

American Council of Christian Churches  
79<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting, October 27, 2020  
Video Conference

Resolution on Ecclesiastical Separation and the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)

In February 1973, the Steering Committee of the orthodox and conservative Continuing Church Movement (CCM), within the theologically troubled Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern), passed a resolution to form a new denomination. By the end of the year, these separatists would convene the First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).<sup>1</sup> Today, the PCA is comprised of roughly 2000 churches and 400,000 members.

Excited from its inception about the revival results of the popular but compromising evangelist, Billy Graham,<sup>2</sup> the new denomination stopped short of taking a stand against his ecumenical evangelism, which had violated biblical principles of separation from apostasy and consequently had divided orthodoxy into new evangelical and fundamentalist camps.<sup>3</sup> In 1986 the denomination's support of new evangelicalism became official with its membership in the National Association of Evangelicals, where it continues to hold common cause with many charismatic denominations and other non-separatists.

In that same month forty-seven years ago, a warning appeared in the "Zeitgeist Watchers" section of CCM's *The Presbyterian Journal*, which warned of the danger of "'Gay' Liberation." Its young author predicted continued spiritual fallout from the sexual revolution of the women's liberation movement of that time. His warning said: "We can expect the emphasis to change somewhat to the so-called Gay Liberationists. Recent trends toward making homosexuality acceptable will increase a hundredfold, and church sanctions of homosexual behavior will reach a new high in rhetorical self-righteousness."<sup>4</sup>

The postponed 48<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the PCA will be hosted next year by the Missouri Presbytery of the PCA (MOP), which has defended Teaching Elder Greg Johnson of Memorial Presbyterian Church, St. Louis. Under Pastor Johnson's leadership, Memorial Presbyterian Church hosted the 2018 Revoice Conference, organized for "supporting, encouraging, and empowering gay, lesbian, same-sex-attracted, and other LGBT Christians so they can flourish while observing the historic, Christian doctrine of marriage and sexuality."<sup>5</sup> Tolerating teachers who represent a false gospel, the Conference included a number of Roman Catholic authorities on the Conference topic (2 Cor. 11:4, 12-15). That no official protest to the inclusion of Roman Catholics at the Conference has arisen in the denomination illustrates its embrace of the new evangelical paradigm, which repudiated biblical separatism generations ago. In 2019 and 2020, Johnson's church, under the auspices of its ministry partner, The Chapel – Sanctuary for the Arts, also hosted "Transluminare," a theatrical play cycle celebrating the LGBT agenda.<sup>6</sup>

Pastor Johnson refers to himself as a *gay Christian*.<sup>7</sup> In response to his presbytery's investigation, Johnson explained, "My sexual orientation is a 6.0 on the Kinsey scale, meaning that I have only ever experienced sexual attraction to the same sex. My orientation is not heterosexual or bisexual, but homosexual. I am same-sex-attracted."<sup>8</sup> He attributes his "homosexual orientation" to original sin and to what the Bible calls *the flesh*, rather than actual volitional sin.<sup>9</sup> He does so because he knows that in this life, the believer's struggle with the flesh never ends. If a person's homosexuality is his flesh, it is incurable in this life (Rom. 7:18).

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<sup>1</sup> The denomination changed its name from the original National Presbyterian Church in 1974.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see the editorial titled "Christlike in Humility," which defended Graham's ministry while charging his critics with a Pharisaical attitude. *The Presbyterian Journal* (November 8, 1974), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the negative aspects of the legacy of Graham, see the ACCC's "Statement on the Death of Billy Graham" ([acc4truth.org/2018/02/23/statement-on-the-death-of-billy-graham/](https://www.reformation21.org/blog/trans-memorial-in-an-evangelical-chapel)).

<sup>4</sup> Bill Melden (February 21, 1973), p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> See the ACCC Special Report, "Revoice and the Gay Christian Movement," by Executive Secretary Dan Greenfield ([acc4truth.org/2020/01/22/revoice-and-the-gay-christian-movement/](https://www.reformation21.org/blog/trans-memorial-in-an-evangelical-chapel)).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.reformation21.org/blog/trans-memorial-in-an-evangelical-chapel>.

<sup>7</sup> Note that the quotation marks around the word *gay* used in Melden's 1973 article, "'Gay' Liberation," are not used.

<sup>8</sup> *Missouri Presbytery Ad Hoc Committee to Respond to Memorial Presbyterian Church Report of Its BCO 31-2 Investigation of TE Greg Johnson* (MOP BCO 31-2) (July 21, 2020), p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson says: "I objected to adding the indefinite article because that implies that being same-sex-attracted is in itself an actual sin, meaning a choice. I agreed that same-sex sexual attraction—even resisted—is of sin, is sinful, and is a movement [or 'motion,' in the words of WCF VI.5] of indwelling sin. But not 'a sin' unless there is volition. I was trying to explain that you can't just 'repent of being same-sex-attracted and then go and be same-sex attracted no more'" (MOP BCO 32-2, p. 16). Note that Johnson agrees that actual sins include both those committed with the mind or heart and the body.

With this assertion, however, Pastor Johnson fails to remember that both created human nature and fallen human nature are common to all humans. None can claim that their homosexuality is something less volitional than an actual sin by virtue of creation because all are created equally heterosexual.<sup>10</sup> Nor can any excuse homosexuality as less volitional than an actual sin by virtue of original sin because all are fallen equally as heterosexuals. The fall did not erase man's heterosexuality, a created aspect of the image of God in man passed down to us from Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:26-27).

Fallen human nature is common to all humans, and it is this nature that still infects believers, although the Spirit of God now lives within them to battle and mortify that flesh (Gal. 5:16-17). Same-sex attraction is the strong temptation to a specific sin in the lives of fewer than all believers, a work of the flesh, not the flesh. Therefore, same-sex attraction is not a component of the believer's incurable flesh, but rather a unique and personal actual sin volitionally committed for reasons specific to the sinner with homosexual desires, as is every one of our other actual sins in violation of the seventh commandment and accompanied by our willful "unnatural lusts."<sup>11</sup>

Although advising against the use of the label *gay Christian*, the Missouri Presbytery has vigorously defended Pastor Johnson, counseling in part, "Wishing to heed Paul's admonition to neither condemn nor despise one another over debatable matters (Rom. 14:1-12), we believe Christian liberty grants believers a degree of latitude as they describe themselves."<sup>12</sup> Throughout the church's history, believers have come to understand that good men must disagree agreeably when truth is unclear. But the true church's universal and Scriptural condemnation of homosexuality as an actual sin rather than an incurable orientation is as old as the ancient sin itself (Gen. 18:20, Rom. 1:26-27, 1 Cor. 6:9-11).<sup>13</sup> The PCA's tolerance of "gay Christianity" is their Presbyterian father's warning come to fruition – "church sanctions of homosexual behavior [have] reach[ed] a new high in rhetorical self-righteousness."<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, the American Council of Christian Churches, at its 79<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting, October 27, 2020, commends and supports brethren who are taking a stand against serious gospel error in the Presbyterian Church in America by coming out in obedient separation away from its fellowship and from under its authority (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). The Missouri Presbytery's defense of Pastor Johnson and the PCA's alignment with the Missouri Presbytery are the fruits of the religious compromise and the cultural accommodation that have plagued the PCA for generations. We thank the Lord for the omnipotent power of the saving gospel, which can convert the sinner, whatever his sin, into the justified, sanctified, and washed child of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). And we resolve to preach faithfully repentance from all sin and faith in Christ to a generation plagued with the actual sin of same-sex attraction and other violations of the seventh commandment, trusting fully that whosoever believes on Him might be saved from man's horrible pit and miry clay (Ps. 40:2). "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).



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<sup>10</sup> See the 2017 ACCC resolution titled, "Resolution on Same Sex Attraction" (<https://acc4truth.org/2017/11/06/same-sex-attraction/>).

<sup>11</sup> *Westminster Larger Catechism*. Question 139: "What are the sins forbidden in the seventh commandment? A. The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts; all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections; etc."

<sup>12</sup> [www.theaquilareport.com/missouri-presbytery-adopts-affirmations-and-denials-on-the-biblical-fundamentals-for-sexual-ethics/](http://www.theaquilareport.com/missouri-presbytery-adopts-affirmations-and-denials-on-the-biblical-fundamentals-for-sexual-ethics/). Note that the *Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality* commissioned by the General Assembly seems to agree with this sentiment: "Churches should be gentle, patient, and intentional with believers who call themselves 'gay Christians,' encouraging them, as part of the process of sanctification, to leave behind identification language rooted in sinful desires, to live chaste lives, to refrain from entering into temptation, and to mortify their sinful desires."

(<file:///C:/Users/pasto/Documents/Ecclesiastical%20Issues/Presbyterian%20Churches%20of%20America/AIC-Report-to-48th-GA-5-28-20-1.pdf>), p. 12. Although this gentleness may be appropriate for weaker brothers as indicated by the Romans passage, weaker brothers trapped in their sin should not be Christian leaders (1 Tim. 5:20).

<sup>13</sup> Note that the text of the Romans passage says that homosexuals leave or give up the natural use of heterosexual relations to engage in homosexuality. They are relinquishing their heterosexual starting point, not following through on a homosexual one.

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.*