

Scripture and the Church

The PCA's Apostasy: No More Lines in the Sand

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True believers who still remain in the PCA have their battle orders. The question is, will they obey the Captain of their salvation, or continue their dereliction of duty?

May 2012 - On April 14, 2012, in the latest of a series of actions that can only be called open apostasy, the Missouri Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America acquitted Jeffrey Meyers of charges of teaching Federal Vision theology, contrary to the Word of God.

This action follows the recent acquittals of PCA Federal Visionist pastors Greg Lawrence of Minnesota (by Siouxlands Presbytery, September 22, 2011) and Peter Leithart (by Pacific Northwest Presbytery, October 7, 2011).

This is Now the PCA's Apostasy



Meyers (pictured at right) is pastor of Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, and an admitted Federal Visionist. He was one of the eleven original signers of the 2007 *Joint Federal Vision Profession* along with Peter Leithart. The *Federal Vision Profession* teaches baptismal regeneration and justification by faith plus works, and denies the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness to redeemed sinners. [1]

Like Lawrence and Leithart, Meyers has stated his heresies openly and repeatedly for more than a decade. Here are but a few examples.

Meyers denies that Christ's righteousness is imputed to sinners in order for them to be saved. Instead, he says, they must have a righteousness of their own. He responds favorably to this

passage from N. T. Wright's heretical deconstruction of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, titled *What Saint Paul Really Said*:

The Gospel is not "a description of how people get saved; of the theological mechanism whereby, in some people's language, X takes our sin and we his righteousness; in other people's language, Jesus becomes my personal saviour; in other languages again, I admit my sin, believe that he died for me and commit my life to him" [2]

Meyers' response:

I suppose this quote is supposed to be damning [toward Wright]. Actually it is quite in line with every "Gospel" sermon recorded in the book of Acts. [3]

The key is to understand what "righteous" means. It does not refer to moral purity or conformity to a legal standard... "Righteousness" in the Bible means covenant faithfulness. A person is righteous when he does what the covenant requires of him. [4]

Meyers declares that the means of salvation is not the blood of Christ, but the water of baptism:

...the reason baptism was offered immediately [to Paul in Acts 9] is because the forgiveness of sins is attached to the action. When were Paul's sins forgiven? When was he "converted"? On the road to Damascus or in Damascus when Ananias poured water over his head in the name of the triune God? The text is pretty clear. . . Normally God forgives sins and grants new life in baptism. [5]

Baptized children are Christians. They are disciples. They belong to Jesus. They are members of his body, of his Church. They don't grow up and "become" Christians in high school or college when they have a particularly powerful experience of God's love or grace. They can and should have these experiences as they mature. But for baptized Christian children these experiences are not "conversion." Baptism seals

to our children all the promises of God in Christ. They are forgiven, justified, adopted, etc. by means of their baptism into the church. [6]

Despite these heretical assertions and many others, the ordained men of the Missouri Presbytery acquitted Meyers of all five charges against him overwhelmingly, in no case by a margin of less than 39 to 3. Space does not permit us to quote them, but Lawrence and Leithart - along with many other ordained men in the PCA - hold the same views. The charges in the Lawrence and Leithart cases were similar, as were the margins of acquittal.

These heresies are no longer the heresies of a few. This is the apostasy of the PCA as a denomination, just as much as the Gospel-denying declarations of the Auburn Affirmation were the apostasy of the Presbyterian Church USA ninety years ago. In both cases the heresies were initially held by a minority of the denominations' ordained men. But just as the modernism of the Auburn Affirmation came to dominate the PCUSA through its seminaries, the Federal Visionism and other errors of the PCA have become the dominating influence through its official seminary, and will continue to grow. The PCA's Covenant Seminary - which produced Jeffrey Meyers and others of his ilk - has become a leading U. S. center for study of the theology of N. T. Wright, whose so-called New Perspective on Paul closely mirrors Federal Vision theology. Members of the Covenant faculty are among the leading defenders of the recently-acquitted heretics.

Lines In the Sand

The Federal Vision controversy is but the latest in a series of issues on which PCA "conservatives" have, for more than a decade, kept drawing lines in the sand and saying, "If the liberalizers are permitted to cross this line, it will be the last straw." But always, when the liberalizers cross the line or simply obliterate it, the "conservatives" quietly step back and draw a new one.

Among the first of their "this-far-and-no-further" lines in the sand was the doctrine of literal

six-day creation. But the PCA's liberalizers soon crossed that line with a report approved by the 28th General Assembly (2000). The *Report of the Creation Study Committee* said that widely divergent teachings on the nature and length of the days of creation in Genesis chapter one are all confessionally acceptable - ranging from an ordinary literal day, to an ambiguous literary figure, to a day-age comprising billions of years. It said that requiring conformity to what the original language of Scripture actually says and what the framers of the Westminster Confession of Faith clearly understood - six literal days - would be "disturbing to the Church." [7]

When the liberalizers crossed this first line in the sand, most of the PCA's so-called conservatives quietly retreated and drew another one.

Their second "this-far-and-no-further" line in the sand was confessional subscription. But the PCA's 31st General Assembly (2003) boldly obliterated that line by approving an amendment to the PCA *Book of Church Order* permitting each of its dozens of presbyteries to decide what constitutes the "fundamentals of the system of doctrine" when examining the theological positions of men who are to be ordained to the ministry. [8]

The wisest among the PCA's conservative voices saw this action as the actual death knell of orthodoxy in the denomination, and subsequent events have proved them correct. Less than ten years later, the PCA's big tent includes ordained men such as Timothy Keller and Bruce Waltke who are open theistic evolutionists, Peter Enns who denies the historicity of Adam, and Federal Visionists and New Perspectivists too numerous to name.

But when their confessional-subscription line was breached, most of the PCA's so-called conservatives once again quietly stepped back from their second line in the sand, and drew yet another one.

Their third "this-far-and-no-further" line in the sand was Federal Vision theology. Most so-called conservatives satisfied themselves with the 35th General Assembly's 2009 *Study Report on the Federal Vision and New Perspective on Paul*. [9] That report and the debate

surrounding it said much but accomplished virtually nothing, except to signal to the heretics that they could remain on the offensive. The report reminded clear-eyed observers of the toothless "diplomatic protests" lodged against repeated worldwide Communist outrages by United States administrations prior to the Reagan years, when official policy at long last changed from *detente* to "we win, they lose".

But now, in late 2011 and early 2012, so-called conservatives' third "this-far-and-no-further" line in the sand has been crossed, boldly and blasphemously - officially by three presbyteries, and in words and deeds by countless ordained men across the PCA who embrace or tolerate Federal Visionism. Covenant Seminary, the denominational seminary which produces the majority of the PCA's ministers, has become the breeding ground of this apostasy. Whoever controls a denomination's seminaries soon controls its pulpits. Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, long a hotbed of Federal Visionist theology because of the influence of men like Norman Shepherd and Richard Gaffin, also supplies many graduates to PCA pulpits even though it is not an official school of the PCA. PCA minister Peter Lillback, who has publicly defended the heretics, is Westminster's president.

What Next?

Will the PCA's so-called conservatives once again quietly step back from their latest obliterated line in the sand, draw yet another one, and say, "If the liberalizers are permitted to cross this line, then we will leave"? And what will that line be? Most likely it will be the Biblical qualifications for ordination to the offices of the church. That line too will be crossed, and women and others who are unqualified to serve as pastors, elders, and deacons will be ordained.

Eventually, if church history is any indicator, a future PCA line in the sand will be homosexuality - as has happened in the Christian Reformed Church and the PCUSA, which have both caved in to one of the few things God directly labels as an abomination. Even today, many "conservatives" (is there such a thing?) in the PCUSA are stepping back from that latest

of their hundreds of obliterated lines in the sand, and trying to find yet another way to justify staying within the apostate fold.

Does this not give PCA "conservatives" a clear idea of what they or their descendants will be doing not many years hence? It seems that it does not.

What a pathetic sight the PCA has become - especially its so-called conservative faction. If men of this mindset had been given the job of fighting the Nazis seventy years ago, we would all be speaking German today.

The SJC to the Rescue?

Many professed conservatives insist that the PCA's Standing Judicial Commission will come to their rescue and, in time, restore orthodoxy. But among its membership one finds men who are a long-standing part of the problem. Dr. Brian Chappell, president of the PCA's heresy factory at Covenant Seminary, is a member of the SJC. Ruling Elder and SJC member Howard Donahoe was a defense counsel for Peter Leithart at his heresy trial. Ruling Elder Terry L. Jones is a member of the Missouri Presbytery which virtually unanimously acquitted the heretic Jeffrey Meyers. Ruling Elder Bruce Terrell is a member of the session of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, where theistic evolutionist Timothy Keller is the pastor.

We could go on. Many other present and former members of the SJC have been men of the same ilk. They can hardly be called staunch guardians of orthodoxy. They would more appropriately be called foxes guarding the hen house. The bitter irony is that self-described conservatives, who claim to be guardians of Biblical truth, serve collegially with such men on the SJC.

This Is War

It seems that the PCA's "guardians" have forgotten that true believers in Christ are in a war with ungodliness, not a dialogue nor even a debate -- much less a collegial fraternity. This is not only a problem in the presbyteries and on the SJC. The PCA world is filled with blogs and

online forums - many of them hosted by the PCA's professing conservatives - where heretics and the self-described orthodox spend countless hours engaging in the travesty of discussing and debating the non-debatable. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones so well put it,

To regard a church, or a council of churches, as a forum in which fundamental matters can be debated and discussed, or as an opportunity for witness-bearing, is sheer confusion and muddled thinking. There is to be no discussion about "the foundation," as we have seen. If men do not accept that, they are not brethren and we can have no dialogue with them. We are to preach to such and to evangelize them. [10]

In other words, we are in a war, and those who do not accept the fundamentals of the faith are in the enemy camp. They are indeed "enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame" (Philippians 3:18-19). A man who is a heretic is to be rejected "after the first and second admonition" (Titus 3:10), not the tenth or twentieth - much less tolerated because a presbytery of apostates decides his teachings are acceptable.

The enemy's weapons in this war are frequently strange to the believer - subversion, propaganda, tricks of parliamentary procedure, deliberate infiltration of many of the institutions of Biblical orthodoxy including seminaries, local churches, and denominational leadership. The enemy has not resorted to the more overt and familiar forms of warfare because he has done so well without them.

True believers must recognize that we face an enemy whose objective is the spiritual emasculation of the church through the undermining and destruction of authentic Biblical Christianity within it.

The question is: What course will true believers pursue - victory or appeasement? The answer to that question will demonstrate who the true believers really are. A true believer

understands that the one true Gospel is by nature an exclusive Gospel, that Jesus is the only Way (John 14:6), and that no other "gospel" that redefines "Jesus" and the terms of the Gospel is tolerable for one moment within the church (2 Corinthians 11:4).

A policy of accommodation - the policy of most so-called conservatives within the PCA almost from its founding - is nothing but appeasement of the enemies of the cross of Christ. Appeasement, unchecked, leads inevitably to surrender. Surrender means bondage - bondage to the tyranny and spiritual death propagated by the heretics, not only for misguided "conservative" pastors and elders who remain in the PCA, but moreover for the flocks that God has entrusted to their care.

Far too many self-described conservatives are willing to remain comfortably settled in spiritual Sodom despite its evils. Far too many are afraid to leave behind the pleasures of spiritual Egypt, thus subjecting themselves and future generations to bondage. That bondage has already begun, even if they do not yet recognize the closing cold iron of the shackles.

Souls are at stake. Blood is already upon self-described conservatives' hands. They must not add more.

Believers Who Still Remain in the PCA Have Their Battle Orders

God's battle orders to true believers could not be more clear:

Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: "When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall

be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life.

"But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand." So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. (Ezekiel 33:1-7)

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial [literally, Satan, or a pagan god]? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them, and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

Therefore, "Come out from among them and be separate," says the Lord. "Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

The Holy Spirit through the Apostle John warned the church concerning a man who is a heretic, "do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds" (2 John 10). The word for house here is *oikia*, which speaks of your dwelling place or your household. In other words, John is saying, do not even receive a false teacher privately, much less receive him publicly in the church. Do not have anything to do with him.

Furthermore, he says, do not even "greet" a false teacher. (The King James has "neither bid him God speed" which is not an accurate rendering of the Greek.) A literal rendering of the

Greek would be, "A friendly greeting to him say not." The idea in the original is actually even more emphatic: "Do not have even a single encouraging word to say to a false teacher, or anything that might even sound like an encouraging word."

John gives us the reason for such an uncompromising stand in verse 11: The one who gives even the slightest encouragement to a false teacher, the one who extends any sign of friendship to a false teacher, "shares in his evil deeds." The word that is translated "shares" is a form of the Greek *koinoneo*. It has to do with entering into fellowship or being associated with someone's evil deeds, becoming a partner in them, causing someone's evil deeds to spread or to gain influence. When people in the church are neutral about false teaching, or they give it even the slightest encouragement, or permit it to be discussed and debated as though it had some standing to be heard in the church, they are partakers in it.

The Apostle Paul said that a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6), and that false doctrine spreads like cancer (2 Timothy 2:17). It is deadly serious.

Again, the question is: Victory or appeasement? That is the choice. Will the PCA's self-proclaimed conservatives continue their dereliction of duty, or will they obey the clear commands of the Captain of their salvation? Victory, in this case, is a final warning to the faithful to do their duty, followed by clear and complete separation from the PCA's apostasy. That is what those who say they are for the truth and opposed to error must do, now. No more lines in the sand.

References:

1. *A Joint Federal Vision Profession*, as viewed at http://www.federal-vision.com/resources/joint_FV_Statement.pdf
2. From a message posted by Jeffrey Meyers on the Yahoo! Groups, Wrightsaid List ("What N. T. Wright Really Said"), Message 274, dated 8/30/2002 11:33 PM.

3. From a message posted by Jeffrey Meyers on the Yahoo! Groups, Wrightsaid List ("What N. T. Wright Really Said"), Message 4652, dated 5/22/2004 8:21 PM.
4. From a message posted by Jeffrey Meyers on the Yahoo! Groups, Wrightsaid List ("What N. T. Wright Really Said"), Message 101, dated 8/15/2002 1:40 PM.
5. N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997), page 41.
6. From a message posted by Jeffrey Meyers on the Yahoo! Groups, Wrightsaid List ("What N. T. Wright Really Said"), Message 101, dated 8/12/2002 11:29 PM.
7. The full text of the report is available on the PCA Historical Center website, <http://www.pcahistory.org/creation/report.html>
8. This was enacted by an amendment to PCA *Book of Church Order* chapter 21, section 4. The full text of the amendment, and the overture that brought it about, appears at the PCA Historical Center website, www.pcanet.org/history/documents/BCO21-4.htm.]
9. The full text of the report is available on the PCA Historical Center website, <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/07-fvreport.pdf>
10. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "The Basis of Christian Unity," in *Knowing the Times: Addresses Delivered on Various Occasions 1942-1977* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 162-163.

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