

Table: ‘Five Solas’ of Reformed Faith versus PCUSA

Introduction

The “Five Solas” emerged during the Protestant Reformation as Latin phrases meant to summarize the Reformers’ fundamental theological beliefs, as distinct from those of the Roman Catholic church. The Latin word “sola” means “alone” or “only,” and the “Five Solas,” taken together, articulated the basic pillars of faith the Protestant Reformers believed were essential to Christian belief and practice. Deriving from the Reformed Tradition, the Presbyterian denomination is grounded in these “Five Solas”, which find their expression in the Presbyterian Church (USA)’s *Book of Confessions*. Sadly, as we shall demonstrate here, the PCUSA now embraces a culture of theological pluralism which has abandoned its “Five Solas” heritage. Listed below are the “Five Solas” of Reformed faith, along with evidence of how the PCUSA has departed from these tenets in its policy and practice.

1. The Person and Work of Jesus Christ: “Solus Christus” – by Christ Alone

“Solus Christus” is the Reformed teaching that Jesus Christ is one with God, that by His death and bodily resurrection He is the unique and only mediator between God and humans, and that there is salvation in no other.

The Word of God:

John 14: 4-6

“You know the way to the place where I am going.”
 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”
 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Colossians 1:15-23

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his

PCUSA beliefs, policies and practices:

a.) The deity and singular, saving lordship of Christ

In 1981, the highest court in the PCUSA upheld National Capital Union Presbytery’s decision to ordain Mansfield Kaseman. In answer to the question, “Was Jesus God?” Kaseman replied, “No, God is God.” Later, in an attempt to explain his position, he said, “Saying Jesus is one with God is a better way of saying it ... but I, too, am one with God.

Over the past two decades, representatives of The Jesus Seminar, which blatantly denies the divinity of Jesus Christ, have been invited to speak at PCUSA conference centers and have been published by PCUSA funded publishing houses.

In 1993, a conference entitled “Re-Imagining God” was funded by the PCUSA mission budget (\$60,000) and planned largely by PCUSA personnel at denominational expense. Participants received tens of thousands of dollars worth of travel and registration expense reimbursements from the PCUSA mission budget. At the conference, “worship” leaders denied the existence of a transcendent God, worshipped “the god within ourselves,” and exchanged the goddess “Sophia” for Jesus Christ, declaring that Jesus “was first born only in the sense that he was first to show us that it is possible to live in oneness with the divine source while we are here on this planet.”

In 1993, twenty PCUSA leaders attended the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, including David Ramage, President of the PCUSA’s McCormick Theological Seminary and a key organizer of the event, and Dirk Ficca, executive director of the Parliament. Also present from PCUSA were Syngman Rhee and Thelma Adair, former moderators of the PCUSA General Assembly, Jay Rock, director of

blood, shed on the cross.

²¹Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of^{f^a} your evil behavior. ²²But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.”

Acts 4: 8-12

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is

“the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.^{a·b}

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

interfaith relations for the National Council of Churches and an employee of the PCUSA, and Margaret O. Thomas, associate for interfaith relations in the PCUSA's Worldwide Ministries Division. The event lifted up “pluralism” as a conference reality and a goal toward which participants and their denominations/religions should strive.

In 1994, The PCUSA co-sponsored “Celebrate! Gathering at the Crossroads,” an ecumenical student conference in St. Louis. The Bible Study leaders' book for that occasion was *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*. Here is a quote from that book: “Christ is a major problem for feminist theology. That problem has been born of an unholy trinity, father-son-holy ghost, that has cradled Christ in its patriarchal arms ... I will be developing a Christology not centered in Jesus, but in relationship and community and the whole-making, healing center of Christianity. In that sense, Christ is what I am calling Christa/Community.”

In 1994, Kwok Pui-lan was invited to be the featured leadership seminar speaker at the PCUSA's Stony Point conference center. She told her audience of presbytery leaders that our gods are the products of our own experiences. It follows, she said, that many experiences will generate many gods, a fact of life in Kwok Pui-lan's culture. This is no problem, she said, so long as one avoids “superior attitudes” and does not get hung up on “the myth of Christian uniqueness.” Kwok Pui-lan's writings have been published by the PCUSA's denominationally funded publishing house, Westminster/John Knox Press. In 1994, she was a featured author for *Horizons*, the official publication of Presbyterian Women.

In 1996, at the “Naming, Claiming and Re-Imagining Power” conference, heavily supported and funded by the PCUSA, the following prayer was chanted: “Bless Sophia, Dream the Vision, Share the Wisdom Dwelling Deep Within.” The conference theme promoted the idea that our salvation is achieved by discovering “the god within us,” rather than looking to a male figure [Jesus] who purportedly came from above.

In 2000, The Rev. Dirk Ficca (a member of Chicago Presbytery) was the featured speaker at the PCUSA sponsored and funded “Peacemaking Conference.” He stated that world peace is threatened by religions that make exclusive claims, and he asked rhetorically, “If God is at work in our lives, whether we're Christian or not, what's the big deal about Jesus?” In 2001, the Executive Committee of the General Assembly Council, the PCUSA agency responsible for the conference, declined to discipline Ficca or even to distance itself from his “Jesus” statement. Rather, it affirmed that PCUSA conference speakers had the freedom to express their convictions.

At the 2001 General Assembly, a motion was made to declare “the singular, saving lordship of Jesus Christ.” That motion was defeated when the assembly was persuaded that such a statement was disrespectful to “other religions.” “Religions are like a basket of fruit,” said a speaker representing the prevailing opinion. “Apples and oranges are different, but they are all fruit. Religions are different varieties of the same thing, so they're all equal.”

In 2006, the World Council of Churches (which receives \$458,402 in the 2010 Per Capita budget and additional funds from various categories of the Office of the General Assembly's \$1,002,633 "Grants to Ecumenical Groups" budget) began a move to stretch its boundaries to include non-Christians. On Feb 15, 2006, his Holiness Aram I, moderator of the WCC's Central Committee called on the WCC assembly to lead its member churches "out of our frozen, ossified, petrified churches" and recognize the "Christ" in other places. "We cannot confine the economy, practice, activity, and saving action of Jesus Christ within the church," he said. At the assembly, representatives who prayed in the name of Allah, the Lord Krishna, Siddhartha Buddha, and the Goddess Gaia were welcomed in a "Big Tent" where inter-faith "worship" services were conducted.

The 2008 and 2010 General Assemblies struggled over attempts to forge a statement that might strengthen relations among Christians, Muslims and Jews. Exclusive claims for Jesus became a stumbling block in those discussions. In the end, the General Assembly diminished Jesus' divine character in order to forge more friendly inter-faith relations. During committee and plenary testimony, frequent use was made of the mantra, "we are all children of Abraham." Commissioners urged one another to diminish – not by denial, but by omission – Trinitarian statements and statements that emphasize Jesus' divine nature, since such statements have proven stumbling blocks during interfaith dialogues.

An example of this can be seen in the 2008 General Assembly's vote "to support *A Common Word Between Us and You*, an invitation to dialogue and cooperation from 138 Muslim clerics, and to commend this document...as a primary source for engaging in substantive interfaith dialogue with the goal of greater understanding and cooperation among members of the Abrahamic faith traditions as the pathway to a new era of global peace and justice." Included in *A Common Word Between Us and You* is a quote from the Qu'ran: "Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God." Discerning Christians know that the "God" affirmed by Islam and the Trinitarian God worshipped by Christians represent two very different understandings of the Deity, and that the above Qu'ran quote that they voted "to support" rules out the Trinity and the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

In 2009, the PCUSA sponsored a gathering in Atlanta, GA called "The Big Tent," self described as "a denominational happening ... celebratory, diverse, participatory and intergenerational." The conference proved to be a symbol of the PCUSA's preeminent "faith" claim, that of "inclusiveness and diversity."

On November 17, 2010, Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church Senior Pastor Morgan Murray wrote to his congregation of his concerns, "...about the spiritual and structural health of SF Presbytery, not to

mention its theological commitments. In recent Presbytery meetings we have been encouraged to pray in the name of 'the Triune God, Yahweh, and Allah.' We have also seen the presbytery show near unanimous support for a pastoral candidate whose statement of faith affirmed 'the Kin-dom of God' over against 'the Kingdom of God,' which the candidate dismissed as an obsolete metaphor."

b.) The atonement of Christ

In 1993, Delores Williams, speaker at the PCUSA-sponsored "Re-Imagining God" conference, declared: "I don't think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff ... we just need to listen to the God within." Williams's articles, including one that rejects "the theory of the atonement," have been published by the PCUSA's official publication, *Presbyterian Survey*, and she was featured as the leader of a week-long seminar leader at Ghost Ranch, a PCUSA national conference center.

In 2002, at a conference sponsored by the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, Anna Case-Winters, associate professor of theology at the PCUSA's McCormick Theological Seminary, declared that the atoning death of Jesus Christ is an outdated doctrine. Not the cross, but "the incarnation itself may be redemptive," said Winters, in a paper that she prepared for the conference. "He became as we are that we may become as he is – the incarnation that accomplishes our salvation." Winters has often declared that the atonement is an evil doctrine, because it is child abuse for a father to sacrifice his son, and the doctrine encourages such child abuse in today's world. Winters has played a prominent role among PCUSA policy makers. She was appointed by Jack Rogers, moderator of the 2001 General Assembly, to the General Assembly Committee on Confessions and Theology. She has also served as the PCUSA's delegate to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

At the same conference, Paul Capetz, formerly professor of theology at the PCUSA's Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va., agreed with Winters' dismissal of the atonement: "What about the atonement?" he asked. "We don't need any more crucifixions." Capetz said the symbol of the cross is still useful because "it is a reminder that suffering is part of the Christian life." Capetz, argued that Jesus was crucified and died in a time when many religions practiced animal sacrifice because they were influenced by the culture of their times. In his view, the doctrine of the atonement was simply a perpetuation of that culture which is no longer useful to us today.

In 2010, Margaret Miles was chosen to give the prestigious annual Sprunt Lecture at the PCUSA's Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va. Miles rejected the orthodox view of the cross, declaring it an inappropriate symbol for 21st century Christians. She suggested that the cross be replaced with a lactating breast: "The cross is inappropriate as a symbol of God's love because it presents a violent act as salvific. The equation of love with heroic violence and suffering is typically a male-centered perspective ... the value of the nursing breast as a symbol of God's provision might need to be reconsidered in our own time."

c.) The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ

In 1996, Douglas Ottati, professor of theology at the PCUSA's Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va., published *Jesus Christ and Christian Vision*. His publisher was the PCUSA funded publishing house, Westminster/John Knox Press. In that book, and throughout the years of his seminary teaching, he argued against the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. He affirms "the resurrection," but what he means by that is "a continuing presence" of Christ in the lives of his disciples. He says that the disciples "experienced" Christ's presence after his death, although it is not clear how he differentiates this experience from a residual memory. Recognizing that his denial of the bodily resurrection might become a problem, Ottati wrote in a paper distributed among his seminary colleagues: "I am not insensitive to the fact that my interpretation yields few hard and fast rules for the preacher at Easter."

In 1997, Rosemary Radford Ruether delivered the prestigious Sprunt Lecture at the PCUSA's Union Theological Seminary. In her book, *Sexism and God-Talk*, Ruether calls the resurrection of Jesus Christ "a myth created by males to assuage their own fear of death." Her theology makes room for multiple deities that are encompassed into "the great womb within which all things--Gods and humans, sky and earth, humans and non-humans--are generated."

In recent years, several PCUSA ministers have publicly declared their inability to believe that Jesus rose from the dead. Among them are John Shuck in Elizabethton, TN, Rob Martin in Palo Alto, CA, Helen Dekker, in the Presbytery of West Jersey, and James Rigby, of Austin, TX. Says Rigby: "The resurrection took place when the community was born. What rose was the body of Christ. Maybe a body got up; I don't care. That's not the point ... It's a symbol of something deeper ... What these symbols are talking about are not things that happened; they are things that are always true. The Resurrection is happening now. ... Heaven is not another world someplace else. It's a profound understanding of this world, of that which is not born and that which does not die."

While the statements in the paragraph above have been made by individual ministers and are not official declarations of the PCUSA itself, the denomination's failure to discipline such ministers leads them to believe that they can make such statements with impunity. They rightly perceive that a culture of theological pluralism is firmly entrenched in the PCUSA, a denomination which by forfeiting any theological boundaries has therefore welcomed a multiplicity of divergent and often contradictory faiths.

II. The Authority of Scripture: "Sola Scriptura" – by Scripture Alone

"Sola Scriptura" is the Reformed teaching that the Bible is the only inspired, perfect, sufficient and authoritative word of God and the only source for Christian doctrine.

The Word of God:

2 Timothy 3:16-17

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the servant of God^[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13

“And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”

2 Peter 1: 16-20

“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.¹⁷ For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”^[a]¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

John 17:17

“Sanctify^[a] them by the truth; your word is truth.”

PCUSA policies and practices:

Throughout the PCUSA, there is a general pattern of prioritizing one's perceptions of faith above the propositional truths of Scripture. Scripture then is only “authoritative” if it melds with the preconceptions one brings to it. This breaks from the Reformed tradition, which not only declares that Scripture is our authority, but stipulates how Scripture is to be properly interpreted—via the principle that *Scripture interprets Scripture*. In other words, one is to read a particular passage in the light of the whole counsel of Scripture.

This hermeneutic is often disregarded by General Assemblies and their agencies. Instead, they typically lift up a principle (e.g., “justice” or “equality” or “liberation”), each with its own predetermined (i.e. extra-biblical) definition, and then interpret a passage of Scripture through the lens of that predetermined principle. In this manner, the words of Scripture are recast into meanings that defy what Scripture actually says. This hermeneutic is often employed during General Assembly deliberations. Thus the General Assembly disregards *what Scripture says* in favor of what its theologians *say that Scripture means*. One often hears the statement, “We all agree that Scripture is authoritative, but we have different ways of interpreting it.” This has led to the plight described in Judges 21:25: “There was no king [authority] in Israel, and everyone did what is right in his own eyes.”

As an example, witness the proceedings of the Boston Presbytery, which put forth the concept of three tiers of authority: First is Jesus Christ, second is the Scriptures who witness to Christ, and third is the confessions of faith. The scheme definitely implies that there is a way or are ways of knowing Christ that could take precedence over the testimony of the Scriptures. The Boston Presbytery went so far as to claim that the Scriptures are to be obeyed only “to the extent that they accurately bear witness to Christ's will.”(!) Of course, Colossians 3:16 clearly states that Scripture is “the word of Christ,” so it is unclear how any portion of Scripture could be anything other than what Christ wills.

The Confession of 1967 (C-67) modified prior confessions to state that Scriptural authority is determined not by Scripture, but by the “self” who reads and interprets Scripture. The Bible was no longer considered the word of God, but rather a “witness” to the word of God, introducing the idea of fallibility of Scripture. Says the Confession: “Scripture is nevertheless the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written.” NOTE: 1967 was the last year PCUSA grew as a denomination. Since that year, the denomination has lost more than half its membership.

In 1991, the Presbyterian Women Horizons Bible study issued a statement which elevated human authority above Scripture. Quote: “In obedience to the Bible, we sometimes must disobey a given biblical imperative.” This theme was later reiterated in the report of the Special Committee on Human Sexuality (1991): “...Whatever in

Biblical tradition, church practice and teaching, human experience, and human reason violates God's commandment to do love and justice, that must be rejected as ethical authority." The human lens of "love and justice" thus determines the applicability of Scripture. ("Horizons" is the official publication of Presbyterian Women and is funded by the PCUSA mission budget.)

In 1995, at a conference sponsored by the Women's Ministries Program Area of the General Assembly Council and funded in part from the PCUSA mission budget, Miriam Theresa Winter was the keynote speaker. She told her audience that relying on Scripture alone is "like peering at the universe through a straw." Winter's poetry often extols pagan goddesses Sophia, Ishtar, Inanna, Hathor, Cybele, Nut, Hera, Athene, Aphrodite, Artemis, Demeter, Isis and Gaia. Her poems have been included in the Presbyterian Church USA Youth Curriculum and appeared in the 1996 "issues packet" for the National Network of Presbyterian College Women. Also, in 1996, Winter's songs of praise to Sophia were sung during a youth gathering at the Massanetta Springs Conference center.

Minutes of the 217th General Assembly (2006) show the following statement: "We derive our understanding of human life from Scripture and the Reformed Tradition in light of science, human experience, and reason guided by the Holy Spirit." This statement inverts the orthodox approach to Scripture interpretation, which more correctly would state, "We derive our understanding of all things in science, human experience, and reason in light of Scripture." The statement as quoted in the minutes represents a clear subjugation of Scriptural authority to human interpretation, and implies the Holy Spirit could guide the reader in a manner other than what is stated in Scripture.

In 2010, the Rev. Landon Whitsitt, vice-moderator of PUCSA, declared, "Sola Scriptura is dead in most places and rapidly dying in others." The accuracy of his comment regarding the PCUSA is not challenged here; however, he meant it as something to celebrate, while we see it as something to lament.

A Specific Example of PCUSA Deviation from Scriptural Authority: Sanctity of Life

Scripture explicitly teaches that we humans are not accidents of nature. Rather, each person who has ever lived or will ever live was ordained by God at the origin of the world to be created in His image and immeasurably loved by Him. Therefore, all human life is precious, a gift of God to be loved, nurtured and protected by His people.

The Word of God:

Psalm 139: 13-18

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's

PCUSA policies and practices:

In 1970, the General Assembly ratified the following: "Women should have full freedom of personal choice concerning the completion or termination of their pregnancies."

womb.

¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book

before one of them came to be.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, God!

How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—

when I awake, I am still with you.

Jeremiah 1:4-5

Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born^(J) I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Ephesians 1:3-6

Blessed be^(E) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing^(G) in the heavenly places, ^{4(H)} even as he^(J) chose us in him^(J) before the foundation of the world, that we should be^(K) holy and blameless before him. In love ^{5(L)} he predestined us^(b) for^(M) adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, ^(N) according to the purpose of his will, ^{6(O)} to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in^(E) the Beloved.

In 1988, GA Stated Clerk James Andrews filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of "abortion rights."

In 1996, the GA rejected an overture affirming that "partial birth abortion of a live fetus, except to save the life of a mother, falls short of God's plan for humankind."

In each General Assembly over the last two decades, a motion has been made to have the PCUSA affirm the sanctity of life and oppose the extermination of God's little ones living within the womb. Not one of those motions has been voted in the affirmative, with the PCUSA declining to approve any proposal to uphold the sanctity of life for unborn children.

III. Salvation: "Sola Gratia" – by Grace Alone and IV. "Sola Fide" – by Faith Alone

"Sola Gratia" is the Reformed teaching that salvation comes by divine grace only, and apart from any human merit or achievement. "Sola Fide" implies that our justification (i.e. being declared just by God) is received by faith only,

without reliance on “good works.” Taken together, these two doctrines recognize that our salvation from death to life is entirely dependent on the grace of God, who imputes to the believer the righteousness of Christ. This then is a “free” gift received by the believer simply through faith, and not merited by any work on the part of the believer. Implied in these two concepts is the need for redemption from the universality of sin, which is understood as the fundamental and universal human affliction which separates us from God. It is this affliction which necessitates our justification, for apart from forgiveness in Christ, our sinful condition necessarily leads to our destruction. Salvation by faith in God’s wondrous grace is thus understood to bring redemption from this fate and to eternal life with God.

The Word of God:

Romans 3:21-26

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Ephesians 2: 1-10:

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature^[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed

PCUSA policies and practices:

In contrast with the doctrine described above, the PCUSA, in policies and practice, espouses a liberation theology that considers humans as inherently good, and redefines evil as the oppression that is imposed upon humans by unjust socio-political structures. As noted above, the Biblical understanding holds that we are saved by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, not by any act emanating from ourselves. In the PCUSA’s understanding, humans are liberated by overthrowing the unjust structures and systems that oppress them. Sometimes, this is accomplished through its own organized efforts, and sometimes it occurs through the efforts of others who join their cause. Said the PCUSA Representatives Joint Strategy and Action Committee (1975): “We need to continue to build ties of solidarity between all those who are working for human liberation both here and in other countries...In order to understand the nature of the socio/political/economic reality of the American people as a basis for doing liberation theology, the tools of Marxist social analysis are crucial—especially its attention to class structures and the economic determinants of behaviors and institutions...The present economic system is irreconcilable with the Christian faith...”

The result of this doctrine is the subjugation and even dismissal of evangelism in the form of sharing the traditional gospel message of salvation from death to life through belief in Christ alone. Rather, there is a prevailing pattern within PCUSA of subordinating issues of salvation to issues of human liberation. There is a corresponding pattern of prioritizing cultural endeavor which emphasizes the recipients’ material condition above his/her spiritual condition, to the point where belief becomes inconsequential. “Missions” (meaning delivering the gospel of Christ to all cultures and peoples) has been redefined as “mission” (meaning the various functions and activities of the church), with a resultant de-emphasis on gospel evangelism. This “theology of liberation” is the root doctrine that underlies the denomination’s use of “missions money” as a de facto political action committee (PAC) for radical leftist national and international causes. Examples include the following;

--Support of Marxist revolutions in Africa and Latin America (e.g. support of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua in the 1980’s).

in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

--Unilateral identification of Israel as the “oppressor” in the Middle East conflict, and support of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, as well as Hamas, Hezbollah, and other Palestinian liberation organizations, all of which seek to undermine the Israeli state.

--Praise of Cuba’s leadership under Castro, much to the distress of Christians who have suffered under that leadership.

--Support of community organizations among the “poor and disenfranchised” (e.g. ACORN), focused entirely on rectifying perceived material injustices and without regard to sharing the importance of faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

In 2006, Jim Rigby, minister of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Austin, TX welcomed into the congregation’s membership Robert Jensen. When receiving Jensen, Rigby made it clear that Jensen’s “faith” was “not exactly orthodox.” In an article published in Counterpunch magazine, Jensen had said, “I don’t believe in God. I don’t believe Jesus Christ was the son of a God that I don’t believe in, nor do I believe Jesus rose from the dead to ascend to a heaven that I don’t believe exists.” Jensen said he joined the church because he approved of its social service and political stands. Rigby defended the decision to admit to the membership of a Christian church a person who does not believe what the church believes, saying that it was important to “build bridges” with non-believers and that policies of inclusiveness and diversity would widen Christian fellowship.

V. Everything for God’s Glory: “Soli Deo Gloria” – Glory to God Alone

This final “Sola” represents the culmination of our faith—that everything is done for God’s glory alone. Implicit in this doctrine is the idea that any thought, belief, or activity that is not in keeping with the will of God as expressed in Scripture is to be denied. God is understood as represented by the Trinity—a manifestation of God in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are created by the Father through the Son through whom we have been redeemed. We are then drawn into a holy, Trinitarian communion by the Holy Spirit, empowering us to be fruitful as we experience abundant and eternal life. Reformed faith tells us not only that Jesus Christ is our Savior, but that he is our present Lord, our future Judge, and our coming King. Thus, our life in Christ is a disciplined life in which our wills and sinful inclinations must be conformed to His example and teaching as we witness it in Scripture, so that everything we think and do is done in reverent submission and honor to the glory of God.

The Word of God:

1 Corinthians 10:31

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

Matthew 3: 16-17

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said,

PCUSA policies and practices:

In 2006, an “alternative definition” of the Trinity as “Mother, Child, and Womb” was offered in a paper submitted by the denomination’s Theology and Worship Ministry Unit that was approved for study by that year’s General Assembly. Those in PCUSA leadership eager to jettison the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity fall into two basic groups: (1) Radical feminists, who are offended by “patriarchal” terms such as “Father” and “Son”; and (2) Ecumenically-inclined syncretists, who see the Trinity as a stumbling block in their attempt to equate all religions, especially Christian, Muslim, and Jewish.

In 1991, the General Assembly Task Force on Human Sexuality recommended a “Justice/Love Principle” to the General Assembly. In

“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Matthew 28: 19-20:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Ephesians 4: 17-24:

“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. That, however, is not the way of life you learned²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds;²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Jude 3-7:

“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people.⁴ For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about^[a] long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord^[b] at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later

its report, the task force concluded that all sexual activity among adults – whether marital or extramarital, heterosexual or homosexual – is good if it occurs by mutual consent that is not coerced (justice) and is motivated by a sincere desire to please the partner (love). The task force report recognized that this “justice/love principle” does not comport with Scripture, so it offered a new understanding of Scriptural authority: “Whatever in Scripture, tradition, reason or experience embodies genuine love and caring justice, that bears authority for us and commends an ethic to do likewise. Whatever in Biblical tradition, church practice and teaching, human experience, and human reason violates God’s commandment to do love and justice, that must be rejected as ethical authority.” The report failed to gain approval in the GA, but the assembly agreed the report could be used as a “study resource” for the church. The concept of “Justice/Love” has since appeared in numerous denominational conferences, study guides, curricula and promotional materials.

Stated in the 2006 Report on Peace, Unity and Purity (PUP), General Assembly, Birmingham (2006): "Therefore, we believe the church should seek constructive, Christ-like alternatives to the 'yes/no' forms in which questions about sexuality, ordination, and same-gender covenantal relationships have been put to the church in recent decades."

In 2010, for the fifth time, the PCUSA General Assembly voted in favor of submitting to the Presbyteries its recommendation to overturn the “fidelity-chastity” clause governing ordination in the Book of Order. The same General Assembly voted to recommend to the Board of Pensions that same-gender couples be provided with benefits comparable to those offered to opposite-gender couples.

Wrote Bill Tammeus, Presbyterian Outlook, July 26, 2010, in his article "Who will be the last Presbyterian?": "Let's acknowledge that the PC(USA) has been a reactionary voice of condemnation and not a joyful voice of love." Ignoring the preponderant weight of orthodox understanding of Scripture on this topic, Tammeus implies that one must accept homosexual behavior to truly care for the homosexual person.

destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶ And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. ⁷ In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.”

VI. Conclusion: Consequences of Surrendering Truth

Truth—Expectation that the Christ-follower is to discover, proclaim and apply God’s truth as found in His word, and that one will be held to account for one’s response to this truth

Reformed faith admonishes us of our obligation to search the word of God prayerfully in order to discern His truth. This truth is immutable, universally-applicable (the term here is “ontological”), and readily discernable (a concept Luther termed “perspicuous”). Contrary to the postmodern claim that truth is elusive and that ambiguity is to be celebrated, God presents in His word a truth which is designed to serve as an unchanging guide through the shifting beliefs of culture. Furthermore, it tells us that one day Christ will return to judge both the living and the dead based on our response to the truth He reveals in Scripture. We as disciples of Jesus Christ are therefore called to discern this truth and proclaim it throughout the world.

The Word of God:

Ephesians 4: 14-16

“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

2 Timothy 2:24-26:

“And^(A) the Lord’s servant^(a) must not be quarrelsome but^(B) kind to everyone,^(C) able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵correcting his opponents^(D) with gentleness. God^(E) may perhaps grant them

PCUSA policies and practices:

The aforementioned evidence represents but a sampling of the theological drift in the PCUSA over the past thirty years. An overarching theme in all these examples is this: When truth is disregarded in any area of Scripture, there is no boundary to how far one will stray. Attempts to incorporate supposedly minor deviations from God’s explicit instruction as revealed in Scripture invariably result in further and further decay, eventually yielding situations that are nothing less than shocking in their irreverence.

repentance^(b) leading to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from^(c) the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.”

2 Timothy 4:1-5

“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: ²Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”

2 Corinthians 10:5:

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Proverbs 16:25

“There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.”

