

71st General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church
RESOLUTION

Cape Canaveral, Florida • August 2-7, 2007

RESOLUTION 71:9

The Road Back to the Roman Catholic Church

In 1994, evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders published a document titled “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium.” Less than four years later, another joint document was published: “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Gift of Salvation.” Both documents viewed evangelicals and Roman Catholics united as true Christians striving towards doctrinal agreement.

On October 31, 1999, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation¹ signed a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, “articulating a common understanding” concerning justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ.”² During July 2006, The World Methodist Council³ signed an Official Common Affirmation on the Doctrine of Justification with the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, stating: “We declare that the common understanding of justification as it is outlined in the Joint Declaration of Justification ... corresponds to Methodist doctrine.”⁴

Among conservative Presbyterians, an emerging movement, called the Federal Vision, has expounded doctrines friendly to Roman Catholicism. This theology teaches an objective salvation, beginning with ceremonial baptism, maintained by faith and works, and completed by a final justification, requiring personal righteousness. Advocates, who may differ on specific points, include Norman Shepherd, Peter J. Leithart, Steve Wilkins, Doug Wilson, John Barach and Rich Lusk.⁵

Joint confessions with Roman Catholics and departures from historical Protestant beliefs pave the way for conversion to Romanism. Recently, Francis J. Beckwith resigned his position as president of the Evangelical Theological Society, because he and his wife converted to the Roman Catholic Church. Beckwith said, “I can in good conscience, as a Catholic, affirm the ETS doctrinal statement.”⁶

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Scott Hahn testified that Norman Shepherd influenced him to embrace the Roman Catholic Church. Mr. Hahn is now “an apologist to other Presbyterians” for Romanism.⁷

Taylor Marshall, a former member of the Presbyterian Church in America and past student of Westminster Theological Seminary, also converted to Romanism. Marshall’s opinion is that “[u]ltimately ... younger Presbyterians will gravitate toward what the Federal Vision offers. Many will sink their teeth into it and many will find it wanting. Many will discover that the [Roman] Catholic Church is their true home, and many will discover her in a great moment of joy.”⁸

The 71st General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church, meeting in Cape Canaveral, Florida, August 2-7, 2007, mourns the continuing decline of Biblical Christianity in this land and warns against the subtleties and attractions of the Roman Catholic religion, which teaches a false gospel of salvation by works, demands submission to humanly devised doctrine, worship, government and discipline contrary to God’s Word, and boasts herself, as recently as July, 2007, by declaration of her Pope, Benedict XVI, as the only true Church of Jesus Christ. In fact, she lacks the essential marks of a church, causing historical Protestants to reject her as an apostate church. The Bible instructs God’s people: “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partaker of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4).

¹The LWF was founded in 1947 and now represents 66.2 million Lutherans. See www.lutheranworld.org.

²<http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/ecumenicaldialogue/romancatholic/jddj/declaration.html>.

³“The World Methodist Council links together the 70 million family of Methodist and related United Churches in the ‘Wesleyan Tradition’ in 130 countries.” See <http://www.worldmethodist.org/wmc.htm>.

⁴The World Methodist Council and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, p. 1.

⁵See Presbyterian Church in America’s study report at <http://www.pcaac.org/2007GeneralAssembly/Fed%20%20Vision%20Rept%20%205-11-07.pdf>.

⁶See http://rightreason.ektopos.com/archives/2007/05/my_return_to_th.html.

⁷See http://www.prca.org/standard_bearer/volume79/2003mar01.html.

⁸See <http://cantuar.blogspot.com/2007/05/catholic-prespective-on-federal-vision.html>.

