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The Scandal That (Apparently) Was Not a Scandal
By Freddy Davis

Trinity Whitney used to be one of the pastoral staff at Faith Presbyterian Church in Tallahassee, Florida. She was in charge of adult education, community outreach, and membership. She also performed baptisms and led missionary trips abroad. I say “used to be” because she has recently been let go from her position. You can find the story at: <https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/local/2025/02/26/tallahassee-pastor-faith-presbyterian-rocked-after-political-attack/78514749007>.

Whitney is married to one of the city’s high-ranking administrators, which is, in part, one of the factors that led to her downfall. Her husband was also the former chief of staff to the mayor, and continued on as a close friend and ally.

During the last election season, a political opponent was attempting to flip some of the city commission seats, and attempted to use an allegation of “misuse of funds” by Mr. Whitney as an issue to impugn the mayor and those aligned with him. It appears that ultimately there was nothing there, but it did get people looking more into the life of the Whitneys.

What was discovered was they are participants in the *Feeld* dating app. According to Wikipedia, “Feeld is a location-based online dating application aimed at people interested in ethical non-monogamy, polyamory, casual sex, kink, swinging, and other alternative relationship models and sexual preferences.” After this was exposed, Ms. Whitney admitted that she was an “ethically non-monogamous bisexual.” When asked later, Mr. Whitney also identified himself as “ethically non-monogamous bisexual.” This is a lifestyle that both spouses have deliberately chosen and are in agreement with.

When all this hit the fan, the church had no choice but to let her go. Initially, the church’s governing body placed her on a three month leave, but she eventually decided it was best for her and the church if she would simply resign. It is not certain what percentage of the church would have been okay with her staying, but overall it was recognized that her behavior was not compatible with her position as a pastor.

Now to many, it may seem a little odd that allowing her to stay, even for three months, could have been an option. However, with a little context, this is a bit more understandable. Faith Presbyterian Church is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA). In 1973, there was a split within the denomination because of increasing theological disagree-

ments between factions that were theologically liberal and theologically conservative. The conservatives split off and formed their own new denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Since that time, the theological divide has only grown wider.

The PCUSA is only one of the many mainline protestant denominations that have split over theological differences. Among the issues that divide theological conservatives and liberals are such things as the ordination of women, homosexual behavior, abortion, and in more recent times, the issue of transgenderism.

Underlying all of that, though, is the matter of what authority source the church should look to as the basis of its theology and values. The conservative faction looks only to the Bible as its authority, and believes that those who do not interpret the Bible based on biblical hermeneutical (interpretive) principles are, necessarily, going in a direction that leads to error.

The liberal faction, on the other hand, while giving lip service to the authority of the Bible, actually look to another authority source for their interpretation of the text. The actual authority source for their interpretative approach comes from naturalistic philosophy. Naturalism is the belief that the natural universe, operating by natural laws, is all that exists. Secular society in America is dominated heavily by naturalistic beliefs. It is atheistic, believes that man is a product of naturalistic evolution, and that the ultimate purpose in life is survival and achieving personal fulfillment. The theological liberals are not as blatant as non-religious Naturalists regarding their naturalistic leanings, especially as it pertains to questions of faith – they actually profess to believe in God. Nonetheless, their understanding of God and His will is filtered through a theological system that uses biblical vocabulary to express non-biblical beliefs.

The Theological Beliefs

The core theological beliefs of EVERY belief system is found in their answers to the three essential worldview questions. Every belief system answers these questions in its own unique way. The three questions are:

1. What is the nature of ultimate reality? (Belief about God)
2. What is a human being? (Belief about man)
3. What is the ultimate a person can get out of this life? (Belief about salvation)

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Let's briefly compare how biblical Christianity and liberal Christianity answer these questions.

Biblical Christianity

Biblical Christianity answers the three essential worldview questions as follows:

1. *What is the nature of ultimate reality?* - Ultimate reality is expressed as the God of the Bible who has revealed Himself to be holy, just, and love. It is critical that all three of these characteristics be included in one's understanding of God. He is *holy*, and, thus, will not fellowship with sin. Everyone who has ever sinned is blocked from fellowship with Him. He is *just* in that sin will be righteously judged. Sin causes a person to be excluded from His presence. This carries on into eternity if the sin problem is not resolved in this life. He is *love* in that He desires for every person have the sin problem resolved, and has provided a solution by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

2. *What is a human being?* - Human beings are persons created in the image of God, but fallen. As persons created in God's image, humans have the characteristics of personhood that make them capable of knowing Him in a personal relationship. However, being fallen creatures, we live in sin and are naturally separated from Him.

3. *What is the ultimate a person can get out of this life?* - The ultimate a person can get out of this life is to enter into, and live in, a personal relationship with God. This is accomplished by making a personal decision to receive Christ into one's life, and committing to live for Him as Savior and Lord.

Liberal Christianity

Liberal Christianity has a different take on its answers to the three essential worldview questions.

1. *What is the nature of ultimate reality?* - In liberal Christianity, the character of God is evaluated a little differently. For them, God's most important characteristic is *love*. And when it comes to justice, the focus is on social justice, not actual justice. This form of Christianity tends to take a collectivist approach to determining what is just and unjust. More specifically, they pick and choose particular groups that they deem to be oppressed and oppressors, and believe that God's purpose in the world is to take down the oppressors and lift up the oppressed. Since they don't acknowledge an objective transcendent authority source, their determination of who represents the oppressed and oppressor is necessarily relative. In their understanding of God, personal holiness does not come into play in an objective sense.

2. *What is a human being?* - Liberal Christians tend not to take the idea of fallenness very seriously. Humans are seen to be

God's creation and, as such, are unconditionally loved by Him. They are also deemed to be essentially good by nature.

3. *What is the ultimate a person can get out of this life?* - Salvation for liberal Christianity is not a spiritual concept. Rather is related to the efforts people make in life to accomplish social justice. They see God's primary purpose for mankind as helping the oppressed overcome their oppressors out in society. Thus, the ultimate one can accomplish in this life is to work with God to help the oppressed overcome the oppressors. The oppressed are generally viewed as any group they deem to be disadvantaged in society – racial and social minorities, the poor, immigrants, homosexuals, transgenders, etc.

The Values Application

The values followed by the different theological positions follow naturally from their authority source.

In biblical Christianity, the authority source is the Bible. It is considered to be God's revelation of Himself and His ways to mankind, and its teachings are considered an objective expression of truth. People are obligated to follow its teachings as it represents God's will.

Liberal Christianity, on the other hand looks to the Bible for its ethical teachings, but interprets it through the lens of their relativistic theological perspective. That is, they basically throw out the spiritual element related to a personal relationship with God, and have deemed it more important to accomplish social justice ends. For them, the Bible's imperative is to promote social actions that feed the hungry, help the oppressed (as they define it), provide for the poor, and lift up the lowly, etc. – as ends in themselves. They see the biblical mandate as a social imperative to help certain elements of society, rather than a spiritual imperative directed at changing the lives of individuals.

At this point, it is possible to revisit the beliefs of the Whitneys in order to see why they felt it okay to participate in what biblical Christians would consider sinful behavior.

Question 1 - Why did Mr. and Mrs. Whitney feel it was okay to participate in a sexual lifestyle that is contrary to the teachings of the Bible?

The answer is that they interpret the Bible in a way that considers their non-monogamous, bisexual preferences to be "ethical." That is, since they have agreed together to live that lifestyle, they are not betraying each other, so God would not disapprove. For them, God is "love," and He wants them to be happy. As long as they serve God by "promoting social actions that feed the hungry, help the oppressed, provide for

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the poor, and lift up the lowly," God is okay with them doing what they want sexually.

Question 2 - Why did Mrs. Whitney have no problem serving as a pastor in a Christian church while living her deviant lifestyle?

Once again, her personal moral boundaries are not based on a normal interpretation of the Bible's content. It is based upon her reading of the biblical text through the lens of a naturalistic worldview. Her relativistic morality allows her to define God's will based on her own personal preferences, rather than on a plain reading of the biblical text. She has redefined God's will to not pertain to personal eternal salvation, but to correcting what she perceives as the ills of human society. She has also redefined sin to refer to the various kinds of ills that are seen in modern society, rather than the rebellion of individuals against God.

What is the Truth?

The truth? The truth is, God exists as He has revealed Himself in the Bible, and attempts to reinterpret His revelation through the lens of non-biblical sources only produces a false religion. God is holy,

just, and love – all three together in a single being. He does love us beyond measure, and has provided a way for us to overcome the unholy result of sin in our lives that separates us from Him. At the same time, His justice ultimately must prevail against those who choose not to accept His offer of forgiveness and an eternal relationship with Him.

The Whitneys, and others like them, have created a religious belief that is leading a lot of people down a path to destruction. They have hijacked genuine Christianity and turned it into a new religion that calls itself Christianity, but is something entirely different.

Christians need to be aware of this deception. They need to be aware so they, themselves, can avoid being sucked into it. They also need to be aware because they undoubtedly have friends and relatives who don't know how to distinguish between true and false Christianity, and need to be able to share the truth about God with them. We live in a messed up world, and God has put us in a position to influence the lives of those who are being deceived.

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