

Fighting the Wrong Battle in the PCUSA

Written by Calvin Fox
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50 years ago, Fundamentalists, some of whom ordained me to the Ministry, often warned that the anchor that holds our Faith secure is a High View of Scripture. If that anchor is lost they said, the Faith will drift into Error and Heresy. It was and still is the Formal Principle which forms and determines the Material Principle which is Reformation Theology, including Doctrines about morals and right living. Today's Evangelicals have long since thrown Fundamentalism into the dust bin of Church History. Bitter Theological Wars were fought, primarily between the 1920's and the 1950's, between Conservatives and Modernists (Liberals). Modernists became known as the Neo-Orthodox. Fundamentalists began on the defensive and became cloistered separatists. They lacked the desire and tools to intellectually engage the Modernists and became increasingly out of touch and irrelevant to the Issues of the day.

Coming from the Fundamentalist camp were young scholars who did want to wage intellectual war on behalf of the Faith and who did want to be socially relevant to the Culture of the times. At first they were known as "Neo-evangelicals" and then as Evangelicals. My Fundamentalist colleagues were concerned that these new Evangelicals, though they were orthodox in key Doctrines, would eventually drift into Liberal waters because they were departing from the High View of Scripture (i.e.- it is the special, inscripturated Revelation of God, His verbally inspired and inerrant Word.) That has happened. Many younger Pastors no longer believe the inerrant verbally inspired Word of God, inscripturated Special Revelation, is the Formal Principle of their Faith. They are convinced they can do Theology and be true to the Faith relying on a more human Bible, a Narrative, which is not inerrant or infallible, but nevertheless is their main authority for what to believe. The consequence of this misguided conviction is what has happened in the mainline Denominations, all of which were at one time very Orthodox. The fears of my early Fundamentalist Mentors have come true. The Evangelicals in those Denominations have been fighting the wrong battle. They have been trying to stop the trend toward acceptance and approval of Homosexuality and the Ordination of openly Gay Clergy. They have lost that war (and others) because they have fought the wrong Battle and should have been fighting to defend the High View of Scripture. Here are excerpts from an article in the current CT written by Dr. S. Donald Fortson III, Professor of Church History and Practical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary—Charlotte. He is an ordained minister in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/mayweb-only/gayordinationpcusa.html?start=1>

"On Tuesday May 10, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) joined a group of mainline churches that has opened the door to gay ordination. The new PC(USA) constitutional change, which has now received the necessary votes, will officially take effect in July and is widely interpreted to allow for gay ordination.

"...three decades of a pro-gay agenda relentlessly pressed until at length Presbyterians officially

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landed in the gay ordination camp with other mainline denominations.

"I believe it is a mistake to focus our attention on how the church has dealt with this issue over the past three or four decades. The long view that church history offers is often the clearest perspective of all. And church history is crystal clear: Homosexual practice has been affirmed nowhere, never, by no one in the history of Christianity. The church fathers insisted that doctrine and practice must be tested by Holy Scripture. In addition to careful exegesis, another test was catholicity, that is, what has been the universally accepted scriptural interpretation passed down in the church. When novel teachings were shown to fail both the careful scrutiny of Scripture and the consensus of the orthodox Fathers, heretical ideas were doubly condemned."

"Christianity is a tradition; it is a faith with a particular ethos, set of beliefs and practices handed on from generation to generation. The Christian tradition may be understood as the history of what God's people have believed and how they have lived based upon the Word of God. This tradition is not only a collection of accepted doctrines but also a set of lifestyle expectations for a follower of Christ.

"Revisionist biblical interpretations that purport to support homosexual practice are typically rooted in novel hermeneutical principles applied to Scripture, which produce bizarre interpretations of the Bible held nowhere, never, by no one.