

MOSCOW'S TRINITY FESTIVAL FEATURES FRAUDULENT CALVINISTS AND QUESTIONABLE TRINITARIANS

By Nick Gier, Professor Emeritus, University of Idaho
Read [here](#) for more on the Wilson Controversy

Douglas Wilson, pastor of Moscow's Christ Church and speaker at the Trinity Festival (August 6-8, 2007), calls himself a "crawling-over-cut-glass" Calvinist. Wilson has also authored a book entitled *The Serrated Edge*, but he is much more adept in using this weapon than Jesus allegedly was.

Most conservative Calvinists, however, have not been impressed with Wilson's crooked sword. A Salt Lake City congregation of the conservative Orthodox Presbyterian Church has criticized Wilson for "false reports," "misrepresentations," and defending himself with "sophistry and word games that should be an embarrassment for elders of a Church of Christ."

In June of 2002, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of the United States declared that Wilson's teaching "has the effect of destroying the Reformed Faith through the introduction of false . . . principles." Most recently, delegates at the June, 2007 meeting of the conservative Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) overwhelmingly rejected Wilson's version of John Calvin's theology. Out of 1,400 delegates in attendance, one observer counted less than fifty votes for Wilson and his associates.

Ironically, the detailed doctrinal debate revealed that there was not much "cut glass" in Wilson's so-called "Federal Vision," which gives a very un-American, collectivist view of human responsibility. Interestingly enough, a federal government is evil, but a federal God and family is the supreme good.

Of central concern for the PCA delegates was Wilson's very liberal definition of who is saved. For Wilson one is fully justified and sanctified simply by being baptized in any Christian denomination. Not much cut glass on this road through a very wide gate of salvation.

Wilson is not a PCA member and enjoys total immunity in his own Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches. However, Peter Leithart, Wilson's right-hand

theologian at his own New St. Andrews College (NSA), and good friend Steve Wilkins are PCA members.

In a recent letter to the Pacific Northwest Presbytery, Leithart essentially dares the PCA to discipline him. In 2005, Wilkins survived a heresy trial by his own Louisiana Presbytery, but even in exoneration, Wilkins was warned of his problematic views on the baptism. For a denomination that emphasizes adherence to religious doctrine rather than religious practice, excommunication is a real possibility for Leithart and Wilkins, who are featured speakers at this year's Trinity Festival.

Since 1994 Wilkins and other radical right Christians have come to Moscow for what was originally called a "history" conference. The topic of the 1994 meeting was slavery in the Antebellum South. Drawing on their conference papers, Wilson and Wilkins co-authored a booklet *Southern Slavery As It Was*, published by Wilson's own Canon Press in 1996.

The authors argued that Bible supported owning slaves and that the Antebellum South was the most harmonious multiracial society in world history. Several years ago, Wilson removed the booklet from circulation citing "documentation" problems, a euphemism for the embarrassing fact that Wilkins had lifted 20 percent of the text from another book on slavery.

Although not on the official agenda, many PCA members know of the slavery booklet and have condemned it as inconsistent with the PCA's 2004 Pastoral Letter on Racism. Echoing the Southern Baptists' 1995 Racial Reconciliation Resolution, the PCA confessed that its churches participated in "the national sin" of racism and slavery. PCA members have also condemned Wilson's book *The Serrated Edge*, in which he argues that Jesus himself employed racial epithets.

The words "trinity" and "trinitarian" are found everywhere in the literature of Wilson's K-12 schools, college, and church. NSA's President Roy Atwood has toured the country extolling the virtues of "trinitarian" accreditation, which must somehow overcome the academic deficiencies of the 40 Bible Colleges, NSA is among them, approved by the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools.

In October, 2003, NSA Senior Fellow Douglas Jones and I started a long, drawn-out debate on the Trinity. I was shocked at Jones' poor performance in defending a doctrine so central to his church. In four exchanges of views (<http://www.class.uidaho.edu/ngier/trinity.htm>), Jones could not formulate a coherent defense of the Trinity and refused to answer my arguments against his views.

Most importantly, Jones failed to clarify strong implications in both his and Wilson's writings that indicated three separate divine beings rather than a three-in-one unity with a single will. Most distressing was Jones' recommendation of an author who declared that defining Christianity as a monotheistic religion was a mistake.

As hundreds of Wilson's followers come to the Palouse this coming week, Moscow's citizens should ponder the negative implications of a nationally discredited pastor and Christian nationalist with anti-democratic views, who is head of an expanding college and owner of more and more downtown real estate.