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Elder Rod Crich and members of Wingham PRC,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In a letter of separation from the Protestant Reformed Churches in America the elders and deacons who left included a "History of the Controversy." I believe the history of the controversy to be convoluted and biased and therefore not only inaccurate but in many places false. But it is not my intent to challenge this part of the "history" in my letter to you.

I am hurt and angered at the false accusation of error leveled at me in my writings and the sermon I preached on Matthew 12:33-37. (It is worthy of note that reference to the passage of God's Word I preached on was left out of the letter so no one could have opportunity to examine the passage to see whether the accusation of error was correct or not.) I would like to take this opportunity to vindicate myself for the sake of those who may be struggling with what the four members of the consistory have called error.

In general:

It is easy to take a sentence or two from a person's writings or sermon and read into them what was neither the intent nor the teaching of the one who wrote or preached them. For example: Jesus says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." Jesus was in error because by this statement he is saying that God loves everyone in this world. Or let me give you another example: Paul writes to Timothy that a woman "shall be saved in child bearing." Paul is in error because he says that a woman will be saved only when she brings forth children. If she does not she cannot be saved. These are obvious examples of a misinterpretation of what was said or written. It is easy to read something into what someone writes or says to make him sound as if he is in error when he is not. Those who left have done this with every minister they quote in their letter. Rev. Guichelaar has defended himself against the false accusations leveled against him. I want to do the same.

In particular:

A. Regarding my view of total depravity and the regenerated, sanctified believer.

1) I am accused in the two statements I wrote in my letters/RFPA blogs with insisting "that all things requisite to our salvation are not in Christ." In doing so I deny "the Belgic Confession, Article 24, especially with respect to total depravity, voicing also a rejection of broader or wider regeneration." Those are serious allegations that require proof. Yet, none is given. Just the unfounded accusations making it sound as if they are true when, in fact, they are *not* true. It makes me wonder whether the men of the consistory who have left us actually *know* what Article 24 teaches, or more, what regeneration in the broader sense even means. Were these accusations against me authored by the consistory or an individual whose word the consistory just accepted?

2) The statement: "Here is the truth: the regenerated believer is no longer totally depraved. Scripture reveals it," is taken completely out of its context by the consistory and given a false interpretation. This is dishonest. I believe with heart and soul in the total depravity of fallen man apart from Christ. I also believe that regenerated man still has an old man that is totally depraved against which we must fight every day. But I also believe that the believer who is regenerated and sanctified in Christ is on that basis able to bring forth works that are pleasing to God and that God is sorely displeased with us when we walk in disobedience. "In thy wrath and sore displeasure chasten not thy servant, Lord!" (Psalter number 102). For that reason we are exhorted in Scripture unto good works. That certainly is not a denial of total depravity.

3) The statement, "It is not Christ who does the good in us. We do good, we live in obedience to God's law because we are no longer totally depraved," is also taken out of context and infused with a meaning by the

consistory that was not meant or stated by me. Again, that is dishonest. This statement within its context means that Christ is not *himself* performing the good when the believer performs works of righteousness. This would make of man a stock and block. We perform the good works. Christ works *in us and through us by his Spirit and grace* so that we in faith produce good works. Who says that in the statement I made I disagree with what the men of the consistory say is the truth? Everything that they *claim* I deny in the statement I made, I, in fact, agree with. They only make it *seem* as if I deny the truth by giving a false interpretation to what I wrote. This is the sin of taking one statement out of the writing of a man and giving it a meaning that the context reveals he did not intend. I say that is a sin because it is meant to discredit the integrity of the man so that he can be labeled as a heretic. I know many of the saints in Wingham. I visited with you in your houses. It hurts to think that that is how you might now view me. Please take time out to read the blogs I have written on this subject on the RFPA site.

B. Regarding my sermon on Matthew 12:33-37

1) This is what Jesus tell us in verse 37, “For *by thy words* thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” That is what Jesus says! I explain, “But Jesus does teach us that by means of, *by* our words, by means of our words we will be justified. That is, by means of the words that we speak we will be declared righteous in that day of judgment.” Notice in verse 37 Jesus himself says, *by thy words*. I was simply reiterating what Jesus said. I suppose that technically the literal meaning would be “*out of thy words* thou shalt be justified,” but this makes little difference in the meaning. I was simply using the same preposition that the KJV used and other prominent writers have no problem with, including Calvin.

2) The consistory adds in their criticism of my statement “similarly, here Christ’s reference to justification by words is not that justification in the judgment of God, which Rev. Bruinsma asserts. The rest of Scripture forbids that interpretation.” It does? Hoeksema points out in his dogmatics, “we shall be justified publically before all the world in the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, when our righteousness in Christ shall be universally revealed and recognized, and when our public adoption unto children and heirs will take place.” (Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 2, p. 97) Jesus speaks of this final judgment in the words of verse 37 – a judgment that will take place according to our works. My interpretation of verse 37 is shared by other commentators as well.

3) Once again, my statement is taken entirely out of context. Here is what I say in the context of my statement. “This is true not because in that day we are going to be justified *on the grounds of* what we have spoken in life. God’s people are judged on the grounds of what Christ has done. But the words we have spoken will be evidence of the work of God’s divine grace in us. The words we speak will be the fruit of a heart that is a good storehouse of the blessings of salvation. They will reveal in that day whether we believed in Christ and therefore were by God’s grace a good tree. They will be a testimony that we are in Christ by faith and therefore justified in his blood.” This proves what I said at the outset in general. We can take any statement that a person makes (especially out of context) and make it say what we want it to say. We set up a straw man and take punches at it as if it is the man himself.

I write this defense of myself to you in order to clear away the doubts you may have of me. I honestly care about my standing in your midst as a congregation. I have spent myself in my ministry out of a love for the church. I do not embrace or intentionally preach error in the church. Her welfare is too precious to me. My prayer is this will help clarify what I have written and preached.

In Christ love,
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma