

Family,

Perhaps you saw this RFPA post from a couple days ago. I am home today so I decided to write down my thoughts on it.

While reading the most recent post, I was struck by Rev. McGeown's reference to a "schismatic" group of "concerned people". I want you all to know that his thinly veiled accusations against me are lies and deceit. We joined as a group of "concerned men" because as independent members of the association, our concerns about our magazine as members of the RFPA (which concerns were conveyed—at times to the editors themselves, and sometimes to the RFPA board) were being dismissed out-of-hand.

In order to comply with the requirements of the RFPA constitution, we joined together as a group (I think it had to be at least 15 men) to voice our concerns to all the members of the association, since neither the editors nor the board would hear us. We agreed that we were willing to abide by whatever decision was handed down by the majority. I had stated earlier that it was our magazine, and I meant that in the sense that, as members of the RFPA, the SB belongs to the members of the RFPA.

Contrary to what Rev. McGeown asserts, we did not feel that it would have been right for us to go to the elders of churches—where the magazine editors held their membership—and charge these men with sin. This was not a sin issue. Our concern was that we did not agree with the direction the editors were bringing our magazine. Our concern was about our magazine, and how it was being run. Despite the insinuations in the attached blog post, the consistory is not the place to bring concerns about an independent non-denominational magazine.

I still believed that a good amount of the writing in the SB was true and clear. But I also found that some of it was unedifying "fluff" pieces, and some of it I did not agree with at all, and some of it I found to be downright confusing. I thought that if clear, relevant, and applicable truth could be published to our people in the SB, it would cause unity and peace. That is why (after the SB refused to allow our concerns to be brought to the members) I was in favor of publishing an additional religious magazine.

I had a feeling that some of the editors from the SB held different views on certain doctrines than I did, and that there were probably a great many people who might agree with me, but just needed to have these views written and expressed with some clarity. I feel that most people are like myself in the way of lacking in the gift of communication, and the ability to concisely express our thoughts and convictions at times. I felt that having it written in a magazine would help everyone.

I felt that through this "fleshing out" that another magazine could bring, that those who held to different beliefs or convictions would either be brought to love what the PR church held as the truth more and see it clearer, or it would draw out those with whom I did not understand, so that I could have enough clarity so that I could see things their way. And failing either of these, we could agree to disagree on non-essentials.

Because I was definitely getting "mixed signals" from the writing in the magazine, and as members of the PR church, the truth is what we always taught and what we believed. I thought that once the truth was clearly set forth, that God would work reformation WITHIN the Protestant Reformed Church. Never in my wildest dreams would I ever imagine that the clarity of PR doctrine would be—as expressed, and unchallenged by anyone in the PR church—what Prof. Engelsma wrote "in a certain specific sense, an

activity of man precedes the blessing of God.” And that “active faith precedes justification.” I thought I was justified at the cross! I thought faith was being ingrafted into Christ, due to no activity of mine at all! I was naïve.

And another thing I don’t agree with is that God only blesses us when we are not living in sin. I want you all to know that God **always** blesses the righteous, and God **only** blesses the righteous. Nothing that the righteous can do can ever make God stop blessing the righteous. Not only is God blessing you when you are doing good works, God is also blessing you when you are walking in sin.

My personal experience has been that; God is especially blessing me when I am walking in sin, because that is when I most need God. This blessing is realized by a searing conscience. This blessing is realized in the afflictions that come with the sin that drive me to repentance. This blessing is realized in the purging out of sin in my life, as tried by fire. This blessing is realized in my assurance of the Holy Spirit, that we have forgiveness through Christ—even before I repent! This blessing is realized in the confidence that God will never leave me nor forsake me.

The last thing you (or I) need is a God that leaves me hanging when I am down. While it is true that when I am walking in sin, I am looking to that sin for my comfort, rather than looking to Christ. And in this respect, I may not feel His fellowship. But it is because I am not looking to God for comfort and fellowship, not because the Holy Spirit has left me, but because I am quenching the Spirit!

But Christ is just as much if not (as I stated before) **more** present, and will **never** leave me. That is the clear experience of David after his sin with Bathsheba. Psalm 32:3 & 4: “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” This confession does not sound like God left David. It sounds more like God would not leave David alone for a second.

This new theology that has a hold on the PR church, that we have fellowship “in the way of obedience” with the clear (and yet twisted) implications being taught from the pulpit, is destruction to the believer.

I recently received a book by Rev. Hanko on Job. The book is stellar, and I highly recommend it. The theology of the book is the antithesis of the new PR doctrine on fellowship. This is clearly and simply set forth when we see that Job was a godly man and living an exemplary life of good works and true obedience. Job 1:8: “And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?”

And then (according to the experience of Job) God (in His love for Job) removed any sense of “fellowship” from Job. Job’s testimony was that he looked for God and could not find a sense of fellowship with God. Job 23:9: “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him”.

Job’s miserable comforters had the exact same theology as the PR church does now. After all his children were dead, they accused Job of not being sincere enough in his good works. In Job 4:7 & 8 the comforters rebuked Job by asking him; “Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.”

What is really striking to me is that through the story of Job, God reveals what it is that determines the level of fellowship we have with God. HIS WILL! HIS WILL ALONE! HIS WILL APART FROM OUR DOING! HIS WILL APART FROM OUR REPENTING!

Did anybody catch that Job's sense of God's "fellowship" did not depend one iota on Job's obedience? God would not stop blessing Job with His love and true faith, and God would not leave Job to believe the doctrine that his friends reviled him with, and which is taught today in the PR church. God worked faith in Job which exceedingly surpasses any temporal earthly sense of "fellowship."

Getting back to the blog... The irony of the title of this article is rich. "Avoiding all Lies and Deceit". I find it ironic for several reasons.

The first irony is that by veiling his false accusations, he can insinuate wrongdoing by a group of men, he can make these accusations without an ounce of truth. The tactic of setting up straw men so that he can tear them down is well established, and very effective. It is called "Deceit". In this way, the denomination can shake their heads and say, "Yeah! I am sure that Rev. knows what he is talking about." "I will just accept that narrative. It's a lot easier than finding the truth. I don't have that kind of time."

The second irony is that in this very blog he is teaching the theology I still find confusing. The theology being taught in this blog post, is neither new nor novel. It is EXACTLY the theology of Hubert DeWolf.

The message of this blog post, "**On the cross pardon was purchased for all those who repent of their lies and believe on him.**" is Arminianism. It is salvation by Christ AND something. In this case, my repentance. This is the theology I was raised under in the RCA. The gospel message should be; "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" And that believing is faith. Faith is the ingrafting of us, by Christ, into the vine. It is all of God.

Is it true that repentance of my lies a necessary fruit of salvation? Absolutely! I believe repentance is the first fruit of salvation, and it is as necessary that I bring forth this fruit, as it is necessary that I bring forth the other fruits of obedience. Is it true that repentance a necessary fruit for salvation? No. My salvation, and your salvation was purchased by Christ on the cross.

In the statement by Rev McGeown does not say that "on the cross pardon was for all His elect". If he had done this, he would have clearly stated the truth without confusion. I am guessing that Rev. McGeown does not really believe that our repentance from all our lies is a prerequisite for salvation. But I really don't know. If he does not really believe that, they why does he express it that way? And this is another example of why I found (and still find) the writing in the SB confusing. Another reason I find it confusing is because if I don't agree with a theology of one article, there is usually another article (sometimes from the same author) forthcoming, that will contradict it.

But as things progress, and believers are either silenced or driven from the ranks of the Protestant Reformed churches, I am guessing that unity will coalesce around the most popular and least offensive form of theology. But this is not unity in the truth.

This is unity when people do not agree, but they will be fed enough of what they believe in order to placate them, and at the same time keep them either uncertain, or confused enough to refrain from doing anything about the confusion.

The necessary implication of this blog post is that I (as a member of this “group” falsely accused of schism) repent. Repent or face damnation. Nothing could be more serious. God says in Roman 3:7 “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” This is the charge against me (schism) for which Crete Protestant Reformed Church has delivered a verdict of “guilty.”

With my requested membership papers in the mail came a letter informing me that the consistory had charged me with sin, and also passed judgement that I was guilty of the gross sins of; public schism, faithless desertion of office and perjury.

Since the elders never spoke with me concerning any of these charges prior to, during, or following their judgment; I can only assume that all the charges relate to my signing of the Formula of Subscription.

But I maintain my innocence of these three charges.

Public Schism:

False doctrine, a refusal to reject the false doctrine, and the binding of the conscience of office-bearers who were faithful to their calling to fight the false doctrine was, and is, the cause of the schism.

Perjury:

I upheld my vows to God and in the Formula of Subscription so that I was not guilty of perjury. In the Formula, the office-bearer (I) declares his (my) allegiance to the Confession and Catechism together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, do fully agree with the Word of God. “We declare moreover that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, **and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod (which specifically militated against Arminianism)** but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors.”

Desertion of Office

It is exactly because I “refuted and contradicted these and exerted (myself) in keeping the church free from such errors” (specifically Arminianism), that I was forced out of the church where I was an office-bearer—and also obligated to call out the faithful members with me.

Eventually, the false charges, the lies, the compromised gospel, the abuse of authority; will all be brushed under the rug. But God knows what was said and what was done. And God loves the truth. And He loves His Christ. And God does not give His glory to man, nor does he condition the salvation purchased by Christ, on the activities of man. Whether by grace, or otherwise. God cannot un-God Himself.

When I was a child, I remember hearing a riddle that said, "Can God make a stone so heavy that He can't lift it?" I thought it ridiculous. But now, what I thought was ridiculous as a child, is passed off as sound theology. That God is able to sovereignly deny his attributes in such a way that salvation is no longer "believe and be saved" but believe and repent and be saved. The new riddle that passes for theology is: "Is God powerful enough to give His power to man?"

Norman Shepherd's Federal Vision theology teaches that in order to obtain salvation we must "Trust and Obey." The new Protestant Reformed theology teaches that in order to obtain salvation we must "Believe and Repent." **It's the same thing.** You cannot repent enough. You cannot obey enough. Romans 11:6 "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

I have written a lot this morning, and I will stop now. Please don't think that I am out of thoughts! :-) If anyone disagrees with anything I have said and written here, please let me know. If anyone would like more clarity on any of my thoughts, I would be glad to provide proof texts to corroborate them, or I will gladly retract them. These are just my thoughts, and I don't claim to have all the answers.

I pray that God uses this too, for His glory.

I love you all very much.

Dad

Andy Birkett