

Why it is Against the 6th Commandment for Travis Fentiman
to Orally Speak with the Session of Greenville Presbyterian Church
(FCC) about Sensitive Information

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Preface

The purpose of the below is not intended to be about “aggravating smaller faults... [or be an] unnecessary discovering of infirmities;” (WLC 145), nor to rake people over the coals, nor is it a “requital of evil for evil... [but rather] for a man to use lawful defense”. (Andrew Willet, *Hexampla on Romans*, 1611, p. 589). WLC 145, part of the constitution of the FCC, forbids “stopping our ears against just defence (Ps. 56:5. John 2:19 compared with Matt. 26:60,61)”.

It should also be noted that the subtlety of some of the following, in my opinion, makes it all the more dangerous.

Whereas it is not my intention in these circumstances to further prosecute for these matters (and hence there is no need for libels), but the purpose of this is to lay out historic truth as it informs the situation, especially as I have been told by the session that the reason I gave them for my declinator of their requirement that would cause me to break the 6th Commandment (when they answered the matter before hearing it, Prov. 18:13), was ‘insufficient’.

See Rutherford affirm the apostolic practice of speaking the truth regarding morally culpable actions of elders (being material, though not formal accusations) in Church assemblies and court settings (even when they are not in the form of a written libel) when such are relevant to the case (and as they ought to be appropriately handled by the court) in *Due Right of Presbyteries* (1646), Pt. 1, ch. 10, section 10, on Acts 15, p. 388, Objection 2, Answer 1.

Some Scriptures that prove the Scriptural lawfulness of this in necessity (which Scriptural warrant cannot be discharged by any Church assembly and as this Scriptural warrant overrides all positive human and ecclesiastical traditions and laws) are Acts 15:6,10 (note that the material

accusation was upheld by the assembly itself and the Holy Spirit, Acts 15:24,28), also Acts 4:5-10,19; 5:29-30; 7:51-53.

Names and specifics are here given for the purpose of ensuring accuracy.

Where two other human witnesses besides myself cannot be given, these instances have still been included insofar as:

1. This is a matter of self-defense when my claim of the 6th Commandment has been challenged by the session under pain of ‘discipline’ (a 6th Commandment issue);
2. 2 Cor. 13:1 & 1 Tim. 5:19, about two or three witnesses, is merely the regular positive law regarding Church proceedings in ordinary circumstances; however, given the ten years of history to all of this, these are not ordinary circumstances;
3. Such instances have as much weight as they are worth, and they may be further searched into and confirmed;
4. However the following instances may affect the court, they certainly must inform and guide my conscience in the matter; and that is precisely what is at hand in that I have plead the 6th Commandment out of conscience (note that the word ‘conscience’ means ‘with knowledge’).
5. In these instances I am willing to have recourse to the natural and Biblical method advised in such circumstances, namely of swearing upon God’s name that these things are true insofar as I am able to relate them.
6. God takes all of the following into account in his Judgment, according to Moral Law, and hence so should Church government insofar as they are able to do so, insofar as they likewise must judge according to all relevant, available to be known, natural circumstances and God’s Moral Law.

Instances of other actions of elders and courts have been included below insofar as:

1. Multiple elders have spoken over the years of their great valuing of the ‘close-knit bond’ that they have with the other American FCC elders; some have family relations to each other and they regularly meet together around three times a year for close fellowship.

What is spoken and done by one often represents an ethos either in the presbytery (of only around 9 or so people), or as tolerated in the presbytery, or as influential in some way amongst the presbytery (which the elders of GPC often sit on), if only as the influence of one person on it.

I have had close acquaintance in varying degrees with the ethos of the elders of GPC and of the presbytery over the last 15 years (though the last 8 years or so have only been by

distance). Obviously there remain differences of opinion and actions amongst all of the elders.

2. Numerous elders of GPC have sat on the session of Cornerstone in years past during the relevant events. Elder James Wanliss currently sits both on the session of GPC and on that of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church (NC).
3. Even instances below of elders not on the session of GPC, nor yet known by the elders of GPC, yet still pose a threat to my safety insofar as such elders have some influence in the situation with the elders of GPC.

The possible personal repentance of some elders regarding some of the morally culpable instances below is largely irrelevant to this situation, insofar as:

1. The only persons that have repented to me for anything in the last ten years are Rev. Rob McCurley, about ecclesiastically leading me to countenance the Liberty & Grace group in Culpeper, Virginia (from 2009 onwards; he did this on 8-5-2019) and Rev. Jonathan Mattull, who repented to me in front of the presbytery for becoming 'exasperated' with me before the presbytery (on 3-9-2019). Both men were immediately and heartily forgiven for these things, though these things still inform the circumstances.
2. Despite endeavors after new obedience upon repentance, yet, it is often the case that such a sin committed makes it that much easier for it to be fallen into again, especially as the commission of the sin may entail stronger temptations later, especially in more demanding circumstances.
3. If persons are repentant for such, due to the point above, they will be willing to take the proper precautions in order to hedge their own ways and safeguard my safety.
4. Where some of the morally culpable instances below have had more than a private nature to them, I have heard of no public repentance being given, which is highly problematic for many reasons, and further entails a lessening of my safety.

The below instances are only some of those which are relevant to the matter at hand, and not all that might be cited.

Nearly every detail in the instances below can be further verified and confirmed through witnesses, original documents, emails (with their data sources) and hard evidence.

Part of the importance of relating these details is so that the record and narrative of these things is not changed, as might suit other persons' interests.

Instances

1. McCurley's Label: 'Shenanigans'

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, McCurley, Reeder, Wanliss

In April of 2015, after receiving godly counsel and giving it prayerful and thoughtful reflection, I publicly protested the current, highly problematic, public actions of John Uselding (which came to me, and many others on email), out of moral and Scriptural necessity, for the welfare and safety of others, and out of my divine and ecclesiastical right of continued protest unto the truth (I had publicly protested the same train of his public actions the year before). I was an officer under the presbytery at the time.

Nearly immediately I received an email from my pastor, Rev. Rob McCurley (4-11-15), who said such things as this:

“...I was both devastated and appalled to see that you weighed in on the Miriam e-mail exchange... Your actions were undiscerning and reckless [this is false]... Participation in this kind of public display is unseemly and below the dignity of an officer in Christ's Church [this is false]. You have no jurisdiction, no responsibility [this is false], no place in these matters [this is false]...

In the meantime, you absolutely must cease and desist from any further shenanigans [this is a false representation of my actions]... I have no idea what would prompt or motivate your actions...”

2. Phone Call with the Session of GPC about my Concerns

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, McCurley, Reeder, Wanliss

On Sept. 1, 2015 I had a pastoral check-up phone call with the session of GPC.

Persons from the Liberty & Grace, Culpeper, VA group were planning on moving to FCC churches in the Carolinas. I was very concerned to see that their past, highly problematic actions, which were greatly offensive to me, would be faithfully and sufficiently addressed and dealt with.

On that phone call, they will recall, I expressed my deep and grievous concerns about their past history, and encouraged, cautioned and exhorted the session of GPC to fully and faithfully deal with their past history, in a 20 minute monologue, if the leaders from Liberty & Grace sought for membership in FCC churches.

Rev. McCurley, on behalf of the session, repeatedly gave me the utmost assurance for a few or several minutes that their past issues, if they apply for membership, would be fully, and most faithfully, rigorously and Biblically dealt with.

I believed the session of GPC. I tried to persuade critical friends outside of the FCC that this would be the case.

A few of the elders on the session of GPC were also on the session of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church (NC) at that time. Their promises, woefully, did not hold true, as I will show below. That was the first time my trust was broken with American FCC elders.

3. McCurley & Mattull, ‘We were not born last night.’

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, McCurley, Mattull

At the American FCC Family Conference in 2018 (Aug. 6-10), after the presbytery meeting, Rev. McCurley and Mattull desired to talk to me about something privately that was positive.

After we came to a close about that, I brought up, “John Uselding”, as it was a heavy concern on me. I specifically had one thing (and one thing only) in mind: namely to tell these two ministers that I was thinking about writing a letter to presbytery to tell them that I did not consent to Mr. Uselding being an elder over me, insofar as Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, where Uselding had become a member, was seeking elders.

I was reassured by Rev. McCurley that that likely would never happen (I am not sure how one person could so assure me of this). In regard to Mr. Uselding’s highly problematic ecclesiastical past and public actions, Rev. McCurley said, “We were not born last night.” At one point in the conversation, Rev. McCurley, with reference to addressing issues with Mr. Uselding (after he was a member in good standing in the FCC), said to the effect, “We are working on that” with a less than confident side-look to Rev. Mattull.

Though it seemed like it required implicit faith in Rev. McCurley, without much else to go on, I chose to believe and trust him, that Mr. John Uselding would likely never become an elder in the FCC. Within at least 8 months, indicators arose that the exact opposite may be occurring.

3. Phone Call with Session of GPC, Jan. 2019

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, McCurley, Reeder, Wanliss, King

Leading up to the following oral meeting, in anticipation for such, I had elevated levels of chronic stress (related to my medical condition, and aggravating it).

On Jan. 23, 2019 I had a ‘pastoral’ check-up phone call with the session of GPC. They brought up the issue of my Letter of Public Repentance from Aug. 2018, wherein I had further protested the public actions of Mr. Uselding. It certainly was not a free conversation to discuss such things (wherein some mutual understanding, trust and resolution may occur), or even to hear my reasons for my actions with any sufficiency.

Rev. McCurley (unnaturally) dominated that part of the phone call, at times without even taking a breath, so as it seems, not to let me talk at normal junctures (which I took quietly, without expressing issue). He, at a few points, rattled off surprisingly many (12-20) suspicions that were reported of me. All of these suspicions were false imputations and uncharitable, twisted constructions of my action.

WLC 145, “The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors... outfacing and overbearing the truth... evil suspicion... not hindering what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.”

I was at length, with great intensity, by Rev. McCurley (no doubt speaking for the whole session) encouraged/counselled/exhorted to:

“Fall on your sword, eat humble pie, throw yourself in the dust and try to attend the next Colloquium in order to regain the assurances and confidence of the elders of presbytery.”

The few times I was given the ability to speak, it was usually to see my response to what had just been told me. During the few times there was any two-way conversation, when I asked a relevant question to Rev. McCurley, he often did not answer, but simply changed the topic.

At one point, with respect to my Letter of Public Repentance, Rev. McCurley said, “We told you not to do this.” I humbly expressed that that was not true (because it was not). However, before I could explain, Rev. McCurley aggressively directed the conversation elsewhere by monologue.

As the rest of the session would believe Rev. McCurley in this, it allowed them to believe that I had been previously warned by FCC elders not to emit my Letter of Public Repentance (and hence step up the measure of looming dissatisfaction with me), which was not true.

I have indication to believe some summary of this conversation was made known to the presbytery, and that I consequently, before going into the Spring Colloquium was possibly viewed as a false witness.

When this ‘misunderstanding’, which I do not believe was a misunderstanding, was cleared up at my impetus with Rev. McCurley before the Friday presbytery meeting at the Spring Colloquium, he did not seem surprised at learning of the misunderstanding (because I don’t believe he was), and the damage had already been done.

In my naivety, I thought I could yet trust otherwise godly persons not to make their very significant conflict of interest in the matter (a decade long) an issue. This belief would be thoroughly dashed at the Spring Colloquium, and ever after.

4. Making Reeder, on GPC’s Session, a Clerk to Presbytery

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, the Presbytery

During these months the clerk of the session of GPC, Elder Reeder, was made an assistant clerk of the presbytery. While, from one angle, this was simply an administrative change, likely due to pressures on the other clerk of presbytery, and for greater efficiency in communication in the matter attending to me, yet it also allows for any communication I have with the GPC session (through Elder Reeder) to be immediately forwarded to the whole presbytery, if need be.

Fentiman is in the bear-trap.

5. Presbytery’s Silence Order

On 3-4-19, two and a half days before the Spring Colloquium, the clerk of presbytery sent me a letter of presbytery saying that:

"The Presbytery seeks... to instruct you to cease communications regarding the matter between the Presbyterian Reformed Church and Liberty and Grace Reformed Church."

For the teaching of Samuel Rutherford and James Guthrie against such silence orders, see the section, ‘On Gag-Orders Against a Righteous Cause’ on this webpage:

<https://reformedbooksonline.com/scottish-theology/free-church-of-scotland/quotes-on-the-right-of-continued-protest/>

I was told by a clerk of presbytery that I would be able to ask for clarification on the silence order at the Spring Colloquium presbytery meeting. I was never given that opportunity.

The presbytery would, after my further impetus in bringing the issue to them, months later, claim that this silence order was originally meant to only exclude public

communications. I responded to them (on 7-18-19; I am not sure that it was communicated to all the presbyters), with 8 documented reasons, numerous of which are significant, why I do not wholly believe that this was their original intention.

6. Spring Colloquium, McCurley's Devotional Before Presbytery

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, the Presbytery & Around a Dozen Other Church Officers of Other Denominations

Besides other things that occurred at the 2019 Spring Colloquium, Rev. McCurley gave a devotional from 2 Kings 19 before or at the presbytery meeting.

In my 15 years of knowing Rev. McCurley, I have never before seen him so elevated, with such a raised and forceful voice, and I believe, angry. This was sustained through the whole 15-20 minute or so devotional, without relenting.

As he often characteristically does, as he's told me before, and other people well-know (yet retaining the appearance of plausible deniability), the carefully chosen text was expounded with remarkable applicatory detail to the situation (without explicitly naming names), which involved me.

I had a private conversation with a friend a week before who attends Cornerstone (who very well may have told others); many details in that conversation were directly and remarkably alluded to and emphasized forcefully from the text. I felt severely targeted and wrongfully shamed due to such a course of action.

In years past there was another time (Anne-Marie Fentiman is a witness) where I told Rev. McCurley I thought he was talking about me in a sermon. He was utterly surprised, aghast and in a fit of humor; he immediately denied it and took great lengths to try to convince me otherwise. I believe him.

On that Lord's Day following the Colloquium, I spoke with Rev. McCurley in a private room (God is our witness, who tries the thoughts and intents of the heart) after the 2nd service at GPC.

I confronted Rev. McCurley and told him to the effect, "That devotional before the presbytery was about me; you shouldn't do that to anyone." He never denied that the devotional was about me. According to many sources, persons openly telling the truth usually deny an imputed falsehood outright, and not doing so is a major indicator of someone who is, at least, not telling the whole truth (for an ulterior purpose).

Rev. McCurley took a great pause, was evidently thinking, his head bowed down and then raised up again, voice cracked (another indicator, as stress dehydrates the

voicebox, under the pressure of having to think to get creative on the spot while trying to appear natural; this was the first time I have ever heard his voice crack in personally speaking with me) and then he said to the effect that the text he chose for the presbytery devotional was one he had reworked from a sermon sometime before, which did not explicitly answer my charge (another indicator). Everything he said was with (an unnatural) extreme care and body language which was not his normal.

7. Spring Colloquium: 1st Presbytery Meeting

Shortly before the 3-8-19 presbytery meeting I went up to Rev. Gavin Beers and asked to the effect, "Am I going to be able to freely speak at the presbytery meeting?" He thought at some point I would be able to. I insisted that it was necessary that they give me opportunity to let me freely speak at the presbytery meeting. He assured me that they would. This never happened.

Rev. McCurley was the moderator at the presbytery meeting, who was a principal party in the relevant happenings over the last decade. During this closed (private) part of the meeting, he, at various points, was prominently and sometimes forcefully saying, "Did you all hear that? He said....; Did everyone hear that? He said....; You heard that; you heard that?" as he was taking notes and writing down what I said. I do not believe his moderation was moderate, nor was it purely neutral, benign and uninfluential as is the task of the moderator. Nor did the moderator prevent any of that which follows (as is his duty).

Near the beginning of the meeting I was told by a minister that he saw I had my Blue Book (*The Practice of the Free Church of Scotland*) with me. "You won't be needing that." The presbyters were given the opportunity to ask me their own questions, on the spot. The first question put to me sought for information they did not know. I answered it fully and truthfully, as I tried to do all the other questions. I believe (I can cite evidence of this pattern) that they wanted information they did not have for the purpose of damage control. Damage control, and the control being in the hands of the presbytery, I believe, has been an over-riding principal concern of all of the relevant events herein described, and this situation and history cannot be understood without recognizing this. Damage control was not the principal and directing concern of Jesus; rather the truth was. Damage control, however, was the principal concern of those who crucified Jesus (Jn. 11:50).

In the interview I was repeatedly interrupted, talked over and cut off in the meeting when I was trying to answer the questions put to me by elders. Hence I was not even able to answer many of the questions put to me. I objected to the moderator several times that I

was not able to answer the previous question. One or two of those times he replied, sternly, "Answer the question [last put to you]."

Many of the questions put to me assumed my moral guilt in the matter. Though this was an 'informal' meeting, I distinctly felt that I was assumed to be guilty until I proved myself innocent; and I would not be allowed to prove myself innocent.

When I sought to explain my actions, or give more information as to the circumstances of them (which were largely unknown to the presbytery), I was often interrupted and condemned, with raised voice, sometimes pointing gestures, that I was blame-shifting, that I would not take responsibility for my sin, that my very defending of myself was 'pride' and 'self-righteousness', that the problem was me, etc. I was told, forcefully and repeatedly, to the effect, that I should be silent, not respond, and listen my elders. I did, and the same sort of things continued from the elders while I did not say a word.

I asked 4-5 times whether I may give my Biblical reasons for proceeding in the way that I did with my Letter of Public Repentance in light of the parties involved, and each time it went ignored and the elders changed the direction of the interview and brought up something else, or they told me 'no'. At one of these times, though I nearly never do so otherwise, from sheer surprise and aghast at the way I was being treated (in a Protestant ecclesiastical court), I rolled my eyes at the response of 'no'. I was promptly rebuked for this, doing this to a gospel-minister, etc.

Later, on probably the 5-6th time, I was allowed to finally give my Biblical reasons for my actions as to the 'manner' in which I had submitted my Letter of Public Protest regarding the parties involved. I had 4 verses I intended to bring up. I was only able to bring up one before the direction of the interview was routed elsewhere (deliberately in my opinion).

I do believe I maintained, by God's grace, my composure throughout the whole of the Thursday meeting (with the exception of eye-rolling at one point). On more than one occasion they were standing up, throwing up their hands, pointing at me and literally gaping at me. At times elders had asymmetrical grins on their faces, a major indicator of contempt and danger. I keenly felt that I was encompassed by raging bulls gaping at me (Ps. 22).

As this drew on, presbyters forcefully put the same questions to me over and over (when they would not allow me to answer them, or I could not do so well due to the pressure, intimidation, etc. Upon this occasion, saying that "I hear the same things being said over and over again", the moderator closed the meeting on the supposition of time.

I have little doubt that most or all of this did not make it into the official presbyterial notes being taken. Later in various official communications with me, this 'interview' with the presbytery was called a 'sufficient inquest' in order:

“...to deal with him privately in a friendly manner with respect to his conduct, so as to avert, by timely admonition, the possible necessity of more formal procedure at a future date should his actions warrant such procedures.”

On the following afternoon I forewent the planned recreational outing for the attenders of the Colloquium in order to assess and plan; specifically to be able to safely, if at all possible, leave the denomination.

8. Spring Colloquium: 2nd Presbytery Meeting

Another (unexpected, and closed) presbytery meeting was held the day after the first one, on Friday, 3-9-19; I was asked if I would attend, and was told that I would be given a reasonable time to freely speak (which occurred). The atmosphere, and the moderator, was much more beneficial, though this could hardly make up for the trauma that had occurred.

In seeking to give some justification for how Mr. Uselding became a member of Cornerstone in good standing, Rev. Gavin Beers, now minister at Cornerstone (though he was not at the time) stated numerous times to the effect that, “No charges were brought by the session against him at that time.” While technically true, I observed indicators that this line was made up between the two presbytery meetings, and as will be demonstrated below, covers over the fact that the Cornerstone session never morally-sufficiently investigated Mr. Uselding’s very well known, highly problematic past ecclesiastical history and public actions according to the FCC’s constitution.

When seeking to dialogue about a main concern of the presbytery, that I had not come to them first before sending my Letter of Public Repentance, Rev. McCurley said things to the effect (though I do not remember all the exact words) that as an officer in the Church, I had no personal sphere outside of that consideration. This was in response to me saying that surely we have a sphere of responsibility outside of simply and only first using the channels of Church courts. While it is true that Church government has jurisdiction over every personal aspect of an officer’s life that comes to light, yet it simply is not true that one is always, in all circumstances, morally obliged to only use Church courts, and that absolutely first, in the case of highly problematic public issues in the Church (I have never read of such in the Bible and there is plenty of evidence against it in Scripture). If this was not the conclusive force of Rev. McCurley’s comments, then I don’t know why they would be relevant.

Rev. McCurley, in a kind way, directly told me that my ecclesiology was wrong. I humbly took his correction without a word, though the correction was false (and I believe that strange view is not healthy), and manifested, apparently, the ethic of the presbytery at that time. Certainly no elder challenged Rev. McCurley on this at that time.

For further teaching on the subject from Samuel Rutherford, James Guthrie and the FCC, see the section, ‘The Right of Continued Protest Outside of Church Courts’ on this webpage:

<https://reformedbooksonline.com/scottish-theology/free-church-of-scotland/quotes-on-the-right-of-continued-protest/>

During the Spring Colloquium I had serious, aggravated and dangerous medical symptoms (both to myself and others), from my medical condition due to the acute stress of all of it. This may be evidenced from emails of mine at the time, and I also told it to Rev. Beers, Gardner and King on a presbyterial committee phone call a few months later.

9. Phone Call: McCurley & Mrs. Fentiman

Witnesses: God, Mrs. Fentiman & McCurley

Within ten days after the Colloquium, Rev. McCurley offered to speak with myself on the phone about the presbytery meetings. He ended up talking only to Mrs. Fentiman. While the conversation was cordial and respectful, I was told that Rev. McCurley expressed very clearly that he was only going to speak to how the presbytery viewed things.

Hence, real two-way communication, which is the prerequisite for everything, was excluded. When Mrs. Fentiman brought up something very significant and detrimental that had occurred in my life (outside of the Church issue), Rev. McCurley, I was told, did not show any interest at all in such. I believe, due to the ethic of numerous of the American FCC elders, with which I was well acquainted, especially in this time and circumstances, that he may have thought that such an extraordinary negative event in my life, synchronous with the presbytery meetings, was a judgment of God upon me.

10. Phone Call: Evans & Corporate Discipline

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, Evans

After the Colloquium, Rev. Brent Evans called me, in a friendly gesture, and offered to continue to have phone calls with me. On one such phone call, I expressed my concern, to the effect, that I am well aware of how things often go in the corporate world when one comes under ‘discipline’ (for doing what is right) in their house and under their methods of doing things: they will do whatever they want to you. He responded, to the effect, asking whether this was an expression

of how I felt, or whether I thought the American FCC would in fact treat me this way.

I responded that it was how I felt, and not necessarily how the American FCC would treat me. However, as has been seen be the recent events in the last seven months, this is exactly how the courts of the American FCC have treated me (as is documented in all of this).

11. Suspected of Breaking the (Public?) Silence Order

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, Beers, the Presbytery

As the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Australian Presbytery (RPCAP), having a locus in the situation, accepted my Letter of Public Repentance (Aug. 2018) and genuine repentance for the last ten years, and made this known publicly, I knew, given past events and the silence order placed upon me, that I would be suspect as having broken the presbytery's silence order.

I found out later, from a private conversation with Rev. Gavin Beers, that I was right, they did suspect me, and were possibly going to look into it.

However, not knowing that at the time and from a feeling of overwhelming fear, and knowing that the presbytery, more than likely, would not allow me to be fully heard in the matter, as with past events (which I could only expect to continue), and that I would likely be implicitly accused about this, presumed guilty until proven innocent, and not allowed to prove myself innocent, etc., I sent to the presbytery an email in order to explain my innocence in the matter on 4-8-19. Amongst other things, I was privately approached in private communications by a member of the RPCAP about it.

12. Medical problems

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, Mrs. Fentiman, Law

In early April I began to have continued, overwhelming, uncontrollable, recurrent and cyclical fear and anxiety (panic attacks), which I, given my history, am keenly alert to. I don't believe I have had these exact symptoms in my life ever till this time. I told Rev. Blake Law of the RPCAP about this at the time.

13. Requesting to Resign from being a Probationer

On April 12, 2019, I requested via email to resign as a Probationer under the American FCC presbytery, with an (undisclosed) view of leaving the denomination, safely, if at all possible, which seemed possible.

Part of the reasons were that I could only expect these behaviors and practices of the presbytery to continue into the short term and long term future (maybe modified somewhat, maybe not), that I was under such silence orders, under, apparently, the threat of discipline, etc. I felt unable to safely continue for the health of myself and my family as a probationer in the FCC under the American presbytery, otherwise against my will.

14. Phone Call with Beers, Making Things Up

Witnesses: God, Fentiman & Beers

Rev. Beers offered to talk on the phone, which occurred on 4-15-19. While he was generally caring, low-key, de-escalating, expressed his desire that I not resign from my office, and was willing to talk somewhat about some of the issues with me (really for the first time for any elder in the FCC), however, there were at least two things in the conversation, that posed a threat to my safety.

He said, with respect to the claimed ordination of Mr. Uselding in 2010, which I was present at (and he was not), that Rev. McCurley had said that he was 'simply there'. Mr. Sean Humby, a member at GPC, that he had heard the same at Rev. Beers' induction at Cornerstone. Beers inferred from this that Rev. McCurley was not anything but a bystander to the 'ordination'. I told Rev. Beers that the bulletin said that Rev. McCurley laid hands on Mr. Uselding. He said, "Then what the bulletin says must be wrong."

Later, on 5-14-19, I wrote an email which was distributed to the presbytery, which, amongst other audio, visual and testimonial evidence, concluded that:

"There are three [eye] witnesses [Andrew & Jessica Meyers, & Fentiman] plus the evidence of the bulletin that Rev. McCurley laid hands on Andrew Myers and John Uselding with Steven Dilday."

The second problematic issue to my safety was that Rev. Beers, apparently attempting to find ways to possibly clear Mr. Uselding, would say, "What if he..." The proposed hypothetical scenario each time was contrary to the facts of the case of Mr. Uselding's history that I knew from personal experience, which facts can be confirmed and proved. I would relate what did in fact happen, and then Rev. Beers would say, "Well, what if he..." Another made up hypothesis contrary to fact. I would again state what in fact happened, obvious to anyone who knew of the public situation, and again from that (which he did not know

before), he inferred that perhaps he did such and such (again contrary to fact, which can be confirmed through witnesses and evidence).

15. Second Silence Order

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, the Presbytery

On 4-25-19 I received a second letter from the presbytery with another, reiterated silence order (mentioning nothing about it only referring to public communications) with the additional proviso:

“Presbytery agreed to communicate... instructions to cease communications regarding the matter between the Presbyterian Reformed Church and Liberty and Grace Reformed Church, and furthermore, to bring any additional concerns he may have to his overseeing Session and this Presbytery.”

Now I am confined by the American FCC elders to only speak with the American FCC elders about the issues, the very people that I fear due to documented history.

16. Phone Call with a Clerk of Presbytery: Prejudging & Prelimiting

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, Reeder, Presbytery

On 5-28-19 I had a phone call with a clerk of presbytery, Elder Reeder, before the presbytery meeting on 6-4-19. In that phone call, Elder Reeder said that it was likely, even expected, that the presbytery would not be taking into consideration much or most of my written supporting reasons and evidences for the previous ‘appeal’ I submitted to them, seeking to remove the silence orders, for two main reasons (which two reasons I do not believe are sound).

It is courtesy, I was told by a clerk, that a member of the denomination be able to speak to the competency of his submission to the court before they then determine the competency of the submission. Though I was a member of the denomination, I was not given this courtesy, and had to simply wait for them to dismiss my ‘appeal’ when I believe it was competent for their court.

That the clerk could tell me this at all, I find to be alarming, as it seems to evidence that he, and whatever elders, or even the presbytery, counseled him to

tell me such, were evidently prejudging the case before hearing it (contra the Natural Law and the Proverbs).

WLC #145, “The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors, as well as our own, especially in public judicature;”

Further by telling me that the presbytery would likely only deal with part of what I was appealing (and not all of it), the clerk and presbytery were evidently prelimiting my ‘appeal’, which is immoral.

In fact, I was told by Elder Reeder that the presbytery would likely or possibly seek to narrow its concern to treat principally of the ‘manner’ of my communication relating to my Profession of Public Repentance. This is absolutely remarkable:

I submitted an ‘appeal’ expecting to prove my case that the presbytery’s actions of silence-ordering me without qualification was immoral. The issue was about the actions of the presbytery, which were to come under review. Instead, I was told that *my actions* from previous to the silence orders would come under review; that I would be in the dock.

I wrote emails to the clerks of presbytery mentioning these things and numerous more that endangered my safety on May 28, 29 & 31, 2019.

17. Gardner to Me: ‘Slanderous’

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, Gardner, Beers, King

On June 18, 2019 I had a phone call with a committee of presbytery (Rev. Beers, Gardner, King). On that phone call, Rev. Gardner said to me that my Profession of Public Repentance (8-15-18) was ‘slanderous’. He gave a certain reason for this. That reason does not hold, as I can prove; and his statement was false: my Profession of Public Repentance was not slanderous, as I can prove.

18. My ‘Appeal’ was Dismissed, though Partly Addressed

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, Clerks of Presbytery & Presbytery

My ‘appeal’ to the presbytery was dismissed by for reasons that I, and others, do not believe are sound. After receiving the presbytery communications, I shortly, on 7-17-19 and 7-18-19 responded to them, to the clerks of presbytery,

explicating problematic issues with those presbyterial determinations that endangered my safety.

Further, the public libel that Justin & Genesis Spratt had made regarding Mr. Uselding to the presbytery, I had mentioned in the supporting evidence to my 'appeal', which had been distributed to all the elders of the presbytery. I was told later by Elder Reeder that the presbytery did nothing about this because the libel was not submitted separately in the normal way a libel might be submitted. I believe this reason and action is contrary to the constitution of the FCC (From of Process 8.18; and hence it endangers my safety), and a public libel of Mr. Uselding, addressed to the presbytery, still remains in the public domain.

19. Beers: No Responsibility to Report the Session's Actions to You

In the Fall of 2019 I had went through the process of Mt. 18 with someone who was divorcing their wife unBiblically (and who had scandalized my soul), who had attended Cornerstone semi-regularly for the previous 6 months. At the end of Mt. 18, I sent that information to the Cornerstone session and other interested parties. I asked to be kept informed as to what came of it (seeing as I was greatly affected and concerned in all of this).

Several months later, when the person no longer attended Cornerstone, I sent an update to the Cornerstone session and others regarding the person's current, highly problematic actions (with documentation), in case he were to come back. This is part of the response I received from Rev. Beers, which manifests the ethos of the American FCC eldership insofar as I've perceived it for the whole 15 years I've been in the FCC:

"We recognize that you may have asked to be kept informed by our Session in your previous correspondence, but I do not see what responsibility we have to report our actions on this point to you..."

I felt it necessary to wrote back to Rev. Beers, in part:

"Our Blue Book says that elders are to discharge their functions "with a view to the religious and moral interests of the people". (p. 15)...

Regarding Cornerstone's session's responsibility to answer, in some way, an honest and reasonable request by one of Christ's sheep who has been scandalized (besides simply ignoring it without telling the individual), that stems from, if nothing else, common decency and treating people the way one desires to be treated, for this is the law and the prophets (Mt. 7:12).

But if one needs more Scriptures (and presbyterian elders have a moral and ecclesiastical obligation beyond simply the persons in their congregation):

"Take heed therefore unto... all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts 20:28

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly;" 1 Pet. 5:2"

Professor James Bannerman of the Free Church of Scotland described historic presbyterianism this way:

“...there are means of a most indispensable kind to be employed in the way of explanation and instruction, counsel and persuasion, to secure the convictions and concurrence of the private members of the Church, in whatever act or declaration the rulers, in the exercise of their judicial, or legislative, or administrative functions, may find it necessary for them to perform or to adopt.

Without the use of such means to carry the conscience and understanding of the members of the Church along with them in all that they do and declare, the office-bearers are not at liberty to use or enforce their peculiar power at all. And it is only when all such means have been employed and exhausted without effect, and when the members of the Church, so dealt with in the way of Christian persuasion and instruction, still refuse their concurrence, that it may be necessary and is lawful to use authority to strengthen the appeal, and to fall back upon the ultimate resource of all societies, — namely, the inherent right of the rulers to rule, and the no less inherent duty of the ruled to obey.” (*The Church of Christ*, Edinburgh, 1868, pp. 241-2)

20. The False Findings of Cornerstone Session

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, Uselding, Cornerstone Session, Presbyterian Reformed Church

The day before Thanksgiving, 2019, I submitted a Letter of concern regarding Mr. Uselding to the Cornerstone session. They responded back on 1-30-2020.

The Cornerstone session gave as a reason for dismissing my communication:

“3... the Presbyterian Reformed Church... took no action against Mr. Uselding or any of the other members of the congregation who acted with him, but simply removed them from their rolls by erasure.”

Appended below is the email that was sent from the clerk of the Presbyterian Reformed Church to Mr. Uselding, and the two PDF documents attached to it, namely a letter from the clerk of presbytery and a further attachment.

That letter says this with respect to Mr. Uselding and others:

“...we must report to you **the following actions** of the Presbytery. The Presbytery has decided to **dissolve the congregation** of Northern Virginia and **your names will be stricken from the rolls** as of October 1, 2009 **with a *cum nota* [with a note] record kept by Presbytery.** Formal action has also been initiated against [the then suspended pastor]...”

The letter then goes on to say that the presbytery of the PRC is “very grieved over your actions in this particular situation.” It mentions the persons’ (including Mr. Uselding’s) ‘serious offenses, which we believe you ought to... seek to make good.’ Further regarding another of his actions, the letter says, “Not only is it unbiblical, but it is spiritually hazardous to...”

The attachment of the PRC says:

“The following actions were taken by the Presbytery of the Presbyterian Reformed Church... 2. It was moved and seconded that the Presbytery instruct the Session to strike from the rolls the names of those who have adhered to Mr. Dilday... The motion carried.”

Cornerstone session also said:

“4. That the Presbyterian Reformed Church who brought no censure against Mr. Uselding at that time...”

As seen is seen in the letter, the clerk of the PRC spoke in the first person plural on behalf of the presbytery and included in that letter to Mr. Uselding admonitions and rebukes. The PRC considers both of these things to be censures:

“...the infliction of one or more of four censures. It may be (1.) Admonition, involving affectionate warning of sin and danger, and exhortation to greater circumspection; or (2.) Rebuke either before the session alone or before the congregation, after confession or conviction of a scandalous offence;” (Book of Discipline, section 75)

Why did Cornerstone session say that the PRC “removed them from their rolls by erasure”, when the PRC used the language of ‘strike’ and ‘stricken’, and why does what the PRC said contradict what Cornerstone session said the PRC said, unless Cornerstone session never read the PRC documents?

The first thing one ought to do in evaluating any claims is to seek to confirm them. But Cornerstone session did not do this by writing a simple email to the

PRC, either within the last year, or before 7-16-16 when Mr. Uselding became a member in good standing at Cornerstone.

Hence, even though no charges were brought against Mr. Uselding before he came into membership in the FCC (because I was not locally there and did not know when it would take place, and committed to being non-intrusive and non-divisive), yet it is very clear that Cornerstone session did not adequately fulfill their constitutional obligation at that time, or since:

“...it be the duty of pastors and ruling elders to use all diligence and vigilance, both by doctrine and discipline respectively, for preventing and purging out such errors, heresies, schisms, and scandals, as tend to the detriment and disturbance of the Church...” (Form of Process 8.18)

If American FCC elders do not uphold their own constitution, I am not safe in the denomination, nor do I believe anyone is, especially church officers. (Rev. Beers, as moderator of the 6-4-2019 sought to persuade me of the presbytery’s resolve to uphold its ecclesiastical laws and constitution, which was the main reason, trusting that, that I decided at that time to revoke my request to resign as a probationer and linger on longer.)

21. Cornerstone’s Aggressive Action

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, Cornerstone Session, GPC Session

Also alarming to my safety was Cornerstone session’s resolve:

“The Kirk Session resolve to receive nothing further from Mr. Fentiman on such historic matters, and further to notify his own Kirk Session of his raising these issues.”

That I was going to raise a historic matter by way of exercise of my divine and ecclesiastical rights was no surprise to any American FCC elder in that I told the presbytery in writing at the August, 2019 conference that I was going to go to Mr. Uselding in private with Rev. Blake Law (RPCAP) to address his issues.

Notifying my session was an aggressive action (which I believe was unnecessary). This action may effectively lock me into the bear-trap, which it consequently did.

Upon receiving this notice from Cornerstone, I immediately requested to leave the FCC from the GPC session by way of a disjunction certificate. Ever since that day, 1-30-2020, I have been being held against my will in the FCC. Still, after six and a half months, I have not been told what cause of censure there is in my actions.

22. GPC Session's Aggressive Action

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, GPC Session

On 2-26-20 I was notified that GPC session decided to suspend judgment on my request for a disjunction certificate and investigate me for scandal due to the notification that Cornerstone session sent them. GPC session had decided this in their session on 2-11-19.

This was despite the fact that: (1) I had simply and only exercised my divine and ecclesiastical rights in the matter, according to necessary moral and Scriptural reasons (and that respectfully and according to the truth), (2) Cornerstone session did not allege that I had sinned in the matter, (3) nor was their notification of my actions a *fama clamosa*, a clamorous report (such as sessions are to investigate as per books of church order).

23. Beers's Facebook Post

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, Beers, dozens or hundreds of people on Facebook

Two days before I received the above notification, on 2-24-20, about two weeks after the decision had been made by GPC session to investigate me for scandal, Rev. Beers publicly posted this to his Facebook wall (which went into many people's news feeds, which they see when they first open Facebook):

“This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 19:21-22”

Many of Rev. Beers's 1,500 Facebook friends (many of which happen to be my friends) saw this.

If this public post (couched in plausible deniability, which is even more dangerous) had any mental reference to me (God and Rev. Beers know): (1) it is false, as I have not blasphemed or reproached God in this continuing matter, and (2) it is spiritual abuse.

The only way it could be perceived that I have blasphemed God, it seems to me, is if a person implicitly believed in and practiced ecclesiastical, [group-identity politics](#), where a given person's identity and self-worth is wholly tied to being part of the inner-circle, or the group, and going against the tightly-knit bonded group's will is the highest sin.

Yet every believer, including myself, is anointed of God (1 Jn. 2:27).

24. All GPC Officers: Our Civil Dignitaries are 'Pharaohs'

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, All GPC Officers, the Whole Congregation of GPC

On 3-24-20 the clerk of GPC sent a letter of the Deacons' Court of GPC (including every officer at GPC) to the whole GPC congregation. Near the end it said this:

“...we are faced with a sudden and unexpected storm. Our liberty to worship God at this building is now opposed—opposed by the magisterial Pharaohs of our day and sadly, by the church at-large, even our own familiar friends.”

This statement about our civil dignitaries is factually false: the distinctive characteristics of Pharaoh in the Exodus were not characteristic of the civil dignitaries leading the initial response to COVID. In fact, not long after this letter of every officer at GPC, the governor of South Carolina specifically exempted churches from civil, assembly restraints regarding COVID. Not too long after that, President Trump declared his view and encouragement as to the same.

The statement of every officer at GPC also betrays false theology, which I don't need to elaborate on.

If I had not been taken up already with this matter regarding Mr. Uselding, I would have immediately charged the whole Deacons' Court at GPC with scandal before the presbytery.

The Deacons' Court has never publicly repented for this significant, false statement of theirs to the whole congregation, otherwise I should have heard about it (being on the email list).

That such an erroneous mindset has existed amongst all of the officers of GPC, and that they felt free to declare such a false and inflammatory statement to the whole congregation, they trusting the whole congregation felt the same way, shows the extreme danger of the mindset at GPC, led by the officers.

I could easily document with written (not to mention oral) evidences of numerous persons at GPC who have expressed implicit faith in the GPC elders. I don't believe such a characteristic as that is uncommon there. Such persons implicitly believing, even against evidence, the narrative of GPC (and some Cornerstone) elders, is significantly harmful to my safety (not to mention everyone else's as well).

25. Beers's False Public Statement on Facebook

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, Beers, Mrs. Fentiman, Many Persons at Cornerstone & GPC as well as the Greater Public

On a Facebook thread on the public wall of Joshua Cochrane (of GPC) on 5-2-20, Rev. Beers posted the following (see the unaltered image attached):

“...I actually agree with Travis conclusions in his copious material but I can't let him know that because for some reason he has blocked me [on Facebook].”

That statement is false (I believe consciously) because weeks after I blocked Rev. Beers on Facebook, he emailed me on 3-20-20, inquiring about reformed literature on a given topic, whereas in the past he has usually so inquired of me through Facebook.

The seven emoji reactions on Rev. Beers's comment were mostly from persons at Cornerstone and GPC. Numerous other people from those churches, and others, commented elsewhere on the thread, very likely seeing his comment.

26. GPC Session's Request to Meet

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, GPC Session & Some Other Witnesses Later Copied on Email

On 5-13-20 the clerk of GPC session requested for myself to meet with the session via video conference (and not simply a phone call). He gave no reason for it, other than that the session needed to.

If I were to meet with them in these circumstances, behind closed doors, it allows them to spring all kinds of things on me that I in no way would be prepared to address, including, likely, many 'suspicions' about me. I may be viewed as guilty

until I prove myself innocent, and I likely would not even be given that opportunity.

It would also allow the elders to dictate things to me, and expect immediate compliance (without further discussion of the circumstances and moral issues), and to let the presbytery know that I had been directed, instructed or commanded such.

I reasonably requested an agenda and the things that would be addressed. Yet they would not treat me so reasonably (2 Thess. 3:2).

I don't doubt that if I confirm certain facts, the elders may put their own constructions on them as they have so often done in the past. It also allows them to selectively quote from my words at will, in order to give whatsoever representation of them according to their interests.

I have worked at a corporation before which pinned everyone behind closed-doors in all of its sensitive dealings (with no transparency), isolating people, clamping down on them, and cutting off otherwise normal and natural communications and relationships, making an environment of pressure, intimidation and fear. Through the isolation and dictated domination of parts, it is much harder for persons, on all sides and in all positions, to obey the revealed, moral law of God expressed in WLC 99.6:

“6. That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.[z]

[z] [Matt. 5:21,22,27,28](#). [Matt. 15:4-6](#). [Heb. 10:24,25](#). [1 Thess. 5:22](#). [Jude 23](#). [Gal. 5:26](#). [Col. 3:21](#).”

The video aspect only exacerbates the problems, and danger.

A helpful guide for life: don't trust people who demand things from you and won't tell you why. And if you plead your own safety (upon God's 6th Commandment), and they take no cognizance of it, but only make their human, positive demands louder: Obey God rather than men, Who has never sanctioned anyone, much less an authority in this life, to run contrary to his 6th Commandment, even in degrees, methods or means. His 6th Commandment is a refuge of life, and He will enforce it.

27. The Contradiction of Words to Actions

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, GPC Session, the Presbytery

While the contradictions between words and actions may be evidenced all throughout this history, one example will do:

I am addressed by the clerk of GPC as ‘Dear Travis’, at the same time the session ignores my pleading of the 6th Commandment and proceeds to put twice as much pressure on me to perform their dictate, under pain of censure. They won’t even stop and inquire into why I believe I am being hurt.

I had previously cautioned them about not mentioning my morally justifying and sufficient reason for disobeying their dictate in their communications, according to the Westminster Larger Catechism, and then they proceed to do exactly that in their next letter to me. This allows next to nothing from me, and my moral reasons, to be on the official FCC records.

Benevolent dictators are those who have benevolent designs in their dictates, which dictates they expect immediate obedience to, because they have dictated them. The most dangerous thing about benevolent dictators, is their benevolence.

Another helpful guide for life: Don’t trust, much less obey, persons whose actions contradict their words. God’s do not; his words accurately match his disposition, because He is sincere. That’s why persons should obey his 6th Commandment.

28. Double Standards

While this could be evidenced at length, it is enough to note that the clerk, session and American FCC elders expect me to answer their questions and confirm their communications, but they often have often, or even regularly, not answered my questions nor even confirmed receiving my communications.

If this were only due to shortcomings, it might be easily looked over; but I believe it is a mindset.

Another helpful guide for life: If persons demand that you be reasonable with them, but they will not be reasonable with you: do not trust them, talk to them about sensitive information, do not appear before them, do not answer their questions and do not have anything to do with them at all, especially if they pretense all of this on God’s authority, Who said, “Come now, and let us reason together...” (Isa. 1:18)

29. The Session's Significant Conflict of Interest

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, GPC Session, the Public & Lots of Documentation

The session has a very strong conflict of interest in all of this, not simply with regards to the future outlook, but even primarily in regards to morally culpable ties and actions in the history of the past decade. This fact reveals an extremely strong inclination and temptation towards proceedings that are not fair and neutral, as they might be from 3rd parties who have no conflict of interest in the matter whatsoever.

Every reformed book of discipline that I have ever looked through seems to assume that all other things in the situation in which it speaks to are equal, namely that there are not strong and culpable conflicts of interest in the very court that is trying the issue.

In the Mosaic economy, a person who had committed a given crime could not witness at a trial against someone for what he was guilty of. I don't believe GPC could ever morally (and hence they could never, by definition, have an ecclesiastical right to) try me for scandal, until they at least publically repent for publicly calling our civil dignitaries 'Pharaohs' (Point 24 above).

While I had hoped that otherwise godly persons would restrain their own conflicts of interest, so it would not be an issue, I have been immediately, greatly, and continually disappointed all the way through all of these years.

Courts desirous of proceeding in a fair and equitable manner would likely appoint other elders to proceed with me in these things.

30. David's Words & Protection of the 6th Commandment

Witnesses: God, Fentiman, Everyone who Reads the Bible

In 2 Sam. 23 David expressed his desire for water from the well at Bethlehem. Three of his strong soldiers broke through the host of the Philistines, got the water and brought it back to David. David would not drink of it, but rather, having the Lord first before his eyes, spoke to the Lord and reproved his soldiers, saying (v. 17):

"Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?"

Though the soldiers were not hurt, yet their disregard for the 6th Commandment in simply using means that put themselves at risk, and that for the mere dictate of a man (who was God's anointed), was worthy to be reproved.

The Session of GPC, and the presbytery, especially if they are repentant, are obliged by the 6th Commandment of God, out of care for my well-being, with David, to refuse any such service of mine which unduly risks putting my well-being into jeopardy.

Appendix: PRC's Email to Uselding

Andrew & Jessica Myers and Travis Fentiman attest that the below email is unaltered; this can be confirmed in multiple ways. The email had two PDF attachments on it, which are attached and unaltered.

From: **Lindsay Smallidge** <lesmallidge@msn.com>
Date: Wed, Aug 19, 2009 at 8:28 PM
Subject: Letters from Presbytery
To: rec@mycelery.com, andilday@hotmail.com, vzeli262@gmail.com, ulstreram@gmail.com, non501c3@yahoo.com, johnuse120@yahoo.com, quiverfuljnm@yahoo.com, joyfuljessica@gmail.com, freewds@yahoo.com, ajbabb@aol.com
Cc: "Michael J. Ives" <mjives.refparish@gmail.com>

Dear Brethren,

Please consider the attached letters from Presbytery.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Smallidge
Clerk of Presbytery