

Positive Contributions of Evangelicals to the Life of the PC(USA)

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Let me begin with a personal note. I write this piece out of deep love and devotion to my Savior, Jesus Christ. It is my desire that what I write glorifies him, and yet I know as a sinner, that what I write is deeply flawed and imperfect. The reason I am willing to write at all about being an evangelical PC(USA) Presbyterian is that, for me, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) evangelicalism has been a means through which Christ drew nearer to me and a means through which I found myself drawn nearer to him. Some time after my ordination as a minister in the former Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS), a season came when my devotion to and love for Jesus Christ deepened. I noticed that I also began to take the Bible much more seriously. At some point I recognized that I had become an evangelical Presbyterian in the PC(USA). Yet I recognize that PC(USA) evangelicalism is the clay pot, and Jesus is the treasure.

During the month between my writing the first and second installments of this response to R. Milton Winter's article, *Presbyterians and Separatist Evangelicals—A Continuing Dilemma*,¹ the issue of what to me is a highly exaggerated and critical broadside against PC(USA) evangelicals, published by the Office of the General Assembly (OGA), has not gone away. For those who have not read the feedback and want to, there is a lot to read. Robert Gagnon², Jack Haberer³, Dave Moody⁴, and Dennis Evans⁵ are just a few of those who have responded to the article or to the responses to it. Viola Larsen⁶ was the first to comment on it, and it was her article that called it to my attention. Within the parameters given me by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly⁷, I tried to briefly to answer Winter's charges in my earlier article.⁸ That will not be the primary purpose of this piece, and yet the problem remains.

Jack Haberer, editor of the independent *Presbyterian Outlook* cuts to the heart of the problem: "Now, to make matters worse, the OGA has published an essay that dissects the evangelical movement within the church, presenting a highly critical, one-sided, and oft-erroneous set of generalizations about that movement."⁹ Having published an unfair characterization and caricature of PC(USA) evangelicals (an action which in my view does not further the peace, unity, and purity of the church), the OGA has neither retracted it nor has it expressed regret. It should.

There are, of course, various ways the OGA could have reacted:

1. It could wisely have issued a retraction or an apology.
2. It could unwisely have replicated its original error by publishing a similar lengthy critique of another part of the body of Christ—for example, theological liberals.
3. Instead, the OGA decided to ask an evangelical who had complained about the article (me) basically to defend evangelicals by showing positively how we fulfill the seventh ordination vow—"to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church."¹⁰

Since accepting this task, I have come to see how problematic it is. It is an unenviable job to attempt to demonstrate how evangelicals, the accused party, actually do fulfill our ordination vow after all, and I have gotten some feedback about it.¹¹ Though I do not believe this was Cliff Kirkpatrick's or my intention, upon reflection, I wonder if the effect of this assignment might not be somewhat like me as a pastor asking some of my elders whom I might have criticized to show how they were actually "friends to their colleagues in ministry" after all (fifth ordination vow). Or, imagine the effect if I asked a deacon whom I had criticized because she didn't like my sermons to show how she really did, after all, "trust Jesus Christ her Savior"(first ordination vow). In both cases, the effect is to put a person who has already been criticized on the defensive once more.

Also, the intent to further peace, unity, and purity is difficult to prove. Is the evangelical person who asks probing theological questions of someone being examined in an examinations committee or on the floor of presbytery a legalistic and egotistical pietist, or is he trying to further the theological purity of the church? Is the evangelical person who gives some money to a highly effective non-PC(USA) mission organization hurting the unity of the church or is she pursuing its first great end? Is the evangelical Presbyterian who seeks, constitutionally, to resist the ordination of self-affirming, practicing homosexuals a hopelessly fundamentalist bigot, or is she doing her best to further the peace, unity, and purity of Christ's church by seeing that it is built on God's Word as she reads it in Scripture, rather than on the assumptions of our culture? Is the evangelical member of the PC(USA) who at times criticizes its denominational leadership a "troubler of Israel,"¹² or is he speaking truth to a power structure, which may itself at times be the troubler of God's people?¹³ These issues go to the heart of the things that divide us, and so it is very difficult to prove about a person that he or she is furthering peace, unity, and purity.

In thinking about the kinds of persons and situations I just mentioned, my own experience causes two thoughts to come to mind. First, about ninety-five percent of PC(USA) evangelicals I know, especially laypeople, have never even once done anything confrontational or political like the examples cited above. They are simply salt-of-the-earth Christians who love the Lord and love people and do their best to follow Christ. They support their local church with their generosity, their hard work, and their attendance. They try to reach out to the world in word and deed. Second, the small number of PC(USA) evangelicals I know who would—even once—do something even vaguely confrontational on behalf of the peace, unity, and purity of the church, spend the great majority of their lives—day in and day out—being loving, caring, nurturing, plain-vanilla Christians, though there is nothing plain about the vibrancy of their lives! In my mind, both groups of these PC(USA) evangelicals reflect so well the prayer of St. Francis:

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy..."

So, the answer to the question of who in the PC(USA) is contributing to peace, unity, and purity—and who is not—is complex because people are complex and because we see the issues differently. The answer we find will be rooted in our theology and even in our eschatology, but the truth is, we will probably not know for sure who actually furthered the peace, unity, and purity of the church until we all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. He is the judge. In the end I do think, however, that we have quite reasonable grounds to consider that peace (as well as unity and purity) is linked to the living out of certain theological truths that our Lord has given us.

Therefore, in this article I shall be trying not so much to prove the un-provable—that evangelicals by intent and action fulfill the seventh ordination vow. Instead, I will attempt to show that the seventh vow grows out of the soil of our relationship with Christ, and that it is the culmination of our whole system of doctrine and government, including the great ends and the core beliefs of the church, matters which are of central importance to evangelicals. In other words, I want to show how evangelicals are committed to Jesus Christ the Foundation of the Church (Form of Government, G-1.0100), to its great ends (G-1.0200), to its core beliefs (G-2.0300-2.0500), and to all the ordination vows in G-14, culminating in the seventh vow, “to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church.” But first let us ask, Who are PC(USA) evangelicals?

Who Are PC(USA) Evangelicals?

If evangelicals are not a majority in the PC(USA), then in a denomination where no group is a majority, we are surely the largest minority. Interestingly enough, in a 2005 Presbyterian Panel survey, 41 percent of our members said they were theologically conservative¹⁴ versus 19 percent who said they were theologically liberal. Of our elders, 43 percent said they were theologically conservative, and 19 percent said they were theologically liberal.¹⁵ Although being theologically conservative and being theologically evangelical may not be quite the same things, I think there is a very significant overlap between the two groups. One could estimate that evangelical Presbyterians compose significantly over a third of the PC(USA) membership, but somewhat less than half.

How might we define evangelicals? Let me begin with an email I received from Harry Hassall, a prominent PC(USA) evangelical. Harry emailed me, giving a stab at a definition of what it means to be an evangelical. He wrote: “Early on, I submitted that Martin Marty of the *Christian Century* had it right, when he described us (this is not a direct quote) as Christians with three characteristics: 1. a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ our Savior (some call this ‘being born again’ ...and I [Harry] am one of those¹⁶); 2. a very high view of the authority and trustworthiness of the written Word of God (our Bible) as ‘the infallible rule for faith and practice’; and 3. a commitment to an outward compassionate mission to others (and I [Harry] would add), balancing our concern for ‘the Lost’ (true evangelism) with our concern for ‘the Poor’ (true justice).”

But as soon as Harry gave this definition of an evangelical, he continued: “In my 50+ years of ministry I was less concerned about someone self-identifying with the label ‘Evangelical’ than discovering allies whose witness and ministry demonstrated the three

above characteristics. My view is that, when we strip away the church politics and polemics and just look at personal faith and practice, a near majority of all Presbyterians I have ever met fit into this generalized category.”

Peace, Unity, and Purity: A Vow for Officers That Is Not Freestanding but Rests on a Complex Structure

In the seventh ordination vow in Chapter 14 of the Form of Government, officers promise to “further the peace, unity, and purity of the church” (G-14.0405). Just as it is a bad idea to jump into a book at the middle, so it is an error to go immediately to this seventh vow without considering the earlier vows in Chapter 14. Just as importantly, it is an error to go to the ordination vows without first considering the foundations of the Form of Government, particularly in Chapters 1 and 2. Our church gains much of its peace, unity, and purity from the truths expressed in the first two chapters of the Form of Government: allegiance to Jesus Christ, commitment to the great ends of his church, and living in fidelity to its core beliefs based on Scripture. And even within the structure of Chapter 14 of the Form of Government, the seventh ordination vow is built upon the earlier six vows, which of late have received much less attention.

A Word Picture¹⁷

I believe peace, unity, and purity are best seen as being like the steeple of a church building. I think of the steeple of one of the first church buildings where I served as a pastor—First Presbyterian Church of Mercedes, Texas. The steeple rested on a sort of rectangular wooden base, which itself rested on the roof. The roof, of course, rested on the walls, and the walls rested on the foundation.

I believe that the foundation of the PC(USA) is Jesus Christ. As Paul writes in 1 Cor. 3:11, “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” If Christ is the foundation of the PC(USA), then the great ends of the church can be seen as the walls of the PC(USA). The core beliefs of the church can be seen as our roof. The square, box-like structure on the roof that is the base for the steeple reminds me of all the vows taken by officers. The seventh vow, “to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church,” reminds me of the steeple. In other words, peace, unity, and purity are the result and culmination of our entire life of faith. They do not function independently of everything else.

Therefore, I will be addressing in this order the building blocks that lead to peace, unity, and purity:

- the Foundation, Jesus Christ
- the great ends of the church
- the core beliefs of the church
- the ordination vows for officers
- the seventh vow, to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church

I will also be discussing positive contributions of evangelicals in all of these areas, especially to the great ends of the church.

The Foundation: Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Foundation. Before we ever learn of the great ends of the church or its core beliefs in the first two chapters of the Form of Government, we are told at the very beginning that Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the Church. The opening words of the Form of Government say: “All power in heaven and earth is given to Jesus Christ by Almighty God, who raised Christ from the dead and set him above all rule and authority, all power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ Head of the Church, which is his body” (G-1.0100). These are the most important words in the *Book of Order*.

Evangelicals and Jesus Christ

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:14, NIV). The death and resurrection of Jesus are finished works, and they are the decisive events in human history. They shed a strange and different light—the light of God’s grace—over everything we see, including our sin and the sin of others, including the deep conflicts in the PC(USA)—and even including our disagreements with those who would like to depart from our denomination.

Evangelicals focus on Jesus Christ as he is presented in Scripture. We understand that he is the key to the expansion, renewal, and preservation of the church. In 1998 in Dallas, the Presbyterian Coalition, a key evangelical group in the PC(USA), adopted “Union in Christ, A Declaration.”¹⁸ The introduction to that document stated our conviction about the centrality of Jesus Christ as the church’s foundation: “The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord. God has called the church into being in order to carry out God’s mission to the world. We believe that the Presbyterian Church (USA) must respond to that commission by reaffirming its Christ-centeredness, reclaiming its biblical faith, and remobilizing its missionary service.”

The Walls: Great Ends of the Church

The six great ends of the PC(USA) are listed in Chapter 1 of our Form of Government (G.1.0200). I have added a summary word or words in parentheses after each one. These great ends are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind (evangelism or word-witness); the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God (feeding, fellowship, and protection); the maintenance of divine worship (worship); the preservation of the truth (truth); the promotion of social righteousness (justice); and the exhibition of the Kingdom of heaven to the world (life-witness). To see a list of these vows with a summary word, a definition, and a Scripture verse, go to this link:¹⁹
http://www.pearlandpres.org/Organization/Casey/six_great_ends_of_the_presby.htm

Evangelicals and the Great Ends

I want now at some length to discuss these six great ends and how some evangelicals I know are involved in them—something that is a little easier to get at than whether or not we evangelicals are furthering the seventh ordination vow. If you are interested in inspiring (but frequently unknown) glimpses of how evangelicals in the PC(USA) help further the great ends of the church, read on. If you would prefer to avoid this discussion for now, scroll ahead a few pages. But first a disclaimer: Most of my discussion of evangelical involvement in the great ends is based on my very limited knowledge and experience living in the Presbytery of New Covenant in Texas. It leaves out 99.9 percent of the committed and enthusiastic PC(USA) evangelicals who work in this church and contribute to its great ends, to its theological integrity, and to its peace, unity, and purity. I apologize to all whom I will leave out. [May the Lord open our eyes so that we see the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around (2 Kings 6:17).] Secondly, evangelicals are not a hard and fast category of Christians or of Presbyterians. Thank God. I personally can think literally of hundreds of persons in our church who may not identify themselves as evangelicals, but for whom I am grateful and who exude a warm, lively, biblical faith and love for Jesus. I do not care if they are evangelicals. I am grateful for them. If I may be permitted a personal comment, I especially think of our Moderator of the 217th General Assembly (2006) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reverend Joan Gray. I have never heard our Moderator describe herself as an evangelical Presbyterian, but I so appreciate her emphasis on prayer, her focus on Jesus Christ, and her love for the church. She is perhaps one in a million, but along the lines of my emphasis on evangelicals finding kindred spirits, she is one of a million.

Evangelicals and the Great Ends of the Church

The proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind

A friend points out that Presbyterian missionaries, most of them evangelicals, were used by God to help found churches and denominations that today have some ninety million members. He adds that in his view a majority of PC(USA) congregations that are growing numerically are evangelical, and that many of them have growth through leading people to Christ.²⁰

Presbyterian Bill Bright was led to Christ in this way. He grew up as a self-described “happy pagan” and attended evangelical Hollywood Presbyterian Church, where he became a Christian in 1944. He went on to found and lead Campus Crusade for Christ, the largest mission-sending organization in the world, and received the Templeton Prize in Religion. Some might fault Bright because he did not work under a Presbyterian umbrella. But though not all who became Christians through Bright’s ministry became Presbyterians, he fulfilled the first great end of the PC(USA) better than most of us.

In the Houston area, many Presbyterian churches, including many which are more or less evangelical, have sponsored the Alpha Course.²¹ Started in the United Kingdom by Holy Trinity Brompton Anglican Church in London,²² it is a course that in the UK is designed

to reach out to non-believers. However, in the United States, it seems not only to fulfill an evangelistic purpose, but also to strengthen the faith of believers, helping to fulfill the second great end of the church.

Finally in Houston and in many other cities, evangelical PC(USA) congregations have helped ensure that mass media, especially television, is a place where a variety of Presbyterian and evangelical witnesses to Jesus Christ are presented to our city on television on a weekly basis.

The shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God

Another ministry that started among evangelical Houston PC(USA) Presbyterians at Houston's First Presbyterian Church is The Bible in 90 Days.²³ When I first heard of reading the Bible in ninety days, I thought it was preposterous. But then I heard testimonies of people who noted that if you could read a novel in a month, you should be able to read the Bible in three months. People who did it reported that this quick reading of the Bible gave them an integrative understanding of how the Bible all fits together that they previously did not have. The course comes with a special Bible published by Zondervan and a choice between two different persons giving weekly lectures on DVD. In our church, over 20 percent of our folks, including me, took the course and attended weekly seminars. All were blessed.

Another ministry having to do with nurturing ministry is Houston Presbyterian Cursillo. (Cursillo is similar to Walk to Emmaus or The Great Banquet.) Evangelical Presbyterians in the Presbytery of New Covenant are deeply involved in this²⁴ renewal program, a three-day retreat that has touched many lives and congregations in our presbytery. (Approximately 1871 persons have attended 43 three-day renewal weekends.) In the church I pastor, approximately 20 percent of our members have attended a weekend like this, and many are not the same ones who attended The Bible in 90 Days. In addition, five or six from our church consistently take Cursillo into prisons in a ministry called Kairos.^{25 26} All of this helped lead one of these persons, a commissioned lay pastor from our congregation to begin, with the blessing of the presbytery, a new outreach in Houston for people recovering from addiction.²⁷

The maintenance of divine worship

Divine worship is another area where the evangelical movement contributes to the larger church. Dr. Winter seemed to feel that a disproportionate number of evangelicals were involved in innovative or contemporary worship, and he appeared to feel this was not an altogether positive development. Because many evangelicals believe that part of the truth of Scripture is that through the atoning work of Jesus Christ at Calvary we can by sheer grace call God "Abba" "Father," many of us are especially interested in worship that expresses intimacy and a close relationship with God. I came upon a quote that speaks to this issue of renewal of worship, even during the First Great Awakening:

One of the most notable, but least studied, aspects of the 18th-century revivals that led to the rise of modern evangelicalism was the disputed place of hymn-singing....Jonathan Edwards noted that ...the revival had worked an extraordinary musical effect:

‘Our public praises were greatly enlivened, and God was served in our psalmody as in the beauties of holiness. There was scarce any part of divine worship wherein God's saints among us had grace so drawn forth and their hearts lifted up, as in singing the praises of God.’

Yet soon the fervor of hymn-singing, as well as what the newly revived were singing, came under fire. Not only were critics upset with what Edwards....described as ‘abounding in much singing in religious meetings.’ Critics were also complaining that the revived congregations were singing ‘hymns of human composure,’ that is, hymns newly written by contemporaries rather than hymns paraphrased directly from the Psalms, which was then the only kind of hymnody widely accepted in most English-speaking Protestant churches.²⁸

Renewal in worship was a part of the First and Second Great Awakenings. If these revivals had never happened, I believe the PC(USA) would have many fewer churches and much less membership than we do today. The leaders of those revivals included many Presbyterians, and they were evangelical Presbyterians. Many PC(USA) congregations and colleges that today have drifted into theological liberalism are unaware of their evangelical roots in the First and Second Great Awakenings. The truth is, America needs another great awakening, and Presbyterians need to be a part of it! While Jonathan Edwards was a Congregationalist and not a Presbyterian, he was clearly a Calvinist and is part of our Reformed heritage in America.²⁹ Both in Jonathan Edwards’ day and today, an emphasis on renewal in worship has to do with evangelism and truth, as well as with “the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God” (second great end). Ideally, enlivened worship that emphasizes being not only hearers but also doers of God’s word will also result in the implementation of the last two great ends of the church, **“the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world”** (see below). In this connection, I think of worship-connected kingdom activities like the One Great Hour of Sharing offering and the Souper Bowl of Caring offering. The first is a denominational hunger offering, the second a nationwide ecumenical hunger offering started in a PC(USA) congregation and now featured on our denominational planning calendar, even though it is not “our” offering.

The promotion of social righteousness and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world

When the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly or other officials of the PC(USA) make pronouncements about social righteousness, they are often left of center. While we are certainly called to reflect the politics of God and not the politics of our people, it is a stretch to think that God is *always* a liberal Democrat. Many evangelical members of the

PC(USA) don't recognize themselves in these denominational statements and often are embarrassed by them. According to the Presbyterian Panel, 53 percent of the membership identified themselves as Republicans, while only 27 percent identified themselves as Democrats.³⁰ Also, I am told that the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy for decades has rarely had more than one or two non-liberal members. All of this means that many PC(USA) members go elsewhere to work on social righteousness as they see it.

Many evangelicals in the PC(USA) believe that as comparatively rich American Christians in a world full of poverty, one of the ways we work on social righteousness and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven, besides trying to influence government policies, is to give sacrificially of the financial resources with which God has blessed us. Interestingly enough, in a book entitled, *Who Really Cares: The Surprising Truth About Compassionate Conservatism*, Arthur C. Brooks speaks to the cultural divide in America. "The book's basic findings are that conservatives who practice religion, live in traditional nuclear families and reject the notion that the government should engage in income redistribution are the most generous Americans, by any measure."³¹ Harvey Mansfield, professor of government at Harvard University writes of the book: "[Brooks'] main finding is quite startling, that the people who talk the most about caring actually fork over the least...." Let me be clear that I do not know of any Presbyterian Panel survey that would tell us if PC(USA) evangelicals give more (proportionally to their income) than non-evangelicals. It would be useful if the people who do the Presbyterian Panel could investigate this. What I can say is that in my own very limited experience, it seems as if evangelical PC(USA) leaders tend to emphasize giving a 10-percent tithe more consistently than those at the other end of the theological spectrum—some of whose theological position may lead them not to take a 10-percent tithe literally. I do appreciate that our Moderator, Joan Gray, has urged tithing,³² and I think it should be a much greater emphasis in the PC(USA). God has given to our membership many more dollars for his kingdom than we are currently spending for kingdom ends, and American Christians, of all theological stripes, may be judged for our greed.³³

The Medical Benevolence Foundation has enjoyed particular support from Grace Presbyterian Church and other PC(USA) congregations.³⁴ It has announced it is expanding its international short-term volunteer program (ISTV) in partnership with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Its Web site invites churches to participate in the fifth and sixth great ends of the church: "Whether your church seeks to build its own team to travel and explore the possibilities abroad, or you are an adventuresome servant with a talent to share with '...the least of these' for a few weeks—or, possibly even months—you can demonstrate the gospel of Jesus Christ by serving in some capacity."

Members of Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church (MDPC) and other local Presbyterian churches are active in "Faith in Practice,"³⁵ a ministry to Guatemala that also relates to the fifth and sixth great ends of the church. (MDPC in Houston has, from its inception, given a dollar to some sort of work beyond itself for every dollar it spent on itself.)

Nehemiah Center³⁶ is a Christian-based organization, originally founded by members of First Presbyterian Church of Houston, that offers academic, emotional, cultural, social,

and spiritual enrichment to the children and families in the MacGregor Elementary School area just outside Houston's Third Ward.

As I have written elsewhere, Houston Citifest, spearheaded by Houston evangelical PC(USA) Presbyterians and attended by 250,000 people, was more than an evangelistic event. It was also an exhibition and demonstration of the "peaceable kingdom" of God.³⁷ The pastor of Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church, Dave Peterson, spearheaded this effort.

The preservation of the truth

This is the fourth great end, but since divine worship naturally flowed into the fifth and sixth great ends, I have left truth for last. While currently much of our culture laughs at the idea that there is such a thing as truth, many of those in the church who hold up the notion of truth are evangelicals. The phrase "the preservation of the truth" in the fourth of the great ends of the church suggests what we see—that the truth is perennially under threat and therefore needs preserving. Therefore, for evangelicals the words of Jude 3 have spoken to a special responsibility we feel for preserving the truth: "...I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." I would submit that it is foolish to think that contending for the faith will not sometimes involve contention! Rather than saying, "I wish they would go away," about evangelicals, the church should be grateful for the evangelical movement. In many ways, evangelicals often function as the church's T-cells, its immune system,³⁸ and without evangelicals I believe the church would be even more vulnerable to the ravages of heresy and false belief than it is. (Still, most evangelicals function as "red cells" most of the time. See footnote.³⁹) As Paul writes to Timothy:

For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully. (2 Tim. 4:3-5)

As we can see from the above passage, Paul emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine, and he also understands the connection between truth and evangelism.⁴⁰ Like canaries in a coal mine, evangelicals have often been among the first to point out that the introduction of heterodox and even unorthodox teaching into the church has a deleterious effect not only on truth, but also on evangelism, missions, and on our relationship with growing third-world churches.

The Roof: Major Themes, Essential Tenets, or Core Beliefs

The core theological beliefs of the PC(USA) are stated in Chapter 2 of our Form of Government, "The Church and its Confessions." In an important and under-reported speech on April 26, 2002, at Columbia Seminary,⁴¹ our Stated Clerk said, "Chapter Two

of the Form of Government was drafted at reunion to be an aid to our governing bodies in examining candidates concerning the essential tenets of the Reformed faith, and it does an excellent job of highlighting the major themes of our common faith as Presbyterians:

the mystery of the triune God,
the incarnation of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ,
salvation by grace alone,
salvation by faith alone,
the authority of Scripture,
the sovereignty of God,
election for service as well as salvation,
covenant life together in the church,
faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation,
seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.”

The Clerk continued, “These are the core theological convictions that unite Presbyterians. We need to affirm this confessional tradition and continually re-appropriate it for our time....” As the Clerk pointed out, “core theological convictions...**unite** Presbyterians.” (emphasis added).

I take these words of our Clerk to mean that our theological convictions are a major source of our unity.⁴² If we find that we do not have unity, we might want to ask if we are clearly articulating and living by our core beliefs. If we lack unity, we might want to ask ourselves if we are using Chapter 2 of the Form of Government as the Clerk tells us it was designed to be used—“as an aid to governing bodies in examining candidates concerning the essential tenets of the Reformed faith.”

Evangelicals and the Core Beliefs

In my experience, evangelicals, because of our devotion to the fourth great end of the church—truth—and because of our high regard for Scripture, have more than average interest in these ten core beliefs from Chapter 2 of our Form of Government. In fact, in 1996, the session of the church I pastor overtured our presbytery, which overtured the General Assembly, to amend the Form of Government to make these beliefs the essential tenets that officers promise to receive and adopt in the third ordination vow. This overture was opposed by national staff, including staff from our Office of Theology and Worship; but in spite of that, it did receive a third of the commissioners’ votes, and the assembly did commend the beliefs in Chapter 2 as a resource to those seeking to determine what the essential tenets are.

Let me briefly mention several of these core beliefs. First of all, I want to talk about “salvation by grace alone” and “salvation through faith alone.” These can be expressed as one belief—“justification by grace alone through faith alone.” We live in a world where pluralism causes many to question whether Jesus is the only way to the Father, as he says at John 14:6. According to the Presbyterian Panel, a third of Presbyterians agree or strongly agree that all religions are equally true.⁴³ Clearly the notion that there is

salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ alone and that he is the only complete revelation of God has not penetrated the minds and hearts of many of our members.⁴⁴ I have met a number of people at the other end of the theological spectrum who are universalists and who believe that all are saved by Christ, whether they have faith or not. This of course is a denial of the core belief, “salvation through faith alone.” Most evangelicals on the other hand, still believe that adults who have rejected Christ are lost, and many, like me, believe that adults without faith in Christ risk being lost. This explains one reason why evangelism and missions are so important to us. Because of our concern for the perishing, we give funds for evangelism and world missions, and many of us answer God’s call to go—even to the ends of the earth. In my experience in talking to some at the other end of the theological spectrum, while they nod their heads, some seem viscerally not to get the importance of evangelism and world missions to evangelicals, perhaps because some of them do not really believe in “lostness.”

Second, let me mention another core belief. In the Stated Clerk’s summary of the core convictions, it appears as “the authority of Scripture,” but I like the Form of Government’s language better: “Scripture alone.” Scripture alone means that Scripture is the Word of God, it is God-breathed,⁴⁵ it is the infallible rule of faith and life,⁴⁶ and it is the authoritative witness to Jesus Christ,⁴⁷ the Living Word, meaning that all attempts to get beyond or behind the Jesus of the Bible are wrong-headed and unproductive. As the Presbyterian Panel asks us our views of Scripture,⁴⁸ several things are clear. The 10 percent of Presbyterians who say Scripture is not the Word of God would not be evangelicals, and whatever they are, they need help. We could help them by making this core belief clearer. The 18 percent who say Scripture is the literal Word of God would be evangelicals—at the conservative side of our movement. But the other two Panel categories⁴⁹ totaling 71 percent are, to me, insufficiently nuanced to be at all illuminating. Suffice it to say that evangelicals have a high view of Scripture, and the views of the Bible that stress its human origins to the practical exclusion of its divine origins, as well as views that emphasize it mainly as “a record of what people believed back then” rather than as the written Word of God,⁵⁰ are not evangelical.

Most evangelicals favor a stronger teaching emphasis on these and our other core beliefs from Chapter 2 of the Form of Government, and we feel that when the church does this, it will increase the peace, unity, and purity of the church.

The Box-like Base of the Steeple: The First Six Vows for Officers

The commitment to peace, unity, and purity occurs in our ordination/ installation/ commissioning vows. It occurs after a number of other commitments that officers must make. Before affirming that he or she will “further the peace, unity, and purity of the church,” a PC(USA) officer must first answer these questions in the affirmative:

- A. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father Son, and Holy Spirit?

- B. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the church universal, and God's Word to you?
- C. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?
- D. Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?
- E. Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?
- F. Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?
- G. *Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?*

Evangelicals and the Vows

Arguably, evangelicals have been among those in the PC(USA) most interested in officers taking all of these vows seriously. First vow: We are concerned that all officers have trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord and that all are thoroughly Trinitarian. Second vow: We are concerned that all officers understand the Jesus in whom they trust to be the Jesus who is revealed in Scripture and not a different Jesus of our imaginations. Also, we want officers to accept Scripture as God's inspired Word. Third vow: We lift up the forgotten part of our Constitution, Part I, *The Book of Confessions*, and we wish it to function as a greater authority in the church's life. Some, like me, believe that for officers to be asked to pledge to receive and adopt essential tenets of the confessions, which we then cannot name, is absurd. Fourth vow: Evangelicals accept the order of authority outlined—and implied—in our vows: first, Christ; second, the Bible; third, our confessions, fourth, our *Book of Order*; last, governing bodies, including the General Assembly. Fifth vow: Most evangelicals believe that the promise to be governed by our church's polity means exactly what it says. To be "governed" by our Form of Government means that the "shalls," mandates, and requirements it contains must be obeyed and cannot be made optional. Most of us do not believe the General Assembly or any other governing body has the power to make such provisions optional for governing bodies. Most of us believe that everyone who takes the fifth vow promises to be governed by all the provisions of our polity in our *Book of Order*, unless or until the General Assembly and a majority of our presbyteries agree to change or to remove them. We believe fulfillment of this vow is foundational to fulfilling the seventh vow—"to further peace, unity, and purity." We desire to be friends among our colleagues in ministry and to work with them under God's Word as we interpret it by His Spirit. Sixth vow: We want our personal lives and personal piety to reflect and bear witness to the gospel by the way we love others and reach out to others as Christ's representatives.

Why Does the Order of the Vows Matter?

Officers and commissioned lay pastors promise to fulfill each of the vows, and each promise helps lay the foundation for those that follow.⁵¹ What makes it possible to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church is that one first of all trusts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and acknowledges him Lord of all and Head of the Church; that one accepts the authority of Scripture as God's Word; that one receives and adopts the essential tenets of our faith; that one is governed by the church's polity and abides by its discipline; that one works for the reconciliation of the world and is a friend among one's colleagues in ministry, and so on. **One of the chief ways officers further the peace unity, and purity of the church is to fulfill all their vows.**

Let me give two examples of how fidelity to the earlier ordination vows lays a foundation for achieving the peace, unity, and purity pledged in the seventh vow. In his previously cited, albeit indelicately named editorial, "Pick Up the Phone, Not the Cow Pie,"⁵² Jack Haberer says PC(USA) members should be talking to and getting to know those on the other side of issues—not writing articles about them and gossiping about them. And in my own earlier article, I encouraged Dr. Winter to get to know living, breathing PC(USA) evangelicals. The order of our ordination vows makes this same point, because before we ever get to the peace, unity, and purity vow, we promise in the fifth vow to be a friend among our colleagues in ministry. Being friends with those on the other side of issues is a first step towards peace, unity, and purity.

Another example of how fulfilling the previous vows helps us achieve the peace, unity, and purity sought in the seventh vow is the current fracas over whether governing bodies can declare "shalls" and requirements in the Form of Government to be optional or non-essential. To many PC(USA) evangelicals and others, to allow this is to create a hole in the fifth ordination vow, "will you be governed by our church's polity....?" To most of us, it is self-evident that, should such a hole in the fifth ordination vow be upheld by presbyteries and by the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission, it would damage the church in its pursuit of the goals of the seventh ordination vow.

The Steeple: Peace, Unity and Purity (Seventh Vow)

Many evangelicals and many non-evangelicals in the PC(USA) further every day its peace, unity, and purity. Evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike, we do this even though we are imperfect and the church is imperfect. We do it because our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect foundation of the church and of our lives! We further the **peace/shalom/wholeness** of the church by seeking for it to demonstrate the fullness and holiness and character of Jesus Christ. We further the **unity** of the church by realizing that in spite of our differences, we are all sinners who are justified by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. We further the **purity** of the church by seeking in both doctrine and morality for the church to be on the way to becoming a pure and spotless bride of Christ, a sanctified people.

Evangelicals and Peace, Unity, and Purity

Peace: Evangelicals are aware of the gap between our human definition of peace as the absence of conflict and God's peace. Many of us are aware that in Jeremiah, God sometimes condemned as hypocritical those who professed to be furthering peace. God said about the prophets of good news who proclaimed that things were going well in Israel: "They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace. They acted shamefully, they committed abomination; yet they were not ashamed, they did not know how to blush. Therefore....they shall be overthrown...." ⁵³ Many of us believe that a "peace" which weakens God's word, which winks at immorality, and in which the principle, "man is the measure of all things," threatens to replace the Lordship of Christ as our ruling principle cannot be God's peace.

Unity: Many evangelicals agree with what the Stated Clerk said in 2002—"core theological convictions...unite Presbyterians." We want the church's core beliefs in Chapter 2 of the Form of Government to be lifted up more often and more clearly in this church, and we believe that this will lead to greater unity. Many of us are convinced that by striving for more theological clarity about our core convictions, it is not we evangelicals who threaten unity, but rather those who, apparently disagreeing with the Clerk's remarks at Columbia Seminary, are content with an amorphous theology in which no core beliefs are articulated. This leads to the issue of the third ordination vow to "receive and adopt the essential tenets." In the January 29, 2007 issue of *The Presbyterian Outlook*, Joseph Small, director of Theology, Worship, and Education for the PC(USA), calls the third ordination vow "incomprehensible" and "impenetrable... so that it is routinely ignored or evaded." My view is that it is providential we have this vow in our Constitution, and that since it **is** the vow we have in our Constitution, our goal, in furthering peace, unity, and purity should be to make it work, rather than implying that those who ignore or evade it have a good excuse for doing so. So I think a list of essentials would be helpful. Small does not. However, I do not disagree with most of what he says in this quote from his January 29, 2007 article: "While a list of essential tenets might serve to identify (and limit) the scope of the third ordination question, it would not help with the central task of determining what candidates believe, and whether the beliefs they receive and adopt are consistent with the church's confessional faith." My own view is that with eleven confessional documents and with an ordination vow (since reunion) which specifically asks, "Do you receive and adopt the essential tenets?" we desperately need to, in Small's words, "identify (and limit) the scope of the third ordination question." Small admits having a list of essentials would do this. I agree! I also think that to identify essentials *would* help us examine candidates, and it *would* help them in being examined. But even if, as the Clerk suggested in 2002 at Columbia Seminary, we only called the beliefs in Chapter 2 core beliefs, and we only used them "as an aid to our governing bodies in examining candidates concerning the essential tenets of the Reformed faith," that would still be far ahead of where most of the church is today. Though not all evangelicals agree, I think that if we as a church have eleven confessional documents and we cannot summarize their essential tenets or core beliefs, we have become a confessional church in name only, and we have needlessly (but not yet irretrievably) lost a crucial source of our unity.

Purity: For many evangelicals purity means both moral purity and doctrinal purity. The two sections above have addressed both sorts of purity. We will never totally achieve either moral or doctrinal purity, but the church should at least be striving for both kinds of purity.

Evangelicals and Peace, Unity, and Purity: Another List

I now want to shift to a list of some evangelicals who have worked very hard in the PC(USA). Most of the people I will list have worked at a level of service above the local congregation. While it would be impossible to quantify or document how much peace, unity, and purity each one helped achieve, I believe their very involvement as evangelicals in the wider church⁵⁴ is itself a source of peace, unity, and purity. Like the material I have just covered, this list will perhaps be over-represented by people I know. I apologize for that, but just imagine that what I am writing is multiplied by ten thousand. Again, if you dislike such lists, just scroll down to the next section.

John Huffman and Roberta Hestenes have both served on the PC(USA)'s delegation to the National Council of Churches in Christ. Roberta chaired the General Assembly committee that first produced G-6.0106b in the *Book of Order*. John has also served as moderator of two presbyteries: Everglades Presbytery in the old PCUS and Presbytery of Los Ranchos in the PC(USA). He was one of the writers of the Definitive Guidance of 1978. He has served on three General Assembly task forces, the most recent being Mission Initiative: Hearts & Hands Together. The church he pastors has already paid \$800,000 of a \$1.5 million pledge to that initiative.

Betty Moore, Jeff Bridgeman, Tom Gillespie (presently) and others have served on the General Assembly Council. Dave Peterson served as co-moderator of the Hearts and Hands Program and he serves on the board of San Francisco Seminary. Jin Kim serves as moderator of CCAM executive board. James Kim presently serves on the Form of Government Task Force. Jack Haberer, an evangelical, is editor of the independent publication, *The Presbyterian Outlook*. Jeff Ritchie served several years in the Office of International Evangelism (OIE) on General Assembly Council staff, following which he has served as associate director of The Outreach Foundation, promoting General Assembly mission. Bill Young followed Jeff in OIE from 1998-2005 and now promotes GA mission through Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship. Harold Kurtz was a PC(USA) missionary before heading up Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship, and also offered himself for Moderator of the General Assembly. All three men worked with many congregations to help them engage in Presbyterian mission work. Rob Weingartner, executive director of The Outreach Foundation, served on the General Assembly Council, as have many others. Kathy Van Schooten, Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship associate director, served as moderator of The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area in 2004-05, then chaired Presbytery Council in 2005-06. She was instrumental in helping with a shift to "less heat and more talk" in the presbytery. Elder Shirley Prey has served as moderator of the Presbytery of Southern New England; Minister Paul Leggett has represented the denomination at an international aids conference, served three times as moderator of the Presbytery of Newark and served with Harry Hassall and on the committee of fifteen that

reviewed A Brief Statement of Faith; Harry Hassall and others have worked tirelessly to help small PC(USA) churches through the Wee Kirk ministry.⁵⁵ Doug Harper was on the committee that wrote A Brief Statement of Faith, as well as on the committee that wrote the Plan for Reunion. Doug Harper, Louis Zbinden, Frank Harrington, John Huffman, Dave McKechnie, Howard Eddington, David Dobler, Jerry Tankersley, and Jim Meade were just a few pastors of vital and alive evangelical PC(USA) congregations who offered themselves as candidates for Moderator of the PC(USA) General Assembly. Nancy Maffett did the same as an evangelical elder from First Presbyterian Church, Colorado Springs. Mike Kruse, who, I am told, is evangelical, is on the General Assembly Council. Jody Harrington is moderator-elect of the Presbytery of New Covenant and a member of its General Council. Again, multiply this list by 10,000, and you will begin to see the impact of evangelicals on the PC(USA).

How All of Us Can Do More for Peace, Unity, and Purity: “The Way Forward”

I believe evangelicals in the PC(USA), along with all our members (even those who have never taken the vows for officers) are called “to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church.” I believe that the words spoken over four years ago by our Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Clifton Kirkpatrick, at Columbia Theological Seminary, are still the indispensable condition for achieving peace, unity, and purity for the PC(USA) today.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, in my opinion these words, while spoken by the Clerk in 2002, have not consistently been lifted up in Louisville and in the church. In my view, and I know not all see it the way I do, these words are not even always reflected in opinions and advice coming out of the Office of the General Assembly. To me, they were not emphasized in the authoritative interpretation recommended by the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church—which, in my view, undercut them. Back in 2002, the Stated Clerk said:

What is the way forward in this situation? First and foremost, it is to develop a culture of respect in every quarter of the church for our Constitution in its fullness: to uphold the faith of the church so clearly affirmed in the common themes of Scripture and *The Book of Confessions*, to honor the covenant for our life together so clearly articulated in the first four chapters of our Form of Government, to abide by the provisions for our polity, worship, and discipline found in our *Book of Order* and to seek to implement and/or change those provisions where they are felt to be in error in accord with the processes for such implementation and change specified in the Constitution itself.

The glue that holds us together as Presbyterians is first and foremost Jesus Christ, who is the living Head of the Church (G-1.0100). This glue finds expression in the body of Christ through a common and voluntary commitment among all the church’s officers to be governed by the church’s polity and abide by its discipline (G-14.0405b). Without a widespread and profound commitment to these basic principles, no amount of judicial process, constitutional amendments, or interest group politics can move us forward as a faithful church of Jesus Christ....I call on every Presbyterian to make a fresh commitment to be part of a culture of respect

for our Constitution. To be part of this culture of respect means minimally: to uphold Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the essential tenets of the Reformed faith, to abide by the provisions of our Constitution (including G-6.0106b), even if seeking to change them, to seek correction first through pastoral approaches (Matthew 18) and conciliation and mediation (D-1.0103), to honor the processes of our Constitution for seeking change or for seeking discipline or remediation.

Frankly, as an evangelical, I do not believe we have consistently heeded those words since 2002. I also do not believe that the Clerk himself has always stayed “on message” and defended the Constitution as he did then in the way many of us PC(USA) evangelicals would like him to do. I understand that various sides in the church do not agree about this, and that the comment I have just made will offend some, but I hope people understand that evangelicals like me who oppose the authoritative interpretation, and who even disagree that it was in conformity with the Constitution, are also trying to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church by our defense of the Constitution as we understand it. To me, if we had all heeded the Clerk’s important words from 2002, the new authoritative interpretation would never have been proposed, and even if it had been proposed, we would have voted down an authoritative interpretation that (unconstitutionally in my view) undermines our Form of Government. I do not ask that all agree with what I have just said. I do ask that you consider that, speaking as an evangelical, I say it out of deep conviction and to attempt to further the peace, unity, and purity of the PC(USA). Finally, I believe that if we had heeded the Clerk’s words from 2002, our own apparent disregard last summer for requirements in the Form of Government would never have happened, and therefore would never have caused some PC(USA) evangelicals to erroneously believe this entitled them to try to circumvent the constitutional procedures by which a presbytery might decide to constitutionally dismiss a congregation to another Reformed denomination.

As our Stated Clerk said in 2002, **Peace, Unity, and Purity flow from commitment to Jesus Christ and to living under our church’s Constitution.**^{57 58} We need to re-emphasize and re-commit to the centrality of and the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the church. We need to re-emphasize and re-commit to fostering a culture of respect for our Constitution. It is not too late.

Conclusion: Putting Up the Steeple

To erect the steeple of peace, unity, and purity, we begin with the first thing: the foundation of our Constitution and of the PC(USA)—Jesus Christ. This Jesus is not the Jesus of our imagination but the Jesus of the Bible. On Patmos John saw him with eyes of fire and a two-edged sword (his word) coming out of his mouth. He died for the world, but he will also judge the world. He is the lamb who was slain but is now alive and from his (and his Father’s) throne flows the river of life. He is Lord.

Building upon the incomparable foundation of Christ, we continue by emphasizing, as it were, the walls of the structure of a church under his Lordship—the six great ends of the church. We then erect the roof or covering over us—the ten core beliefs, major themes, or

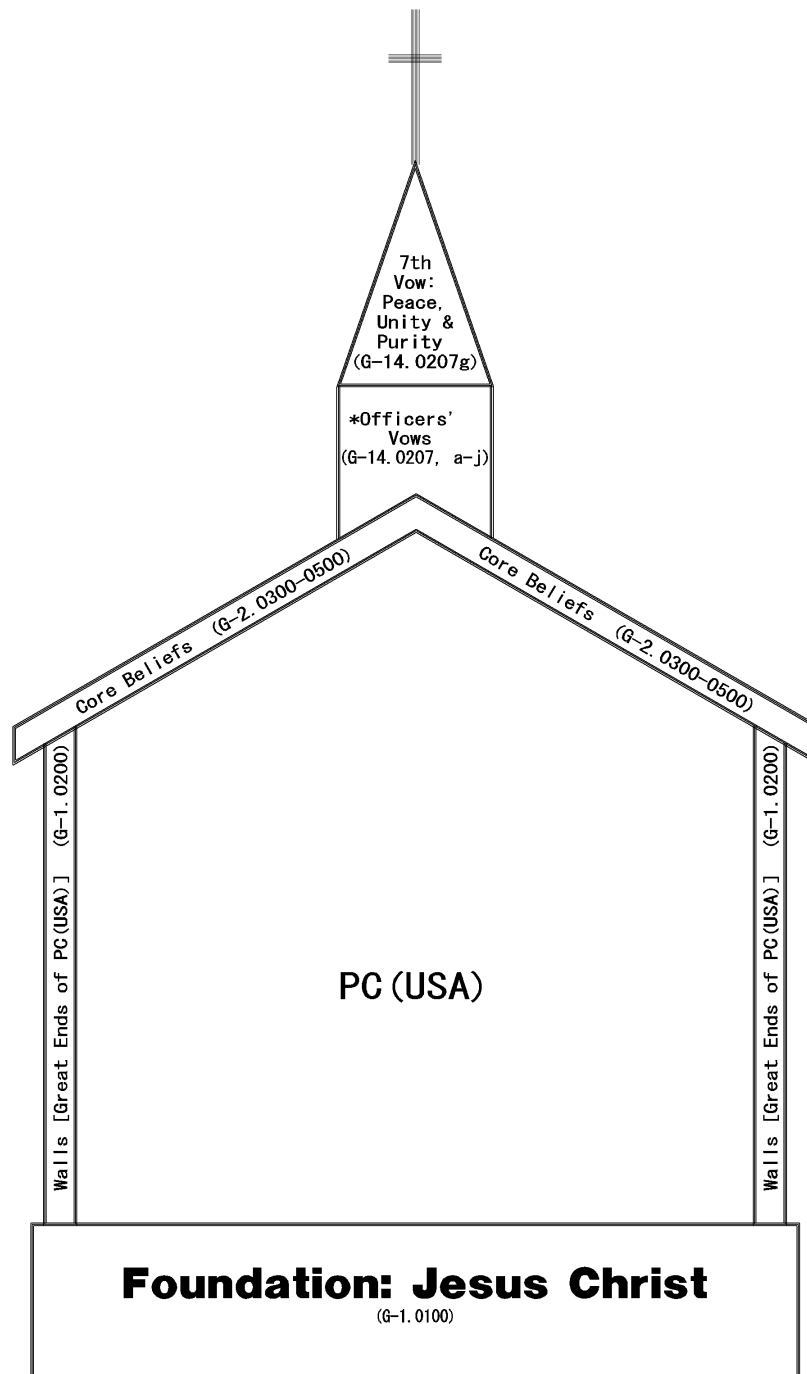
essential tenets. (Call them what you will, just believe and proclaim them.) Then we move to our ordination and installation vows that begin by re-affirming our commitment to Christ, the foundation and Head. The vows then affirm the authority of Scripture, the centrality of the core beliefs, our commitment to be governed by our polity, and our desire to work as friends with our colleagues in ministry and to work for the reconciliation of the world. Finally comes the steeple—our commitment to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church. The whole structure holds up the steeple. Those who attack, or do not support, the structure underneath the steeple invariably end up helping to bring the steeple down, whether they are aware of it or not. But when the foundation, the walls, the roof, and the base of the steeple are properly in place and protected, then, with God’s help, peace, unity, and purity in the church can be achieved by all the parts of the Body working together.

Postlude: Lifting Up Jesus

Someone has said that even a steeple is not an end in itself. The purpose of a steeple is to lift up a cross! When the PC(USA) in her life truly exhibits peace, unity, and purity, then the result will be that this steeple will lift up the one who died on the cross and is risen—the Lord Jesus Christ—so that all the world can see him! ⁵⁹

I want to end this article with a picture of what I have tried to say:

An Evangelical View of The PC(USA)



(*Vows for Elders and Deacons. Ministers' Vows are at G-14. 0405 b.)

¹ <http://www.pcusa.org/oga/perspectives/jan07/presbyterians-evangelicals.pdf>

² <http://robgagnon.net/WinterRMiltonResponse.htm>

³ 2-12-07, “Pick Up the Phone, Not the cow Pie,” <http://www.pres-outlook.com/tabid/1329/Article/3994/Default.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.presbyweb.com/2007/Letters/012901.htm>

⁵ <http://www.presbyweb.com/2007/Letters/020203.htm>

⁶ <http://www.presbyweb.com/2007/Viewpoint/0117--Viola%2BLarson--Presbyterians%2BAnd%2Bseparatist%2BEvangelicals.htm>

⁷ In an email to me on January 23, 2007, the Stated Clerk said: “I don’t want to encourage turning *Perspectives* into a forum for point by point rebuttal of other articles but do believe that a positive article (obviously in response to Winter’s) about the contribution of the evangelical movement to the peace, unity and purity of the church would be helpful at this point.”

⁸ <http://www.pcusa.org/oga/perspectives/feb07/response-and-invitation.htm>

⁹ 2-12-07, “Pick Up the Phone, Not the Cow Pie,” <http://www.pres-outlook.com/tabid/1329/Article/3994/Default.aspx>

¹⁰ Please see footnote 7.

¹¹ One evangelical for whom I have great respect but who shall remain anonymous wrote me the following: “It seems demeaning to me for evangelicals to have to come up with some sort of list of achievements. Could you imagine...asking that of other categories of church members—‘There’s some dispute here about whether you have any value at all. I’ll tell you what, why don’t you give me a list of at least SOME things you have done that might be considered notable....’? He continues: “At what point is it enabling wrong behavior to play along with such an attitude? Who is saying to the progressives: Prove that you have value? Is it assumed that THEY have value, but we evangelicals, outside the club, don’t have value and now are getting interviewed to see if we measure up, just possibly? That whole set-up is infuriating!”

¹² 1 Kings 18:17

¹³ 1 Kings 18:18

¹⁴ So far as I know, even though the Presbyterian Panel does not provide us with a percentage of church members who say they are evangelicals, it has asked members if they consider themselves theologically conservative, moderate, or liberal. Therefore the 41 percent of members and 43 percent of elders who said they were theologically conservative may be our best clue as to how many of our members or elders might identify as evangelicals.

¹⁵ <http://www.pcusa.org/research/panel/bg-snapshot-2005.pdf>. Compare 2002 results: <http://www.pcusa.org/research/panel/snapshot2002.htm>

¹⁶ Casey’s note: I agree with Harry so long as we understand that being “born again” is a biblical metaphor used to describe the position and status of **all** who put their faith and trust in Christ, rather than a description of a particular sort of conversion experience in which, clearly, not all Christians share.

¹⁷ See drawing before footnotes at end of article.

¹⁸ <http://www.presbycoalition.org/union.htm>

¹⁹ http://www.pearlandpres.org/Organization/Casey/six_great_ends_of_the_presby.htm

²⁰ Since the publication in 1972 of Dean M. Kelly’s book, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing?*, it is often pointed out that a disproportionate number of numerically growing churches are evangelical. Two comments should be added: 1. Not all evangelical churches are growing. Many are not: 2. As Dallas Willard has pointed out in *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 1988, pp. 31-2, all sorts of churches—Protestant, Catholic, liberal, conservative, and charismatic—fail to produce sufficient numbers of persons who “grow to maturity in Christ” and who realize “‘the abundance of life’ the gospel promises.” This is an indictment of all of us, including evangelicals. (This quote is from Stanley Ott Acts 16:5 Initiative workbook)

²¹ <http://www.alphana.org/>

²² <http://www.htb.org.uk/>

²³ <http://www.biblein90days.org/>

