

Proposed GSC By-Law Problems

Again on the Chicago Invitation website - in the document library - you will find several proposed overtures coming to the Synod of New York which met this week. I do not yet know how they fared, but one from Dan Meeter sets an appropriate tone and question - are some of the items coming to General Synod "Of God"? In the "reasons" section, Dan says:

The church must always be Reforming according to the Word of God, and God's direction for us comes to us through the faithful preaching of the Word in our congregations (and by our missionaries), in the context the faithful celebration of the sacraments and the practice of Christian discipline by our consistories, which is then shared and tested, with the guidance of our doctrinal standards, by our classes and our synods. This is the pattern in the Book of Acts. This is how, together, in fear and trembling, we discern what is of God.

Dan's judgment is that a number of items coming to Synod are not "of God". I concur and specifically want to point to the proposed By-Laws for the GSC. They are proposed for no other reason than to implement Carver Governance - which is stated quite plainly in the workbook - and with complete disregard for the RCA Constitution.

Please remember that GSC By-Laws do not require 2/3 Classis approval. They are not constitutional. They are just included in the BCO. All it takes is a single General Synod vote to make changes and that is why this proposal is so very very destructive.

There are only twelve articles. I really want to rant on most of them, but rants rarely help. So I offer fourteen brief comments. The references are to the document printed in the GS workbook beginning on p. 53.

Art II 2.1 - Notice that the purposes of the GSC are to be only those set forth in these By-Laws, not from the RCA Constitution. This gives GSC broader powers than the General Synod has and makes the GSC its own god.

-Notice this section gives GSC "power and authority to engage in any and all activities and pursuits that are lawful" and that NO consideration is given to 1 Corinthians 6:12ff. This is not of God.

Art II 2.2 - This talks about earnings and payments of indeterminate charges for "administrative services". The GSC has NO earnings. All it has is our assessment money. The "administrative services" are not defined in any way. This is not of God.

Art III 3.2 - Since when are those who serve on General Synod commissions and agencies put under gag order. The Reformed came into being because the Church (Roman at the time) was operating with a confidential hierarchy and the Reformed answer was to require all actions be taken by assemblies made up of office bearers from the congregations. Silencing an office bearer is silencing the Spirit. These By-Laws return us to the secrecy of the elite gnostics who "really know the truth". This is not of God.

Art IV - We got the current GSC because we were told that, being elected from the Synod, it would actually be an executive committee and carry out the instructions of Synod in the months between synod meetings. But this article eliminates that derivative connection and makes GSC simply another independent "agency" of Synod, like the seminaries or (for the moment) the Church Herald. The practical effect is that the Synod has no continuing presence. It only has existence when it is actually meeting as there is no longer any continuing executive committee. Thus government by office-bearers in assembly disappears. We are left with a meeting which can only be called a "Convention", which has no staff or budget of its own and can only give instructions to one or more agencies and then wait a year or more to see what happens. All denominational decisions will now be made by the GSC - , which is not composed of office bearers, is not representative, and

is not an assembly. This is not of God.

Art V 5.4 - The annual meeting of GSC is to be immediately preceding General Synod "UNLESS PROBLEMS ARISE". Now what might those problems be?? The failure of the Synod to meet for a year?? Or two???? Or three???? Remember the Methodists only meet every four years. And the Lambeth Conference only meets every ten! And who will care for the life of the church in the interims? This is not of God

Art V 5.5 - So emails are going to replace face to face prayer and discernment for whatever action "needs to be taken now"? How open to misuse is that? Reformed means office bearers in assembly discern the Spirit. This is not of God

Art V 5.6 - Anyone who has ever had a conference call knows how susceptible to manipulation they are. It is not a substitute for face to face and saying that it is does not make it so. This is not of God.

Art V 5.7 - This article says that no action requires a meeting, so anything can happen without meetings being necessary. This provision will without fail prevent reflection on issues, prevent interaction about issues, and almost insure manipulation of the group by those who initiate. And the logical extension of this way of conducting ourselves to congregational life is that our congregations can begin to celebrate the sacraments without a single human being actually being present anywhere. Or we can open 24hour drive-thru sacrament stations. It is ludicrous. This is not of God.

Art VI 6.1 - Notice that there is no longer any connection between General Synod officers and GSC officers. And the provision that General Synod may override GSC is specifically stricken. This is not government by assembly. This is not of God.

Old Art VII - Committees - is simply stricken. While that structure may not have been the best, the wholesale elimination of all committee structure in as complex an organization as this opens the door for some person or persons unnamed to simply decide what the Church will be without General Synod, without any accountability to any assembly. This is not of God.

New Art VII 7.1 - Even St. Paul would not write as complex and fatuous a sentence as this. (Note the whole section is one sentence.) What it in fact says is, "If it feels good, do it because you will not be held accountablebut.t .t.t....."

Art VII 7.2 -Then again, you might." This is not of God.

Art VIII - Once upon a time in the halcyon past, General Synod stated clerks and general secretaries were actually elected by the assembly they served. But as GSC is no longer connected to an assembly, we can just dispense with that "discernment by the church" stuff and make one of our GSC members our CEO. This is not of God.

Art IX - Of course we would not dream of paying GSC members directors fees, but "the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered. . ." - just like any corporate Board pays its directors "reasonable (TO WHOM??) compensation" for services rendered. This is not of God.

If the delegates to Synod 2007 actually vote these By-Laws, we lose the Church. And if the delegates are somnambulant enough to vote these By-Laws, we deserve to lose the Church.

Rett Zabriskie