

ADVICE ON ANDY BIRKETT'S PROTEST:

On February 11, 2021 the Consistory took the following decision in Art. 11, "to require Rev. Langerak to resign as contributing editor of the sword and shield and discontinue writing for and promoting the publication."

Grounds:

- a. Rev. Langerak continues writing in and promoting the Sword and Shield as a co-editor with Andy Lanning, a deposed minister of the PRC who continues to live in the sin of schism.
- b. Rev. Langerak's participation has caused and continues to cause unrest and division in our congregation.

On February 18, 2021 Andy Birkett protested this decision and asked the Consistory to overturn it decision on the basis of 6 grounds.

Recommendations

1. That the consistory declare the protest of Mr. Andy Birkett to be legally before it.
2. Ground: The requirements of Church Order Articles 30 and 31 have been met.
That the Consistory not sustain the protest of Mr. Birkett on the following grounds:

1. Andy Birkett's ground # 1, is incorrect, i.e., that the Consistory's decision is "a violation of Art. 84 of the Church Order which reads, 'No church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no Minister over other Ministers, no Elder or Deacon over other Elders or Deacons.' ". Explanation:
 - a. Art. 84 of the Church Order does not apply here. This article forbids individual office bearers from lording it over other office bearer(s), e.g., an office bearer with a strong personality and agenda imposing his will on other office bearers through intimidation, deception and/or manipulation.

Ground a. is not valid because according to The Church Commentary by Van Dellen Monsma ground a. is not true. Proof is that the article refers to "No Church over other churches" A church is not an individual but is rather made up of multiple members. The article would be in perfect harmony if it added "consistory over other consistories" or "consistory over minister(s)"

While this Article does give *allowance* for individuals, it gives equal allowance for groups and/or bodies of office holders, including and especially groups of elders

According to commentary of Van Dellen and Monsma

1. The origin of this ruling.

The provision of Article 84 is all important and goes back to the very origin of the Reformed Churches. Dr. F. L. Rutgers very correctly calls careful attention to utterance and decision taken at the Wezelian Convention, 1568, the first gathering of Church leaders belonging to the Reformed Church of Holland and nearby territories.

Chapter IV, Article 7 of the conclusion of Wezel provides, among other things, that **elected Elders** *{plural}* shall promise “not to employ domination, neither **regarding the Ministers** *{plural}* nor regarding the **congregation**. (Cf. also Chapter IV, Art. 9.)

- b. The consistory’s decision is rather the proper exercise of the authority that Christ has invested in the elders to exercise supervision over the work and labor of their pastor.
 - i. Art. 23 of the Church Order “The office of the elders...is to take heed to the ministers, together with their fellow-elders and the deacons, faithfully discharge their office...”

The above statement accompanied with parts of Article 23 of the Church order which are quoted above give a misleading meaning and sense of unequal standing between the offices which is not apparent to the complete Article.

The complete article states:

“The office of the Elders, in addition to what was said in Article 16 to be their duty in common with the Minister of the Word, is to take heed that the Ministers, together with their fellow-Elders and the Deacons, faithfully discharge their office , and both before and after the Lord's Supper, as time and circumstances may demand, for the edification of the Churches to visit the families of the Congregation , in order particularly to comfort and instruct the members, and also to exhort others in respect to the Christian Religion.”

Concerning any type of supervision, as quoted from The Church Commentary by Van Dellen and Monsma

2. Supervision over fellow-office-bearers.

Supervision over office-bearers in Episcopal Churches (Roman Catholic, Methodist, etc.) is exercised in the first place by superior officers, Bishops, Cardinals, etc. With us all officers stand on par as to their official authority. Consequently, inasmuch as supervision in this imperfect and partial dispensation of the Church is highly necessary, all supervision amongst office-bearers must be mutual.

Each must oversee, supervise the other, (cf. Acts 20:28.) “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops (overseers) . . .”

This supervision covers, in the first place, doctrine and life, as well as the discharge of one’s office. In doctrine one must be sound, in conduct exemplary and beyond reproach, and as an office-bearer faithful and diligent withal.

The Elders should give particular heed to the Ministers of the Gospel. It is of prime importance that these preach and teach correctly and effectively, and that their labors are performed in all faithfulness. But the other officers in the Church must also be true and faithful if the cause of God is to flourish. Error, disloyalty, and neglect may not be tolerated in any office-bearer. That would be contrary to God’s Word and would undermine the very foundations of the Churches.

Prof. H. Hanko writes concerning this in his Notes On The Church Order,
“The minister is also under the supervision of the elders. He too is subject to their rule. This is true as far as his personal life is concerned.

He (the minister) is not above the consistory in any way.

It is true that he is not above the consistory in any way. But it is also true that he is not an inferior to the other office bearers so that the consistory can impose their own will upon him.

The consistory is not subjecting the minister to God’s will, but their will. That is not in accordance with either the Bible or Church Order.

It is mutual oversight. And regardless of who is overseeing whom, the will which is being exerted, is subject to the Word of God.

When mutual oversight is disregarded, the necessary implication that the equality of the offices which is the hallmark of the entire Church Order is completely undermined. It also leads to allowance of injurious lording it over one office bearer or group of office bearers over another, as it is being used presently.

His doctrine and conversation are subject to the scrutiny of the Consistory.” (p. 44)

ii. According to the Form for Ordination Of Elders And Deacons, “Thirdly, it is also the duty (of elders) to have regard to the doctrine and conversation of the ministers of the word....”

2. Andy Birkett’s ground # 2 is incorrect, i.e., that the Consistory’s decision “forces our minister to violate his conscience concerning the oath he took in the Form of Ordination of the Ministers of God’s Word to ‘and refuting with Holy Scripture all schisms and heresies which are repugnant to the pure doctrine...’ ” Explanation:

a. In the case of Rev. M. Dick and the proper application of Article 21 of the Church Order, Synod 2009 stated in the Art. 86, 5, ground “a” (p. 77&78) that “An office-bearer is not at liberty, indiscriminately, simply to act according to the dictates of conscience without regard to circumstances.” Synod went on to explain that:

i. The exercise of a believer’s Christian liberty in carrying out the dictates of his conscience is limited by a consideration of many factors, e.g., what is profitable for his neighbor and the requirements of the Church Order.

In the instance being used as a precedent does not apply.

In the above example Synod first apparently established that the minister was in violation of Church order Article 21.

Upon establishing the violation, they charged the minister with showing disregard for his neighbor by refusing to help support the Christian schools.

There is no disregard for his neighbor in Rev writing and expounding on Biblical truths and church matters.

Biblical admonitions are beneficial for the neighbor, whether the neighbor wants to hear them or not, and there is NO CHURCH ORDER that is being violated.

ii. One whose conscience does not allow him to labor within the requirements of the Church Order cannot serve as a minister in the PRC.

This is not an issue because Rev is not violating any of the Church Order.

b. Applying the principles set forth by Synod 2009 to the case before the consistory:

i. Rev. Langerak may not appeal to his conscience to defend and justify behavior that the elders deem hurtful to the church.

It is not orderly or brotherly for the elders to arbitrarily “deem” things without any evidence, proof, or scripture. This is rule by the wisdom of man. We may only rule the church by the word of God. That goes to my next item of protest.

a. 1 Cor 10:23, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all

things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.”

b. Rom 14:19, “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”

ii. There are other avenues available to Rev. Langerak to carry out the convictions of his conscience to refute schism, heresy and false doctrine, e.g., the pulpit, lectures, pamphlets, writing books, etc.

3. Andy Birkett’s ground # 3 is incorrect, i.e., that “ground “a” of the Consistory’s decision is not a ground” and contradicts what others have done and are doing in our churches. Explanation:

a. Ground “a” is in fact a ground. The point of this ground is that Rev. Langerak may not serve as co-editor of a magazine with a man who has been deposed from the office of minister in the PRC for public schism and is still engage in inciting schism in the PRC.

b. This position of the Consistory is substantiated by Rev. Langerak’s sermon on “Christian Discipline” preached in Crete on 5/24/15, Sermon Audio – 56:29 – 58:03

This isn’t a separate thing, ‘keep no company’. It belongs to Christian discipline. The apostle speaks of

it specifically. He says ‘keep no company with man.’ He says ‘withdraw.’ ‘To keep no company’ is

fellowship. When someone’s having fellowship with a man, that’s as clear and obvious as in the Old

Testament when some man plowed his field with an ox and ass. It is that clear. It’s not difficult to know what fellowship is. We all know that. Fellowship is friendship with that man. Eating and drinking with him. It’s forbidden, with the impenitent. That’s clear. That’s non-negotiable. That’s the tradition that we receive from the Apostle. There are those who show their disdain for a friend or for a family member’s excommunication by fellowshiping with him. They say as though to the church, ‘You may put him out, but I’m not going to.’ But, that is the calling of scripture.

Rev. has made no illusion regarding his fellowshiping with the Rev Lanning. He told us that he “loves him as a brother in Christ”.

But the consistory contradicts itself when it speaks about the church orderly way of protest and appeal, and then binds a man’s conscience while he is appealing. Rev had openly told us that he does not believe Rev Lanning is guilty of the charges he was charged with, and that he has lawfully filed a protest of said decision.

For us to bind his conscience is denying Christian liberty to a brother while he waits for his appeal to be heard. God demands that we no allow our conscience to be bound by any man, but God alone. Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

It is also disorderly to make random decisions without proof or scripture and then sit back and tell the man he must go the way of protest and appeal. How is it even possible to protest or appeal a decision that does not even cloak itself with principle. There is not principle to protest or appeal to or against.

c. The example of Engelsma and Cammenga serving with a divorce and remarried minister on the board of an organization that seeks to translate Dutch Reformed literature into English is not a valid comparison. Rev. Beeke, although divorced and remarried, has not been charged with schism in the PRC.

I do not agree with the assertion that my example is “not a valid comparison.”

Could you please explain to me to what degree the consistory considers gross public sin to be worthy of separation?

Beeke is guilty of gross public sin.

He is walking impenitent in gross violation of the 7th commandment.

Do you say that the comparison is “not valid” because his sin is not as personally offensive to you? because we do not personally know the wife that this man put away? because he is in a different denomination?

While I would agree that serving as a fellow board member which includes sharing corporate responsibility for decisions, including ungodly decisions is not fellowship either.

I do believe that it is much more a relationship of fellowship when you are corporately responsible for the decisions of a majority, that if you are submitting articles to the same magazine for publication.

4. Andy Birkett’s ground # 4 is incorrect, i.e., that the consistory’s decision “forces our minister to violate the vows he made before God in the Formula of Subscription ‘but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these [errors], and to exert ourselves (through preaching and writing) in keeping the church free from such errors,’ that we as a consistory now stand in the way of.” Explanation:
 - a. The consistory has judged that because of the schismatic behavior of the editor-in-chief of the Sword and Shield, this magazine is not a proper platform for Rev. Langerak to carry out his ministerial vows.
 - b. There are other avenues available to Rev. Langerak to carry out his vows to refute and contradict error and to keep the church free from such errors, e.g., the pulpit, lectures, pamphlets, writing books, etc
5. Andy Birkett’s ground # 5, a&b is incorrect,
 - i.e., that there is no basis that shows any truth to ground “b”, i.e., Rev. Langerak’s participation (writing of Sword and Shield) has caused and continues to cause unrest and division in our congregation.

Explanation: That Rev. Langerak’s participation in the Sword and Shield is causing unrest in the congregation is the judgment of the majority of the consistory, a judgment that need not be proved to the satisfaction of a dissenting elder or minority of elders.

I do not believe that the consistory may not be ruled by majority but instead, it must be ruled by God and His Word.

A decision of this magnitude and far reaching implications should have scripture and grounds to support their conclusion and decision.

That there is strife and division in our church and churches we all acknowledge.

That has been festering for years.

To arbitrarily decide that the cause of this strife is the truth of the Godly writing of our minister, in the only church magazine that will publish his writings, is unjust.

Even if this decision had been taken with solid grounds and evidence proving what it is asserting, then then the Godly way to proceed would be:

- 1- Work with Rev to help him see the division that his writing is causing. This division that the rest of the elders see (although has NEVER before reported at a meeting).
- 2- Work with those in the congregation to try to come to an acceptable understanding. There have never been committees assigned to meet with individual or groups of members who feel this way. In fact, those who no longer attend services, and have thereby neglected the means of grace in open rebellion to God and His church are not rebuked for their sins.

The fact that we have done neither of the above is proof that the decision that was made was rash

5c. Andy Birkett's ground # 5, c is not a valid ground, i.e., that the Consistory's "last motion regarding the Sword and Shield is that it is a non-ecclesiastical matter."

Explanation:

- a. The Sword and Shield is non-ecclesiastical in that it is a free magazine not under the supervision of any ecclesiastical body.
- b. This is not a ground to invalidate the consistory's decision. Whether Rev. Langerak may write in the Sword and Shield is an ecclesiastical matter in so much that his ministerial office and work is under the authority and supervision of the consistory.
 - i. Art. 23 of the Church Order "The office of the elders...is to take heed to the ministers, together with their fellow-elders and the deacons, faithfully discharge their office..." Prof. H. Hanko writes concerning this in his Notes On The Church Order, "The minister is also under the supervision of the elders. He too is subject to their rule. This is true as far as his personal life is concerned. He is not above the consistory in any way. His doctrine and conversation are subject to the scrutiny of the Consistory." (p. 59)
 - ii. According to the Form for Ordination of Elders And Deacons, "Thirdly, it is also the duty (of elders) to have regard to the doctrine and conversation of the ministers of the word...."

5d. Andy Birkett's ground # 5, d is incorrect, i.e., that the ground "b" of the Consistory's decision "blames the publication of the truth in the Sword and Shield for causing unrest and division in the body of Christ.". Explanation:

- a. The consistory's grounds say nothing about the content of the Sword and Shield as causing unrest in the congregation.
- b. The consistory's grounds speak to unrest that is being caused in the congregation by Rev. Langerak's serving as co-editor of a magazine with a deposed PRC minister who is causing schism in the PRC.

6. Andy Birkett's ground # 6 is incorrect, i.e., that the decision of the consistory violates the 9th commandment in that it does not reflect the true mind of the consistory.

Explanation:

a. Mr. Birkett speaks about the “true mind” of the Consistory alleging hypocrisy on fellow elders as it related to the motion passed. This broad accusation and serious charge of sin leveled against all the elders, or at least those who voted in favor of the motion, he must not do.

To brand the discussion as defamatory, unproven, and vicious attacks against the person and preaching of Rev. Langerak is uncharitable and unjust.

Lively debate in the Consistory room including differing perspectives is fundamental to good decisions and order. **You are claiming that accusing a man of God who has given his life to the ministry of feeding the sheep of Christ the pure milk of His word, and His word alone, that “Your preaching does damage to the flock.”, and “You use the pulpit to spit out personal gall” is something we are called to do by God under the auspices of “lively debate”? I was appalled by what I witnessed that evening, and I question the motivation of those who engaged in those charges**

The words of Proverbs 15:22 are necessary to remember, “Without counsel.

purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors, they are established.”

God is not mocked by quoting from scripture to justify what took place that evening in that consistory room.

b. To judge that the prevailing mindset of the Consistory in taking and passing the motion to ban Rev. Langerak from participating in the S&S was done to “get rid of our minister” is presumptuous. Even that some may ultimately hold this position does not allow for the broad categorization that the decision is a lie and violation of the 9th commandment.