

Bnonn's side of the story

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Thank you for taking the time to read this. I have tried to keep it short, but you have been asked to judge a situation that is much more complicated than you've been told. That means I have to fill in a lot of blanks for you. I have tried to *summarize* these on this page, along with my responses to each of the charges. I have provided *full* responses and proof of my claims at the links below, if you want to fully satisfy yourself about the facts.



The most important thing to read is this page. The links below are for if you want to verify what I say here.

Full responses to the charges against me

[My full response to the charges of slander](#)

[My full response to the charges of false teaching](#)

[My full response to the charges of division](#)

Proof of my claims

[My history of trying to cooperate and reason with Ryan](#)

[My personal statement of faith](#)

[The Reformed pedigree of my views](#)

[What people actually say about It's Good To Be A Man](#)

[Quotes from me that contradict how I've been presented](#)

[Proof that Ryan's presentation of people can't be trusted](#)

Sarah's perspective

[On Bnonn's teaching on gender](#)

[On harsh language](#)

On Bnonn's "unhealthy focus on gender"

On Ryan's ultimatum

Why haven't we left Trinity?

Why is this happening?

Christians are engaged in spiritual warfare (Eph. 6; 2 Cor. 10:3-5) My own battleground includes ongoing ministry—ongoing warfare—on human nature, sexuality, and piety. You are being asked to assess my conduct as a soldier in that war. A war you probably know little to nothing about.

I am accused of having acted falsely and wickedly, but I have not.

I have always loved truth. I have been driven to seek it out and defend it since I was a teenager. Even as an atheist, I spent my time online vigorously defending atheism, and trying to prove that Christianity was false.

That is how I became a Christian.

When I was converted by God's grace, I went straight back online to debunk atheism and vindicate Christianity with my atheist friends. I had to eat a lot of crow. I lost a lot of friends.

In the years since, I have never stopped being compelled to seek out the truth; to test everything and hold fast to what is good...even when it hurts. I started www.bnonn.com to study and write on theology that interests me. I co-founded NZ's apologetics organization, [Thinking Matters](#), to teach believers to defend Christianity. I tried to get churches involved, and discovered how conflict-averse Western Christianity is. I ran afoul of the "11th commandment," *thou shalt be nice*. Then, as the sexual revolution brought in "gay marriage," I saw those same Christians unwilling to fight for God's word because they were ashamed. Many abandoned it.

I became convinced that sexuality is the key battleground of our day. I studied how feminism conditioned us in a way that led to homosexuality—and left us unable to "stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

I met a lot of men who shared my frustration. I read Reformers and Reformed theologians, and found that their understanding of gender roles was very unlike ours. I realized that this was not because we had discovered something in Scripture they hadn't, but because something in our culture had discovered us, that hadn't discovered them—feminism.

I met Michael Foster, a pastor in the U.S. We started a ministry, [It's Good To Be A Man](#), to articulate a biblical, practical, and positive doctrine of masculine piety. Our focus is helping the many, many men we meet, who feel abandoned by the church and rejected by our culture. Men who have been divorced against their wills, men who are frustrated that they can't find wives, men who haven't figured out manhood because their fathers abandoned them, men who are struggling with problems that pastors don't want to talk about. See [What people actually say about It's Good To Be A Man](#).

Have I made mistakes? Plenty. I have done far too much "thinking out loud" online—as David Marshall pointed out in the meeting. Sometimes I have misunderstood people and ideas. I have had to apologize for getting things wrong. I have had to repent to Ryan for sometimes being disrespectful to him (see [My history of trying to cooperate and reason with Ryan](#)). And I have had to repent of spending more time on ministry to strangers than to my own family.

But most of the charges against me are not about that. They are false charges. They take my words and twist them to look like something totally different and awful, or they judge them by a standard that would condemn the Lord Jesus himself.



In any war, some of the things a man does can **look bad** from the outside, without **being bad**. Optics and ethics are different. Many of the accusations against me are based on snapshots of my online activity—snapshots I think have been picked to make me look as bad as possible, while ignoring many [Quotes from me that contradict how I've been presented](#). It's easy to see a snapshot and jump to conclusions. But the Lord Jesus tells us, "**Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment**" (John 7:24). What is the context of the snapshot? Is this part of a larger battle? Who are the different sides? And is it showing something I do *all the time for fun*, or something I do *sometimes* out of *duty*? A snapshot can't show you my heart.

If you don't know the details, you cannot "judge with right judgment"

If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days.

The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. (Deuteronomy 19:15–19)



I maintain that our elders have accused me falsely. It is a miserable thing to have to say, but they are acting as malicious witnesses. I do not really know why.

The eternal principles of God's perfect law are very clear about how we must deal with such a dispute. You have been asked to pass judgment between us. Therefore, you need to inquire diligently first. As Nicodemus says, defending Jesus: **“Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?”** (John 7:51) Please don't judge me without first giving me a hearing and learning what I do.

Where I actually stand on the issues I'm accused of

- **I affirm that justification is by faith alone.** Thank God for it; how else could I be saved? It is only because of the works of the Lord Jesus that I am counted righteous. **I utterly reject the idea of earning right standing with God by our works.** My position is the Reformed one, as articulated by renowned men like Francis Turretin: "although works may be said to contribute nothing to the acquisition of our salvation, still they should be considered necessary to the obtainment of it, so that no one can be saved without them," (cf. Heb. 12:14; Eph. 5:5 etc). If that sounds strange, I'm afraid it is because the full-orbed Reformed view is not taught in our church; you can verify this for yourself in [The Reformed pedigree of my views](#).
- **I affirm that women are made in the image of God.** I have even contributed original work to *advancing* this belief ([The Doxological Purpose of Sex, Part 2](#) (March 2019)). I have also repeatedly condemned hyper-patriarchalists who think that women are not made in God's image, and that Eve was primarily created for sex. **I detest and abhor men who mistreat women**, or give cover to those who do—Sarah and I have recently been counseling a young woman, to

help her escape a tyrannical father! You can see Sarah's own statement [On Bnonn's teaching on gender](#).

- **I affirm that Scripture requires us to imitate the speech and conduct of Jesus.** This includes using strong words against those who should know better. Doing so is called *polemics*, not slander. I don't always imitate Jesus perfectly. Sometimes I have to repent and apologize. But I speak from love of the truth; not hatred of people. **I reject the use of polemics against wayward sheep**, where the Bible instead calls for gentleness and compassion. I have actively tried to *avoid* causing division in our church. Sarah testifies to all this also in her statement [On harsh language](#).

My summary response to the charges of slander

The elders have said that they are not using slander in the technical sense, but more broadly to mean reviling or verbal abuse. Very well. **But if the standard used to judge my words as slander would also condemn the Lord Jesus, then the standard is wicked.**

Vigorously refuting error is not slander—it is *polemics*, found throughout Scripture. Using humor to do so is not slander—it is *satire*, also found throughout Scripture. And if someone is offended by my words, that does not automatically make it slander either—nor does it imply that my intent was to be offensive rather than to defend the truth.



We are supposed to model *all* of our lives after *all* of Scripture—including the bits that aren't culturally acceptable. "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). It does not say "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ, except when we speak in ways that will upset genteel 21st century Christians." So I do not apologize for engaging in polemics or satire. **I am imitating the Lord Jesus and his holy men, like I am supposed to.**

None of the evidence used against me actually shows that I am a reviler or abuser. None of it shows that I am speaking out of hate, rather than out of love. It is all based on the *presumption* that what I said *sounds* nasty, and therefore I was *being* nasty. But...

- Some of the examples given were written with my tongue in my cheek—yet the elders have presented them as if I had a sneer on my face. The "frozen-chosen" one for instance. I learned that phrase from the Marshalls as a humorous term of endearment.
- Some of the examples are attacks against people I truly believe are leading God's sheep into grievous error. I have not knowingly said *anything* false about anyone; I am responding in proportion to their error and ability to know better, as Jesus models for us. What is especially disturbing about many of these examples is that the elders are siding with men who, if you check the screenshots I supply in my full response linked below, have *demonstrably* reviled, belittled, and abused me.
- Some of the examples seem to have been chosen because, if you see them out of context and aren't familiar with what I'm saying, they "look scary" and easily give the wrong impression. For instance, the comment about being skeptical of softness with sex is presented to say **literally the opposite of what I was actually saying.**



Someone asked in the meeting why I hadn't spoken to Ryan if I thought his teaching was "dangerous to people's souls." The answer is that I had been trying to reason together with him on this for *months*, as you can see in [My history of trying to cooperate and reason with Ryan](#). I went to him with my concerns; he did not listen. I later brought witnesses; he did not listen to them either. But the article I wrote was not against *him*; it was against a general *doctrine*, as part of my own ministry work. I merely used a public comment that he made, by way of illustration—while *concealing* his identity.



[My full response to the charges of slander](#)

My summary response to the charges of false teaching



I was shocked and horrified that the elders spun my words to make me look like a cultic, misogynistic, wannabe rapist who believes in works-righteousness. **None of this is remotely true, but I wasn't even given the chance to explain how they were twisting my words.** My views on the place of men and women, and the place of works in salvation, are *historic and Reformed*. I came to them largely by reading our forefathers. I have repeatedly tried to reason with Ryan about this, as I explain in [My history of trying to cooperate and reason with Ryan](#). I have sent him dozens of quotes from Reformers and renowned Reformed theologians, saying exactly what I say (see [The Reformed pedigree of my views](#)). He has not even *acknowledged* them.

Given how I was made to sit quietly while my church family was told I am a monster, and I couldn't even defend myself, I hope you will forgive me if I sound emotional. These charges are historically ignorant, theologically incompetent, and outright false witness in many cases. A lot of the "evidence" is selective quotes, carefully presented to cast me in a truly awful light. The fact is, to accuse me of false teaching on the issues the elders raise is to accuse our *entire Reformed heritage* of false teaching, because I get my views from our forefathers. Not only have I proved this to Ryan, but I have also had other men testify to him on my behalf. David Marshall—our previous pastor who has an M.Div from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—has carefully examined my views on justification, and agrees that they are orthodox. Euan Alderton, who is studying for a theology degree, has done the same. The elders, who do not have theological degrees, have simply ignored this! I have no special regard for seminary training, but the men who test my doctrine should have the knowledge and skills for the task. Formal qualification is a useful way of proving this—so it counts for something that such men find me orthodox.

If my views are genuinely cause for dismembership, then TRBC would excommunicate the Reformers themselves, along with the Puritans, and nearly every other Reformed theologian of note until the 20th century.



You are also welcome to examine [My personal statement of faith](#) to see if it is out of step with our confession. It covers what I consider the core doctrines of Christianity.

I would also encourage you to speak to Sarah, my wife, about whether I am the kind of man the elders made me out to be. If they are correct, she of all people should be testifying with them against me. She has written her own statement [On Bnonn's teaching on gender](#).

 [My full response to the charges of false teaching](#)

My summary response to the charges of division

"Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division." (Luke 12:51; cf. John 7:43 etc).

 **Since Jesus did it, causing division is not, in itself, a sin. What the Lord hates is rather a man who "stirs up division" in the church, where there should be unity (Titus 3:10)—"a false witness who breathes out lies, and sows discord among brothers" (Proverbs 6:19).**

This is what *the elders* are doing. They accuse me of divisiveness, but in fact it is *they* who refuse to acknowledge the widely-held views of our Reformed forefathers, instead bringing charges against me and seeking to bind my conscience.

It is not divisive just to hold a different view to someone. The Reformed tradition contains many divergent views on various issues. Neither is it divisive to call out and refute error (or to offend those who believe error). If it were, Jesus, the prophets, and the apostles would all stand condemned. But on the contrary, polemics—*responding* to the division caused by error—is exactly what faithful Christians are called to do, as modeled by Jesus, the prophets, and the apostles.

Many of the examples the elders give seem borderline cultic to me. It is as if they think it's automatically sinful to express public disagreement with their views. Is that the kind of church Trinity wants to be? Is that the kind of church we *are*?

If I am so divisive, why did most people attending the meeting on July 18 have no idea about any of these charges, or even that I was the one being put under discipline? The fact is, I have gone out of my way to avoid discussing my less popular views with anyone at Trinity, for years, because I was concerned about

looking divisive! If the elders' charges were true, wouldn't I be advertising the fact that I have a book, and a men's ministry, and a blog? Wouldn't I be trying to get people to listen to me? Wouldn't I be doing *something* in Trinity to stir up actual division?

 [My full response to the charges of division](#)

I was the one who pushed Matthew 18

I believe Ryan has considered me a wolf in sheep's clothing since at least February 2018, when I published the article that describes his view of works as dangerous to people's souls. But instead of following the process of church discipline at that time, he engaged in what amounted to a private excommunication, shunning me and my family ever since, typically not even greeting us at church or making eye contact.

Neither he nor Greg *ever* confronted me about *most* of the issues they now charge me with. They only raised them after I repeatedly pressed Matthew 18 in an email discussion beginning February 2020.

 I will repeat this: our elders did not follow Matthew 18—until I made them.

Because of this, I truly believe their professed desire to disciple me is phony. If they desired it, they would have done it two years ago. Instead, Ryan almost always refused to engage me when I tried to bring theological issues to him that I knew we'd probably disagree on. On many occasions, I was proactive in seeking to reason together with him; he was not willing. I document this in [My history of trying to cooperate and reason with Ryan](#).

The ultimatum

I have tried to salvage the relationship between us for years—he simply has not been willing. I have been proactive in trying to work out our theological disagreements in good faith; he has withdrawn every time. I have repented to him personally of the times where I have been disrespectful to him; nothing came of

this. I have suggested mediation to him twice, and David Marshall has suggested it twice also; each time he ignored or dismissed it.

Now, after these years of evading the issues and refusing to deal biblically with them, avoiding pastoral care, and not even acknowledging the arguments and evidence for my views, the elders give me this ultimatum:

1. Stop operating my websites/online accounts and allow them to mentor me, or
2. Continue operating and resign as a member of Trinity.

They back this up with the power of the congregation in wielding the keys of the kingdom—but let me tell you how I felt at our meeting on July 18.

I felt like a convict at a show trial.

- Half of the evidence I had never seen before.
- All of it was dishonestly spun to look far worse than it is—often to look like the *opposite* of what it actually shows in context.
- I was given no chance to explain it or defend myself. I just had to sit quietly while my reputation was destroyed in front of my church family, and you all started to wonder if I was a sexual predator.
- The chairman repeatedly tried to shut down concerns about due process (I am very thankful to those people who were insistent in raising this).
- The elders wanted you to vote immediately to push me out of the church, without even time to look into it for yourself.

What would *you* think in my shoes? Would you have any reason at all to trust that Ryan and Greg were acting in good faith? Would you want to submit for "mentorship"? The only way *I* can interpret this is as a demand to submit for "reconditioning," cynically veiled in the language of love and service. It really seems cultic and tyrannical.

Alternatively, to resign my membership at TRBC would be to bear false witness that I believe or have done something out of step with our Reformed heritage. It would also leave the church vulnerable to further abuse. I will not be coerced into a tacit admission of heinous sin, nor will I abandon my church family to elders who are willing to do this to one of their congregants. I have *not* committed any

excommunicable offense. I have proven that I have not. The elders have given no serious evidence to the contrary.