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Transcript of Rev Ivan Foster's contribution to the HOM radio programme, 'What a difference six months does not make'

This programme highlighted Dr Joel Beeke's continued compromise and defiance of the teaching of God's Word on Separation.

3rd January 2013.

In the month of June past, Ralph Ovadal and I posted the following on our websites.

"Last week, Pastor Ralph Ovadal and I sent out, including to a good many ministers, an article titled "Of Ducks and New Calvinists." The thesis, and conclusion, of that much read warning, which we reluctantly sounded, is that the very influential Dr. Joel Beeke is very much a New Calvinist. By way of justifying such a warning, we supplied copious amounts of documentation. That documentation included, but was very far from limited to, Dr. Beeke's deep involvement in a grossly ecumenical organisation called Refo500.

Previously, some of this same information was also shared on the "Heart of the Matter" program. Now this week, we have been informed by a minister close to Dr. Beeke that he has just agreed to sever all ministry connections to Refo500. It is to be greatly wondered at how Dr. Beeke could ever have become involved in such a blatantly ecumenical venture in the first place! It is to be mourned that such pressure was necessary for him to withdraw from what was literally a partnership with the Refo500 consortium.

We ought now to pray that Dr. Beeke, who has so much influence with so many evangelicals, will move forward to reform his still deeply and broadly compromised ministry." End of quotation.

Today, I wish to highlight the fact that Dr Beeke told his friends almost within days of the exposure of his links with Refo500 that he was breaking all links with this organisation. He offered the excuse that he had naively linked himself with Refo500 while not realising its true character.

Six months have gone by since he learned of the character of that organisation and his public promising to sever all links. Has he kept his promise? Sadly, the answer is a resounding NO! The evidence of this is on the internet for all to see should they care to investigate.

Sadly, on the basis of Dr Beeke's assurances that he was unaware of the ecumenical position of Refo500 and his clear statement indicating that he would withdraw from it, many good men who publicly repudiate the whole tenor of Ecumenical apostasy, continued their association with Dr Beeke and in some cases strengthened that association. The fact that Dr Beeke did not fulfil his promise to separate from Refo500 has betrayed the trust of those good men and left them in an invidious position and has undermined their stand for the Lord.

It is for their sakes particularly as well as the people of God generally that we seek highlight the present increasingly compromised position of Dr Beeke regarding his continued links with Refo500.

I would like to deal first of all with the Biblical separation from that which offends God. What does such separation entail?

I recall hearing the late Dr Carl McIntire, a man who undoubtedly took a great stand for the truth of God in his early days, preaching on separation from 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and emphasising the command of God in verse 17: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." He said that separation from the unclean thing entailed a refraining from even the merest touch. The word "touch" carries the meaning of contact by embracing and clinging to right down to the slightest touch.

Dr McIntire was of course correct. God has chosen His words most deliberately and we should take note of



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them. Separation from sin means not the merest touch or contact is to be tolerated. This matter is illustrated for us in God's instructions to Moses regarding Dathan and Abiram. We read in Numbers 16:25-26: "And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins." Just a touching of those wicked men and anything that was theirs, was enough to condemn a person to God's judgment.

This truth is primarily illustrated by the words of Eve in the Garden of Eden when she reiterated the command of God regarding the tree. "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die," Genesis 3:3. Though the words "neither shall ye touch it" are not expressed in the prohibition uttered by God, it was implied. Such a touching the fruit as to pull it from the tree, a taking of it in the hand, and a putting of it to the mouth in order to eat it was forbidden. A touch was the beginning of a taking and eating and a defying of God.

This then is the degree of separation God requires and no amount of theological juggling or philosophical quibbling can alter or weaken that Scriptural truth.

The facts require me to state clearly that Dr Joel Beeke has not entered upon such a separation from that which he acknowledged was wrong and required his withdrawal from Refo500.

He has removed links to Refo500 and promotional material from some of his websites but that only serves to heighten the wrongdoing since it gives the impression that a determined effort has been taken to separate from this apostate organisation when in fact that is not the case.

Let us look at some of the links Dr Beeke has maintained with Refo500.

All of the links are too numerous to list or name in this programme but I can illustrate the fact that Dr Beeke is still in cordial relationship and fully participating in Refo500 events and fellowshiping with its leadership.

On the Refo500 website there is a promotion for "The Legacy of the Reformation Tour" which is directed by Dr Beeke and Dr Jason Van Vliet. It is clearly set forth on this site that the tour "is sponsored by Refo500.

Dr Beeke enthused about the tour in the promotional article on the Refo500 site. He says: "Having preached from the Heidelberg Catechism for 35 years, and having written two volumes of sermons on it as well as teaching a seminary course on 'Preaching from the Heidelberg Catechism' for decades, I am excited about this European and Reformation tour, and look forward to playing an active role in enjoying fellowship and historical sites with friends from far and near."

On his own site, Dr Beeke was most excited about the Refo500 tour in an entry dated August 30th, 2012. "I'm excited to be partnering with Witte Travel (by the way, this tour company is the North American travel partner of Refo500) on a beautiful, historic tour in Europe next summer. Please consider joining us on a first-class tour next July 11-22, traveling through the Netherlands and Germany, taking in various sites related to the Reformation, and ending in Heidelberg in commemoration of the

Heidelberg Catechism's 450th anniversary. Dr. Van Vliet and I hope to fill one bus each, so the tour is limited to 96 people—48 people per bus. Check out this summary, and a 10-page, detailed brochure. I'd love to have you along, God willing. Send in your reservation today!"

Part of this tour includes a service on Lord's Day, 14th July, 2013. The blurb for the tour reads: "We'll return to the Grote Kerk in Hasselt for morning worship. Dr. Herman Selderhuis will preach in Dutch and English. Dr. Selderhuis is professor of church history at the Theological University in Apeldoorn and the director of Refo500."

This tour is extensively advertised on the various Refo500 sites. Dr Beeke makes clear that he knows of Dr Selderhuis' links with Refo500 for he declares that he is its director. That makes Dr Beeke a willing ungoing



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participant in Refo500 activities. But this not Dr Beeke's only association with Dr Herman Selderhuis.

We must ask first of all, who is Dr Selderhuis? He is listed as Refo500's "Director" on **The Netherlands's Refo500 website**. He is therefore a prominent and leading figure in the world of Refo500 and its affairs.

Dr Selderhuis is a thorough-going ecumenist. I found this interview with Dr Selderhuis on the site of "Acton Institute". It is called "**Reformation and Rediscovery: An Interview with Herman J.Selderhuis.**" Dr Selderhuis is answering the question: "What is the current state of religion in Holland and, more broadly, Christianity in Europe?"

He replied: "Well, when we look at church numbers and church attendance, it does not look good. I just lectured today on the developments in former Eastern Germany, the former German Democratic Republic, and linked that to developments in Germany in general. The Protestant Church in Germany has lost 2.5 million members in the last ten years, which is quite a bit. You still have a lot left, but ten percent has vanished and it is a trend. As for the Netherlands, the perspective is that within the next ten years, 1,000 churches will close. On the other side, you see new developments. Young churches are emerging. You see church planting movements. We see missionaries from foreign countries, those countries European churches used to send missionaries to and now they are coming back. They say that you brought us the Gospel, now we will take it back to you so you can learn from it again. So on the one hand, the institutional churches have a hard time nowadays, but Christianity as a way of life and a way of faith has a future and there are developments among young people. A perfect example is the young Catholic convention in Spain and the Pope attended the event there and hundreds of thousands of young people attended that Mass, and they were enthusiastic about it.

These two developments are contradictory. What I do see is that young people need a clear message. They want that. They want to hear what is right and what is wrong. There is chaos—there is ethical chaos, there is political chaos—now who will give us straight talk? Who tells us what way to go? There is a need for that and the Pope is preaching a clear message and young people are attracted to that."

These words indicate the thinking of Dr Selderhuis on Romanism. He believes that the enthusiastic reception given by young people to the words of the Pope is a welcome indication of hope for Christianity. Clearly he does not view the pope as does the Westminster Confession of Faith or the Reformers in general. The WCF says of the Pope : "There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalts himself, in the Church, against Christ and all that is called God."

How can any person who claims to walk in the faith and footsteps of the Reformers and Puritans rejoice in the embracing of the pope's words by tens of thousands of young people as does Dr Selderhuis? How can he herald such an event as a token for good and a mark of the Christian Church advancing?

Yet this man is a much lauded close associate and fellow conference speaker with Dr Beeke. Dr Selderhuis is part of a network of "scholars" who seem to spend their time traversing the world speaking at conferences which give the impression of being based upon sound Reformed theology.

However, when one trawls through the maze of internet sites that are all linked to Refo500 and its associate sites, one finds compromise, deceit and double-talk. Back on 19th October, 2010, an announcement was mounted on the Refo500 news site. "On October 15th, during the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference in Montreal, it was announced that the Refo500 academic partners are closer to organizing through the Reformation Research Group (RefoRG). In this way, research institutions within Refo500 can more effectively cooperate and still make use of cooperation with partners outside of Refo500, which was a problem for some academic partners until recently."

Just who are these Refo500 partners and what sort of cooperation are they seeking? Well Dr Selderhuis is one of the academics taking a leading part. He is a member of the Board of RefoRG, indeed he is its director. One of his fellow-board members is Violet Soen of the Catholic University of Leuven. In conjunction with



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RefoRG, she and her university are planning a conference in December 2013 with the purpose of highlighting "450 years of the Council of Trent, which has been prepared by the University of Leuven."

The Council of Trent was convened to counter the work of the Protestant Reformation. Dr Selderhuis and RefoRG are clearly bent on having this work of Satan embraced by the Protestant people as an integral part of the purpose of God in the Reformation.

This Dr Selderhuis is Dr Joel Beeke's dear friend! Dr Beeke is well aware of these events yet he is happy to continue fellowshiping and preaching with Dr Selderhuis.

Despite stating in the summer past that he was deceived about the nature of Refo500 and would break all links with it, Dr Beeke is as involved with its Director in a way which can only indicate that he endorses Dr Seldehuis and his views and teachings.

On the website: "Joel Beeke - Doctrine for life", dated 9th November 2012, Dr Beeke commends a special conference at the Canadian Reformed Seminary in Hamilton, Ontario on the Heidelberg Catechism, listing himself and Dr. Herman Selderhuis, among others, as speakers. The conference is called: "Your only comfort". **The conference is promoted on the Refo500 site.**

In his blog dated September 25th, 2012, Dr Beeke speaks of flying out of Belfast (he had just had some meetings in Northern Ireland) to the Netherlands for some meetings. One of the places he visited was Apeldoorn's theological seminary where, he says, "Dr. Herman Selderhuis gave us a tour in his own inimitable style." Clearly, Dr Beeke is on good terms with the Director of Refo500, that evil organisation from which he promised his concerned and alarmed friends in the UK, some of whom he had just bidden farewell to in Belfast before flying to visit Dr Selderhuis, that he was breaking all links!

Dr Beeke endorses Dr Selderhuis's books. Dr Beeke has been a close associate with Dr Selderhuis for a number of years and on the internet there are many indications of that. Dr Beeke's Reformation Heritage Books website endorses and sells a number of Dr Seldehuis's books. This is another indication of the links which remain between Dr Beeke and the apostasy of Refo500.

Surely I have highlighted enough information to indicate that when Dr Joel Beeke said to friends that he had been deceived about the character of Refo500 and that he would nothing more to do with it he did not act as he promised. Just why that was so I cannot say definitively. Just why Dr Beeke has acted as he has is most puzzling. He has not kept his word. He has maintained his links with Refo500 through preaching engagements, book sales and personal fellowship. This is not separation. This not what he promised.

He did very speedily remove many of the internet links with Refo500. That was pointed out to me by those who sought to defend him. But when we go behind the "shop window" of the internet we see that the same working arrangements with Refo500 were maintained. "Shop window" reformations are what Fundamentalists have charged Roman Catholicism with. It has been universally accepted amongst Bible believers that her changes were mere window dressing. Such chicanery makes Romanism a deceitful entity. But when those professing Christianity, those presenting themselves as promoters and defenders of the faith of Jesus Christ engage in such tactics just what are we to think of such persons?

Please bear in mind that good men, true Christians can act improperly, sinfully, shamefully. Recall Paul's word in Galatians 2:11-14. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"

I trust that all that we have said today has the same motivation as that which moved Paul to denounce the



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actions of Peter. Paul had Peter's welfare on his heart as he also had that of those that had been misled by Peter's actions, men such as his dear friend Barnabas. Was there criticism of Paul for acting and speaking as he did? Of course there was. But the matter was more important than personal popularity. It was a matter of maintaining the truth of God and the spiritual wellbeing of the people of God. If the dissimulation or hypocrisy, for that is the meaning of the word, of Peter and Barnabas had gone unchallenged, as I am sure many would have wished, then the truth of the gospel of Christ would have suffered.

The issue at the heart of this public controversy is stated by Paul in the verse 16 of the passage we have looked at. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," Galatians 2:16.

The issue is not about personalities though so many controversies within Christendom today is shamefully about just that. No, this issue centres upon the actions and behaviour of Dr Joel Beeke and is about whether or not he is walking in accordance with God's Word with regard to his associations, fellowship and links with Refo500. I say, as graciously as I can, that he is not walking in obedience to God's word with respect to the matters we have sought to highlight. In so doing he is harming himself. He is misleading the flock of God and those ministers who have come under his influence and he is doing great disservice to those who are already deceived by the ecumenical apostasy embodied in Refo500 and its associate organisations.

As a Christian, I can do none other than speak out on the issue, irrespective of how that stance is viewed.