

Is Box Turtle Kincaid Logic-Challenged?

A Response to His Claim That I Used “Tortured Logic” In Evaluating the Effect of 2008 PCUSA General Assembly Actions on Ordaining Homosexually Active Candidates

by Robert A. J. Gagnon, Ph.D.

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA 15206-2596
gagnon@pts.edu

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The homosexualist “Box Turtle” website is aptly named. Though its originators had other ideas in mind when they chose the title, there is a certain irony in naming their site after an animal with an obsessive streak that can be easily confused and frightened by the world beyond its shell. One website recommends that those who keep box turtles as pets should house the creatures in containers whose sides are covered. Otherwise they will either become scared by outside noises or obsessively try to pass through the glass long after the futility of such efforts should have been apparent. If not fed a varied diet they can quickly develop obsessive addictions toward a food fed often. Another website notes that, if moved more than a half-mile from its habitat in the wild, it “may never find its way back but may spend years unsystematically searching.”

One of its founders, a certain Timothy Kincaid, seems to be similarly challenged by issues of truth and logic in his obsessive efforts to promote his homosexual behavior. Kincaid’s fear is masked by an abrasive, bullying style. He has written two postings for “Box Turtle” critical of my work. The latest is “Gagnon Employs Tortured Logic” (July 5, 2008; <http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2008/07/05/2324>).

Kincaid alleges somehow that it is “tortured logic” on my part to argue that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) high court (known as the GAPJC, i.e. the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission) does not have to interpret a 2008 General Assembly vote to mean that ordaining bodies have a right to ordain homosexually active candidates for church office. The vote has to do with an “authoritative interpretation” of G-6.0108, the “freedom of conscience within certain bounds” clause of the *Book of Order* (the *Book of Order* is the polity half of the PCUSA Constitution).

Kincaid characterizes my view as "tortured" because, he alleges, I believe that the "vote [by the General Assembly] guides ordaining bodies rather than the judicial commission directly." This is *not* my argument but Kincaid's own distorted view of my argument.

My point is rather that, contrary to the desire of its supporters, *the precise wording of the 2008 authoritative interpretation of G-6.0108 does not actually state that governing bodies have the right to ordain homosexually active candidates*. It says only that "the requirements of G-6.0108 ... apply equally to all ordination standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)." Moreover, G-6.0108 itself, the very text of the Constitution that the new "authoritative interpretation" purports to interpret explicitly forbids departures from standards that involve "obstructing the constitutional governance of the church."

It would clearly be an obstruction of "the constitutional governance of the church" to ordain a candidate who was in noncompliance with the specific ordination requirement found in the "fidelity and chastity" clause of G-6.0106b. This constitutional clause explicitly *singles out* from "among" all "the historic confessional standards of the church" the specific "requirement" that officers confine sexual activity to "the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman." This specific requirement includes not only a prohibition of homosexual unions but also a prohibition of sexual unions involving three or more persons (even of an adult-committed sort), adultery, and fornication (even in committed relationships outside of marriage).

By the same token it would be an obstruction of the church's "constitutional governance" if a governing body attempted to ordain a candidate who refused to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (in violation of the first ordination vow) or who refused to participate in the ordination of women (in violation of numerous affirmations of women's ordination in the *Book of Order*). To read the 2008 A.I. as permitting ordination of homosexually active candidates is to contend, absurdly, that there are absolutely no identifiable, churchwide essentials for ordination. Such a contention would make it possible for a presbytery or session to ordain someone who didn't believe in Jesus, who refused to ordain women, or who committed adultery, polygamy, or fornication.

It is true that the rationale accompanying the new "authoritative interpretation" (A.I.) interprets the A.I. as allowing the ordination of homosexually active candidates or, for that matter, the ordination of candidates who didn't believe in Jesus or who engaged in polyamory or adultery. But the precise wording of the text proper of the A.I. does not say this and, as anyone who knows anything about PCUSA polity recognizes, the General Assembly approves only the text of the A.I. itself, not the rationale accompanying it.

In fact, even the liberal-dominated high court (the GAPJC) in its 2008 *Bush* decision (reached just a couple of months before the General Assembly vote) noted this precise point when it ruled on the similar 2006 A.I. that

it would be an obstruction of constitutional governance to permit examining bodies to ignore or waive a specific standard that has been adopted by the whole church, such as the “fidelity and chastity” portion of G-6.0106b, or any other similarly specific provision.

Recognizing that its ruling conflicted with the rationale of the 2006 A.I., the high court simply noted: “The Authoritative Interpretation includes a rationale section which was not adopted by the General Assembly.”

For years homosexualists in the PCUSA have used the argument that the “fidelity and chastity” portion of G-6.0106b could be read in ways that *its original rationale never attended*, namely, as allowing ordination of homosexually active candidates. The chickens are now coming home to roost.

So I am not arguing, as Kincaid confusedly claims, that the General Assembly authoritative interpretation “guides ordaining bodies rather than the judicial commission directly” but rather that:

1. The General Assembly approved only the actual text of the authoritative interpretation and not its accompanying rationale.
2. In this case the authors of the authoritative interpretation failed to word their overture in such a way as to accomplish their goal of allowing ordination of homosexually active candidates.
3. Therefore, the PCUSA high court has a right to continue to rule, and indeed should rule, as it did in its 2008 *Bush* decision; namely, that “it would be an obstruction of constitutional governance to permit examining bodies to ignore or waive a specific standard that has been adopted by the whole church, such as the ‘fidelity and chastity’ portion of G-6.0106b, or any other similarly specific provision.”

This is hardly an instance of “tortured logic.” In fact a respected candidate for General Assembly Stated Clerk, Ed Koster, who personally *supports* homosexual unions, has already written in a recent [Presbyterian Outlook article](#) “How it is that the new Authoritative Interpretation of G-6.0108 does not allow ordination of non-celibate gays and lesbians.”

Kincaid has made charges before he has taken the time to understand the issues. Willful misunderstanding sadly appears to be typical of his tirades, which gives even the confused box turtle a bad name.