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Dr. Kenneth Talbot, Moderator
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Subject: R.C. Sproul, Jr. and Paedocommunion

Dear Dr. Talbot,

Perhaps you've already seen RC Sproul Jr.'s statements below regarding his beliefs about paedocommunion. However, I thought it might be useful if you had them compiled for your convenience. I'd also like to offer in writing some comments that I've already given to you verbally, so that you might have a written record of my concerns.

As previously disclosed, I have been a paedo-communionist for over a dozen years. It wasn't until you recently pointed out to me that the Westminster Confession forbids paedo-communion that I started having reservations about it. I place considerable confidence in the Westminster Divines, whereas I put considerably less credence upon the opinions of more recently concocted doctrines of theological upstarts. Until I'm able to more thoroughly investigate the matter I'll now have to place myself in the "undecided" category. However, given that my children are all now of age and ability to give credible professions of faith, it no longer directly affects the Kershaw family.

Though I have been sympathetic to paedocommunion, my concerns over the issues of paedocommunion beliefs and practices at St. Peter were never over whether or not paedocommunion is Confessional, because I didn't prior understand the issue in that light. My concerns have always been over the fact that the St. Peter Session is prohibited by RPCGA policy from practicing and teaching paedocommunion, yet they do it anyway. They dishonestly skirt the issue in two ways:

1. By claiming that they require a credible profession of faith prior to admission to the Table.
2. By asking fathers, "Which of your children take the Lord's Supper?"

With respect to item 1, while RC Sproul, Jr. and his Session *perhaps* may have at one time required a credible profession of faith, the Kershaws know from personal experience, and from observation, that hasn't been taking place for at least a year, for either St. Peter members or visitors. None of my children were ever examined, and my youngest was barely five years old when he first came to the Table at St. Peter as a member.

In the case of visitors the practice appears to be much the same. We first visited St. Peter in November 2002, and we visited twice more thereafter before moving to Bristol and becoming St. Peter members. Again, none of my children were ever examined. I was merely asked, “Which of your children take the Lord's Supper?” It was clear to me that I was the decision-maker about which members of my family would come to the Table. At the time I didn't give it much consideration, but subsequently I began to see this as inconsistent with “fencing the Lord's Table.”

In the eleven months that we were St. Peter members, we witnessed this practice consistently and on a weekly basis, both with members and visitors, and we witnessed all four members of the St. Peter Session administering the Lord's Supper in what we could only characterize as paedocommunionism. We have repeatedly witnessed children as young as two years old taking the Lord's Supper. We have witnessed a number of children taking the Lord's Supper at St. Peter who would be incapable of forming a cogent sentence, let alone giving the Elders a credible profession of faith. In those cases where profession of faith examinations have been performed, the Session equivocates through what they term “age-appropriate” confessions. All that is necessary for a two-year old to take confession is if she can utter, “I love Jesus.” Even though she probably has no idea who Jesus is she is permitted to come to the Table.

As such, the assertion by the Elders that they require a credible profession of faith is, to put it politely, a misrepresentation of their practice, based upon what we consistently witnessed in the course of our year of membership in 2005, as well as in our three prior visits in 2002, 2003, and 2004.

Based upon our initial visit to St. Peter in November 2002, and our witnessing the practice of paedocommunion, I presumed that the RPCGA either did not explicitly forbid the practice, or that St. Peter had received some special variance on the matter. However, after becoming a St. Peter member, I overheard several men discussing the matter, and expressing their concerns that they knew that the RPCGA prohibited the practice, but that the Elders appeared to be in rebellion to Presbytery by practicing it anyway. Given the strong emphasis by the St. Peter Session on submitting to godly authority, this appeared to be a matter that greatly troubled these men. Overhearing that discussion was how I first became aware that the RPCGA prohibited the practice of paedocommunion.

My conscience compelled me to determine if the Session had received some special variance from Presbytery and, if not, on what basis the Session would practice paedocommunion in defiance of RPCGA policy. I determined that the best way to proceed was to speak to each of the four Elders individually and privately. Each Elder, RC Sproul Jr, Laurence Windham, Wayne Hays, and Jay Barfield, knew that I was a paedocommunionist. I approached each one with the same set of questions:

1. “Isn't the practice of paedocommunion against RPCGA policy?”
2. “Aren't we practicing paedocommunion?”
3. “Didn't you take a vow to submit to and obey the RPCGA BCO and the rules of Westminster Presbytery?” [BCO § B5:7]

All four men answered all three of those questions in the affirmative. Given the fact that they knew I was a paedocommunionist probably caused them to believe that I would be sympathetic to their practice. However, my next questions probably began to tip my hand that I was troubled over what they were doing:

4. “Aren’t you then in violation of your vows?”
5. “How can you justify violating your vows?”

All four men gave me the same responses. None of them would address the issue of violating their vows to Presbytery. They avoided those questions entirely. What they did address, however, is that they had an agenda to co-opt the Presbytery – to take it over through obtaining a majority and then forcing a change on the paedocommunion issue. “Our plan is to bring in like-minded men to the Presbytery, by using our Pastor’s Camps. We’ll soon have a majority in Presbytery and then we’ll be able to force the issue so that paedocommunion will be permitted. We’ve got the same plans for John Knox Presbytery. Maybe we’ll even be able to form our own Presbytery in the RPCGA.”

6. “But rather than trying to take over the RPCGA, why don’t you just seek out membership in a denomination that permits the practice of paedocommunion, like perhaps the CREC?”

“We’ve looked into the CREC. We can’t join them. We’re Presbyterians. They’re not Presbyterian. They even accept Baptists.”

I knew by this point that I had made a major error in moving my family to Bristol to join with this group of subversive conspirators. I had taken vows to submit to a cadre of vow-breakers masquerading as Presbyterians who had conspired to covertly take over a confessional Reformed Presbyterian denomination, a denomination which I had high regard for. It would take several more months yet to confirm the enormity of my error.

“But worse was the man I read who has confused the Lord’s Table with the internet. This ‘brother’ is, like me, covenantal. Like me, he believes in paedocommunion.”

The Democratization of Web-ian Christianity,

<http://highlands.gospelcom.net/articles/Democratization.php>

Where does the RPCGA draw the line with RC “believing” in paedocommunion but not practicing or teaching it? My interpretation of the Presbytery’s directive to RC Sproul, Jr. is that he may believe in paedocommunion *privately*, and he must keep all his beliefs on the subject *private*.

Given that everyone recognizes RC Sproul Jr. as a “teacher,” if he makes a doctrinal belief known in a public fashion, is there any way for him to avoid leaving his audience with the impression that he isn’t “teaching” on that subject? If that were the case, how could he even be permitted to publicly state that he believes in paedocommunion?

If he states he believes in paedocommunion publicly (which he has), is it not inevitable that he will be influencing his audience? And why would he say it at all unless it was for the purpose of influencing his audience? Is that not the same objective as teaching?

Are there not a number of his devotees who will think (and in fact who have thought), “Hey, RC says he believes in paedocommunion. If he believes in it that must mean that he practices it. I think that’s something I should look into. I’ll pack up the wife and kids and take a visit to St. Peter.” And then when people come to visit St. Peter they discover that RC’s public statements about “believing” in paedocommunion line up with what they witness being practiced at the Lord’s Table. They bring

their little ones forward and all Dad is asked is, "Which of your children receive the Lord's Supper?" Dad decides, not the Elders. Is not such a practice completely contrary to RPCGA policy?

"The other accusations, sadly, haven't come equipped with reasons. So I am left to guess. I know that Saint Peter is committed to the Westminster Standards, and that is what we preach. I know that we baptize babies, and celebrate the Lord's Supper. While we believe in paedocommunion, we don't practice it, because we are under the authority of a presbytery that doesn't allow it. (So much, by the way, for a cult being defined as a group led by a single charismatic leader.) (By the way, neither Laurence, nor I, nor anyone in our presbytery, is charismatic.) And we do practice discipline, having excommunicated the one unrepentant man from our midst several years ago."

The Marks of a Cult, or They'll Know We're a Cult By Our Love,

http://highlands.gospelcom.net/journals/hsc/2003_09_01_archive.html#MarksOfACult

It's interesting that RC Sproul Jr acknowledges that "we believe in paedocommunion." I realize that he personally was brought into the RPCGA with the understanding that he was permitted to believe in paedocommunion. However, that was not the agreement with the others. They were not permitted to even believe in it. So who is this collective "we" that RC is referring to?

It's also interesting that RC says, "we believe in paedocommunion, we don't practice it." Yet, that's contrary to not only what I and many others have personally witnessed, it's also contrary to what Laurence Windham has stated:

"On Sunday we attended our respective churches. On that Sunday, my sons and daughters, ages 3 to 9, took communion. His children, same age as mine, not only did not take communion, but are not allowed to in their church."

Cartularium, <http://highlands.gospelcom.net/journals/windham>

"Would I like to see the PCA and the OP's merge? Sure I would. And I'd throw in the RPCNA, the RPCUS, and, if they'd have us, the RPCGA. I'd love to see all the true P's in the split p soup get back together. Do I think we need to be divided over issues like paedocommunion? Not at all. But that my brothers do so think doesn't mean they're not my brothers."

Every Thought Captive, Sept/Oct 2002, Apologia,

http://highlands.gospelcom.net/ETC/Volume_Six/Issue_Five/Apologia.php

"I was questioned on the floor briefly concerning my views on the Sabbath (I tend to be more continental than Puritan, as the majority of PCA pastors are), my views on worship (that I saw nothing wrong with burning incense was the problem, though there is nothing in the Confession against it), and on paedocommunion, where my views are out of accord with the Confession, and the great bulk of Presbyterians. (Of course, I think they are, however, biblical, else I would not hold to them.)"

ETC, Jan/Feb 2001, Apologia,

http://highlands.gospelcom.net/ETC/Volume_Five/Issue_One/Apologia.php

“On the other hand, one should boycott the Ligonier conference because Ligonier publishes *Tabletalk*. *Tabletalk* for several years ran a column by Doug Wilson. They also published articles by Steve Wilkins and Steve Schlissel. Further still, *Tabletalk* was edited by R.C. Sproul Jr. for over a decade. R.C. Jr. was known to consort with known Auburn Avenue-ites, and believes in paedocommunion. Add to that the recent controversy over the infamous February 18 study from *Tabletalk*, that argued that apostasy actually happens, and you can see that Ligonier is receiving secret instructions from the Pope Himself.”

Six Degrees of Condemnation,

http://highlands.gospelcom.net/journals/hsc/2004_03_01_archive.html#SixDegrees

“We are rightly zealous to benefit from the gifts God has given His church, studying not just the first generation of Reformers, but also the Puritans, the great southern theologians, the Princetonians, and their heirs at Westminster. As I’ve said in other places, one nearly must presuppose the truth of Van Til to have any chance of getting along with good Reformed people. We treat our theological heroes like personal councils. You can disrespect the law, because Luther did. You can believe in old earth because Hodge did. And now, thanks be to the pantheon, you’re allowed to believe in paedocommunion, because G.I. Williamson does.”

Radically Reformed,

http://highlands.gospelcom.net/journals/hsc/2003_10_01_archive.html#RadicallyReformed

This duplicity and deceit, on the part of the St. Peter Presbyterian Church Session, is not limited to just the practice of paedocommunion. In my opinion it is endemic and representative of a pattern of abuse of their own authority, as well as insubordination toward the authority of the Presbytery that they swore oaths to submit to and obey.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Peter Kershaw