

Congregationalism – Heritage & Future

Class #6 – The Rise of Theological Leftism & Woke Theology

October 21, 2020

Terms

- 1) In the 1980's & 1990's the theological divide among American Protestants was simple:
 - a) Old School Mainstream **Theological Liberalism** = *Bad*
(The belief that the individual is the final authority + the Social Gospel)
 - b) 20th century **Evangelicalism** = *Good*
(Focus on the Bible, the cross, being “born again”, evangelism, etc.)
 - c) There was some Fundamentalists (hardened Evangelicals) but they were on the fringe.
 - d) Denominations and detailed creedal statements were no longer that important.
- 2) Things have changed! Today I would see it as (to use broad categories):
 - a) Conservative Old School Reformational **Confessional Protestantism** = Very Good
(The Christianity of the great Protestant creeds.)
 - b) 21st century **Pop-Evangelicalism** = *Weak*
(Old school Evangelicalism focused on church growth and being “relevant.”)
 - c) Old School Mainstream **Theological Liberalism** = *Bad & dying* (praise God!)
(Though in some ways they won: They created our current secular age.)
 - d) Leftist **Woke Theological** based on **Critical Theory** (CRT) = Troubling
(This new movement is infecting all groups.)
- 3) Basic political terms:
 - a) **Conservative**: Conserve Christian Western (Protestant) Culture
 - b) **Liberal**: Focus on liberty and individualism
 - c) **Leftist**: Focus on creating equality

Timeline of Leftism as it Relates to Christianity in the America

- 1859 Charles Darwin publishes On the Origin of Species.
- 1865-1929 Theological Liberalism begins to take over all Christian institutions.
- 1867-83 Karl Marx publishes Das Kapital. History is to be understood through the lens of economics and class struggle.
- 1890-1929 “The Progressive Era” in the United States: To address problems of industrialization, urbanization, immigration and political corruption through the application of science and expertise to society.
- 1899 Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, publishes The Interpretation of Dreams
- c.1923 The Frankfort School begins in German, encouraging Cultural (Neo-) Marxism. The focus is no longer about economic revolution (as with traditional Marxism) but peacefully working to change the social oppression of Western Culture. Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) as a leading thinker of this movement.
- 1923 John Gresham Machen publishes Christianity and Liberalism.**
- 1925 The Scopes Monkey Trial.
- 1929 Princeton Seminary, the last bastion of orthodoxy, goes liberal.
- 1929 Westminster Theological Seminary is founded by conservatives from Princeton, (Machen) in Philadelphia to defend historic traditional Calvinism.**
- 1935 Machen is tried and suspended from ministry by the (liberal) Presbyterian Church. He is not allowed to use the Bible in his defense.
- 1937 The Cultural (or Neo-) Marxist Antonio Gramsci dies in prison in Italy
- 1973 Derrick Bell publishes Race, Racism and American Law, one of the foundation texts of Critical Race Theory
- 1989 The term “*intersectionality*” coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw.
“Intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities (e.g., gender, caste, sex, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability, physical appearance, height, etc.) combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.” - Wikipedia
- 2017 The Nashville Statement, a conservative Protestant affirmation of biblical marriage and sex, is published.**
- 2018 The Dallas Statement, a conservative Protestant rejection of Social Justice, is published.**
- 2018 The “Revoice Conference” (taking a soft stance on LGBTQP+) starts to divide the conservative Presbyterian Church of America (PCA).
- 2019 The passing of Resolution 9 (saying CRT is an acceptable tool for theology) passes at the Southern Baptist Convention, which starts to divide the largest (and conservative) Protestant denomination in the USA.
- 2020 Conservatives within the PCA begin to form a new denomination: Vanguard Presbyterian Church.

Appendix I – Critical Theory Defined

1) “Critical Theory” as defined by Wikipedia:

“Critical theory is a social philosophy pertaining to the reflective assessment and critique of society and culture in order to reveal and challenge power structures. With origins in sociology, as well as in literary criticism, it argues that social problems are influenced and created more by societal structures and cultural assumptions than by individual and psychological factors. Maintaining that ideology is the principal obstacle to human liberation, critical theory was established as a school of thought primarily by the Frankfurt School theoreticians Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, and Max Horkheimer. The latter sociologist described a theory as critical insofar as it seeks "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them.”

2) Critical Theory as described by Pluckrose & Lindsay¹:

- Sees knowledge completely created by humans – stories we tell ourselves, largely in the unwitting service of maintaining our own social standing, privilege and power.
- Blurs boundaries and erases categories, while reveling in manufactured ambiguity.
- Rejects individual and universal human values in favor of group identity and identity politics.
- Focuses on victimhood.
- Rejects debate and discussion and views them as ways of reinforcing dominant discourses that suppress certain perspectives and insists that we cannot get to “the” truth, but only to “our” truths, which are rooted in our values.
- Promotes the idea that truth is a “language game” and that words, ultimately, only point to other words and can never correspond concretely to reality – unless those words describe oppression.
- Never can except criticism of itself. (One is “woke” or not.)
- Is radically cynical about the possibility of progress.
- Is inherently corrosive because of its cynicism and attachment to methods it calls “critical.”

3) See the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture in Washington, DC poster about “Talking About Race: Aspects & Assumptions of Whiteness & White Culture in the United States”.

artoferickuns.files.wordpress.com/2020/07/poster.jpg

¹ Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity – and Why This Harms Everybody by Helen Pluckrose & James Lindsay, 237-38.

Appendix II – Call for the Vanguard Presbytery

WHEREAS, We the undersigned have met together to study the situation in the Church of Jesus Christ, and

WHEREAS, We are disturbed by the progressive and liberal trend in the Presbyterian Church in America which has effectively replaced the preaching of the gospel with the social justice gospel, and

WHEREAS, We believe the PCA has left us inasmuch as we still hold to the same truths that we professed at our ordination when we solemnly adopted the Westminster Standards as a faithful expression of the teachings of Scripture, and

WHEREAS, We believe that the essential issue in all the problems within the PCA at present is the authority of Scripture which is either being denied or ignored by many officers and churches within our communion; and

WHEREAS, We are disturbed that many ministers within the PCA have made public statements or written things concerning creation and the origin of man which conflict with our understanding of Scripture inasmuch as we believe that science must be interpreted by the Bible rather than the Bible being interpreted by science; and

WHEREAS, We believe that the PCA has turned its back on true grassroots Presbyterianism through the development of an entrenched bureaucracy and hierarchy at the General Assembly level whose committees function like so many different bishoprics and the PCA has thereby abandoned the type of Presbyterianism which our founding fathers sought to establish; and

WHEREAS, We believe that churches and presbyteries in the PCA no longer have any meaningful input in the fulfillment of the Great Commission by the larger denomination inasmuch as all the decisions for foreign missionaries, campus ministries, and even new church plants are made by a small group of committee members or bureaucrats who take final action apart from the approval of the denomination as a whole; and

WHEREAS, We believe the adoption of “good faith subscription” by the General Assembly in 2003 has not protected orthodoxy within the PCA, but has resulted in the proliferation of exceptions to the Westminster Standards being taken by ministers; and

WHEREAS, We affirm that God disciplines those He loves and the Church should do the same; and

WHEREAS, We acknowledge that the Standing Judicial Commission of the PCA found Louisiana Presbytery guilty of providing sanctuary to TE Steve Wilkins and the Federal Vision heresy at a trial on March 6-7, 2008 by a vote of 11-7 and formally rebuked the lower court at the 2008 General Assembly which resulted in that presbytery dissolving; and

WHEREAS, the constitutional powers given to all church courts is specified in BCO 11-4, which says in part:

Every church court has the right to resolve questions of doctrine and discipline seriously and reasonably proposed, and in general to maintain truth and righteousness, condemning erroneous opinions and practices which tend to the injury of the peace, purity, or progress of the Church.

WHEREAS, BCO 14-6 states in part:

The General Assembly shall have power:

- a. ...to bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, injuriously affecting the Church; to decide in all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline...
- g. To suppress schismatical contentions and disputations, according to the rules provided therefor;

WHEREAS, the SJC of the General Assembly has abdicated its exercise of the above constitutional powers of church courts in some of its decisions since at least March 7, 2013, to wit:

1. On March 7-8, 2013, the SJC voted 15-2 to deny a complaint against Pacific Northwest Presbytery for its protection of TE Peter Leithart and his heretical views. Their stated rationale at the hearing was that the SJC did not have the authority to overturn a nearly unanimous decision by the lower court which had conducted a trial according to the right constitutional process. In other words, the SJC decided that process is more important than doctrine or necessary discipline.

2. On March 1, 2018, the SJC denied a complaint by TE Michael Frazier against Nashville Presbytery for its failure to find that there was a strong presumption of guilt that TE Scott Sauls had violated the Westminster Standards in his writings and messages concerning same-sex attraction. There was sufficient evidence for the SJC to at least remand the matter to Nashville Presbytery with instructions to conduct a trial concerning such a matter of great importance in the Church, but the SJC did not do so. The SJC did not decide in a matter which has the potential to rend the Church apart and, therefore, did not give the "advice and instruction, in conformity with the Constitution" (BCO 14-6b) that was demanded of that body at the hour of great need.

WHEREAS, We believe that officers of the Church are held to a higher standard in doctrine and morality and spirituality than other church members inasmuch as there are specific requirements given for them in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9, and

WHEREAS, We believe that for any officer of the Church to refer to himself as a "gay Christian" or a "same-sex attracted Christian" is a contradiction of the gospel and the doctrines of regeneration, justification, and sanctification, and

WHEREAS, We believe that there is a great difference between being tempted to a sin that is resisted and finding one's identity as a person in any sin, whether of the heart or the deed, and

WHEREAS, the courts of the PCA at both the presbytery and General assembly level have failed to discipline those who claim to be same-sex attracted officers and/or those who participated in the Revoice conferences, and

WHEREAS, We are agreed that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and

WHEREAS, We are agreed that the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms set forth the system of Doctrine declared in the Scriptures, and

WHEREAS, The Proposed Form of Government along with the Rules of Discipline and the Directory of Worship which is based largely on the 1973 PCA BCO sets forth a reasonable and practical formulary for church organization, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, THEREFORE, we the undersigned do covenant together to form an Association to be known as VANGUARD PRESBYTERY, INC., a provisional presbytery for Presbyterian and Reformed Churches uniting, and

THEREFORE, this Association shall have as its purpose to perpetuate the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as it was once for all delivered to the saints in Holy Scripture.