

December 26, 2007

Dear Troy,

On December 20, 2007, I requested you tell me the reasons for my termination at PCS. I have included your response below along with my response. Thank you for replying quickly. I have prefaced the paragraphs with our initials, depending on the author of the paragraph.

TW: Your termination was the conclusion of numerous attempts to develop your teaching approach to come in line with our school's philosophy in two primary areas:

Acknowledgement and care when dealing with issues of secondary doctrine. We discussed your approach to teaching apologetics on numerous occasions (9/27/07, 10/11/07, 10/29/07, 11/16/07) and this was noted in the memo dated November 20, 2007. Your failure to take into account the denominational differences in our school was further noted in the numerous parent complaints, requests to drop your classes, and student appeals to me. While you answered the complaints of the students and parents in class, as referenced in your November 26, 2007 lesson plans, your answer (especially on point #4) rejected the student and parental concerns regarding the secondary nature of the presuppositional method of apologetics.

TRH: Your ability to arrive at this conclusion after reading point 4 underscores the truthfulness of presuppositionalism; conclusions will be determined by one's presuppositions. Nothing I said in point 4 contravenes §III.B.—Secondary Doctrine Policy—of the "Providence Classical School Staff Handbook." Now, if in stating my position, I was not to defend it, then I plead guilty as charged. But you assured me on many occasions, including my interview last spring, that teachers at PCS may present their arguments for their viewpoint. Perhaps you weren't prepared for an apologetics teacher who actually knows what he is talking about and can present a cogent, irrefutable case against all non-presuppositional methods? I told you and my students on many occasions that one's apologetic method is a secondary matter. Hence the reason I said in point 4 of the aforementioned lesson plan that R. C. Sproul is my brother in Christ. If I didn't think apologetic method was a secondary matter, I certainly wouldn't claim Sproul as my brother in Christ. Right? You write as if my *supposed* failure to account for the many denominations represented in our student body produced all of the "numerous complaints, . . ." Yet seven of the eight complaints that you listed in your 11/20/07 memorandum to me have *nothing to do with denominational differences* or were complete misrepresentations of something I said in class (i.e., "Mr. Hepp has claimed that Catholics are going to hell."). Your use of the adverb "especially," therefore, in the parenthesis above is incorrect.

TW: In nearly every conversation with you regarding this, I pointed out that we have students from various denominational backgrounds. Those students' parents have entrusted their children to Providence with the understanding that we will respect these denominational differences. You did not do so.

TRH: If "respect" means "acknowledge the reasonableness of the other views," then you are correct. But this definition of "respect" surely isn't that which you want the PCS students to espouse. This definition quickly and easily breeds theological relativism and scholastic laziness. I fear you have bought into the world's definition of "respect." Can you imagine an intelligent Arminian saying, "Calvinism is the antithesis of my soteriological scheme, but I respect the position because it is reasonable, scripturally

speaking”? If so, please provide some evidence. Consider the late Jerry Falwell. He was an intelligent Arminian. Do you know how he described Calvinism? “Heresy.”¹ Do you know how all of the authors of the proceedings of the Synod of Dordt (1619) and the Council of Orange (529) described Semi-Pelagianism, the twin sister of Arminianism? “Heresy.” Let’s not alter the meaning of respect in order to promote a false unity. One may respect another while simultaneously judging him/her. I can respect William Lane Craig or John Warwick Montgomery *even as* I describe the way in which they defend the faith as immoral. Likewise, I can respect Greg Bahnsen *and* describe his practice of paedobaptism as immoral (which is exactly what Baptist theologians for hundreds of years have said about baby sprinkling).

TW: *Utilization of the Socratic Method in high school teaching.* In many of the meetings noted above, I also pointed out your need to engage the students in discussion and draw them into discussion. You responded to my observations by claiming that the students needed the grammar of apologetics before they could be allowed to enter into dialogue. I understand the need to provide the grammar of a subject, but your approach with the students, even when you initiated classroom discussion, had the effect of frustrating the students and discouraging them from entering discussion. As pointed out in my memo from November 20, students did not believe that their input was welcomed. In fact, one student said, “Mr. Hepp intimidates us and makes us feel like idiots. It’s the *way* he says things not just what he says that makes us angry.” When I came to model a more interactive approach on November 19, you provided a critique of my content and style rather than simply accepting the guidance offered.

TRH: The slanted, selectively-substantiated character of this reason for my termination is breathtaking. You’d make a fine lawyer, at least until your opponent stood to present his case. You’ve committed the fallacy of hasty generalization. You say my “approach with the students” had “the effect of frustrating” them. All of them? Some of them? Or a few of them *who didn’t like being told their answers and reasoning that led to their answers were incorrect?* You say, “One student said . . .” One?! Several students told me last week they enjoyed my class, learned from my class, and were sad that I was leaving.

Given that you *said* you wanted to learn about apologetics from me prior to 11/19, I felt no compunction in offering a critique of your lesson that day. As you even admitted Troy, the bulk of my critique pertained to the content of your lesson, which in at least one point was wrong. Even so, I later apologized for critiquing your lesson and implemented your advice. But did you ever take the time to see if I improved in my style? No, you observed *none* of my lessons after 11/19. None! Andrea did, and she said they went well. If you were really interested in my “success at Providence Classical School,” why didn’t you take *any* time to see the changes I was making?

TW: While your specific responsibilities of lesson planning, timeliness, and other duties were carried out with great diligence, your ability to engage with the students was still lacking.

TRH: If that which you did in my classroom on 11/19 is to be considered student engagement, I’d rather not engage students. Has anyone ever observed your teaching of apologetics, besides me? I think you think more of yourself than you ought to think (Rom 12:3a). You should take a lesson from Donna Grimley on being patient with teachers in training. She described your teaching of the statistics class last year as “terrible,” yet she put up with you. Jon said he views your role at PCS as an administrator, not a teacher. OK, but I still think a headmaster should be able to model excellent teaching.

TW: Due to the growing list of grievances from students and calls from parents, I determined that it was in the best interest of the school for us to terminate your employment.

¹www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbbcGIrgOds and <http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/blog/2007/04/jerry-falwells-friday-13th-declaration.html>

TRH: You know full well that the vast majority of the complaints about me had no warrant whatsoever. It's more than interesting that your decision to fire me came on the heels of a meeting in which I challenged you to check the gossiping tongue of one of "our customers,"² Mr. Guess. You agreed that he had gossiped and thereby sinned against God and me. You further agreed to arrange a meeting for us during which you would speak to him about his gossip. Mr. Guess' reasons for questioning my judgment as a teacher were outlandish and nothing close to that which should influence your decision to retain me as an employee. Yet four days later, you "have come to see that I'm not a good match for Providence after all." Examine your heart Troy. I asked you during our meeting on Monday what changed since Thursday, December 13. You replied, "Just more time to think about things." This is vague, lame, and beneath the rationalization of a man who is working on a doctorate in education. Permit me to speculate, though not entirely. I think you simply grew tired of fighting for me (assuming you did this at least once in the case of Mrs. Guess' gossip-ridden letter to Mrs. Allison) because of your wavering theological and ethical convictions and fear that another family might pull their child(ren) and money from PCS. Thankfully, Jon Weichbrodt assured me on Saturday, December 22 that such money-based kowtowing will never occur under his watch. I believe him, but I also know he is simply one man. He is physically unable to oversee the decisions that you make. If I am off-base in my thinking on this point, tell me. Before doing so, however, remember this fact: self-deception has afflicted man since the beginning.

TW: Wednesday afternoon, following your last day of classes, I began receiving calls from 8th grade parents who said, "Mr. Hepp told my child's class that Providence is not a Christian school." They said that you told them, "I have 500 years of church history on my side." This supports my position that it is in the best interest of the school that we terminate your contract. This statement and your approach in responding to areas of critique make it clear that you would be better off serving Christ in another setting where those you minister to are more mature able to discern between primary and secondary doctrinal issues. Your statements and dogmatic presentation of your perspective have caused confusion rather than clarity for our students.

TRH: No sir, you are the one who is creating confusion in the hearts of the students by your unwillingness to take a stand on anything except the eight points of PCS's very vanilla statement of faith. Did you care to ask me about my claim that PCS is not a Christian school? No, you, like the loose-tongued, prejudicial Mr. and Mrs. Guess, engaged in the same prejudice contra John 7:24. Our conversation on Monday afternoon was a great blessing, for you and Andrea were clear that PCS considers the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ—justification by faith alone—to be a negotiable, debatable doctrine (at least you did at that time). You relegated the article upon which the church stands or falls to a secondary matter. As Alex Champagne rightly said in class on 11/26/07, "We're use to relativism at this school. This is why you [me] are perceived as arrogant." Is the way in which a sinner is justified before the holy God of the universe a subjective, debatable, secondary matter to PCS? You and Andrea made it clear that *you* strongly believe it to be primary. Great! But if the *school* is not willing to say it is primary, then the *school* is not Christian. The fact that I had to challenge you on this point is shocking. If PCS is a Christian school, why was I asked on 11/8/07 by the same student above, "Is justification by faith alone a necessary thing for salvation?" If PCS *seniors* are asking this question, there is a serious lacuna in its "Christian" curriculum.

Your unwillingness to confront parents in their sins of gossip and slander and your unwillingness to immediately bolster the PCS statement of faith to include a point on justification by faith alone³ and your

²Memo from you to me, dated November 20, 2007.

³Appeal to the ACCS confession is inadequate. How many parents and teachers (especially the Roman Catholics and Campbellites) actually read this?

unwillingness to dismiss teachers⁴ who believe water baptism is necessary for salvation all prove that you are a coward and a man-pleaser.

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? *If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.* Galatians 1:6-10, NASB, emphasis mine

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. *And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision [or baptism!], that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.* You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. *A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.* Galatians 5:1-9, NASB, emphasis mine

But for the *cowardly* and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Revelation 21:8, NASB, emphasis mine

If you really think I have confused the students of PCS by my assertion on Wednesday, let us publicly debate the matter before the student body and Spring community. The point of contention to be debated: Is Providence Classical School a Christian school? Appeal to an orthodox confession such as that of the ACCS organization is insufficient. Talk is cheap, and it's often inconsistent with one's practice. Your double-mindedness on the issue of justification by faith alone (i.e., changing your story between Monday, December 17 and Friday, December 20), your practice of hiring and retaining Campbellites, and your overly-sensitive way in which Roman Catholicism is addressed betray your orthodox confession of faith. Jesus and Paul weren't gentle and Socratic when dealing with heresy; nor should any God-fearing man be!

In a meeting with me on 12/3/07, you said, "The strength of your rhetoric [in the classroom] gives room for misunderstanding." Upon hearing this, I honestly wondered if you had ever read a book on rhetoric. Rhetorically powerful presentations actually have a clarifying effect. Declaring one position as right and another as wrong coupled with persuasive argumentation for and against the positions leads an audience not to confusion but to a clearly-marked fork in the road.

Dan Baker told me about his and Joe Jones' meeting with you on Thursday, December 20. His report confirmed you are a "double-minded man, unstable in all [your] ways" (James 1:8). Dan said he and Joe asked you whether or not they could teach that the doctrine of justification by faith alone is a primary theological truth. According to Dan, you said they could. Dan also asked if he is permitted to declare that professed Christians who do not espouse this primary theological truth are going to hell. You said yes but

⁴According to Andrea Martin, the following faculty members of PCS are members of the Church of Christ cult: Kristie Martin, Melissa Martin, Denise Rosier, Carrie Black. The Spring Church of Christ clearly teaches that water baptism is necessary for salvation. Visit <http://www.churchesofchrist.com/whatmustidoarticle.htm>.

to do so in a “non-abrasive way.” (Is there a winsome way to tell Andre Leger and his parents and Ximena Garcia and her guardians that they are members of a Christian cult? Doubtful.) Dan told you that the ACCS confession of faith⁵ is to be followed by all ACCS accredited schools. You affirmed this fact and said the “PCS Staff Handbook” says the school subscribes to the ACCS statement of faith (§V). Why have you changed your tune? Why did you (and Andrea) tell me on Monday of the *same week* that I would have to refer a student to his/her parents and church when he/she posed the following question in class? “Mr. Hepp, are you telling me that I will go to hell upon death because I believe that baptism (or observation of the Mass or other good works in the case Romanists) is necessary in order to be saved?” It seems obvious that on Monday you and Andrea had conveniently forgotten that Christ comes before the beloved classical model of education, happy parents, and worldly unity. As I experienced this past semester, I told you and Andrea that any senior level theology teacher will have at least one student who pins them against the wall, wanting to know if one is cursed or anathema (ἀνάθεμα, the very word that Paul used twice in Galatians 1) if he/she believes you must be baptized (or perform any other work) in order to be saved. **Neither of you said you would tell the inquiring student, “You are condemned if you receive baptism, thinking it has any part in your being right with God.”** Again, Andrea said a teacher is to refer students with such questions to his/her parents and the church that they attend. I rejoined by explaining that the student will only be further supported in his/her heresy if this approach to *Christian* education is taken. Any *Christian* school teacher must, if they claim to be teaching the *Christian* worldview, tell the above student that being baptized (or observing the Mass or being circumcised; cf. Gal 5:1ff.) in order to be saved from the wrath to come actually heaps up more eternal wrath upon the self-righteous person. In fact any *Christian* school teacher should be most concerned with his/her students’ understanding of the gospel, even more than a student’s ability to reason since only Christians can make sense out of reasoning itself. In other words, the content of the biblical gospel is that with which the *Christian* teacher should be most concerned in his/her teaching. And part of his/her teaching of the gospel is an exposé of cults that deny the sufficiency of the atonement of Jesus Christ, e.g.: Roman Catholicism, Church of Christ, Jehovah’s Witness, Mormonism. “By the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his [God’s] sight” (Rom 3:20a, personal translation) because “all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment” (Is 64:6a, NASB) before “the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13b, NASB). Andrea explicitly said on Monday she could not and would not tell a Church of Christ member (the vast majority of which ascribe to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration) that he/she believes a damnable heresy. Would a loving person refuse to tell his neighbor to flee a burning house? Troy, you tacitly agreed with Andrea’s statement by saying nothing in response. Why, if the doctrine of justification by faith alone is non-negotiable and essential to Christianity?

When you read the PCS statement of faith on Monday in my and Andrea’s presence and discovered no hint of the necessity of believing in justification by faith alone, why didn’t you appeal to section V of the “PCS Staff Handbook”? Had you simply forgotten some of the content of section V? Or could it be, though I surely hope not, that you didn’t want me to have a PCS policy to ground my declaring that justification by faith alone is a primary Christian truth that must be taught to the students?

I must reiterate one of the last things I said to you during our meeting on Monday, December 17. When interviewing potential PCS employees, you need to be crystal clear as to the proper interpretation and outworking of §III.B. of the staff handbook. As I’ve indicated above, you were clear on the day of my termination at least that PCS does not consider the doctrine of justification by faith alone to be primary. Any educated headmaster of a professedly Christian school should have known that a Master of Divinity graduate from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary believes that a denial of the doctrine of

⁵<http://www.accsedu.org/36664.ihtml>

justification by faith alone is equivalent to a denial of the gospel, resulting in eternal perdition. You must also inform presuppositionalists that they cannot claim to *know* (publicly at least) that presuppositionalism is *the* faithful method of defending Christianity, because in so doing they are claiming to *know* that all non-presuppositionalists are morally wrong and philosophically incorrect in their apologetic method. The sin of non-presuppositionalists of course does *not* mean they are accursed, as if apologetic method were a primary doctrine. I frequently said this to you and to my classes. Yet, because of the superficial “love” in Christ’s church and the open hostility to biblical confrontation (Matt 5:23-24; 18:15-17), no Christian may tell another Christian that he/she is in sin, unless of course money is involved.

Lastly, I encourage you to read the position paper entitled “What Constitutes ‘Classical & Christian’ for ACCS?” on the ACCS Web site.⁶ For those who understand apologetic method, the sections on antithesis, worldview, and neutrality actually preclude the possibility of a *faithful*, non-presuppositional approach to defending the faith because the other approaches greatly blur or deny the God-inflicted antithesis between believers and unbelievers and assume and/or encourage Christians and non-Christians to be neutral as they consider the arguments and evidence for and against the existence of Yahweh. Perhaps this is why Patch Blakey is a staunch presuppositionalist! Consider the following statement from the paper. “We must build from the ground up, with the Scriptures as the foundation, both our educational philosophies and the framework in which we understand and present all subject matter [including apologetics!].” See also pages 7-8 of Always Ready where Bahnsen rightly describes neutralists as immoral. Only the presuppositionalist is a revelational epistemologist.

Regards,

Tony

⁶<http://www.accsedu.org/Page.aspx?id=36676>