

September 27, 2007

Because It is My Name

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

The time has come for me to sever my relationship with the corporation, The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). While this decision is obviously a personal matter of little consequence to anyone else, I believe some attempt at explanation is in order. Sadly, such an explanation will not make for pleasant reading, but I do not ask your pardon. I would be remiss and no one's legitimate interests would be served were I to fail at honesty now – or even were I to remain silent where speaking out is most important. These are my reflections only; others may see things differently. I refuse to call the choices of others unfaithful, but I will say that for a person who sees the same things I see a choice is required.

Back-story

The 216th General Assembly shocked me out of a stupor of unawareness and ignorance of the national doings of the PC(USA). Lest there be any misapprehension, I did not learn of the actions of this assembly from the *Layman*, *Presbyweb*, the *Outlook*, the IRD, the NWAC, the Covenant Network, or the Witherspoon Society. Instead, I first heard about them in the customary way: non-Presbyterian friends asked me about things they read in the secular press. My habitual response to this type of occurrence was to assure them what they had read was not really accurate – in its attempt to find a simple take-away, the media had gotten the story wrong. A casual observer can clearly see the rigorous level of critical thought I applied to the national denomination.

Naturally, I was aware that the PC(USA) made some political statements I did not really support; and I was aware that certain Presbyterians – even a few officials – had a worrying tendency to dabble in ancient heresies and the occasional apostasy. But there were two pieces of conventional wisdom that I then firmly believed. I have since come to view them more clearly for the inadequate rationalizations and excuses they were.

1. Political stands of a General Assembly were not binding on conscience and therefore had nothing to do with me – I am, after all, (and I regard Christianity as being) mostly apolitical.
2. The official beliefs of the PC(USA) as expressed in the Book of Confessions were clearly Christian, decidedly Protestant, and for the most part Reformed. Therefore non-Christian beliefs proclaimed by some Presbyterians were not really relevant to me.

Something was different this time – after the 2004 General Assembly. I had a deep sense of disquiet that no craven counsel or conventional wisdom could wholly allay. If I belonged to a union, or a country club, or a political party, or a book club, I would make sure that its actions were ones I believed right; at the very least, I would not accept those I considered morally problematic. How then could I hold my church to a lower standard of conduct than that to which I would hold a secular organization without being pathologically stupid, phenomenally hypocritical, or both? This time I found I had no choice but to examine the PC(USA) more closely.

I decided the fairest approach would be to visit the official website of the Presbyterian Church (USA). I started with the minutes of the 216th General Assembly, then proceeded to the minutes of some prior assemblies. Over the next couple of months I spent considerable time examining the actions and information posted by various offices and committees of the denomination. I found some items to be good and helpful, but in the main, I can recall no other period in my life when I have so dramatically, so suddenly, and so starkly discovered myself to be a stranger in a strange (brave new) land. The Presbyterians described on the pages of this website bore very little resemblance to the Presbyterians I knew. Their beliefs, their passions, their causes, their priorities, their senses of right and wrong, and their understandings of Christianity were at profound odds with my own. The gulf fixed between the organization described and historic Presbyterianism seemed to me to be cosmic in scope.

It was at this point that I launched an experiment of sorts: I sent a letter to over ten thousand sessions. I needed to ascertain whether or not my experiences had been completely insular, and whether there were other Presbyterians like me. I also wanted to find out something else. If, as the Presbyterian Panel's statistics led me to believe, there were a disparity between the views of considerable majorities of Presbyterians and the actions of the national denomination, was it possible within Presbyterian polity to correct this error? It seemed to me that, if there were in fact a polity problem, there could also be a polity fix.

I believed then that such a solution would need to involve greater participation at the presbytery and national levels by sessions; it would require regularly sending accountable commissioners to presbytery meetings; it would require greater attention to the selection of representatives to the General Assembly; it would involve objecting to non-democratic and manipulative procedures employed at the presbytery level; and it would involve bringing issues of common concern before the presbytery through the overture process. I imagined sessions could push for presbyteries to pressure the General Assembly to make changes. I also believed that some changes would benefit the PC(USA) if indeed the national organization was 'out of step' with Presbyterians. Examples of possible helpful changes would be to explicitly require all officials of the PCUSA to uphold basic Christian doctrines; to discontinue funding and support of organizations that teach non-Christian theologies; to require the General Assembly to provide a biblical basis for its political actions; to require a supermajority of at least 75% of commissioners to pass political actions; and to require all employees, officials, and offices of the PC(USA) to discontinue all activism, advocacy, letter writing, petition signing on any issue not expressly addressed by the General Assembly. Much of my activity over the last three years has been a result of this action.

The Results

The last three years have proven illuminating. I received a wide array of responses ranging from the supportive to the patronizing to the condemnatory. This I expected. I also observed a fair number of ordinary Presbyterians taking actions that I earnestly desired to see. What I did not expect was the wide range of people – both inside and outside of the PC(USA) – with whom I have had the opportunity to interact. I have found friends where I did not look for them; for these I am profoundly thankful. I am also thankful for those people with whom I have strongly disagreed that showed a gracious willingness to both talk and listen even when such conversations were tense at best. I am grateful for the Truth In Love Network for providing me with a platform to speak – particularly to Brad who maintained and paid for that website. And I am grateful for the encouragement I have received from many people.

In this time I have come to a few conclusions. First, while there are deep differences among Presbyterians, some of these really are differences of sensibility rather than essential matters. If the political spoils of a denomination could be removed from the equation – e.g. if a hands off policy could be taken toward political activism where there was not agreement in the church – we would have little or no quarrel. Few fair-minded people will fault individuals for their political disagreements as long as they do not presume to speak for all Presbyterians or equate Christianity with their political preferences. Second, the theological differences are very marked and problematic, but the majority of Presbyterian members, elders, and pulpit pastors hold legitimately Christian beliefs. These may not be Presbyterian (in the sense of conforming to traditional Presbyterian doctrines), but they are at least definitionally Christian, generically Protestant, and somewhat Reformed. The assertion that there are two faiths equally divided within the Presbyterian Church (USA) is not entirely correct. There are, in fact, three faiths harbored within the church, but majorities of Presbyterians do not participate in the two non-Christian ones. (The three disparate faiths I have observed to operate within the PC(USA) are Historic Christianity, Modernism, and a Neo-Pagan/Neo-Gnostic Post-Modern Freeform Spirituality. The second and third join forces against historic Christianity, and are disproportionately represented among the higher governing bodies, officials, and national employees of the PC(USA).) Third, the disparate emphases of different Presbyterians are generally valid – though our views of one another often are not. Some of our goals are, if not the same, at least companionable. This situation is complicated because of the terminology we use. Some of the language employed by 'progressives' I tend

to reject out of hand because I associate it with political agendas I regard as harmful – yet often what is intended is not what I am hearing. Similarly, some phrases favored by ‘conservatives’ are interpreted by others as equally political and agenda driven; yet these too are often not meant in the way they are heard. At times we default to viewing one another as caricatures, and we fail to see the legitimate intentions and in fact Christian emphases we each have. This is by no means true of all Presbyterians, but it is the case for many.

The Bad News

I have mentioned positive results I have seen; I cannot deny there have been hopeful and encouraging signs. Yet I have concluded, somewhat against my own will, that the time has come for me to depart. You may rightly wonder at this determination, and I find I have an obligation to explain it. The chief end and reason for being of any church organization is to support the Church in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, preaching repentance and remission of sins in his name, and making disciples in all nations, teaching them to observe all things Jesus commanded his followers. If an organization does not support the Church in this way, if it should become destructive of these ends, or if it should become an active force for harm in the world, a Christian must seriously evaluate his or her affiliation with it. This organization – the PC(USA) – is sustained both by the gifts of members and by our names; what it does, it does in our names. What it does, we do – whether we agree or not. In the last act of Arthur Miller’s play, *The Crucible*, John Proctor balks at putting his signature to his false confession for witchcraft. The reason Proctor gives: ***“Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life!”***

If one were to conclude that the corporation, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) did not support the Church in its mission or had become an active force for harm in the world, one would have very few legitimate reasons to continue the affiliation. These would include the specific leading of the Holy Spirit and the peace that accompanies such a thing, sound arguments from Scripture, or a clear way forward – something that could be done to correct the situation. Inertia, property considerations, habit, in-group bias, institutional loyalty, dissembling arguments that confuse the Church (the Body of Christ) with the organization or the group with the individuals within it, the bonds of friendship, or the self-importance of being the loyal opposition – all of these would not suffice. I make no judgment on others’ choices; I do not know where the Holy Spirit leads them, or what they may see and believe.

For me, there are two germane questions: *have we reached the point where our organization no longer supports the Church in its mission, is a hindrance to that mission, or has become an active force for harm in its own right? And, if we have reached that point, are any of the reasons that would warrant a continued affiliation with the corporation, The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) present?* In my case, the answers to these questions are yes and no respectively, but it would be helpful to examine them in greater detail. I observe four specific problems in the organization for which I can find no remedy: apostasy and heresy, harmful political action, a culture of corruption, and a large measure of denial and apathy. These four cannot really be viewed separately because they are inter-related and mutually support one another. The first is clearly the more important, followed closely by the second – but neither of these would be possible were it not for the rampant corruption of the organization and the denial and apathy of many Presbyterian members, elders, and pastors.

Apostasy and Heresy

I do not deem the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to have officially apostatized or even to have officially endorsed heresy: our confessions, such as they are, remain intact. I would not seek to question that – on paper, according to our highest governing documents, the PC(USA) is a Christian organization. It would be a mistake to claim otherwise without qualification. As a matter of personal taste, I dislike imprecision; I also am most interested in determining the truth of a matter. Words have specific meanings, and I believe it is unhelpful to incorrectly label things apostate or heretical that are not so. These are not words that describe non-essential errors or differences of opinion. For clarity, I am using apostate to indicate that which formerly claimed to be Christian but has abandoned the inescapable tenets of Christianity; by heresy I mean the ancient heresies of the Church that were rightly rejected as wholly incompatible with Christianity.

I am mindful that many Presbyterian ministers do faithfully administer the Word and sacrament. That having been said, what our organization has done is, in reality, more damaging and harmful than official apostasy. It has harbored, fostered, and supported both apostasy and heresy. It has tolerated these things and given them the cover of 'Christianity' – allowing them to be offered as counterfeits in place of Christianity. This policy of supposed tolerance is a critical failure to uphold our responsibilities on the part of Presbyterians. We are frequently informed that we are a 'connectional' organization – the actions of one governing body – one session, one presbytery – are taken by the whole denominational organization. When Ministers of the Word and Sacrament are ordained by a presbytery and use their teaching ministry to advance doctrines that are fundamentally at odds with Christianity, their actions have been endorsed officially by the PC(USA). If they are not corrected, their actions are the actions of all Presbyterians.

Rather than sorrow and shame at the failure to confront teachings that, being offered in place of Christianity, actively prevent people from salvation, many in the PC(USA) have expressed intellectual pride at their tolerance. I realize, of course, that fashion dictates I must emphasize right practice over right doctrine. I further realize that most who adopt this fashion fail to see the harm in substituting unchristian ideas for Christian ones. People will, after all, (it is maintained) accept or reject ideas, and they ought to be given the opportunity to consider all of them. I believe this approach, while sometimes well-intentioned, overlooks some important factors. First, these Presbyterian advocates of apostasy and heresy are claiming the brew they offer for sale IS Christianity – when they themselves cannot be so dim-witted as to fail to see the great gulf fixed between their proclamations and those of the New Testament and the historic Church. I have no doubt that such ministers believe their doctrines to be true; but they cannot believe that they are accurately representing Christianity. If they were in any sense of the word moral people, they would not seek to withhold that information – they would, in fact, offer their doctrines as distinct from Christianity and at odds with it. There is an almost universally lauded ethical principal they choose to violate: Thou shalt not steal. In so doing, they deceive the unwary by cutting them off from Christianity. (I mean specifically they prevent those they deliberately deceive from actually knowing and understanding that Christianity teaches different doctrines from those they hold dear – so that their hearers are not in a position to make an informed decision. It is true that individuals must live with the consequences of what they believe, so they have the ultimate responsibility, but it can hardly be called a good thing when the PC(USA) endorses teaching ministries that mislead them.) Second, in Christianity, there is an interrelation between Christian doctrine and Christian action. Christian behavioral requirements are radical; they involve a rejection of the world's and their societies' values. But they are also at odds with human nature; they go against the grain. Consistent Christian actions are not possible without a change of heart and life and the transforming activity of the Holy Spirit. To simply provide a list of 'Christian' behaviors that are by nature unattainable is neither fair nor Christian. Third, there is considerable variety in the 'right practices' endorsed by those who choose this emphasis. How, in the absence of doctrine, is one to determine which practices are truly Christian, and which are simply the pet opinions of the speaker? This is not an insurmountable problem, but it is rarely effectively addressed.

Aside from the increasing presence of 'renegade', undisciplined Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, officials of the PC(USA) also continue to dabble in the heretical and apostate. Our Book of Common Worship includes two prayers that are at odds with Christianity. Many presbyteries actively oppose and indeed fight to stamp out orthodoxy in their ranks. I know of presbyteries where candidates for ministry dare not use the word Father to describe God – because, of course, we apparently currently have vastly greater wisdom and knowledge of God than Jesus displayed. Moderators of General Assemblies have endorsed non-Christian beliefs and practices. Offices, agencies, committees, and officials of the national denomination have, at times, done likewise. *[FOR EXAMPLES AND DOCUMENTATION OF APOSTASY AND HERESIES HARBORED IN THE PC(USA) PLEASE SEE SUPPLEMENT A.]*

The bottom line here is this: as an organization, the PC(USA)'s systemic tolerance for and encouragement of apostasy is destructive to the legitimate ends of the Church. The failure of most members to oppose this is a failure of the Presbyterian form of governance. If this is not corrected, then all Presbyterians – by virtue of our membership

in the PC(USA), become partakers in hampering and preventing the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Judge for yourself whether we can, with our right hand advance the Gospel, and with our left hand hinder it. Judge for yourself if there is indeed fellowship between light and darkness. Judge for yourself whether the same spring ought to produce water both brackish and fresh.

Political Harm

As an organization, the PC(USA) (and its northern church predecessor) has displayed an aggressive and unremitting campaign of political activism over the last several decades. I am persuaded that, in the best cases – where the political actions are in themselves good things, and where they have the support of the Presbyterians they claim to represent, this is a distraction from the actual legitimate purposes and reason for existence of a denominational organization. There are indeed occasion, though these are rare, when such an organization must make a political stand – when such a stand involves a strong Christian witness to the larger society, or when such a stand is correcting the errors of other organizations that claim to speak for Christianity. In the vast majority of cases, however, the stands of the PC(USA) have not risen to this level; they have, in fact, solely endorsed opinions about which Christians may legitimately differ. During this process, the PC(USA) has repeatedly claimed for itself the title ‘prophetic’. This reflects no reality except for the arrogance of believing certain temporal political schemes are somehow endorsed by God. Ironically, in many cases these false ‘prophetic’ stands have directly contradicted the Bible and have not been compatible with Christianity. In most cases these stands have not even represented the views of Presbyterians. One would imagine that a Christian who valued the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit would never claim to prophesy when God had not directly spoken to him or her. Similarly, one would imagine that a denomination would not be anxious to risk its entire Christian witness on such a claim. If one had even the remotest fear of the God who will take every idle word into account, one would be very careful to never utter false words in the name of that God. (I’m very well aware that ‘prophetic’ in this context has a different meaning – but that is nothing to be proud of. That meaning is predicated on the assumption that God didn’t really speak to His prophets – but that they just had a feeling or moral sense that prompted them to speak out.)

This has been, for the most part, my opinion since I first seriously examined the political actions of the PC(USA) – so I cannot claim it represents a change. What is relevant here are those areas of activism that I have become convinced are both badly motivated and actively advance evil in the world. Opinions on this may differ, but that is quite beside the point. If a Presbyterian comes to believe certain political actions of the PC(USA) to be objectively bad, that Presbyterian can either assay to change PC(USA) policy and mitigate the harm it has caused or leave the PC(USA) and stop supporting it. Otherwise that Presbyterian is working to advance what he or she believes to be actively evil. *[FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PROBLEMATIC POLITICAL ACTIONS OF THE PC(USA) PLEASE SEE SUPPLEMENT B]*

Both issues I have mentioned so far have potential polity solutions within the PC(USA) under ordinary circumstances. Unfortunately, the next two problems I must address indicate that we are not in ‘ordinary time’, and, in fact, Presbyterians concerned with the faithful presentation of the Gospel and with responsible and representative denominational political actions (or at least actions that do no harm) are without recourse.

A Culture of Corruption

The one thing that has most surprised me over the last few years was the discovery of a system-wide culture of corruption within the corporation, The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Each corrupt or unethical action I have seen taken by a PC(USA) official has caught me off-guard. Partly this consistent horrified surprise has been a product of my own naïveté; I had incorrect expectations for the conduct of leaders in an organization that expressly names itself Christian. Sadly, I have been forced to the conclusion that the corruption within the PC(USA) does not represent isolated incidents but a pattern of behavior. I realize this is a very serious statement, and I recognize the need for precision. Institutional corruption is a nebulous charge; it can refer to such things as graft, embezzlement, sexual misconduct or abuse, illegal activity, collusion of officials with those of other organizations to the detriment of their own. While these certainly occur within the PC(USA), I have no reason to believe that they are

more widespread or serious here than they are in other denominations. ***The type of corruption that IS endemic to the PC(USA) consists of three things: the failure of employees and officials of the denomination to follow the constitution of the PC(USA) and explicit instructions of General Assemblies; the knowing and intentional conveyance of false and misleading information to Presbyterians and those outside of the denomination; and abuse of power and manipulation at all levels of the denomination.***

I want to make perfectly clear that there are many Presbyterian officials who are also faithful servants of the Church. I want to underline the fact that many Presbyterians at all levels of the organization are decent human beings and rightly shun corrupt practices. It is also true that other denominations suffer from similar problems. Nonetheless, the system-wide affinity for corruption within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) goes beyond that of most denominations (though some would give us a run for our money). Similarly, renewal groups and those concerned with reform within the PC(USA) have not displayed spotless conduct; however, their occasional misdeeds pale in comparison to what appears to be business as usual in this national organization.

That the three things I have mentioned have occurred in the PC(USA) is beyond doubt; that they are widespread is also fairly apparent. [FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CORRUPT PRACTICES IN THE PC(USA) PLEASE SEE SUPPLEMENT C AND SUPPLEMENT D.] Here, I want to examine the implications of such a system that leaves all Presbyterians of good will without redress. If our denominational officials refuse to abide by the Book of Confessions, the Book of Order, and the explicit instructions of the General Assembly, then no change within Presbyterian polity remains possible. If these cannot, in good conscience, follow the BOC, BOO, and GA, then they have only one ethical option – they must resign. Any other course of action does not qualify as moral or Christian behavior. There is no rationalization that would make it acceptable for a person to remain in a position and deliberately fail to follow the requirements of that position. Similarly, no rationalization can be given that would in any way excuse those officials and employees who knowingly give false information to Presbyterians and to those outside the denomination. To seek to manipulate Presbyterians or to abuse the proper powers of one's office (as defined by both the BOO and historic Presbyterianism) also can hardly be described as moral or decent actions. These statements may seem harsh or dire; in part that reflects the profound distaste I have for deceit, denial of justice to Presbyterians, and all forms of abuse of power and manipulation. However, my tone also reflects the fact that I can honestly no longer see any other possible rationale that would make the situation acceptable.

In plain terms, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is in a state of schism – not because it harbors competing faiths (though that is certainly problematic), but because its polity is irreparably broken. There remains no possible polity fix for this situation short of removing from office every volunteer or employee who participates in corrupt practices. There is no way within the system for ordinary Presbyterians to act on any issue of concern to them – period. Whatever ordinary Presbyterians may do, following legitimate Presbyterian processes, will be undone by the officials of this denomination (if it fails to meet with those officials' approval). The schism we are experiencing is similar in kind to the 'Western Schism' of 1378. History has decided in favor of the Roman Popes, Urban VI, Boniface IX, Innocent VII, and Gregory XII; and indeed the selection of Urban followed the correct and legitimate process – whether or not he met the expectations of the cardinals who elected him. History has also deemed the Avignon (and the later Pisa) Popes to have been illegitimate; they are excluded from the pontifical yearbook, and they are commonly termed Antipopes. Like this schism, ours is predominately a political rather than a theological schism. (It can be argued, of course, that schism is not the proper term precisely because it is a polity issue.) Many of our highest officials have, by their actions – by their (apparently intentional) failure to abide by the Book of Confessions, the Book of Order, or the explicit instructions of the General Assembly – renounced the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Yes, these former Presbyterians still continue to draw salaries; yes, they still continue to work in PC(USA) offices; yes, they still continue to pretend to speak for the PC(USA); yes, they still exert control over Presbyterian assets; and yes, many genuinely Presbyterian employees continue to follow their instructions – though they retain no legitimate authority to issue such instructions. We are in a state of schism because, on the one hand, we have ordinary legitimate Presbyterians to be found in congregations and at every

level of our organization. On the other hand we have our very own version of an Antipope and his followers holding court, not in Avignon, but in Louisville.

Perhaps I exaggerate. The corruption problem is widespread, but, like the difficulties of apostasy/heresy and political intemperance, there is still a possibility it can be addressed. Clearly this would be thoroughly unpleasant, and few would have the stomach for it. But it could, in theory, be corrected were it not for the fourth problem I mentioned.

Denial and Apathy

When faced with corruption on a wide scale or among those highly placed in an organization (which I am convinced describes the situation in the PC(USA)), a member of the organization has essentially four options. He or she must choose among them; not making a choice is to choose one of them.

1. A person may oppose corruption with all his or her heart, mind, soul, and strength. Halfway opposition is not an option; in that case a person, by default has chosen not to oppose corruption. To be a 'troubler of Israel' is a thankless job; it is a difficult job; it is an extraordinarily unpleasant job; and it is a somewhat hopeless job. Such a person will be, in most cases, demonized and maligned; and in many cases, such a person will face retributions by the corrupt who wield any kind of temporal power. I do not say this to discourage; if any are called to such a task they must undertake it. Nonetheless, a sober assessment is appropriate.

2. A person may support corruption. I confess I have difficulty fathoming the motives of such a person, but I know they exist because I have encountered them. A host of Presbyterians will rise to defend every action from the national denomination. There are news outlets and commentators who will provide absurd rationalizations for the most outrageous behaviors. There are many who will lie about the actions of the national denomination that are beyond debate; these will often talk about looking at the broader context or provide some fig leaf explanation. In individual cases such explanations may merit the benefit of the doubt, but when these are used to cover a pattern of behavior there can be one, inescapable conclusion: their advancers support corruption.

3. A person may deny or ignore corruption. This is by far the most wide-spread reaction. In part this is a result of self-selected ignorance on the part of many Presbyterian members. They (perhaps accurately) view their primary and almost exclusive mission as the ministry of their local church. This is understandable as it is in the context of our local church and community and among those we see every day that we live out Christianity. However, to support with finances and numbers a corrupt organization is not morally defensible; it also abnegates a responsibility that goes along with being Presbyterian. In part Presbyterians are poorly informed about the practices of the national denomination; in cases information has been deliberately withheld from them. Being good-natured, these want to believe that the actions of their leaders are well-intentioned and driven by strong Christian character. It is, therefore, very easy for them to believe the inaccuracies and outright lies often found in official communications from the denomination and among its boosters and apologists. In many cases, these inaccuracies and lies are backed up by the pastors of these ordinary Presbyterians – often under a mistaken view that they are shielding or protecting their congregations. Nonetheless, many of us have erred because we have heard rumors and have not sought out the truth of the matter. In my own case, and that of many Presbyterians I know, we have suspected that we'd rather not examine the national organization too closely – regarding this as the equivalent of watching sausage being made. Among ordinary Presbyterians there is also one very strong, overriding incentive to avoid knowledge: the fear of losing the (quite frankly often loving and supportive) relationships that exist within their local congregations. Permitting corruption somewhere else – even when financed by and supported by ordinary Presbyterians is considered preferable to perhaps causing division within the local church.

4. A person may leave. Even here, that person still has a responsibility to try to mitigate the harm caused by his or her former membership in the corrupt organization.

I believe this practice of denial and chosen ignorance has been deadly for the PC(USA). We did not arrive in this situation overnight. It took many decades of gradual and small failures on the part of ordinary Presbyterians to object to abuses, often to attain the promise of peace and unity. That promise has been, like all deceits, one that never materialized. To cede a little bit of one's soul for a temporary appeasement is a fool's bargain – and over time, those who have done this repeatedly find they have nothing left. The phrase 'sold out' comes to mind. What shall it profit a man if he should gain the illusion of peace, unity, pension, property, or personal significance yet forfeit his own self? At least the one Jesus commented about managed to gain the whole world out of the unprofitable deal.

Conclusion

I started what has essentially amounted to a diatribe – though one I believe to be accurate – to attempt to explain my choice. The bottom line is this: I no longer believe the corporation, The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) supports the Church in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, preaching repentance and remission of sins in his name, making disciples in all nations, or spreading the teachings of Jesus. In cases I am convinced the PC(USA) has become destructive of these ends – in most instances the local churches and individuals who are actually doing these things would be at least as effective in the absence of the PC(USA), and that the encouragement and tolerance of apostasy and heresy, the often irresponsible and sometimes blatantly harmful political pronouncements, and the terrible testimony demonstrated by corrupt conduct has actively impeded their work. While I acknowledge that many Presbyterians earnestly desire renewal and reform, and while I acknowledge that Presbyterians of widely varying opinions can make a lot of progress by sitting down together and talking, I now regard the concept of change within the PC(USA) brought through legitimate Presbyterian means to be basically no longer possible. (It is, of course, true that God may choose to yet intervene – to bring revival and repentance to Presbyterians, to change our hearts and to cause us to be truly Christian – but I do not believe that will happen.) I also have no specific calling to actively stay within the PC(USA) and I have not seen any legitimate argument from Scripture that suggests I ought to do so. Therefore, I can no longer, in good conscience, give either money or affiliation to this organization; I can no longer, in good conscience, partake – by such affiliation or support – in the works of what I believe to be an organization that hinders and opposes the Church; I can no longer, in good conscience, permit others to believe I support those works I find actively harmful. I am mindful of the harshness and severity of these statements, and it is only with great sadness – more than you will perhaps realize – that I make them. Yet I cannot do otherwise. ***"Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life!"***

Will Spotts