

**COMPLAINT OF TE JAMES JONES, ET AL.
VS.
LOUISIANA PRESBYTERY
SJC 2007-8**

TE James Jones brought this complaint pursuant to *BCO* 43-1 against the judgment of Louisiana Presbytery in declaring that TE Steve Wilkins' teaching gave "no strong presumption of guilt" by being out of accord with the Constitution of the PCA. Mr. Jones was joined in his complaint by RE Taylor Mayes, TE Paul Lipe, RE R. Ellis Smith, RE Albert Christman, RE Troy Richards, and RE Walter Huffman, all of Louisiana Presbytery. The review and decision of the SJC panel follows.

I. SUMMARY OF THE FACTS

1. On April 9, 2005, Louisiana Presbytery (LAP) received a preliminary study report from its own study committee on Federal Vision/Auburn Avenue Theology (FV/AAT), and in particular the teachings of TE Steve Wilkins. The preliminary report was received and adopted by LAP (ROC 2006-2; p. 11). At its April 9, 2005 stated meeting, LAP appointed a study committee to examine TE Steve Wilkins concerning his Federal Vision theology and teachings (ROC 2006-2; pp. 21-23).
2. On July 6, 2005, the LAP FV/AAT study committee examined TE Wilkins by telephone interview and via emails (ROC 2006-2; pp. 21-23).
3. At the stated meeting of LAP on July 16, 2005, the FV/AAT study committee reported its investigation of TE Wilkins. The LAP adopted the final report of the study committee, "Louisiana Presbytery Report on Federal Vision Theology." (ROC 2006-2, pp. 6-9) LAP exonerated TE Wilkins finding him "to be within the bounds of the *Confession* at this time," and declaring him to be "publicly exonerated by Louisiana Presbytery and declared to be faithful to the *Confessional Standards* of the PCA." (ROC 2006-2; p. 9)
4. On January 28, 2006, the PCA Stated Clerk's office received a Memorial from Central Carolina Presbytery (CCP). After several pages of "whereas" the Memorial requested the following:
Therefore, be it resolved that the Central Carolina Presbytery of the PCA sends this Memorial to the SJC of the PCA to assume original jurisdiction over the investigation of TE Steven Wilkins' teaching, in order to preserve the PCA's commitment to sound doctrine, protect

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our reputation for faithfulness to God's Word, and secure peace within our denomination.

Additionally, in the event the SJC declines to accept original jurisdiction over the investigation of TE Steven Wilkins' teaching, then the CCP hereby petitions the SJC to cite Louisiana Presbytery to appear per *BCO* 40-5 and SJC Manual 16. (ROC 2006-2; pp. 17-20).

5. In its March 2-3, 2006 stated meeting, the SJC declined the request from CCP to assume original jurisdiction, but found the second part of the CCP Memorial in order and cited LAP to appear at the October 2006 SJC meeting, in accordance with *BCO* 40-5. A three-man committee of the SJC was appointed to help the SJC prepare for that meeting.
6. On April 3, 2006, the SJC cited LAP to appear before it at its October 2006 stated meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. LAP appointed TE Howard Davis as its representative.
7. On behalf of the LAP, TE Howard Davis filed an objection to the SJC's citation on August 15, 2006. His objections were four-fold:
 - a. Materials were sent to the SJC that were not submitted by the LAP.
 - b. SJC members must not consider materials other than the relevant documents attendant to the CCP Memorial.
 - c. CCP did not request an investigation of LAP by the SJC.
 - d. In handling the Memorial, the SJC may handle only "matters of process, procedure or proceedings."
8. The SJC committee presented to the SJC a proposed "report of the Ad Hoc committee of SJC case 2006-2" on September 27, 2006. In that report the committee answered TE Davis' objections and set forth a proposed set of guidelines for questioning the LAP representative at the October meeting of the SJC.
9. On October 19, 2006 at its stated meeting, the SJC met with LAP representative, TE H. Davis, at the Old Peachtree PCA church in Duluth, GA. In that meeting the SJC denied TE Davis' objections and specified the following amends (vote 17-0).

That, as Louisiana Presbytery has not completed an adequate examination of TE Wilkins' views, the SJC hereby finds that the matters be redressed (*BCO* 40-5, para. 2, clause 1; cf., SJCM 16.9(a); *BCO* 14-6, a-b) by the following:

- a. That LAP, as a court, examine TE Wilkins on the specific concerns raised by the CCP Memorial and matters raised herein; that this

examination be conducted in the light of the theology and concepts of the *WCF* and *Larger* and *Shorter Catechism*, which are “standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice” (*BCO* 29-1, 39-3); and that this examination be conducted after Presbytery has made itself familiar with all writings referenced by the CCP Memorial as well as pertinent published materials containing TE Wilkins’ views on matters raised herein.

- b. That this examination be recorded, and in light of the seriousness of the issues, that the examination should be transcribed, and that the Presbytery and any committee charged to help Presbytery prepare for the examination keep full and accurate records and minutes.
- c. That LAP formally determine whether TE Wilkins has changed his views on the areas specified in the Memorial since his ordination (*BCO* 21-5, vow 2).
- d. That Presbytery adopt formal responses to the specific concerns raised in the Memorial, with rationale and evidence for those responses.
- e. That Presbytery specifically note any area of TE Wilkins’ views or his choice of terms to explain his views that are inconsistent with *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms* (*BCO* 29-1, 39-3) and how it will require TE Wilkins to redress those inconsistencies (*BCO* 21-5, vow 4).
- f. That these directives be accomplished and reported to the SJC no later than February 16, 2007, for final review.

Finally, the SJC reminds LAP that, should it find that it cannot comply with the stipulations of this redress, it may request by Reference (*BCO* 41-3) that the GA assume jurisdiction in the matter.

10. On December 8, 2006, TE Steve Wilkins provided to LAP a written response to questions about his teachings and the FV/AAT (ROC 2007-8; pp. 31-66), in addition to a written list of his exceptions to *The Westminster Standards* (ROC 2007-8; p. 14). The written questions were put to him by members of LAP and gathered by TE Davis, chairman of the Examinations and Candidates Committee (ROC 13).
11. On December 9, 2006, at a called meeting LAP re-examined TE Steve Wilkins, in an oral exam, at Pineville PCA Church, Pineville, LA (ROC 2007-9; pp. 67-186). This was a *BCO* 31-2 investigation of allegations. During this meeting, but prior to the exam, a motion was made by TE James Jones to refer the investigation/examination of

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TE Wilkins to the General Assembly and the SJC. The motion was defeated. The LAP Examinations and Candidates Committee was tasked to prepare a report based on the exam, which was to be submitted for final approval at their stated meeting six weeks later.

12. On January 20, 2007, at its stated meeting, LAP exonerated TE Wilkins for a second time, stating that it “finds no strong presumption of guilt in any of the charges contained therein and exercises its prerogative not to institute process regarding those allegations.” (ROC 2007-8; p. 15) LAP adopted, as grounds for its decision, the 37 pages of TE Wilkins’ written responses (ROC 31-66) and the 119 page transcript of his oral investigation (ROC 67-186).
13. On February 1, 2007, LAP requested an extension to the SJC’s February 16 deadline to provide a rationale for its decision of January 20 to exonerate TE Wilkins, with a revised due date of April 28, 2007. This request was granted. The response was timely received and included in the ROC. (ROC 2007-08; p.187-206)
14. On February 15, 2007, TE James Jones filed a complaint with LAP stating that LAP erred in exonerating TE Wilkins. His complaint voiced three concerns (summarized below):
 - a. The deep division in LAP over TE Wilkins examination (13 to sustain; 8 to not sustain) reflected the need to refer the matter to the General Assembly.
 - b. In the examination, TE Wilkins redefined biblical and *Confessional* terms before giving his assent to the teachings of Scripture and *The Westminster Standards*. TE Wilkins maintains that the *Bible* and *The Westminster Standards* teach differing doctrines.
 - c. In his examination, TE Wilkins displayed serious variances with *The Westminster Standards* in the areas of election, perseverance and apostasy, the doctrine of the visible/invisible church, assurance and baptism (ROC 2007-8; p.16).
15. On February 20, 2007, TE Howard Davis filed a dissent with LAP concerning its exoneration of TE Wilkins (ROC 2007-08; p.17).
16. On April 21, 2007, at its stated meeting, LAP denied the Complaint of TE Jones and appointed TE Mark Duncan as its representative, although the Complaint to the GA of TE Jones is dated May 1 and received by the SJC on May 7 (ROC pp. 01, 16).

LAP also adopted a 20-page “Rationale for Louisiana Presbytery’s Decision Regarding the Vindication of TE Steven Wilkins” as “reflecting the basis of a majority of Presbyters who found no strong presumption of guilt of TE Steve Wilkins being out of accord with the

Confessional standards” and instructed it be sent to the SJC. (ROC 16 & 187-206).

At this same meeting, LAP appointed TE Mark Duncan to respond to the dissent of TE Howard Davis. This response is included in the ROC, pages 24-30.

17. On May 7, 2007, TE James Jones filed his complaint with the Stated Clerk of General Assembly and the SJC. Added to that complaint were the names of RE Taylor Mayes, TE Paul Lipe, RE Ellis Smith, RE Albert Christian, RE Troy Richards and RE Walter Huffman (ROC 2007-8; pp. 1-4).
18. On May 22, 2007, TE Mark Duncan, on behalf of LAP, responded to the dissent of TE Howard Davis. LAP answered the dissent in the negative, stating that “the conclusion of the matter is that the Louisiana Presbytery continues to see no strong presumption of guilt that TE Steve Wilkins is in violation of his ordination vow concerning fidelity to *The Westminster Standards*.” (ROC 2007-8; pp. 24-30)
19. On July 5, 2007, the SJC assigned a panel to adjudicate the complaint of TE Jones, et al., designated now as SJC case 2007-8.
20. On July 17, 2007, the SJC panel for case 2007-8 met for the first time via telephone conference. The constituting meeting elected RE Tom Leopard as chairman, RE Steve O’Ban as secretary, and directed TE Mike Ross to prepare a summary of the facts. TE Steve Meyerhoff attended the conference as an alternate.
21. On July 23, 2007, the Panel Chairman notified the Parties and Panel Members by e-mail that a hearing was scheduled for 10:00 AM, EDT at the Crowne Plaza Airport Hotel in Atlanta, GA on Monday, September 10, 2007, and informed the Parties of their rights under SJCM 11. The Parties and Panel members acknowledged by e-mail their receipt of said notice.

II. STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

1. Did Louisiana Presbytery fail to apply the correct Constitutional standard when it sought to determine whether TE Wilkins “may differ with *The Confession of Faith and Catechisms* in any of their statements and/or propositions?” (*BCO* 21-4, *RAO* 16-3.e(5))
2. Does the record support a probable finding that Louisiana Presbytery erred, and thereby violated *BCO* 13-9.f, 40-4, and 40-5, when it failed to find a strong presumption of guilt that some of the views of TE Steve Wilkins were out of conformity with the Constitutional standards?

III. JUDGMENT

1. Yes.
2. Yes.

Therefore the complaint is sustained; Presbytery's action of April 21, 2007, to deny the complaint of TE Jones is annulled (*BCO* 43-10); and the Memorial from Central Carolina Presbytery remains before the Standing Judicial Commission. [See the judgment in 2006-2 for additional amends.]

IV. REASONING AND OPINION

It is the opinion of the Standing Judicial Commission that Louisiana Presbytery (LAP) erred in two crucial and related ways. First, it failed to apply the proper Constitutional standard for dealing with TE Wilkins' differences. Second, it apparently failed adequately to guard the Church from "erroneous opinions that injure the peace or purity of the Church." (*BCO* 13-9(f))

Presbytery's respondent argues in his supplemental brief that "Pastor Wilkins has served Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church and Louisiana Presbytery faithfully for over 20 years. LAP is in the unique position of judging Wilkins' views regarding the so called 'Federal Vision' in the context of all of TE Wilkins' work." We agree that Presbytery is in a unique position to judge TE Wilkins' views and work. However, *BCO* 39-3(4) reminds us that "higher court[s]...have the power and obligation of judicial review, which cannot be satisfied by always deferring to the findings of a lower court. Therefore, a higher court should not consider itself obliged to exhibit the same deference to a lower court when the issues being reviewed involve the interpretation of the Constitution of the Church. Regarding such issues, the higher court has the duty and authority to interpret and apply the Constitution of the Church according to its best abilities and understanding, regardless of the opinion of the lower court."

It is precisely such issues of Constitutional interpretation that are at stake in this case. The issues in this case do not involve issues of fact (*BCO* 39-2) or issues of judgment (*BCO* 39-3), either of which would require this court to exercise great deference toward the actions and decisions of the Louisiana Presbytery. Instead, the critical issues in this case involve the proper understanding of what it means to have a "difference" with the standards of our Constitution (*BCO* 21-4, *RAO* 16-3(e)(5)), how to apply that meaning of "difference" in the examination of a presbytery member's views, whether the LAP has properly applied that meaning, and whether the circumstances

presented in this matter give rise to a strong presumption of guilt that LAP has failed to uphold the standards of our Constitution. We find the answer to each of these questions to be “yes.”

Judgment 1

In this matter, LAP’s examinations of TE Wilkins and its defense of those examinations have focused on whether TE Wilkins has or takes “exceptions” to the Constitution in his teaching and preaching. In testimony before the LAP, TE Wilkins identified five “exceptions or reservations” he has held since his ordination and brought these to the attention of the Presbytery. Beyond these five areas, TE Wilkins repeatedly asserted that he did not consider any of his views to be out of accord with the standards. Further, in his testimony he affirmed various propositions of *The Westminster Confession* and asserted that he did not deny them.

Based primarily upon these assertions in his testimony, Presbytery’s brief repeatedly asserts that TE Wilkins claims no further exceptions, does not overtly deny or expressly contradict the teaching of the confession and, therefore, cannot be found to be in violation of its teaching (See, e.g. Preliminary Brief at I.1 and I.6). Similarly, the Presbytery’s answer to the dissent of a presbyter to LAP’s decision not to bring process against TE Wilkins asserted that TE Wilkins does not *contradict or deny* the teachings of the Confession. The standard adopted by LAP suggests that an “exception” only occurs where the stated position of the party being examined denies or contradicts the teaching of the Constitution. That standard is not in keeping with our Constitution (see *BCO* 21-4 and *RAO* 16-3(e)(5)).

Further, the Presbytery argues once that party has asserted that his views are not out of accord with the Constitutional standards, it is the responsibility of other parties to refute that assertion – not the duty of the Presbytery to independently ascertain whether the party being examined is correct. (Brief at I.3 – “CCP did not provide convincing evidence that TE Wilkins is out of accord....”). Again, this is not the standard of presbytery review required by our Constitution.

Presbyteries are to determine whether a candidate or member has any *differences* with the teaching of the Constitution. A difference does not require overt contradiction or denial. It can arise when a member “quibbles” with the sufficiency of the exegesis underlying the proposition of the Constitution. It may occur when a member redefines terms specifically defined in our Constitutional standards. It can arise when a party describes the Constitution as “incomplete, misleading, or inaccurate.” It occurs whenever a position is asserted that “differs” with the authoritative exposition stated in our Constitutional standards.

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Once a difference has been stated, or statements suggesting a difference exists are made, the Presbytery has an affirmative duty to explore that difference and to decide whether the difference is merely semantic, whether it is more than semantic but “not out of accord with any fundamental of our system of doctrine”, or whether the stated difference is “out of accord” and “hostile to our system” or strikes “at the vitals of religion.” (*RAO 16-3(e)(5)*). Louisiana Presbytery, in its examinations of TE Wilkins, in its brief for this matter, and in its response to the dissent filed against the actions complained of here, consistently failed to implement this process as to differences raised by TE Wilkins’ statements in this matter.

In the brief of LAP, Presbytery’s representative states that “TE Wilkins teaches that *at least in some sense* covenant members can be forgiven of sins and yet lose that forgiveness.” (Brief at 4, emphasis in the original). The representative acknowledges TE Wilkins, “questions the *usefulness* of the terminology “invisible” [with reference to the church].” (Brief at 6, emphasis in the original). The Presbytery’s response to a dissent to its actions in this matter states that, “TE Wilkins has affirmed that in some sense covenant members can have a ‘living and vital’ relationship with God that can be lost....” (ROC at 1). Further, “in Wilkins’ teaching, he affirms *The Confession* while at the same time maintaining that Scripture often uses the language of salvation in a broader sense than does *The Confession* ... attempting to be faithful to how the Bible describes the members of the visible covenant community.” (ROC at 3).

In each of these instances, *presbytery’s own description of TE Wilkins’ statements established that TE Wilkins did state differences with The Confession. Presbytery was required to investigate these differences and classify them under RAO 16-3(e)(5)*. Rather than complying with this affirmative responsibility, LAP asserted that TE Wilkins does not deny or contradict teachings of the Constitutional standards and concluded that the standards have not been violated. That conclusion was in error for two specific reasons:

First, as already discussed, it applies a non-Constitutional standard as to what constitutes a “difference” – concluding that a difference only exists where the party being examined contradicts or denies specific propositions of the Constitution. Our Constitution does not require a party to directly deny or contradict a proposition before a “difference” exists. Disagreements with wording, questions of arguments that exegesis allows for other meanings all constitute differences. Where such differences arise, the Presbytery must evaluate them according to *RAO 16-3(e)(5)*.

Second, that duty to evaluate the difference rests squarely on the shoulders of the Presbytery. It may not defer to the examined party’s claim that his view is not in conflict with the Constitution; Presbytery must make

that determination on its own. It may not transfer the duty to prove that the difference contradicts the standards to third parties – such as those who raise the question with it. Where a difference has been brought to light, the Presbytery is obliged to consider and evaluate the difference against the Constitution itself.

Concerning this duty to evaluate differences, our *Book of Church Order* contemplates specific situations where the duty arises for a presbytery – at the beginning of a member’s relationship with the presbytery (transfer, *BCO* 13-6 or candidacy/ordination, e.g. *BCO* 21-4), when a member brings issues to his presbytery’s attention of his own accord (*BCO* 21-5, Ordination Vow 2), or when the matter is brought to the attention of the court from the outside (*BCO* 31-2, 40-5, etc.). However, that duty is an ongoing responsibility of the presbytery. (*BCO* 13-9(f)). In whatever manner a difference comes to the attention of the presbytery, the presbytery bears the burden and responsibility of investigation, discernment and judgment as to the view of its member. (*BCO* 13-9, 13-11, and *RAO* 16-3(e)(5)). No other party has a “burden of proof” to overcome before the presbytery is required to undertake its responsibilities to evaluate the differences brought out. Where the presbytery fails in this duty, as in the matter presently before us, it is the responsibility of the higher court to call it to account for the failure.

Judgment 2

BCO 13-9.f gives presbyteries the power and responsibility to “condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity or peace of the Church.” Further, *BCO* 40-4 states, “Courts may sometimes entirely neglect to perform their duty, by which neglect heretical opinions or corrupt practices may be allowed to gain ground.” The record is clear that TE Wilkins expressed views that differ at key points from the Constitutional standards. Given the nature of those apparent differences, it is the conclusion of the Standing Judicial Commission that there is a strong presumption from the record that Louisiana Presbytery did, in fact, neglect its duty to “condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity or peace of the Church” when it found on January 20, 2007, “no strong presumption of guilt in any of the charges contained [in the Memorial from Central Carolina Presbytery] and exercise[d] its prerogative not to institute process regarding those allegations;” and when it acted on April 21, 2007, to deny the complaint of TE James Jones, specifying as grounds “the written exam of TE Wilkins and his transcribed oral exam on December 9, 2006, and the supporting rationale adopted by Presbytery this day....”

The following are examples of areas in which the stated views of TE Wilkins differ from the Constitutional Standards and do so in ways that fairly

raise questions as to whether the views are hostile to the fundamentals of the system of doctrine.

Concerning election:

TE Wilkins, in his written questions for Presbytery, maintains that the *Confession* uses the term election decretively, whereas the Bible uses the term covenantally. He notes that “Paul and Peter do not appear to use the terms ‘elect’ and ‘chosen’ to apply exclusively to those who were chosen to eternal salvation (i.e., in *The Westminster Confession* sense). He then references certain Scripture passages to support this view, the same Scripture passages used by the *WCF* to support ‘decretal’ election. In doing this, he is asserting a difference between *The Standards’* view of election and that of Scripture. This may rise to a level that strikes at the fundamentals of the system of doctrine. (ROC 37-38) (Cf. *WCF* 3.5-6)

He states that “Paul seems to be viewing those who are in the church as the elect. And saying, you need to persevere there, don’t ever depart from Jesus, or you’re not going to be one of the elect anymore because where you find the elect is the visible church.” (ROC 110) This statement was part of his response to the question posed to him regarding his written statement in the *Federal Vision* to the effect, “that the elect are faithful in Jesus Christ, if they later reject the Savior they are no longer elect, they are cut off from the Elect One and thus lose their elect standing.” (ROC 109) (Cf. *WLC* 64 and 65; 79)

Moreover, TE Wilkins holds that “those who are members of the body of the Elect One [i.e. Christ] are viewed as ‘elect’ themselves.” (ROC 38) He often notes that Scripture appears to use the word elect of those in the visible body of Christ. This appears to stand in contradiction to *WLC* Q.64, that the elect are members of the invisible church.

Concerning Perseverance and Apostasy:

TE Wilkins holds that “when the *Confession* says that these non-elect people ‘never truly come unto Christ,’ it means that they do not receive Christ with a faith that perseveres unto final salvation.” (ROC 34) But this is not what *The Confession* says. It says, they ‘never truly come unto Christ,’ not that they do not receive Christ with a persevering faith (*WLC* 68).

TE Wilkins says that apostates are not saved “because they fail to persevere and fall short of receiving the fullness of redemption as it is described in *WCF* 10-18.” This statement appears to differ with the *Confession* which says that while they “may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved.” (*WLC* 168).

Concerning Visible/Invisible Church

TE Wilkins claims that “the invisible Church does not yet exist though it is surely foreordained by God and will surely and certainly exist at the last day...” He also claims “It seems better to speak of the ‘invisible’ church simply as the ‘eschatological church’ – i.e., the church in its perfection as it will exist at the last day.” (ROC, p. 39b)

Speaking of the invisible church, TE Wilkins states that “if the invisible church consists of the whole number of the elect, then it cannot itself exist except in the mind of God, I mean God knows who’s going to come, but it can’t exist as an entity until that whole number is brought together. ... it exists, but it exists in the form of the visible church now...” (ROC, p. 124)

TE Wilkins’ statements appear to differ materially with *The Confession* that states that the universal church which is invisible is also *presently* gathered under Christ as the Head. (*WCF* XXV.I)

Concerning Baptism:

In his written answers to LAP, TE Steve Wilkins wrote the following:

“When I say ‘everyone who has been baptized is a Christian,’ I am speaking of the objective covenantal reality – i.e., the one baptized has been baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and thus bears the name of the Triune God and has been brought into covenant union with Christ by the power of the Spirit as Paul says in I Cor. 12:13. Paul doesn’t seem to view this as something true only for some of the baptised [sic] but rather this is true for all (note v. 27 ‘Now you are the body of Christ, *and members individually.*’)” (ROC, p. 63)

“Thus, baptism is a ‘sign’ in that by this means the Holy Spirit transfers the baptized from union with the old Adam into Christ Jesus (*The Confession’s* scriptural proofs cite Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:5 at this point), transferring him into Christ, the ‘new creation’ (2 Cor. 5:17). Thus, it is a sign and seal of regeneration (the proofs cite John 3:5;

Titus 3:5 to prove this point). By the Spirit we are ‘given up unto God’ – i.e., bound to walk in ‘newness of life’ (repenting of our sins, trusting and obeying the Savior all our days).” (ROC, p. 56)

TE Wilkins’ statements in this written report are consistent with the quotations of his views in the Memorial of Central Carolina Presbytery to the Standing Judicial Commission, as follows:

“If someone has been baptized, he is in covenant with God.”

“Covenant is union with Christ.”

“Being in covenant gives all the blessings of being united to Christ.”

“Those who are in covenant have all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.” (ROC, Memorial of CCP, p. 19).

Yet, the *WCF* 28.6 on the “efficacy of baptism” says that “the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, *to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto*, according to the counsel of God’s own will, in his appointed time.” TE Wilkins’ views appear to differ materially from the teaching of the *WCF* on baptism.

Given the nature of these and other issues on which TE Wilkins appears to have expressed differences from the positions of *The Westminster Standards*, and given the action of Presbytery to find no strong presumption of guilt with regard to the issues raised in the Memorial, and given the action of Presbytery to deny the complaint of TE Jones (and noting the supporting rationale for that denial); and given Presbytery’s failure to explain how they concluded TE Wilkins’ views are consistent with *The Westminster Standards* and do not strike at the fundamentals of the system of doctrine (*BCO* 21-4) Presbytery has given the appearance that it has failed to “condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity or peace of the Church” and, by this neglect may have allowed heretical opinions to gain ground.

In sum, it is the opinion of the Standing Judicial Commission that Louisiana Presbytery erred in its interpretation of the proper standards and procedures for dealing with TE Wilkins’ expressed differences from *The Westminster* documents, which, as *BCO* 29-1 and 39-3 both note are “accepted by the Presbyterian Church in America as standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice.” Moreover, there is at least a strong presumption that Presbytery erred in failing to condemn the views in question. Indeed, Presbytery’s citation, without any *caveats* whatsoever, of the written and oral examinations of TE Wilkins as

part of its grounds for denying the complaint of TE Jones gives the appearance that Presbytery is supportive of views such as those noted above, and it reinforces the concern that Presbytery has failed to meet its Constitutional obligations as noted above. It is for these reasons that the complaint is sustained and the judgment noted above is entered.

This opinion was written by TE Howell Burkhalter, TE Paul Fowler, TE Stephen Clark, TE Dewey Roberts, RE Frederick Neikirk, RE Steven O’Ban and RE Tom Leopard, October 19, 2007

The vote on SJC 2007-08 was:

TE Dominic A. Aquila, Concur
TE Howell A. Burkhalter, Concur
TE Alton Craig Chapman, Concur
TE Stephen M. Clark, Concur
RE M. C. (Cub) Culbertson, Concur
RE Perry Denniston, Concur
RE J. Howard Donahoe, Recused
RE Samuel J. (Sam) Duncan, Concur
TE Paul B. Fowler, Concur
TE William W. Harrell Jr., Concur
RE Thomas F. Leopard, Concur
TE William R. (Bill) Lyle, Concur
22– Concur; 1 -Absent; 1 –Recused

TE John M. McArthur Jr., Concur
RE J. Grant McCabe, Absent
TE Charles E. McGowan, Concur
TE D. Steven Meyerhoff, Concur
RE Frederick (Jay) Neikirk, Concur
RE Steven T. O’Ban, Concur
RE Calvin Poole, Concur
TE G. Dewey Roberts, Concur
TE Michael F. Ross, Concur
RE Olin L. Stubbs, Concur
RE John Tolson, Concur
RE John B. White Jr., Concur

**COMPLAINT OF TE JOHN GRADY
VS.
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA PRESBYTERY
SJC 2007-12**

I. SUMMARY OF THE FACTS

1. On May 8, 2007, The Southwest Florida Presbytery (hereafter SWFP), at their regular stated meeting, received a report of the Shepherding Committee regarding TE John Grady and approved a motion that this report be read into the minutes. This report included allegations of improper conduct on the part of TE Grady. Based upon the report, SWFP approved the following four actions recommended by the committee: