

Following are excerpts from the response from Byron Center PRC consistory to these charges from the editors,

Although you speak critically of the writing of group letters letter dated February 13, 2020), you have done the same in the writing of your group letter. The key difference between the two letters, however, is that the group letter you received did not, from the material you quoted, charge you with sin, whereas your group letter does charge a brother with sin.

You write regarding your letter and the charges you make, "In what follows we will demonstrate the truth of that" (letter dated February 13, 2020). It is our judgment, that although the charges you make are serious, you do not demonstrate the truth of those charges.

You write that this group, of which Rev. Lanning is a part, grossly misrepresents you, undermines your reputations, spreads suspicion and distrust towards you, and slanders you. This group has sent a document to you and the RFPA Board in which they express concern for the direction of the Standard Bearer, however, you have not proven from your quotations and references to their letter that they are guilty of slander and misrepresentation. You clearly disagree with their conclusions and arguments, as is your right, but that does not make them guilty of slander.

As to your charge of schism, it appears that you believe the mere formation of a group and the writing of group letters are themselves schismatic. We respectfully disagree.

This has to do with the necessary distinction between the RFPA and the church. This from the RFPA website: "The Standard Bearer is not and has never been an ecclesiastical periodical. It is a "free" paper, allowing and encouraging the critique of various doctrines and practices within the church world, even going so far as to accept and publish contrary opinions or hostile articles criticizing the periodical itself. This is the paper the three ministers envisioned, and this is the periodical that remains today." That is why when there is a disagreement with something that is written in the SB, the response is not, "Go to his consistory." Neither is this your view. When Rev. Lanning was accused by an editor of "advocating a deficient view of the call of the gospel" (Standard Bearer, June 2019, Vol 95, No. 17, p399) that editor did not bring this serious charge to Rev. Lanning's consistory. It is right and proper that matters involving the RFPA, and the magazine of the RFPA, the Standard Bearer, are dealt with according to the constitution that governs that institution.

It appears from the sections of the May 2019 letter you quoted that the group is doing exactly that in following the rules as laid out by the constitution of the RFPA. The RFPA constitution allows for group action ("The board on its own motion, or upon written request from any fifteen regular members may call a special meeting of the Association" - RFPA Constitution). In fact, the RFPA itself could be seen as "group action." This from the RFPA website: "When it became clear that these ministers would never give up their fight for the truth, the CRC closed its church publications to them in an effort to stifle their opposition to the error of common grace. In response, Danhof Hoeksema, and Ophoff, together with fifteen laymen who stood strong with them throughout the controversy, organized the Reformed Free Publishing Association in April 1924." We emphasize this section to show there is strong precedent for the action being taken, and this also answers your charge that Rev. Lanning is in error for being a part of this group. The Rf PA was started by a "group action" of ministers and laymen and exists today as a beautiful, living testament to the office of all believer.

As to the charge of slander.

Your most serious concern has to do with what you perceive to be the charge of this group that the editors oppose "the theology of Herman Hoeksema" and "specifically the doctrine of the unconditional covenant. **You take this to mean that the group is charging the editors with promotion of the "false doctrine of the conditional covenant" (letter dated February 13, 2020).**

However, this is not proven from the material that you quoted.

The group does not charge you with promoting the false doctrine of the, conditional covenant but states that according to the Standard Bearer, "the theology of Herman Hoeksema as it was preached in that sermon is now viewed as a danger to the PRC and those that espouse it are considered hyper-Calvinistic and antinomian." It appears to be the contention of the group that this is a logical conclusion given the responses of Rev. Koole to Rev. Lanning, Herman Boonstra, and others. However, we might perceive that, it is certainly the right of these members of the RFPA to object to the conclusions made by Rev. Koole regarding Herman Hoeksema's teaching of the call of the gospel. You make an illogical conclusion that because the group protests an editor of the Standard Bearer strongly disagreeing with Herman Hoeksema's view of the call of the gospel, that they are ipso facto, charging you with promoting the false doctrine of the conditional covenant.

We close our letter with a word of caution to you, brothers. In your letter you have made serious charges against a faithful minister of Christ Jesus, charges which are unproven and unfounded. Although you feel strongly about these matters, which is evidenced in the language you deploy, you have not proven those charges from the material you quoted and referenced. We urge you to reconsider the path on which you have placed yourself by charging a righteous man falsely.

You close by saying if this group continues, "the actions of your pastor and his group will unarguably become public schism." Brothers, the men who formed the RFPA were not schismatics when they organized the RFPA. Neither is Rev. Lanning a schismatic when he operates within the bounds of that very organization.