

Manual Appendix 4

Central Carolina Presbytery
Report of the Ad-interim Committee on Federal Vision
Adopted August 22, 2015

That Central Carolina Presbytery adopt the following declarations recommended by the 35th PCA GA Federal Vision Study Committee Report as faithful to the Westminster Standards which, while subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, have been adopted by the PCA as the standard exposition of Scripture in relation to both doctrine and practice; and

That Presbytery also adopt the accompanying denials proposed by the Presbytery Ad-interim Committee on Federal Vision that are intended to compliment and fully clarify the declarations approved by the 35th PCA GA Federal Vision Study Committee Report; and

That these declarations and denials express the position of this court as regards the teaching of the Westminster Standards on these matters; and

That the Presbytery require candidates for licensure and ordination and ministers transferring into the Presbytery to declare their views with regard to the doctrines in these declarations and denials which Presbytery understands to merely express the Westminster Standards on these matters; and

That if any member of the court disagrees with these declarations and denials inasmuch as they faithfully represent the Westminster Standards, he should make his views known to the court; and

That Presbytery commend this report to sessions for careful consideration and study.

Declarations:

1. The view that rejects the bi-covenantal structure of Scripture as represented in the Westminster Standards (i.e., views which do not merely take issue with the terminology, but the essence of the first/second covenant framework) is contrary to those Standards.
2. The view that an individual is “elect” by virtue of his membership in the visible church; and that this “election” includes justification, adoption and sanctification; but that this individual could lose his “election” if he forsakes the visible church, is contrary to the Westminster Standards.
3. The view that Christ does not stand as a representative head whose perfect obedience and satisfaction is imputed to individuals who believe in him is contrary to the Westminster Standards.
4. The view that strikes the language of “merit” from our theological vocabulary so that the claim is made that Christ’s merits are not imputed to his people is contrary to the Westminster Standards.

- 44 5. The view that “union with Christ” renders imputation redundant because it subsumes
45 all of Christ’s benefits (including justification) under this doctrinal heading is
46 contrary to the Westminster Standards.
- 47 6. The view that water baptism effects a “covenantal union” with Christ through which
48 each baptized person receives the saving benefits of Christ’s mediation, including
49 regeneration, justification, and sanctification, thus creating a parallel soteriological
50 system to the decretal system of the Westminster Standards, is contrary to the
51 Westminster Standards.
- 52 7. The view that one can be “united to Christ” and not receive *all* the benefits of Christ’s
53 mediation, including perseverance, in that effectual union is contrary to the
54 Westminster Standards.
- 55 8. The view that some can receive saving benefits of Christ’s mediation, such as
56 regeneration and justification, and yet not persevere in those benefits is contrary to
57 the Westminster Standards.
- 58 9. The view that justification is in any way based on our works, or that the so-called
59 “final verdict of justification” is based on anything other than the perfect obedience
60 and satisfaction of Christ received through faith alone, is contrary to the Westminster
61 Standards.

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63 The PCA position paper on Federal Vision, with its nine declarations at the end, is a helpful
64 summation of Federal Vision and the declarations are a strong affirmation of the teaching of the
65 Westminster Standards over against the formulations of many proponents of FV.

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67 However, many proponents of FV can affirm the declarations (or at least most of them) and
68 affirm the system of soteriology taught in the Standards, while seeming to be at odds with the
69 standards in their use of key biblical and theological terms. We recognize that there is flexibility
70 and a wide range of meanings in Scripture in the use of certain words and phrases (“justify” is
71 one example). But the use of key terms (e.g., elect, union with Christ, justification) contrary to
72 their accepted meaning (especially when this is done without careful explanation and
73 qualification) has been the source of confusion for God’s people and contention in the church.

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75 Confusion is never good for the spiritual health of the saints. And contention is contrary to the
76 Word of God (Eph. 4:3), as well as to the membership vows of ministers in the PCA, who
77 commit to seeking to maintain the purity, peace and unity of the church. Therefore, for the sake
78 of upholding the peace and purity of the church in Central Carolina Presbytery, we have added to
79 the nine declarations the following ten clarifying denials:

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81 1. While we acknowledge that Paul uses language like “elect,” “saved,” “forgiven,” and
82 “justified” for the corporate church, we deny that such language applies to all individual
83 members of the visible church.
- 84 2. We deny that the language of union with Christ (“in Christ,” “one with Christ,” or other
85 terms that in any way denote a vital relationship with Christ) can be helpfully applied to
86 all members of the visible church.
- 87 3. We deny that any distinction between “decretal” and so-called “covenantal” election is,
88 under the new covenant, biblically justifiable or helpful for God’s people.

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4. We further deny that there is any sense in which a person can be “elected,” “justified,” or “forgiven” and then lose their election/justification/forgiveness.
 5. We deny that anyone can be in a living, vital relationship with Christ and have that relationship taken away.
 6. We deny that the act of baptism in any way makes a person elect, salvifically unites him to Christ or washes his sins away, and further declare that referring to infants as “Christians” upon baptism is unhelpful and potentially creates confusion among the saints.
 7. We further deny that we give any sacrament to a child because we presume that every covenant child has saving faith and is elect.
 8. While we recognize that the language of visible/invisible church can be subject to misinterpretation and even misuse, we deny that it is helpful or more clarifying to reject this distinction.
 9. Likewise, while we affirm that all members of the visible church are in covenant relationship with Christ, we deny that it is helpful to use the language of election, union with Christ or any other language historically used of salvation to describe all members of the covenant community.
 10. We finally deny that the individual nature of our election and justification in any way lessens the corporate aspects, and deny that the redeemed can live an obedient and fruitful life apart from being integrally involved in the covenant community, the corporate body of Christ, the church.