can such a twisting of meaning be construed from the clear text of the *Declaration of Principles* which says:

*The Reformed Episcopal Church, holding "the faith once delivered unto the saints," declares its belief in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, and the **sole Rule of Faith and Practice;**" ?*

One wonders what meaning the revisionist author uses for the phrase "sole Rule of Faith and Practice" to be able to state "*but not exclusively so?*" Did he miss the word "sole"? Every one in the Evangelical world knows what that phrase means, except the author of the Declaration Denial. He goes on to say in the Declaration Denial:

*. . .and thus, ancient creeds as interpreted by their English Commentary, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, are **also authoritative.** (emphasis added)*

So the Declaration Denial author puts the Creeds and the Thirty-nine Articles, imperfect as they are, on the same level as God's Word. This is an affront to the Founders of the REC (and Free Church of England – a sister denomination holding the same *Declaration of Principles*) and the successive generations of biblically faithful Reformed Episcopalians! It is important to note that the Thirty-five Articles of Religion originally adopted by the Founders of the REC incorporated a much stronger Article on Scripture (V) than the Thirty-nine (VI). Thus the Thirty-five had to be made culturally irrelevant recently to clear the path for these other "authorities".

The Declaration Denial's statement limiting the understanding of these additional authorities to the interpretation "by their English Commentary", sounds much like the infamous remark: "If the

King James Bible was good enough for St. Paul, it is good enough for me!" Who made the "English Commentaries" god? Would the *Tracts for our Times*, English commentaries on the Thirty-nine Articles, fall into this additional authority? God forbid!

Section Four of the original *Declaration of Principles* states:

This Church condemns and rejects the following erroneous and strange doctrines as contrary to God's Word;

First, That the Church of Christ exists only in one order or form of ecclesiastical polity:

Second, That Christian Ministers are "priests" in another sense than that in which all believers are "a royal priesthood:"

Third, That the LORD'S Table is an altar on which the oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ is offered anew to the Father:

Fourth, That the Presence of Christ in the LORD'S Supper is a presence in the elements of the Bread and Wine:

Fifth, That Regeneration is inseparably connected with Baptism.

This Section Four of the *Declaration of Principles* is quite clear. Read the preface to Section Four again

This Church condemns and rejects the following erroneous and strange doctrines as contrary to God's Word;

Now, as one raised in the REC, this is telling. To say something is contrary to God's Word is the most condemning thing to be said of a Christian doctrine. But since the Neo-RECs have established by the Declaration Denial that the Scripture is NOT the sole rule of Faith and Practice, but some vague interpretation of historical documents have equal standing, there is an obvious divide between the traditional Reformed Episcopalian and the Neo Reformed Episcopalian.

Witness how every point in the Fourth Section is violated in the Neo-REC at some point, in spirit, if not overtly:

First; As per the new Constitution and Canons one must be confirmed by an "acceptable" bishop to be a full member of the church. This is certainly tied to the Apostolic Succession nonsense denied by the Founders.

Second: How many ministers now call themselves "priests"? or "Father"? Or even offer a "Mass"? Anathemas to traditional Reformed Episcopilians until the current leadership.

Third and Fourth: Clearly violated by the new REC Neo-Oxfordian BCP, especially in the Prayer of Humble Access where the words were added: "*Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our soul washed through his most precious blood . . .*" (Oh, there is an asterisk by this phrase that essentially says "Just kidding", but what kind of a way is that to observe the Lord's Table?)

Fifth: Also clearly violated in the new Neo-Oxfordian BCP with the addition of the word "regeneration" - re-born, in the Baptismal Service and the rubric for that same addition essentially ridiculing the Founders of the REC.

The Declaration Denial says of Section Four:

Specifically, these denials should in no way be understood as rejecting the clear language of documents subscribed to in the *Declaration of Principles* (The Scriptures, Book of Common Prayer, Thirty-Nine Articles, etc.) (1) The Articles allow the use of the word priest as the anglicized version of the word presbyter by their consistent use of it to describe a minister of the Word and Sacrament (XXXII, XXXVI), and not as someone who can uniquely provide atonement (XXXI) is clear. (2) Table and altar are used interchangeably in Holy Scripture (Malachi 1:10, 12), suggesting the table of Holy Communion is an altar of praise and thanksgiving. (3) The Articles affirm belief in the real presence of Christ when they say, The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner (XXVIII). (4) The Holy Scriptures (Titus 3:5) and the Catechism of the BCP speak of baptism as an outward sign of an inward grace such that regeneration should be understood as normally occurring at Holy Baptism, but not inseparable with Baptism.

Wow! What dissimulation! The Thirty-nine articles are NOT subscribed to in the *Declaration of Principles*, there is only a only vague allusion to them and the **substance** of the Doctrines of Grace in the Thirty-nine Articles. In fact the Thirty-nine were edited to the REC Thirty-five Articles which CANNOT be understood to allow any of the Anglo-catholic points argued above. Thus, the logical need on the part of the Neo-Oxfordians to discredit the Thirty-five Articles – the historic position of the Founders of the REC.

Further, where in the *Declaration of Principles* does it state that the BCP is *any* authority? Absolutely no where! Even if it did, *which* Book of Common Prayer is an additional authority? Not 1662,(else why would the original REC develop its own BCP), nor the 1928 – which did not exist when the REC was founded, nor was it adopted by the REC until the Neo-REC leaders came to power in the last decade?

Finally, using the Old Testament (*Malachai 1:10: Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.*) to justify use of the term "altar" – how theologically shallow, deceitful, and manipulative. Christ ended the use of the altar by His one completed sacrifice!

The Reformed Episcopal Church no longer holds to the *Declaration of Principles*. They have declared it a artifact of its time by the Declaration Denial. No longer binding, just a historical curiosity. In that same Declaration Denial they have set up authorities as alternates to Scripture, following the path of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc., all who have alternate authorities. To be sure the authorities cited by the Declaration Denial *may* be more biblical than the Book of Mormon, but they are nonetheless words of men, and have been used to deny the Word of God.

The *Evangelical Connexion - The Free Church of England otherwise known as the Reformed Episcopal Church* still holds to the plan wording of the *Declaration of Principles*, holding fast to the faith of the Reformation, the faith of the Scripture, and the faith of the Founders of the FCE and REC. (www.fce-ec.org.uk) Pray for the remnant of the REC that they may find their way back to biblical, Reformed Christianity.

JTB