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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

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

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.

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."

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).

"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^[a] 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.

repentance^(E) leading to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from^(G) 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."