

Theology Matters

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Faithful Witness to the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

by Bryan D. Burton*

Introduction

At the recent Presbyterians for Renewal(PFR) Breakfast during the 207th General Assembly of the PCUSA in Cincinnati, Dale Bruner from Whitworth College spoke on the “christo-exclusivity” of the Christian faith.¹ In it he called upon the church to proclaim a “Christ-exclusive” faith (i.e. that Jesus Christ is the only way to God) which has “Christ-inclusive” implications (i.e. that in Jesus Christ ALL are invited to God) as the foundation for its life and ministry. At the time when the Presbyterian Church (USA) is seeking to respond to the clarion call that “theology matters” one of the great tests of whether or not theology matters is the struggle to understand and bear witness to the early church’s creed “Jesus is Lord” and its influence upon the church’s life and ministry. It is therefore not only a question as to whether theology matters, but also a question as to what kind of theology matters.

“Christ-exclusive” faith has “Christ-inclusive” implications

As a pastor-theologian within the Presbyterian Church (USA) I am called to affirm the essential tenets of the Reformed faith and witness within the framework of the church’s confessional standards, while remaining open to the principle of “reformed always reforming.” The struggle to maintain that balance is particularly difficult in relationship to the question of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in light of the challenges posed to the church by religious pluralism and the “universe of faith” (John Hick’s description of the relationships of the world religions).² Additionally, the struggle has taken on another dimension within the last generation as the affirmation of the uniqueness of Christ has

been challenged inside the church as well, including the PCUSA, all in the name of a more inclusive ecumenism which seeks to include not only ALL Christian people of various denominations, but ALL people no matter what their religious faith conviction may be.

With the task before us, namely what it means to confess the uniqueness of Christ, it is important to appreciate the different aspects of religious pluralism. What follows is offered as a descriptive overview of religious pluralism with the understanding that various aspects of religious pluralism may have a positive, negative or neutral influence upon the Christian faith.

First, there are the socio-political factors of religious pluralism (i.e. we live in a pluralistic society which has become a permanent reality of American life). The massive immigration of people from other lands with faith commitments not associated with the Christian heritage forces us to come to terms with people of other faiths as fellow citizens, colleagues in the work place, and neighbors. Secondly, there is an educational factor of religious pluralism, particularly prevalent in the universities. During this century there has been a marked transition within university faculties wherein departments which were once faculties of Christian theology have been transformed into departments of religious studies. Students are now free to browse through the “religious supermarket” of faiths while being called upon to take an “objective” approach to the study of religion, rather than pursue religious truth. At lower levels of education the faith AND practice of other religions are being taught (often during “religious” holidays/holy days) in the name of tolerance and mutual understanding in many primary and secondary schools around the country. Thirdly, there is the cultural factor

* Rev. Dr. Bryan D. Burton, Ph.D. is the Interim Sr. Pastor/Head of Staff at New Providence Presbyterian Church, New Providence, New Jersey. He is the author of several articles and book reviews and is currently working on the publication of his Ph.D. dissertation.

which includes a general sense of curiosity towards other cultures, heightened by direct and indirect exposure through the personal encounter of world travel or the exposure to media presentations.

Finally, there are various factors related to philosophical and theological pursuits. The pursuit of the philosophical questions, particularly the pursuit of truth and morality, has led to a form of relativism which asserts that the search for the answers to such questions is dubious and/or futile since the existence of absolute truth, morality and “fixed points of reference” is denied. This has severe consequences for the theological task and has particularly proven itself in the area of how we talk and speak of God. This is most evidenced among those who seek to take the biblical, theological and confessional language of earlier periods of church history and re-interpret the Christian faith.

This re-interpretation takes place when the church is called to interpret the language of the Bible, of the orthodox theology of the church expressed in the creeds, confessions, catechisms and reaffirmed by orthodox theologians as being functionally true but not ontologically (meaning “in reality”) true. As an example of this, those who seek to re-interpret the traditional religious language about Jesus Christ would assert that the statement “Jesus Christ is unique” should be understood in terms of being functionally true because of what God uniquely did through this human named Jesus, but should not necessarily be understood to be ontologically true in the sense that Jesus was and is uniquely both God and human.

There are of course other aspects related to the concept and development of religious pluralism, but this brief overview demonstrates the nature and reality of religious pluralism into which we are called upon to speak of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Any attempt to recapture a bygone era when Christianity “ruled supreme” within Western culture (known as “Christendom”) is naive at best and disastrous to the mission of God at its worst. The challenge therefore is to discover what it means to bear witness to Jesus Christ in an age of pluralism. However, rather than viewing this as a “new” situation as many philosophers, theologians and sociologists of religion argue, it is crucial to realize that this is an “ancient” situation for the people of God, whether we look to the people of Israel among the nations within the Old Testament or the early church engaged in its mission to fulfill the Great Commission.

The challenge is to discover what it means to bear witness to Jesus Christ in an age of pluralism

A final word before we continue, it is important to assert in the strongest terms that to bear witness to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in an age of religious pluralism does not give the Christian church license to be arrogant or contemptuous towards other people’s religious faith, including those within

the Christian faith with whom we may disagree. We must approach our Christian life, theology and mission with boldness yet with humility recognizing that we only see through a glass dimly (1 Corinthians 13:12). In other words, in bearing witness to the uniqueness of Christ we must seek to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) in the spirit of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40).

Theological Questions

In light of the Christian claim concerning the uniqueness and supremacy of Jesus Christ, there are four primary questions which confront contemporary Christianity. Firstly, there is the methodological question which asks what is the task of theology and how are we going to accomplish that task? Closely related to the methodological question is the question of epistemology which asks what can we know and how can we know? Christianity has traditionally answered the question of epistemology with the claim that through divine revelation God can actually be known by human beings. Furthermore, the doctrine of revelation provides theology with a basis for explaining what is actually known about God and how access to that knowledge is possible. The problem however is that Christianity’s “confidence” in the doctrine of divine revelation has been undermined within the various developments of modern theology to the degree that either the doctrine is denied altogether or is redefined in a wide variety of ways. Closely associated with the contribution of the doctrine of divine revelation to the epistemological question is the role of faith in discerning the revelation of God. It is therefore essential that the methodological and epistemological questions be answered since they are fundamental to the task of Christian theology, namely, what can human beings actually know about God and on what basis can human beings actually claim a true knowledge of God?

If the two previous questions address the heart of Christian knowledge of and faith in God, the last two questions address the heart of the Christian gospel and faith. The first question is the soteriological question which concerns itself with the doctrine of salvation, seeking to understand the basis and nature of the salvation offered by God to humanity through Jesus Christ. Simply stated, how does one gain the salvation of God? Traditionally Christian theology has affirmed and defended the position that on the one hand God desires the salvation of all humanity, while on the other maintaining that the salvation offered by God to all humanity is possible only in and through Jesus Christ. Such a position however, raises the primary question with which we are dealing in this article, namely how Christianity as a revealed religion understands itself as well as how it relates to other human religions, philosophies, ideologies and their various alternative doctrines of salvation. The final question is the christological question since the foundation of the Christian faith and its theology is the person and work of God in Jesus Christ. How Christians interpret the person and work of Jesus Christ will necessarily have a direct influence upon how one interprets the Christian faith in the face of the various challenges of other religions, philosophies and ideologies.

Views of Divine Revelation

As we have already intimated, the doctrine of divine revelation has been foundational to Christian theology throughout the centuries and the centrality of this doctrine continues to be reaffirmed in varying degrees today by most theologians. However, as with many other theological terms and concepts, divine revelation has often been “redefined” in recent theological developments. In the broadest sense, revelation is an unveiling or disclosure of something that has previously been veiled or hidden. In the theological sense it includes: 1) God’s unveiling or disclosure of his being and the communication of the divine word to humanity, 2) an event which cannot be brought about through human activity and is therefore, 3) a matter of divine grace by which human beings can actually come to know and acknowledge God in the event of divine revelation. This necessarily implies a relationship between what is known as “faith” and divine revelation. It must be further noted that among many Christian theologians there is a division of divine revelation between what is called “general” revelation (God’s revelation in nature and human consciousness available to all humanity) and “special” revelation (God’s revelation in Jesus Christ as given in the Holy Scriptures and available to people of faith).

In the history of modern theology (the period dating from the Enlightenment of the 18th century to the present day) this traditional doctrine of revelation has been challenged by various theologians and philosophers who have sought to deny and/or redefine it in light of modern scientific, historical and critical scholarship. Despite this, it is possible to categorize these various interpretations as Avery Dulles has demonstrated in his *Models of Revelation*³:

1. Revelation as DOCTRINE whereby revelation is a set of divinely authoritative doctrines proposed as God’s word by the Holy Scripture and/or by official church teachings.
2. Revelation as HISTORY whereby revelation is the manifestation of God’s saving power by his great deeds within human history.
3. Revelation as INNER EXPERIENCE whereby revelation is the self-manifestation of God by his intimate presence in the depths of the human spirit.
4. Revelation as DIALECTICAL EXPERIENCE whereby revelation is God’s address to those whom God encounters with his word in Scripture and Christian proclamation.
5. Revelation as NEW AWARENESS whereby revelation is a breakthrough to a higher level of consciousness as humanity is drawn into deeper participation in the divine creative process.

Although many of these “models” of divine revelation may overlap in the development of one’s theology, each one provides the basis for differing orientations, paradigms and interpretations of the theological task and ultimately of the Christian faith itself, thereby demonstrating the centrality of the doctrine of divine revelation to the task of Christian theology.

How one views divine revelation will determine how one answers the christological question

Furthermore, since it is almost a universal affirmation among Christian theologians that Jesus Christ is either “a revelation of God” or “the revelation of God,” it is apparent that how one views divine revelation will be a determinative factor in how one answers the methodological, epistemological and soteriological questions, but especially the christological question with which we are concerned (see above).

Various Paradigms for Answering the Christological Question

Within the framework of these theological questions and the various models of divine revelation, Christian theology has advanced various theological paradigms to explain the role of Jesus Christ as the divine revelation of God and the questions of theological method, epistemology and soteriology, along with a host of other issues including the mission of the church. Advocates of a given paradigm generally tend to share basic theological methodologies, epistemologies, soteriologies and christologies which can be traced back to their utilization of a particular model or synthesis of models of divine revelation. It is generally agreed that there are THREE dominant paradigms for answering the christological question as to the nature of Jesus Christ as the revelation of God. Utilizing Gavin D’Costa’s *Theology and Religious Pluralism*⁴ the three theological paradigms are as follows:

1. The EXCLUSIVIST Paradigm maintains that all peoples, including all religions, are marked by humanity’s fundamental sinfulness and are therefore erroneous apart from Jesus Christ. Answering the methodological and epistemological questions, the exclusivist paradigm affirms that all theology begins and ends with God’s revelation in Jesus Christ and therefore all knowledge of God comes through Jesus Christ. Concerning the soteriological question the exclusivist paradigm affirms that Jesus Christ both offers the only way to true knowledge of God and the only way to the salvation offered by the one, true God. Lesslie Newbigin in his book *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* among others is probably the best representative of this paradigm.
2. The INCLUSIVIST Paradigm maintains that there is a salvific presence and a general knowledge of God among all peoples, while also maintaining that Jesus Christ is the definitive and authoritative revelation of God. The inclusivist paradigm answers the methodological and epistemological questions by calling upon Christian theology to discover the contributions of other faiths and truths as it carries out its task, thereby recognizing that one may discover a knowledge of the one, true God within those other faiths and/or truths. While this is held, the inclusivist paradigm insists that salvation still only comes through Jesus as the Christ who walked as a human on earth and/or as the one who is known as the “cosmic” Christ. Karl Rahner the

prominent Roman Catholic scholar and his advocacy of “anonymous Christianity” is probably the best representative of this paradigm.

3. The PLURALIST Paradigm is characterized as maintaining that there are many ways to the one, true God, and therefore views Jesus Christ as only one way among many others to the one, true God. The pluralist paradigm gives no special place to Jesus Christ in answering the questions of theological method or epistemology, let alone the questions of salvation except that Jesus Christ is but ONE way to do theology, to know God and to find salvation. John Hick, with his two edited volumes *The Myth of God Incarnate* and *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* along with several of his other works, is probably the best representative of this paradigm.

A Solution to the Christological Question: The Biblical Witness and a Theological Witness

This brings us to the point of seeking a solution to these questions which are central to the task of Christian theology while also developing a theological paradigm which is consistent (faithful) with the witness the Bible, the various confessions of the church (especially those confessed universally within the church such as the Apostle’s Creed, Nicene Creed and Chalcedon) and the Christian tradition that has remained constant for nearly two thousand years, namely that Jesus Christ is the one and only way for humanity to come to God and God’s gracious way to us. When the earliest church confessed its faith by stating “Jesus is Lord,” so must we! Yet, when one looks to Jesus Christ as The Way, the Truth and The Life we must recognize both the exclusive and inclusive nature of Jesus’ lordship. Yes, Jesus is the only way, truth and life(exclusively), however Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life for every human being since God’s invitation has been extended to all humanity through Jesus Christ (inclusivity).

The church has always found itself in deep theological difficulty when it has failed to maintain the balance between the exclusivity and the inclusivity of Jesus Christ

It seems to me that the church has always found itself in deep theological difficulty when it has failed to maintain the balance between the exclusivity and the inclusivity of Jesus Christ. It can be argued further that when the church fails to maintain the theological balance between the two, the church’s life and ministry suffer significantly; primarily in the areas of preaching and teaching, debates upon the nature of church membership and the ordering of its life, ministry, evangelism and mission. In order to find the balance between the exclusivity and inclusivity of Jesus Christ let us look to the witness of the Bible and to the witness of one of the church’s premier theologians, Karl Barth.

The Biblical Witness: A Brief Survey

The Bible begins in the book of Genesis by setting the stage for the history of humanity, namely the creation of the universe by God, a creation including the earth and all its human and creaturely inhabitants and the establishment of an inter-dependent network of relationships between God, humanity and the environment (Genesis 1 and 2). It continues by telling the story of how those relationships have been destroyed by the sin and evil characterized by the rebellion of every human being’s original parents, Adam and Eve, (Genesis 3) and the chaos of systemic rebellion from the days of Noah and the building of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 6 through 11). Sin and evil is perceived as entering into and affecting every aspect of human existence. Therefore, sin and evil is seen to be inclusive of every aspect of human life.

The biblical witness of Genesis continues however to detail God’s (the Creator’s) provision for the salvation of humanity which shall also be extended to all people beginning first with the call to Abraham and the creation of Israel as the people of God, beginning in Genesis 12. The promise God makes to Abraham is clearly inclusive in that the divine blessing upon Israel as the exclusive people of God will lead to the blessing of all nations. What God established was an exclusive people through whom God could achieve the goal of offering salvation/redemption to all humanity among all nations. In other words, while God is seeking the salvation/redemption of all humanity from every nation, among no other nation did God act in the way he did with the people of Israel.

The fact that this was clearly understood by the Old Testament people of God, Israel, can be seen in many contexts. Let us take a look at some representative texts from the Old Testament. First, there is the encounter God has with Moses at the burning bush when God gives the divine name (I AM) to Moses and the promise of divine signs as God acts on behalf of the salvation of Israel (Exodus 3 and 4). Secondly, there is the witness of the giving of the Law, manifested in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and explicitly stated in the first three commands of 1) having no other gods before the one, true God of Israel 2) making no idols/images of God or worshipping them because the one, true God of Israel is a “jealous” God, and 3) not taking the name of the God of Israel in vain or misusing the divine name.

The rest of the Old Testament bears witness to the fact that the identity and command of the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” and also the God of Moses and the people of Israel came to be the determinative factor in the ordering of the life of Israel once it reached the Promised Land. It was clearly understood that obedience to God among the people of God led to blessing and life, while disobedience led to cursing and death. Thirdly, it is not only through the cry of the prophets (minor and major) to faithful obedience among the people of Israel, but through the prophetic call, particularly among Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that God is going to do a “new” thing to accomplish his purposes among all nations, namely the appearance of the Suffering, Servant

Messiah (see for example Isaiah 40-55; Jeremiah 30-33; Ezekiel 34).

The New Testament witness to Jesus Christ (the Messiah and Holy One of God) speaks profoundly to the “completion” of the divine work which began in the history of the people of Israel. Jesus is viewed as being the completion of all that God had started with the nation of Israel. In other words, Jesus Christ not only shares in the uniqueness of Israel, but is the completion of God’s work in and through Israel. The New Testament traces for us the movement in the purposes of God from beginning a work through a nation (Israel) to a work completed through a person (Jesus of Nazareth) to a work continuing through a people (the church) and a work being completed through a person (Jesus Christ in his second coming) and including the gathering of peoples from every tribe and nation for all eternity to the glory of God.

The mystery is that it is through God’s salvific and redemptive work of the unique particularity of one human being, Jesus of Nazareth (exclusivity), that God has invited all people to enter into a full relationship with God, which was the divine intent from the very beginning! This can be seen throughout the New Testament. A few examples will suffice; including Matthew’s genealogical record in (Matthew 1) and the recounting of Jesus’ words that he had come not to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill/complete them (Matthew 5:17); Paul’s writing in Galatians 3, Ephesians 2-3 and Philipians 2:5-11.

However, not only does the New Testament link God’s work through the nation of Israel to the appearance and fulfillment of that work through the person of Jesus Christ, the New Testament proclaims the supremacy and uniqueness of Jesus Christ for all knowledge of God and for receiving the salvation offered by God.

Jesus’ final words to the disciples recorded for us in Matthew 28:18-20 speaks of this exclusivity and inclusivity in a new light.

ALL authority in heaven and on earth has been given to ME. 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, and teaching THEM to obey EVERYTHING I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (NIV)

John’s prologue to his gospel (John 1:1-18) also speaks profoundly to this exclusive inclusivity proclaiming that Jesus is THE LOGOS OF GOD(word) TO THE WORLD and the LIGHT OF THE WORLD. Further, John records Jesus’ words “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6) and “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9) in response to the questions of the disciples Thomas and John. Several years later John would write letters to the churches he pastored reaffirming his belief in Jesus Christ as the Word of Life, Light and Love as a pastoral and polemical word in the face of various heresies (heresies which may be summarized under the general term “gnosticism”). Even in his great Revelation, John proclaims Jesus Christ as the

Alpha and the Omega, the Lamb of God who was “slain and with whose blood purchased human beings for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 1-5) and who will establish the New Jerusalem and reign along with the saints forever.

Luke’s proclamation of the early church, post-Pentecost, in the Acts of the Apostles, continues to reaffirm the exclusivity and inclusivity of Jesus Christ. Acts 2 records Peter’s address to the crowd, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (v21) and supports the claim in his sermon. Later in Acts 4, Peter and John appear before the Jewish Sanhedrin answering questions about their ministry in the name of Jesus Christ. There we read of Peter’s words “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to humanity by which we must be saved” (v12).

The Apostle Paul, after an encounter with the resurrected and ascended Jesus Christ (Acts 9), begins ministry among Jews but primarily among Gentiles. One of the great encounters comes at Athens as Paul dialogues with the Greek philosophers of that city (see Acts 17:16-34). Paul continued that ministry and proclaimed the message of the supremacy of Jesus Christ and the universal invitation to come to faith in this Jesus Christ. The book of Romans is a theological work on the significance of the divine purposes from the beginning and their culmination in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul gives powerful witness again in Colossians 1:15ff.

The writer of Hebrews begins that letter, and continues throughout, with a powerful witness to the superiority of Jesus Christ as being over the angels, greater than Moses and like the High Priest Melchizedek and the great atoning sacrifice once and for all, for ALL humanity.

Yet, there is also a certain element of surprise included in this exclusivity and inclusivity of the New Testament. Take for example the following: the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), the faith of the centurion (Matthew 8), the faith of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15), Jesus anointed by a sinful woman (Luke 7), the parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14), the poverty stricken widow’s offering (Luke 21). All speak of Jesus Christ’s inclusivity while also affirming that it is through Jesus Christ alone that anyone finds their way to God.

When Dale Bruner spoke at the General Assembly breakfast a few months ago, he articulated the confessional stance that Jesus Christ is the exclusive way to God and there is no other way; that Jesus Christ is the full truth of God and in him we gain full knowledge of God; that Jesus Christ is the life of God and from him alone comes abundant and eternal life. This appears to be the faithful witness of the Bible to the uniqueness, supremacy and finality of Jesus Christ.

A Theological Witness: Karl Barth

Karl Barth is considered one of the most prominent Christian theologians of the twentieth century if not the history of the

church. Throughout his life and the development of his massive theology (*The Church Dogmatics*), he sought to take divine revelation seriously, holding to three primary theological principles. They are:

1. The self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ as witnessed to by the Holy Scripture is central to all true human knowledge and experience of God.
2. The futility of the human pursuit of religion to understand God's person and action OR to find the justification, reconciliation or redemption (the three movements of God's salvation, according to Barth) of God apart from faith in and through Jesus Christ.
3. The belief that in Jesus Christ, God both critiques (judges) all humanity and builds up (exalts) humanity as a matter of divine and sovereign grace (loving in perfect freedom).

First, how did Barth understand the true nature, task, method and center of Christian theology? Barth believed, in contrast to the theology of liberalism which focused upon the religious consciousness and experience of humanity (*religious a priori*) and to the theology of Roman Catholicism which focused upon the continuity of being between God and humanity (*analogia entis*), that the Christian faith is determined by God in the divine revelation to humanity. Barth therefore sought to construct a theocentric AND christocentric theology that is determined by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and has God in that revelation as its only object and theme. This necessarily led Barth to an understanding of divine revelation that is also trinitarian, namely that the God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ is the triune God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is Barth's contention that true Christian theology must not be combined with abstract or speculative knowledge of God but rather an actual and concrete knowledge of God that encounters humanity in its existence in the created world.

Secondly and closely related therefore is Barth's doctrine of revelation. Barth maintained that God is actively revealing himself to humanity and it is upon this active revelation of God that Christian faith stands or falls. He is convinced that:

God is active in His Word; therefore dogmatics (theology) must remain bound to His Word and can undertake only to give account of that which is revealed in the Word of God as the past, present and future activity of God. . . and God's Word is His Son Jesus Christ. . . it (theology) must always remember that it can legitimately speak only of the God and the work and the activity of the God who is the revelation of the Father in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.⁵

While Barth presents what has come to be known as the "three-fold" doctrine of the Word of God, namely revelation as the Word of God preached (proclamation), the Word of God written (Holy Scripture) and the Word of God incarnate (Jesus Christ), Barth gives priority to the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, he maintains an essential unity (trinity to use Barth's words) between the three forms of the Word of God and that they may not be

separated from one another any more than the Father, Son or Holy Spirit may be separated from the trinity of the Godhead.

Barth presents revelation as the Word of God preached (proclamation), the Word of God written (Scripture), the Word of God incarnate (Jesus Christ)

What this means is that Barth advocates a "confessional" Christian theology since it is based primarily upon its starting point in revelation and upon the principle of *fides quaerens intellectum* ("faith seeking understanding"). It was from his study of Anselm that Barth recognized that Christian theology, by its very nature and in light of its proper subject, can be understood only in terms of faith seeking understanding; that faith summons the theologian to a greater understanding and knowledge of God. Thus Barth asserts that Christian theology must proceed from within faith rather than from outside faith. However, this does not mean that he denies any other human knowledge of God. Nor does he assert that theology's statements about God can be or are ever complete. Rather, any statement made via the task of true Christian theology is an approximation of divine truth and faith to the degree that it is analogous to its object, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, made possible in faith.

Thirdly, and again closely related to the above two points, Barth makes a significant contribution to the faithful witness of the church concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in his doctrine of election and reconciliation. Barth summarizes his doctrine of election in the following way (note the relationship between revelation and election for Barth):

The sum of the gospel [is]. . . that God elects man; that God is for man [as] the One who loves in freedom. It is grounded in the knowledge of Jesus Christ because He is both the electing God and the elected man in one. It is part of the doctrine of God because originally God's election of man is a predestination not merely of man but of [God] Himself. Its [the doctrines] function is to bear basic testimony to the eternal, free and unchanging grace as the beginning of all the ways of God.⁶

He continues to argue that in Jesus Christ God has not only taken upon himself the rejection and judgment of all humanity with all its consequences, but also has elected all humanity to participate in his own glory because Jesus Christ is both the electing God and the elected man and is the true God who elects all humanity and is the true man through whom all humanity is elected.

The being of God is His being (Jesus), and similarly the being of man is originally His being. And there is nothing that is not from Him and by Him and to Him. He is the Word of God in whose truth everything is disclosed and whose truth cannot be over-reached or conditioned by any other word . . . Jesus Christ is Himself the divine election of grace. For this reason He

is God's Word, God's decree and God's beginning. He is so all inclusively, comprehending absolutely within Himself all things and everything, enclosing within Himself the autonomy of all other words, decrees and beginnings.⁷

In addition to his doctrine of election, Barth's words concerning the relationship between the revelation and reconciliation of God are telling:

Revelation in fact does not differ from the person of Jesus Christ and again does not differ from the reconciliation that took place in Him. To say revelation is to say, the Word became flesh.⁸

In presenting his doctrine of reconciliation, Barth speaks of Jesus Christ in the following way:

as the TRUE GOD (the Lord and Son of God) who humbles himself as a servant and as the reconciling God, thereby fulfilling his priestly work by accomplishing the justification of all humanity. (see *Church Dogmatics* IV/1)

as TRUE MAN (the servant, Son of Man), exalted by God to be the reconciled man through whom all humanity is exalted to fellowship with God, thereby fulfilling his kingly work by effecting the sanctification of all humanity. (see *Church Dogmatics* IV/2)

as TRUE WITNESS (the Mediator/God-man) who is the mediator of humanity's reconciliation with God and the guarantor of all humanity's atonement effected in him, thereby fulfilling his prophetic work by equipping humanity for its vocation as witnesses to his reconciling work in the world. (see *Church Dogmatics* IV/3.1, 2)

Barth makes a significant point in his doctrine of reconciliation when discussing Jesus Christ as True Witness. Reflecting on Jesus Christ as the way, the truth and the life, Barth grants that there are other ways, other lights and other truths which exist in the Bible, the church and the world. However, he argues that other lights, truths, ways and words (what he calls "parables of the kingdom of God") find their meaning only in relationship to Jesus Christ who alone is THE Light, THE Truth, THE Way and the THE Word of God. Barth insists that these other lights, truths, ways and words can NEVER share in or replace Jesus Christ as the one true light, truth, way and word of God, they may only be used by God in and through the sovereignty of his grace as witnesses or parables to the one true Word of God and Light of Life. [While not stating it explicitly, it appears that Barth is making a case following Augustine's theological principle that for the Christian "all truth is God's truth".] Barth is clear in the conviction that the truth of these other lights, words and truths is determined by the extent to which they a.) conform and agree with the one Word of God in Jesus Christ, b.) bear witness to this one Word and c.) are commissioned, moved and empowered to bear witness to the one Word of God in Jesus Christ.

It is essential

that Christian theology examine all other lights, words and truths in the light of Jesus Christ

For Barth it is essential that Christian theology examine all other lights, words and truths in the light of Jesus Christ. This again demonstrates the exclusivity (Jesus Christ as the one true witness) and inclusivity of Barth's christology in that God through his self-revelation in Jesus Christ is able and willing not only to affirm the reality and possibility that God in Christ is present within the various aspects of human existence (history, culture, nature, science, etc.) but that God is also willing and able to utilize other lights, truths and words in order that they may also bear witness to Jesus Christ, serving as "parables of the kingdom."

Because Jesus Christ is revealed to be the Lord of all in creation, election, reconciliation and redemption, we may anticipate that true lights, truths and words exist in the world, while acknowledging that they may be known only in relationship to Jesus Christ, the one true light and word of God. The truth or falsehood of these other lights, truths and words is determined by the degree to which they approximate, conform and bear witness to Jesus Christ who is Lord of all and over all.

It has been interesting to survey the various responses to Karl Barth's theology at this point. Many have been critical of Barth, claiming that he advocated a form of Christian universalism in view of his doctrines of election and reconciliation, despite the fact that he denied that he was a proponent of universalism because he did not believe it was clearly taught in the Bible or in the church's proclamation. What appears strange is that others have been equally critical, claiming that Barth advocated a closed and arrogant exclusivism which does not allow for any truth knowledge or any other way to God except through Jesus Christ, the self-revelation of God. The question must be asked as to how one can be charged as a universalist (which can be either an inclusivist or pluralistic universalism) by those on one end of the spectrum of the church, while being charged as a closed minded exclusivist by those on the other end of the spectrum.

I believe the only way such conclusions can be drawn and argued is if Karl Barth actually provides the Christian church with a theology of revelation, election and reconciliation which answers the primary theological questions (method, epistemology, soteriology) in a way that is faithful to Jesus Christ, the one true Word of God AND maintains the delicate balance between the exclusivity and inclusivity of the Christian gospel. That is what I believe Karl Barth has actually accomplished by calling upon the church to bear faithful witness to Jesus Christ who is the one, true and only self-revelation of God (exclusivity) and to call ALL people to come to Christ in faith, accepting what God has accomplished for them in Jesus Christ (inclusivity). I am not alone in this interpretation. Listen to these words from Donald Bloesch when he writes:

Barth transcends the polarity between universalism and particularism in that he denies both of these as rational

principles or even as necessary conclusions of faith. He sees the truth in universalism in that Christ's victory over the chaos is all encompassing and his love goes out to all. But he also recognizes an element of truth in particularism in that not all open their hearts to God's love revealed in Jesus Christ, not all receive the message of salvation through the sacrificial death of Christ. Regarding the final destiny of those who persist in saying "no" to the divine "yes," Barth at least at times appears to be noncommittal. At the same time he is unequivocal that the divine "yes" cannot be finally defeated or thwarted. One thing is certain: we must regard even the non-Christian with a certain degree of optimism, since we know that he too is in the hands of the living God, whose essence is love.⁹

Conclusion

Having introduced the situation within which the Christian church must bear witness through its theology, life, worship and mission; having raised the relevant theological questions which must be answered in order to provide the proper foundation for the church's witness; having presented the variety of doctrines of divine revelation and the paradigms for understanding the christological issue of the uniqueness and supremacy of Jesus Christ and finally providing a survey of the biblical witness and a representative theological witness in Karl Barth, we must finally conclude the following:

The Christian Church, which holds faithful witness to Jesus Christ as its supreme task, must take seriously the exclusive nature of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the one and only way to the knowledge of, faith in and salvation from God, while also taking seriously the inclusive nature of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the one who offers the way, the truth and the life to ALL humanity in fulfillment of the original goal and purposes of God from the very beginning.

The struggle to gain that balance is difficult. It is a matter of doing theology in light of "faith seeking understanding". However, it is also a matter of bringing glory to God by bearing faithful witness to the whole counsel of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

¹F. Dale Bruner, "Christoexclusivity," ReNews, October, 1995.

²John Hick, *God and The Universe of Faiths*, (New York: Macmillan, 1977).

³Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1983).

⁴Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

⁵Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/2*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark) p. 883.

⁶Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics II/2*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark) p. 3.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

⁸Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark) p. 134.

⁹Donald Bloesch, *Jesus is Victor!*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 70f.

Further Reading (a selective bibliography)

Gerald Anderson and Thomas Stransky, eds. *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism*, Orbis, 1981.

Carl Braaten, *No Other Gospel!*, Fortress, 1992.

Ajith Fernando, *The Supremacy of Christ*, Crossway, 1995.

Brian Hebblethwaite and John Hick, eds. *Christianity and Other Religions*, Collins, 1980.

John Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate and the Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, SCM, 1977 and 1987(respectively).

Hendrick Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, Kregel, 1969.

Erwin Lutzer, *Christ Among Other Gods*, Moody, 1994.

Ronald Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?*, Zondervan, 1974.

Harold Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, Eerdmans, 1991.

Leslie Newbigin, *Christian Witness in a Pluralist Society*, Eerdmans, 1989.

Leslie Newbigin, *The Finality of Christ*, SCM, 1969.

Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, Zondervan, 1992.

John Sanders, *No Other Name*, Eerdmans, 1992.

Discussion questions:

1. How is the epistemological question which asks what can we know and how can we know it, related to a doctrine of revelation?
2. What four models of revelation does Burton give? Which is expressed in the Confessions?
3. What three paradigms are given in answer to the soteriological and christological questions? Which is reflected in the Confessions?
4. Explain what is meant by Christ's exclusivity and inclusivity. Review and discuss the biblical witness for this.
5. What kinds of problems result when the church rejects either Christ's exclusivity or His inclusivity?

Summary of Burton's Article

Introduction

Recently, Dale Bruner from Whitworth College, called upon the church to proclaim a "Christ-exclusive" faith (i.e. that Jesus Christ is the only way to God) which has "Christ-inclusive" implications (i.e. that in Jesus Christ ALL are invited to God) as the foundation for its life and ministry. At the time when the Presbyterian Church (USA) is seeking to respond to the clarion call that "theology matters" one of the great tests of whether or not theology matters is the struggle to understand and bear witness to the early church's creed "Jesus is Lord" and its influence upon the church's life and ministry. It is therefore not only a question as to whether theology matters, but also a question as to what kind of theology matters. The challenge is to discover what it means to bear witness to Jesus Christ in an age of pluralism.

Theological Questions

The METHODOLOGICAL question asks what is the task of theology and how are we going to accomplish that task? The EPISTEMOLOGICAL question asks what can we know and how can we know? The doctrine of revelation provides theology with a basis for explaining what is actually known about God and how access to that knowledge is possible. The SOTERIOLOGICAL question concerns itself with the doctrine of salvation offered by God to humanity through Jesus Christ. The C

the person and work of Jesus Christ and will necessarily have a direct influence upon how one interprets the Christian faith in the face of the various challenges of other religions, philosophies and ideologies.

Views of Revelation

1. Revelation as DOCTRINE -- a set of divinely authoritative doctrines proposed as God's word by the Holy Scripture and/or by official church teachings. 2. Revelation as HISTORY --the manifestation of God's saving power by his great deeds within human history. 3. Revelation as INNER EXPERIENCE -- the self-manifestation of God by his intimate presence in the depths of the human spirit. 4. Revelation as DIALECTICAL EXPERIENCE -- God's address to those whom God encounters with his word in Scripture and Christian proclamation. 5. Revelation as NEW AWARENESS -- a breakthrough to a higher level of consciousness as humanity is drawn into deeper participation in the divine creative process.

Various Paradigms for Answering the Christological Question

There are THREE dominant paradigms for answering the christological question as to the nature of Jesus as the revelation of God. 1. The EXCLUSIVIST Paradigm maintains that all peoples, including all religions, are marked by humanity's fundamental sinfulness and are therefore erroneous apart from Jesus Christ. 2. The INCLUSIVIST Paradigm maintains that there is a salvific presence and a general knowledge of God among all peoples, while also maintaining that Jesus Christ is the definitive and authoritative revelation of God. 3. The PLURALIST Paradigm maintains that there are many ways to the one, true God and therefore views Jesus Christ as only one way among many others to the one, true God.

A Solution to the Christological Question: The Biblical Witness and a Theological Witness

When one looks to Jesus Christ as The Way, the Truth and The Life we must recognize both the exclusive and inclusive nature of Jesus' lordship. Yes, Jesus is the only way, truth and life(exclusively), however Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life for every human being since God's invitation has been extended to all humanity through Jesus Christ (inclusivity).

The Biblical Witness: A Brief Survey

A survey of the OT and NT narratives show the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of God's work in Israel and the church.

A Theological Witness: Karl Barth

First, Barth believed that the Christian faith is determined by God in the divine revelation to humanity. Second, Barth maintained that God is actively revealing himself to humanity. Third, he argues that in Jesus Christ, God has not only taken upon himself the rejection and judgment of all humanity with all its consequences, but also has elected all humanity to participate in his own glory because Jesus Christ is the true God who elects all humanity and is the true man through whom all humanity is elected.

Conclusion

The Christian Church must take seriously the exclusive nature of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the one and only way to the knowledge of, faith in and salvation from God, while also taking seriously the inclusive nature of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the one who offers the way, the truth and the life to ALL humanity.

A Brief Comment on the 1995-96 Horizons Bible Study, "Glimpses of Home"

comments by the Rev. Pride Carson,

Faith Presbyterian Parish, Bowling Green, MO and member of the PFFM Board of Directors

(a longer review of the PW Horizons Bible Study is available by contacting PFFM, P.O. Box 10249, Blacksburg, VA 24062)

The way Scripture is used in this year's Horizons Bible study seems to encourage the elevation of one's own authority over the authority of Scripture as our "only rule of faith and practice." One example on page 60 claims, "Some say that Jesus embodied the realm of God in concrete terms, and they simply acknowledge that he did proclaim a final judgment. *Regardless of whether we hold to a literal or a figurative, a realized, or a future understanding of judgment and the resolution of the realm, the Scripture's discussion of these issues provide us with some interesting glimpses into the nature of the realm of God, its inhabitant, and its ruler.*" [italics mine] In most of Lessons 2 and 3, the Old Testament Prophets are voices for their own thoughts and judgments, rather than being those voices through whom God's own thoughts and judgments, indeed God's own Word, were spoken. The study material constantly portrays Scriptural characters as engaging in self-instruction and self-rule. And, throughout the lessons the learner is likewise instructed simply to decide for herself who God is, what God's rule means, and what response to that rule is appropriate. Within the many examples that could be cited, what the Church confesses to be true about the issues explored is never mentioned.

This approach seems to advocate a utilitarian employment of Holy Scripture where one may pick and choose which texts are valid for one's life and which are not. In such an approach, Scripture becomes not the Word of God having its own authority,

but simply a compendium of ancient literary musings and interesting add to our personal collections of helpful or not so helpful inform:

theological relativism, a bell which resonates with a perception of the role of the Bible in our lives that is inharmonious with either Reformed theology or with the biblical witness itself.

As we approach the season of Christmas, we are compelled to recognize the impact this kind of theological thinking has on how we understand the Incarnation. Here the Gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus Christ become at worst fanciful storytelling and at best a subjective interpretation of events, rather than a faithful witness to the objective truth that God took “the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:7); the truth that “Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1) was “Immanuel, God with us” (Matthew 1:23). Here the central Christmas affirmation that Jesus Christ was “the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20), becomes solely a matter of opinion. Here our celebration of our God's one sufficient self-revelation becomes only one of many possible parties of the same relative significance for life and faith.

None of this is to suggest that human thought, experience and decision have no place within the exercise of faithfulness. What is at issue is an approach to Scripture that is inconsistent with its own proclamation and with what the Church has confessed and proclaimed all along: that there is indeed a revealed truth beyond mere human opinion. This truth is none other than God's own self-revelatory explanations and definitions of who our God is, what it means to be under God's rule, and how we are to respond to that rule; none other than God's own truth, none other than God's own Word revealed to us in human language. Only within this truth can we confess with certainty that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord, “the Word ... made flesh and dwelling among us” (John 1:14), and only then can we truly celebrate Christmas.

AN IMPORTANT NEW BOOK: *Not My Own: Abortion & the Marks of the Church* by Terry Schlossberg & Elizabeth Achtemeier “This new book by Schlossberg and Achtemeier is a very valuable contribution to the current debate on abortion. It brings to one of the most important issues facing the church today the historical, theological, and ecclesiastical wisdom that is so much needed in order to move forward in these matters. It deserves the most careful reading by all concerned Presbyterians.” Dr. John Jefferson Davis, Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, is a Presbyterian.

Terry Schlossberg is Executive Director of Presbyterians Pro-Life. Dr. Elizabeth Achtemeier is adjunct professor of Bible and Homiletics at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, VA. *Not My Own* is available from your local Christian bookstore, from William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company or from Presbyterians Pro-Life, by writing PPL, P.O. Box 11130, Burke, VA 22009 or calling (703)569-9474.

Bible Study of the Gospel of Mark

CHAPTER 6

(chapter 7 will follow in the next issue)

of THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Observe the Text to understand the author's meaning:

Read 6:1-6. Where is Jesus now? Where does he go on the Sabbath? What does he do? Who are the ones who are supposed to teach in the synagogue?

What is the initial response of the listeners? What qualities of Jesus do they notice? After their initial reaction, they begin to reason humanly and what is their concern? Why do they take offense? Explain their offense in terms of authority? Do they believe that Mary's boy has their authority to speak as he does? the authority of the scribes? the authority of God? Isn't the issue, “who told Mary's boy he could say the things he says and do the things he does?” And their answer is “no one.” Therefore he has no right to speak and act as he does. Explain Jesus answer.

Does Jesus answer have a wider application--to the Jews--Jesus relatives? Explain. Why do you think that Jesus could

do no miracle there? If he did a miracle for people who did not recognize his source of authority who would they thank for the miracle? All of Jesus' miracles were to heal those who came seeking him out. Do you think with the attitude in his home town very many people came seeking his help? Did a few come? Were there a few healings? What is God's purpose in doing miracles?

Read 6:7-13. What is the disciples' task to be? From where do the disciples receive authority to do their work? What does that say about Jesus?

Can you speculate why Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs? Why do you think he sent them out without provisions? Any other ideas on why Jesus cautioned them not to take provisions?

Can you speculate on why they were not to move from house to house? What might the danger be? What is their response to be when they are not received or listened to? How successful are the disciples?

Read 6:14-29. Who were people saying Jesus was? Why were they saying this? What prompted them to identify Jesus with John, Elijah or one of the prophets? Read Malachi 4:4-6. Could prophets do miracles? Who does

Herod think Jesus is? (re-incarnation was a prevalent thought at that time--Shirley MacLaine's ideas are not new!) John called for Herod to repent because he broke God's law in Lev 18:16. What is Herodias' motive in having John put to death? What is Herod's response to John? (This is reminiscent of Paul preaching to his jailers!) What do you think of John judging Herod? Whose law is John calling Herod to obey? Was John's action "effective" by human standards? Was it effective by God's standards?

What is going on at this birthday party that prompts Herod to offer Herodias' daughter up to half of his kingdom?

"King" Herod is mentioned in vs 16, after that he is referred to as "Herod" until vs 22ff when "king" or "kingdom" is used 5 times. As king, Herod should have authority and power to do as he willed. Does he? Who has the authority and power? See vs 14. Who else has power? Who is Herod afraid of? Who is he trying to please?

Read 6:30-44. This is when the disciples return to Jesus after their first travels as disciples. How do you think John's death would effect them? What do Jesus and the disciples want to do after John's death? How successful are they in finding a lonely place?

Why does Jesus feel compassion for the people? What does he compare them to? What does a shepherd do? Who are the shepherds suppose to be (see Ezekiel 34) and what do they do?

What is Jesus' first response to the spiritual needs of those without a shepherd? Then what does he do for their physical needs?

What is the problem when it gets late? What is one of the things a shepherd does for the sheep? What is the disciples' solution? What is Jesus' solution? What is the disciples' response? (one denarii was a day's wage)

What part did the disciples play in the miracle? Matt 14:21 says that there were 5000 men not counting women and children.

Where else in Scripture were "multitudes" fed by God in the wilderness?

Compare the two banquets: King Herod's and King Jesus'.

Read 6:45-52. What is the disciples' situation? Having just seen Jesus feed more than 5000 and having seen him calm the water (Mark 4:39), what should they be doing now in their situation?

Twice it says in vs 49, 50 that they "saw Him." What is their reaction and response to "seeing Him?" Why do you think Jesus perhaps was going to pass by the boat? What is Jesus' response and what then happens to the wind and sea? Why does it say their hearts were hardened? Don't we do this--try to make Jesus conform to natural laws? Do we really believe Jesus can still waters and feed 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish? or do we say, "it can't happen?"

Read 6:53-56. What continues to be the response of the people? How many people? This is one of several places where people are cured by touching Jesus garment. Sounds like the magic cloak. But a better explanation is that in Jesus' mercy he heals them because of their faith.

Interpret the Text

1. What does this chapter tell us about Jesus the king?
2. What does it tell us about the faith and understanding of the disciples? About the future of the disciples based on John's death?
3. How are the people responding to Jesus? How is the King caring for his people? What happens when people do not believe and accept the King's authority? Is the King bound by natural laws or does he have authority over them.

BIBLE STUDY NOTES

(Compare these notes to your thoughts after you have looked at the passages and answered the questions yourself)

Mark 6:7-13. Calvin speculates that provisions would slow them down.

"Shaking the dust off their feet" was probably a way of saying that the person was "so foul that their contagion infected the earth whereon they stood." Calvin suggests there are two reasons they were to shake the dust off their feet or break off all communication. First, because those folks might be discouraging to the disciples who are on their first solo trip. Second, to show "God's insult" that his words are rejected--similar to Jesus statement not to cast pearls before swine.

We have to be careful with this teaching because certainly Jesus did not shake the dust off his feet of us!

Mark 6:14-29. Herod's offer is odd and Herodias' request even odder. Why didn't Herodias' daughter take half of the kingdom instead of John's head? Herodias now possessed all the kingdom through Herod. But, if John's call to repentance was successful, she stood to loose it all.

According to Calvin, Herodias lost her position and died in poverty and exile.

Mark 6:30-44. Do you see this as Jesus taking scarce resources at hand and providing in abundance? C. S. Lewis writes that Jesus' miracles are not to make trees talk or elephants fly but to do the things he does everyday, all over the world, rapidly and on a smaller scale. He multiplies fish in the sea every day!

Herod's in palace; Jesus on grass
Herod's for lords, military commanders, leading men; Jesus for the sheep
Herod's clearly not in charge; Jesus is
Herod brings death to John; Jesus brings life to the multitude
Herod with a kingdom is really not a king; Jesus in the wilderness has a kingdom of people and as the kingly shepherd(after David) provides for his people
Herod has neither power nor authority; Jesus has both.

News from Around the World

THE ATTEMPT by the National Ministries Division to delegate the review of the independently incorporated Presbyterians for Health Education and Welfare(PHEWA) to their justice sub-group was rejected by the General Assembly Council at their September meeting. The GA called for the review in response to a Commissioner's Resolution which raised questions about PHEWA's compliance with GA policies, particularly PHEWA's advocacy for the ordination of those practicing homosexuality. Four of the six sub-group members are members of PHEWA. GAC member Jill Heine, chair of the justice sub-group, organized a dialogue on homosexuality last March for the GAC in which 3 of the 4 speakers advocated for homosexual ordination.

THE SEPTEMBER issue of the *More Light Update*, the official publication of the independent group, Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns(PLGC), encourages More Light churches to pass an "ideal" overture which rescinds the Definitive Guidance of 1978,79 and the related authoritative interpretation resolution of the 1993 GA and declares invalid any impediment to the full application of the principles of diversity and inclusiveness and the full exercise of the right of sessions and presbyteries to "discern, elect, ordain and install ministers, elders and deacons." They charge in the overture that the GA stands "in opposition to Scripture by judging the behavior of this entire

class [people practicing homosexuality] as sinful before ever meeting them as persons."

ALTHOUGH the 1991 General Assembly overwhelmingly rejected the report, "Keeping Body and Soul Together: Presbyterians and Human Sexuality," it is currently being published by the PC(USA) as an "official General Assembly position paper and study guide" which "the General Assembly adopted...and...made available for use in congregations."

The Stated Clerk of the GA explains in the preface to "Presbyterians and Human Sexuality 1991" which includes the report, "The GA did not instruct the Stated Clerk, nor any other person or agency, to continue to make the report of the special committee available. However, the continued flow of requests for copies, and the requirement that the clerk provide copies or abstracts of the assembly *Minutes*, has led to the decision to produce this publication."

When the decision was made by the State Clerk to publish the report, it was included on the list of PC(USA) publications identified as "General Assembly Study Papers" and has been identified as a report "which the General Assembly adopted" in annual communications from the Stated Clerk's Office to pastors regarding Office of General Assembly publications.

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