

## MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Potomac	RE David Lambert
Rocky Mountain	RE Walt Meyers
Southeast Alabama	RE Robert Phatuos
Warrior	TE Thomas Kay, Sr.
Westminster	TE Raymond Colgrove

### **26-66 Declaration that Standing Judicial Commission will serve as Commission of General Assembly**

Without objection, and based on *BCO* 15-4, it was declared that the Standing Judicial Commission would serve as a Commission of GA between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> General Assemblies.

### **26-67 Report of Special Judicial Commission [Case 95-11]**

TE John MacRae, led in prayer and presented the Report. The Assembly approved the recommendation of the Commission. The Commission was dismissed with thanks.

## **REPORT OF THE SPECIAL JUDICIAL COMMISSION TO RETRY CASE 95-11**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The 25<sup>th</sup> General Assembly heard the report of the Standing Judicial Commission on Case 95-11, James Landrum, et al. vs Mississippi Valley Presbytery. The General Assembly disapproved the report by a vote of 229 in favor to 423 against.

Pursuant to *BCO* 15-5, sentence 6, the General Assembly referred the whole case to a 20 man Special Judicial Commission to be appointed by the Moderator. Since the case was originally tried under the *BCO* and *RAO* prior to changes made in 1996, the Special Judicial Commission was instructed to follow procedures under the rules of the 1996 edition of *BCO* and *RAO* as well as the 1996 edition of the SJC Manual of Operations, and to report back to the 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. (See *M25GA*, 25-16, V, 5, pp. 80-91).

Following the 25<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Moderator Samuel J. Duncan appointed 20 men to retry the case. The following were appointed:

### **TEACHING ELDERS:**

Dominic A. Aquila, S. Florida  
Larry E. Ball, Westminster  
Craig D. Childs, Evangel  
Don K. Clements, New River  
Howard Griffith, James River

Wayne C. Herring, Covenant  
Paul Kooistra, Warrior  
John P. MacRae, Susquehanna Valley  
Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., South Coast  
Donald W. Treick, N. California

### **RULING ELDERS:**

Wilson J. Barbee, Central Carolina William Joseph, Jr., SE Alabama

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John M. Barnes, Fellowship  
Eugene K. Betts, Philadelphia  
David A. Crabtree, Potomac  
Howard J. Donahoe, Pittsburgh

William H. (Bingy) Moore, IV, Potomac  
Frederick Neikirk, Ascension  
J. Darryl Richards, Nashville  
Harold E. Whitlock, Heritage

The Special Judicial Commission met in Atlanta, Georgia on October 16-17, 1997, to retry the case. The Commission elected TE John P. MacRae as Chairman and TE Craig D. Childs as Secretary. Three members were absent: TE Larry Ball, TE Wayne Herring and RE David Crabtree. By the grace of God, the proposed decision was unanimously adopted.

### II. RECOMMENDATION

The Special Judicial Commission recommends that the Judgment of the Special Commission in the Case 95-11, James Landrum, et al. vs. Mississippi Valley Presbytery (Complaint) be approved. *Adopted*

**JAMES LANDRUM, ET AL.  
VS.  
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY PRESBYTERY**

**CASE 95-11**

#### I. Summary of the Facts

1. Mr. James Blaha was examined in theology for licensure by MVP on June 1, 1993. The Presbytery did not sustain this exam and appointed a committee to encourage his studies on the subject of spiritual gifts. The committee met with him and suggested that he prepare a position paper (which was reviewed as part of the record of the case.) This paper (see below) was distributed to the Presbytery and Presbytery examined him again on October 19, 1993, approving this exam and licensing him.
2. On October 17, 1995, the Presbytery examined him for ordination. His exam in theology was approved by secret ballot of 48 to 24.
3. On October 23, 1995, a complaint against the action of the presbytery was filed with MVP.
4. On November 3, 1995, MVP met to deal with the complaint. After discussion, it was voted to deny the complaint, 48 to 24.
5. TE Blaha was ordained on November 5, 1995.
6. On November 29, 1995, a complaint was filed with the GA against the action of MVP.
7. The SJC heard this case, but its judgment was disapproved by the 25th GA (1997) by a vote of 229 to 423. The Assembly then erected a Special Judicial Commission to adjudicate this complaint.
8. TE Blaha's views are shown as follows:

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### POSITION PAPER ON THE GRACE-GIFTS OF 1 CORINTHIANS 12-14

Jim Blaha

Fall 1993

Brethren,

I have endeavored in these few pages to set forth as clearly and concisely as possible my beliefs on the grace-gifts (*charismata*) mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14. My purpose here is not to offer a wordy and detailed explanation of each point. Rather, it is to show that my beliefs are not ultimately in conflict with the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Book of Church Order*, and above all, the Holy Scriptures. I have focused primarily on those points that were brought up in presbytery and/or are closely related.

**Point One:** I am a non-cessationist. This means that I believe that there is no directive in Scripture that indicates the ceasing of the grace-gifts in question. Exceptions to this are the special revelatory function of the Twelve Apostles and Paul. In fact, the Scriptures point to the continuance of these gifts until the return of Christ (1 Cor. 1:4-8 and 13:8-12).

I differ from the popular charismatic in that (1) I do not believe in a definitive "second blessing," (2) these gifts are not a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit or of spiritual maturity, and (3) all are not called to exercise every gift.

**Point Two:** These gifts are not intrinsically revelatory. No revelation is received from God through them. This includes the gift of prophecy, which I will attend to in a moment.

**Point Three:** There are *various kinds of tongues*. One kind was clearly heard as human language in Acts 2. But another kind, seen in First Corinthians, is difficult to reconcile with a human dialect. Paul states that the one who speaks in tongues *does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries* (14:2); edifies himself (vs. 3); prays and sings with his spirit in contrast to praying and singing with his mind/understanding (14-15); and speaks *to himself and to God* (28). Paul's imperative is: *do not forbid to speak in tongues* (39).

**Point Four:** Paul speaks of *gifts* (plural) of *healing*. This points to a variety (possibly of means and degrees) of healing and not an institutionalizing (D. A. Carson's word) of the gift within a single person.

**Point Five:** The nature of prophecy as set forth in the New Testament is fundamentally different than that of the Old Testament. It is not revelatory as we understand "revelation" theologically. Evidence for this can be seen in the following:

- (1) Unlike in the OT, NT prophecy rarely prefaces its oracles by quoting God or Jesus directly, as in Rev. 2-3. "Thus saith the Lord" is rarely seen.
- (2) Prophecy in the NT was handled differently than in the OT. There is never any thought of excommunication or death where prophecies might be wrong. Instead, Paul

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demands that the prophecy must be weighed and sifted (14:29). Paul's use of *diakrino* (14:29) reflects this. These oracles were mixed and the church was to *examine everything carefully and to hold fast to that which was good* (1 Thess. 5:21).

(3) Paul saw the authority of the prophets as under his own (14:37-38). To Paul, the apostle was the rightful heir to the OT prophets; the NT prophets carried little of the influence that the OT prophets did. In fact, Paul has to warn the Thessalonians not to despise prophetic utterances. Even in First Corinthians Paul spends much time in advancing the ministry of prophecy over the individualistic tongues. Clearly, prophets and prophecy did not carry the authority that the Twelve, Paul, or their visions and revelations (Gal. 2:2; 2 Cor. 12:2-4; Rev. 1:1-2, 9) carried.

An example of this can be seen in the interacting between Agabus, a prophet, and Paul. Paul is instructed by some disciples in Tyre *through the Spirit* (language identical to that used to describe Agabus' prophecy of the great famine in Acts 11:28) not to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4). After weighing this warning, Paul chose to ignore it and go on. Later, Agabus himself amplified the warning (21:11). Again, Paul chose to ignore the warning.

Incidentally, Calvin also saw some continuing use in the ministry of the prophet (though certainly not implying all that I am saying). His statement in his *Institutes* dealing with the prophets mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 is interesting: "... none such now exist, or *they are less manifest*" (Inst. 4.3.4.). In his commentary of 1 Cor. 12:28-31, he says that of prophets, "shades and traces of them (were) still to be found."

(4) Women could prophesy although they were forbidden to teach or to exercise authority: the former would demand the latter. But if NT prophecy was a "lower" and mixed form of God's disclosing of Himself, then women could prophesy without the authority implied. Consistent with this is the fact that though women could prophesy, they could not judge prophecy (14:34-35). This would demand the authority to teach.

(5) Finally, the implications of NT prophecy being special revelation as we know it are astounding. Assuming that the practices of the Corinthian church were essentially normative throughout the Roman Empire, then on any given day of meeting there were multitudes of prophets and non-prophets receiving and speaking forth special revelation (14:29-39). We have no records of any of these, although according to the cessationist theory, they appeared to be a mainstay of church life for over a half a century.

**Point Six:** How would this be presented before and operated in the church? I am totally against any pastor unilaterally trying to implement any of these teachings into a PCA congregation. It is my conviction that because of the continued disagreement over the cessation of the gifts and the very real possibilities of division, that any action involving the charismata be taken at the Sessional, Presbytery, and General Assembly level. Teaching dealing with this matter should be expressed in a way in which the saints are made cognizant of the issues involved (including both sides of the debate) and the efforts that the church is going through to understand and implement the whole counsel of God.

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**Summary:** I ask that the Presbytery recognize that these views are: (1) not inconsistent with either the PCA *Book of Church Order* or *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and (2) not inherently divisive if handled with wisdom and order. I believe that both of these requests are implicitly granted in the PCA Pastoral Letter Concerning the Experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church Today.

### **RESPONSE TO DOCTRINAL QUESTIONS:**

12. What are your views concerning the “Charismatic” or extra-ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church. Are they still valid today? If so, when and how? Do miracles still happen today?

All revelatory gifts have passed away. Our canon is set; the only authoritative Word of God is the Bible. There is no new revelation.

That said, I find it very difficult to find exegetical evidence that the so called “charismatic” gifts have passed away. As per the Pastoral Letter adopted by the PCA Second General Assembly, “The power of God in response to the believing prayer to work wonders and to heal the sick cannot be limited.” This, likewise, would pertain to all these gifts.

It should be noted that I do not believe in a “second blessing” of the Holy Spirit. Also, all manifestations of any professed gift that harm the peace and the purity of the church should be rejected. Also, all manifestations of any professed gift that harm the peace and the purity of the church should be rejected.

### **II. Statement of the Issues**

1. Did MVP err in approving TE Blaha’s theological examination in relation to his view of tongues?
2. Did MVP err in approving TE Blaha’s theological examination in relation to his view of prophecy?
3. Did MVP err in not holding that TE Blaha’s views violate *BCO* 7-1?

### **III. The Judgment**

1. No. TE Blaha’s view and practice of tongues (as private prayer language) are within the bounds of the 1974 Pastoral Letter adopted by the 2nd General Assembly. 16-0-0
2. Yes. Based on TE Blaha’s particular view of prophecy as recorded in Record of the Case , the MVP erred in approving his theological examination without exception (*WCF* I.1 and 6). 16-0-0
3. This issue is not within the purview of this Commission. First, the Record of the Case does not provide sufficient argumentation on this issue. Second, we recognize that in the PCA there are and have been different interpretations of *BCO* 7-1 with regard to cessation of certain spiritual gifts. Unless or until there is an all-encompassing statement by a General Assembly, we believe that the

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decisions of previous General Assemblies, including judicial cases and the 1974 Pastoral Letter, provide adequate guidelines in this area (*BCO* 14-7). 16-0-0

### **IV. Reasoning and Opinion**

Regarding Issue 2 and Judgment 2, while we are not persuaded of all the assertions of the Complainants, MVP should have treated TE Blaha's view of prophecy as an exception, because it fails to maintain the finality and sufficiency of Scripture in communicating God's verbal revelation to us. TE Blaha's view of prophecy allows for the possibility of continuing verbal revelation. While TE Blaha denies continuing revelation, both his citation of Agabus as a paradigm of NT prophets continuing today and his description of NT prophecies as "oracles," "utterances," "instruction," and "warning" leave the door open to continuing revelation.

### **V. Amends**

**In light of Judgment 2, we instruct MVP to ascertain from TE Blaha if he still holds his particular view of prophecy. If so, his view should be noted as an exception in MVP's minutes, and further, TE Blaha should be instructed not to teach or preach this view in private or public.**

/s/ John P. MacRae, Chairman

/s/ Craig D. Childs. Secretary

### **VI Voting on the Proposed Decision**

Approved by the Special Judicial Commission: 16 Concurring, 0 Dissenting, 0 Recused, 4 Absent, October 17, 1997.

### **26-68 Constitutional Business Committee**

RE Frank Young, Chairman, led the Assembly in prayer and presented the report. The Assembly ordered the Committee Report spread upon the Minutes, and thanks was given for the service of RE Frank Young over the past four years.

## **REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL BUSINESS TO THE 26TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Your Committee on Constitutional Business (CCB) met one time subsequent to the 25th General Assembly. This meeting was held on May 4, 1998, in Atlanta, Georgia. The CCB was able at that meeting to complete all of the work then assigned to it.

Attendance was as follows:

TE William P. Thompson (1998)

RE Daniel Hall (2000)

TE Frank D. Moser (1999), Sec.

RE Calvin Poole III (2001)

TE Robert (Ric) C. Cannada, Jr. (2000)

RE Richard Springer (alternate)