



REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 3

APRIL 26, 2025

*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5*

CONTENTS

3 MEDITATION Witch

4 EDITORIALS - As Often As Ye Eat This Bread and Drink This Cup (7) - The Christian Reformed Church

14 HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES Article 107: The Erroneous Views and Unwarranted Criticisms of Rev. H. Hoeksema



Editor: Rev. Andrew Lanning
From the Ramparts Editor: Dewey Engelsma

See reformedpavilion.com for all contact and subscription information.

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

—Exodus 22:18

Witch

The witch was an abomination and must surely be put to death.

In our day we read the word *witch*, and we think of Shakespeare's or Salem's or Disney's or Hogwarts' witches. Witches are three crones brewing potions in a cauldron and delivering cryptic fortunes to Macbeth. Witches are poor women falsely accused of consorting with the devil in a riot of mass hysteria. Witches are warty old hags who give poisoned apples to sleeping beauties. Witches are girls who study magic alongside boy wizards and who secretly live among the general muggle population. All these are the witches of the modern imagination.

But the witch of the ancient world was no such creature. Rather, the witch of the ancient world was the man or the woman who could tell the will of the gods. The gods did not share their secrets easily. Most men never knew what the gods were thinking. But the witch knew secret ways to draw out the mind of the gods. The witch could make contact with the souls of the dead. The witch could read the stars. The witch could discern omens. By many hidden paths and dark ways, the witch could discover the mysteries of the gods.

How powerful was the witch! And how sought after was the witch! Pagan nations lived or died by the will of the gods. How advantageous for those nations and their rulers to know the will of the gods. The ancient nations all employed witches. Their witches went by many names—Egyptian magicians; Canaanite diviners; Babylonian wise men; Endor's woman with a familiar spirit; Greek oracles; Simon

Magus, the sorcerer—but they were all essentially the same thing: witches.

Israel must have no witches. Israel must not even tolerate a witch. “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” The witch was an abomination! The witch must die!

What made the witch such an abomination that Israel must not suffer a witch to live? It was this: the witch displaced Christ. Consider what the witch was. The witch stood between the gods and man and made known to man the will of the gods. Oh yes, the gods of the witch were false gods. And yes, the witch with all his sorcery only ever discovered man's will. But for all that, the witch's entire purpose was to stand between the gods and man to reveal to man the will of the gods.

But just as there is only one true God, so there is only one true prophet who stands between God and man and reveals to man the will of God. “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” (Deut. 18:18). That one true prophet that God raised up is Jesus Christ. When the witch pretended to stand between the gods and man to reveal to man the will of the gods, the witch was attempting to displace Jesus Christ, who alone stands between God and man to reveal to man the will of the one true God.

Forbidden, therefore, was everyone “that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer” (Deut. 18:10–11). “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” (Ex. 22:18).

Where is the witch today? Not first of all in the dark and sickly occult. Certainly, let no one employ the occult—Ouija boards and horoscopes and superstitions and magic. But the modern incarnation of the witch is “the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak” (Deut. 18:20). The witch today is the minister of the gospel who proclaims the will of man to the church. The witch today is the false teacher who “bewitch[e]s you, that ye should not obey the truth” (Gal. 3:1).

And thou shalt not suffer a witch to live! Not by Old Testament stoning but by the New Testament means of deposition and excommunication, the witch of a false teacher is to be put out of the church of Jesus Christ.

And now behold God’s true prophet. “We have found him, of whom Moses in the law...did write, Jesus of Nazareth” (John 1:45). And this Jesus is “our chief prophet and teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption” (L.D. 12, Q&A 31).

—AL

EDITORIALS

As Often As Ye Eat This Bread and Drink This Cup (7)

In these editorials we have been examining the Reformed tradition of administering the Lord’s supper infrequently—only four to six times out of more than one hundred services each year. We have traced the history of this practice to the city council in Geneva at the time of the Reformation, where we also heard John Calvin’s objections to the council’s practice. We have seen that the Reformed doctrine of the Lord’s supper implies a frequent administration of the sacrament, for our Lord graciously and abundantly nourishes his church every time that the sacrament is administered. The Spirit uses the sacrament to strengthen his people’s faith in the glad tidings of the gospel that the body and blood of Christ was truly given for them—as truly as they see with their eyes, hold with their hands, and eat with their mouths the bread and wine of the Lord’s supper. Such an abundant feast was not meant to be kept in the cupboard but to be spread on the table. In the last installment we considered and answered some objections to a frequent administration of the Lord’s supper. This time let us turn to some practical matters that would have to be addressed if a Reformed church were to consider increasing its frequency of administering the sacrament.

How Frequent Is Frequent?

If four to six administrations of the Lord’s supper per year is considered infrequent, how many would be considered frequent? Twelve administrations per year—once per month? Over fifty administrations per year—once per week? Over one hundred administrations per year—every service?

Different churches might come to different conclusions about how frequent is frequent, but there are a few helpful guides that the church can consider. First, there is the nature of the sacrament. The Lord’s supper is Christ’s instrument, by which he works in his church. The Lord’s supper is Christ’s sign and Christ’s seal to his people that they are righteous before God because of what Christ has done. The Lord by his Spirit operates through his supper “as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup” (I Cor. 11:26). Therefore, it would be impossible to administer the sacrament too frequently. Even if the church would administer the sacrament at every single service, she could never wear out the sacrament, rob its power, or make it vain. The church in her folly can certainly corrupt the sacrament, as many have done. However, any corruption of the sacrament is not due to a

frequent administration but to the vanity of man. As far as the sacrament itself goes, it can sustain the most frequent use possible.

Second, there is the analogy to the other elements of worship. The elements of worship are the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments, publicly calling upon the name of the Lord in prayer and song, and offerings. When deciding how frequently to administer the Lord's supper, a congregation could note how frequently she administers the other elements of worship. A Reformed congregation will find that she administers all the other elements of worship every time she meets. At every service a Reformed church preaches, prays, sings, and receives offerings. Why could not the Lord's supper, as an element of worship, be administered just as frequently as the rest? A Reformed church would not fail to pass the collection plate at a worship service; could she not also pass the communion plate at every service? A Reformed church would not fail to preach the gospel of Jesus' body and blood at every service; could she not also give the sacrament of Jesus' body and blood at every service? Because the Lord's supper is an element of worship, the frequency of the other elements of worship can illuminate the frequency of administering the Lord's supper.

Third, there is the example of history. We are not the first generation that has had to ask the question of how frequently to administer the Lord's supper. These editorials have already traced some of that history, so we will not repeat everything here. But the church in her years of spiritual strength administered the Lord's supper very frequently. The early church apparently administered the Lord's supper at every service. Martin Luther and John Calvin both urged the administration at least once every Lord's day. The church today can look to her history, in the light of biblical principles, for illumination as she decides how often to administer the Lord's supper.

The church's answer to the question of frequency does not come from any specific

commandment of the law. Our Lord, whose supper it is, gave no commandment regarding frequency. Let no one—present company included—bind the church to a certain frequency, as if it were the law of God. The church must certainly administer the Lord's supper, for our Lord ordained that she do so—"This do" (I Cor. 11:24–25); but the Lord did not specify how often she was to administer the Lord's supper.

The only law in the matter of frequency is the law of love. It is not a question of how often the church *must* administer the sacrament but of how often it would be *useful and beneficial* for the church to have the sacrament. "It is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the church" (Belgic Confession 32). It is not a question of how often would be *enough* to keep the law but of how often would be *edifying* for the church. "Every church shall administer the Lord's supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification" (Church Order 62).

Guided by the law of love, different churches might come to different conclusions about how frequent is frequent. One church might conclude that its members feel uneasy and pressured to partake more than they are used to; the consistory in love could continue an infrequent administration while it teaches and instructs the members, bringing the church along together to the point that they could administer the Lord's supper more frequently. Another church might conclude that its members are hungry for a more frequent administration of the Lord's supper and could administer it at every service almost immediately. Another church might conclude that its members are ready for a more frequent administration but that changing all at once would be too much of a distracting novelty; the consistory in love could increase the frequency over time. Whatever the church decides in the matter of frequency, it decides in mutual love for the members—love that the apostle enjoins when he calls the church to

tarry for one another. “Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another” (I Cor. 11:33).

The conviction of the undersigned is that the more the church studies the matter of how frequently to administer the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, the more she will desire to administer the sacrament as frequently as possible. Christ overflows with generosity to his church, having given his body and blood for her redemption and giving his supper for her refreshment. The church thus redeemed and refreshed will overflow with generosity among the members, “keeping up among us a holy remembrance of the death of Christ our savior with thanksgiving” (Belgic Confession 35). And the nature of the sacrament, the analogy of the other elements, and the example of history will give the church confidence to spread the table before God’s people often.

The Simplicity of the Lord’s Supper

The Lord’s supper is an infinitely rich meal, being the believer’s participation in the body and blood of Christ. But the Lord’s supper is a very simple meal to administer. There is nothing complicated about it, and there need be nothing lengthy about it. Bread and wine can be broken and distributed in the space of a few minutes. The words of institution can be spoken in a few seconds. Eating and drinking can be completed almost at once. Without rushing in the slightest, and giving the holy supper its due time, a congregation could complete the simple administration of the Lord’s supper very briefly. How long does it take a particular congregation to pass the offering plates twice during a service? In the space of roughly that same time, the communion plates of bread and wine could be passed. Add a little extra time for Jesus’ brief words of institution, the reading of an appropriate passage from scripture or the confessions, and brief prayers; and the entire sacrament could be completed in a short time. The brevity of the communion service would not at all diminish from its meaning or effectiveness, for the Lord gave his church a very simple supper.

As Reformed churches currently administer the Lord’s supper, at least a full thirty minutes is required. Much of this time is taken up by the reading of the Form for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s supper form is lovely, laying out the refreshing gospel of the sacrament. The Lord’s supper form is one of the confessional treasures of the Reformed faith. But the Lord’s supper form is lengthy, requiring that a significant portion of the worship service be devoted to it. This is no problem when the Lord’s supper is administered infrequently. Once every three months the congregation squeezes the psalms, the prayers, and the sermon into less time in order to leave half an hour for the Lord’s supper. But if a congregation were to administer the Lord’s supper frequently, the reading of the same lengthy form every time would be so impractical as to be almost impossible.

The Lord’s supper form is not essential to the administration of the Lord’s supper, and the supper could be rightly and properly administered without it. There are certain things that are essential to the Lord’s supper. The doctrine of the Lord’s supper is essential. The ceremonies that Christ has prescribed in his word are essential. The spiritual nature of the supper, free from superstition, is essential. The administration of the sacrament in the public worship of God’s people, where there are sermons and prayers, is essential. All these essential things are explained and expounded by the form. Therefore, the church ought to read the form regularly in her administration of the Lord’s supper. However, while the form explains and expounds the sacrament, the form is not the sacrament. If the church would administer the sacrament very frequently, she could still have all those essential aspects of the Lord’s supper even if she did not read the form every time.

What about the fact that the Church Order requires that the form be read every time the supper is administered?

Every church shall administer the Lord’s supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification; provided,

however, that the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's word be not changed, and all superstition be avoided, and that at the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers the form for the administration of the Lord's supper, together with the prayer for that purpose, shall be read. (Church Order 62)

Church Order 62 ensures that the essential matters of the Lord's supper be observed: the prescribed ceremonies, spirituality free from superstition, the sermons and prayers, and the doctrine of the sacrament. However, the Church Order is working from the assumption that the Lord's supper will only be administered infrequently—four to six times per year. “The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least every two or three months” (Church Order 63). Proceeding from the assumption of an infrequent administration, the Church Order requires certain things in the life of the church that would be impossible with a frequent administration. For example, the Church Order attaches some of the consistory's periodic work to the celebration of the Lord's supper, as a convenient time to make sure that these tasks are not forgotten. The elders are required to conduct family visiting “both before and after the Lord's supper, as time and circumstances may demand” (Church Order 23). Such a requirement would become so impractical as to be impossible with a frequent celebration of the Lord's supper. Or again, the members of the council are required “before the celebration of the Lord's supper [to] exercise Christian censure among themselves” (Church Order 81). Such a requirement for *censura morum* would likewise be so impractical as to be impossible with a frequent celebration of the Lord's supper. So also, when the Church Order requires that the form be read at every administration of the Lord's supper, it is assuming an infrequent administration of the supper. If the supper would ever be administered frequently, the Church Order's requirement to read the form every time would become so impractical as to be an impediment to edification.

How might a Reformed church administer the Lord's supper frequently without using the beautiful but lengthy form every time, while still retaining the use of the form regularly? A church might decide to read the form four to six times a year, following the Church Order's guideline of administering the Lord's supper “at least every two or three months.” Those celebrations of the Lord's supper would take the full thirty minutes that the church is currently used to. In this way the church would not diminish her use of the form but would use it as often as she currently does.

During all the other services in which the church administers the Lord's supper, she could use a much briefer liturgy that would still incorporate all the essential matters that belong to the sacrament. For example, after the sermon is finished, the supper could be administered as follows:

- Reading of a scripture passage or confessional statement regarding the doctrine of the Lord's supper (Lord's Day 28, Belgic Confession 35, a portion of the Lord's supper form, or some similar confessional statement; or a portion of Isa. 53, John 6, I Cor. 11, or some similar passage)
- Prayer
- Distribution of elements and partaking
- Psalm
- Doxology
- Benediction

What about preparatory and applicatory sermons? Administering the Lord's supper frequently would not allow for a dedicated preparatory sermon before every administration and a dedicated applicatory sermon after every administration. However, preparatory and applicatory sermons are not required by the Church Order but are simply part of the Reformed tradition that surrounds the Lord's supper. When one remembers that the preaching of every sermon is the gospel, then every sermon can be viewed as both preparatory and applicatory.

Conclusion

As we conclude this series of editorials on the Lord's supper, let us return to where we began.

The Lord's supper is a most nourishing and satisfying meal for God's people. In the Lord's supper God feeds his hungry and thirsty people with Jesus Christ. In the Lord's supper God nourishes his people unto everlasting life by Jesus' body and blood. The Lord's supper is the gospel, and the gospel satisfies God's people and makes them happy. "The Lord's Supper testifies to us that we have a full pardon of all sin by the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself has once accomplished on the cross" (L.D. 30, Q&A 80).

The Lord's supper is a most nourishing and satisfying meal for God's people, just as Jesus intended it to be. Our Lord knows our emptiness, our weakness, our sin, our unbelief, our burdens, our wretchedness. Rather than casting us away from himself because of our slow hearts and dim understanding and wretched doubting, the Lord comes near

to us time and again and preaches and preaches the gospel to us so that we might always hear of his grace to us sinners. And adding mercy to mercy, the Lord gives us a meal time and again by which he shows and shows and shows the gospel to us so that we might always see his grace to us sinners. "Christ promised that he will as certainly feed and nourish believers with his body and blood, as they eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup" (L.D. 28, Q&A 77).¹

In light of Christ's overflowing bounty to his church in his supper, it would be appropriate for Reformed churches to reconsider their tradition of so infrequently administering the Lord's supper. In light of Christ's gift of such a rich spiritual table, it would be profitable and edifying for Reformed churches to consider administering that supper often.

As often as ye eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you shall thereby, as by a sure remembrance and pledge, be admonished and assured of this my hearty love and faithfulness towards you. (Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper)

—AL



¹ Andrew Lanning, "As Often As Ye Eat This Bread and Drink This Cup (1)," *Reformed Pavilion* 2, no. 46 (February 22, 2025): 4.

The Christian Reformed Church

Introduction

When we last left our Reformed forefathers, they had set themselves and their generations on the path of spiritual and ecclesiastical apostasy.¹ For Classis Holland had decided to federate with the Reformed Church in America (RCA) in the East. The decision was perfectly understandable from every earthly point of view. Classis Holland shared a Dutch heritage with the people of the RCA. Classis Holland had benefited much from the physical assistance that the RCA had provided. The people of Classis Holland had found the people of the RCA to be warm and friendly. How understandable that they should join churches!

But though the decision to join churches was perfectly understandable to the flesh, the decision was entirely wrong. For Classis Holland had wrongly judged the friendliness, the charity, and even the Christianity of the RCA's *people* to be marks of the true church *institute*. Classis Holland had wrongly interpreted their affectionate love for their *neighbors* in the RCA to be the foundation for an official federation with the *churches* of the RCA. Classis Holland disregarded the fact that both the mark and the foundation of the true church are Jesus Christ, which is to say that both the mark and the foundation of the true church are the truth. The RCA was not marked by the truth; Classis Holland and the RCA could not stand together on the truth. But disregarding the truth, Classis Holland proceeded to unite with the RCA in the East. In doing so Classis Holland set its feet upon the same path of apostasy that the RCA trod.

What would happen to our little band that we have followed from the *Afscheiding* of 1834 to the transplanting of 1846 to the organization as a classis in 1848? Would they be swallowed up and consumed? Would they disappear into the spiritual void like every other apostate church in the world? If it had been up to their own arm of flesh to deliver themselves, then undoubtedly they would have been lost. But the kingdom is

the Lord's. Salvation is of the Lord. And it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. God visited his foolish, stubborn, rebellious people and reformed them, even when they could not reform themselves.

In April 1857—168 years ago this month—God reformed his church by causing a tiny remnant of churches to secede from Classis Holland. Classis Holland was lost spiritually. Though the classis would continue and even grow, it was cast upon the pyre of the RCA and would be burned up in the flames of apostasy. But God snatched a brand out of the fire and formed his church anew as the Christian Reformed Church. It was the third of the three great April milestones of Classis Holland. Classis Holland formed in April 1848. Classis Holland decided to unite with the RCA in April 1850. And the Christian Reformed Church seceded from Classis Holland in April 1857. In this April 2025, let us revisit our brethren in April 1857 to behold God's work of reforming his church.

Growing Concern

From the first moment of Classis Holland's union with the Reformed Church in America, some of the saints in Classis Holland were uneasy. The people of the RCA had certainly been friendly and had given them much-needed help. But the saints in Classis Holland were hearing alarming reports about the worship, doctrine, and practices of their new denomination back East. Some of the people who spent time in New York before coming to Michigan had found the RCA to be very different from their *Afscheiding* churches in the Netherlands. Those who had firsthand experience were eagerly interviewed by members of Classis Holland upon their arrival in Michigan.

Such a gathering was held in a school house at Vriesland in 1851, and there a simple Christian, T. Ulberg, reported his observations. According to him no catechism preaching had taken place in

¹ See Andrew Lanning, "Union," *Reformed Pavilion* 3, no. 2 (April 19, 2025): 4–9.

Wyckoff's church during his stay; the ecclesiastical feast-days were not observed; baptism was administered at the home of the parents or in the consistory-room instead of in the congregational meeting for worship; and colored communicants were seated apart from the rest at the table of the Lord.²

Looming over the entire union was the RCA's fascination with Richard Baxter. Richard Baxter had been an English minister in the seventeenth century. In 1658 he had written the popular little book *Call to the Unconverted*. Just at the time that Classis Holland and the RCA were federating, Baxter's book was being highly recommended by RCA ministers—nearly two hundred years after its original publication. But Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* was essentially Arminian. One historian describes the content of the book as follows:

Baxter's style is simple, direct, conversational, personal, and pastoral, with lavish use of Scripture (especially the Old Testament) and reason to support his case and answer questions and objections. God can in no way be blamed for the sinful human condition, which is totally our own fault. He has made us responsible creatures, with enough "freedom" to remain in sin or to turn to him; no one goes to heaven or to hell unwillingly. Christ has died for each and every one (on condition of repentance and faith), and the Holy Spirit is available to enable the elect to repent. Election appears only at this point (in passing) and once again late in the book (as a lame excuse used by the unrepentant). God wants no one to go to hell but, rather, waits patiently for the sinner to choose the way of life. Baxter, in stressing conversion, the "new creation" in Christ

(2 Corinthians 5:17), and holy living (but not perfection), puts far more weight on sanctification than on justification. Martin Luther (or even John Calvin) he was not! Baxter also insists that, since salvation is of such great urgency, haste can and should be made to "turn" (i.e., repent, be converted; Ezekiel 33:11) for death can come at any time.³

The saints of Classis Holland were right to be alarmed by Baxter's doctrine. It was a denial of God's sovereignty in salvation by the introduction of man's fulfilling conditions in salvation. The fact that such a book was popular in the RCA back East was evidence of that denomination's slide into Arminianism. The inevitable effect of Classis Holland's union with the RCA was that Baxter's Arminianism would worm its way into Classis Holland. And that is exactly what happened. In 1853 an elder in the vacant Vriesland church "read aloud to his congregation from a Dutch version of Richard Baxter's popular *Call to the Unconverted*, presumably in lieu of the usual published sermon by an orthodox Dutch Reformed clergyman."⁴ And later that same year it was discovered that Reverend Van Raalte himself, along with Reverend Van der Meulen—two of the three founding ministers of Classis Holland—were distributing copies of Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* among the Reformed churches in West Michigan. When this was discovered, instead of repudiating Baxter's conditional salvation, Van Raalte defended Baxter by producing quotations to prove that Baxter taught election. Van Raalte would continue to distribute Baxter's books through the years.

How short a time it took for Classis Holland to adapt itself to doctrine of the RCA. How eagerly Classis Holland joined its new denomination in its apostatizing slide into Arminianism. "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!" (Lam. 4:1).

² D. H. Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Tradition: From the Reformation to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1943), 107.

³ Earl Wm. Kennedy, "Richard Baxter: An English Fox in a Dutch Chicken Coop?," in Jacob E. Nyenhuis, ed., *A Goodly Heritage: Essays in Honor of the Reverend Dr. Elton J. Bruins at Eighty* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 141.

⁴ Kennedy, "Richard Baxter," 129.

Meanwhile, reports of the evil life and worship of the RCA continued to reach the concerned saints of Classis Holland. Most influential among these reports was that of Elder Gijsbert Haan. Haan had lived in New York and New Jersey for two years and could report thoroughly what he had seen and heard.

He had had contact with Reformed leaders and churches in the East and related his observations to anxious inquirers in the colony. He told of an elder who had not presented any of his nine children for baptism in order that they might be free to choose their own church affiliation when grown, since there was no difference between the denominations, whether Reformed, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopalian, except in title or name. In personal conversation with Rev. Eltinge he had gained the conviction that this Reformed minister was Arminian in sentiment. In Albany he had met with a lady who had left the Presbyterian Church for the ministrations of Wyckoff because she wished to get away from the preaching of the doctrine of predestination. He had found many pastors and elders of the Reformed Church who made no secret of their membership in the lodge. He had seen a minister and an elder of the Reformed Church take part in a Methodist communion service. He had noticed that a collection of hymns was displacing the Psalms in public worship and that choir-singing was silencing congregational singing. He had observed the displacement of catechetical instruction by the Sunday School and of indoctrination by instruction in Bible History, and he clearly forecast the disastrous results.⁵

The troubled saints of Classis Holland took their concerns to their elders, their ministers,

and their classis. They spent months and years trying to convince the classis at large that their union with the RCA had been a grievous error. They pleaded with the churches to dissolve their union with the RCA and to return to the standpoint that they had had prior to 1850—a federation of Reformed churches of like mind, free from the evil influence of the churches on the eastern seaboard. But Classis Holland had set its foot on the path of apostasy, and it refused to be reformed. In a passage that will sound familiar to anyone who has found himself in the midst of an apostatizing church, one historian relates how Classis Holland dealt with its concerned members. The classis, led by Van Raalte, pursued a program of trumped-up charges against Elder Haan and obfuscation of the issues before the public.

Between 1852 and 1855 the agitation seems to have made little stir at the meetings of Classis, but then Classis began to be flooded with protests. Haan's influence must have penetrated to every church in the colony, and his labors emphasized more and more the duty of a return to the standpoint left in the union of 1849–50. The spring session of the Classis took the labors and influence of Haan up for special consideration. The minutes charge him with sowing disturbance and suspicion, with preaching secession as a duty, and with leading such as lend him their ear into breaking with the Classis. His defense is not recorded, just as in the minutes of the spring session of 1852 the discussion of the compatibility of membership in the Church with that in the lodge is not recorded, though in Sept., 1853, Classis condemned masonry. Van Raalte functioned as clerk, he dominated the Classis, and he was determined to maintain the union with the Reformed Church.⁶

⁵ Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Tradition*, 108.

⁶ Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Tradition*, 110.

The First Brands

God was making it clear to some of his people in Classis Holland that they could not remain in that classis as long as it belonged to the Reformed Church in America. A small group in Graafschap seceded under the leadership of an elder, one Jacob Roelof Schepers. This church joined the Associate Reformed Church, which ordained Elder Schepers as a minister. The Associate Reformed Church was Scottish, but it allowed the little Graafschap church to keep its Reformed confessions and Dutch Church Order.

The church in Drenthe, under the leadership of Rev. Roelof Harms Smit, soon followed Graafschap in seceding from Classis Holland and in joining the Associate Reformed Church. One of the members of the church in Drenthe would later write to a relative in the Netherlands about his experience being a member where they could have the pure gospel and the psalms.

We seem to live in times when everyone has his own vision of Christ. There are many different parties among us. The greatest number belong to the Dutch-Reformed Church [Classis Holland—AL] which is much like the Hervormd Church among you [the State Church of the Netherlands—AL]. They have 811 evangelical hymns. Among them are the Dominees Van Raalte, Klein, Oggel, Hovbolt and others. Then there are two churches connected with the United Presbyterian Church [Associate Reformed Church—AL] and Dominee Schepers and Smit are preachers in the Denomination. I am a member of Dominee Smit's congregation. Our church is pure and is in agreement with the separatists among you [the people of the *Afscheiding*—AL], still there is some difference in church government. But we joined them on the condition that

we can retain the teachings of Dort and our own church ruler.⁷

Little by little, the Lord was plucking his brands out of the fire and returning them to the old paths of the gospel and worship of Jesus Christ.

The Christian Reformed Church

The main reformation would come to Classis Holland with the arrival of Rev. K. van den Bosch from the Netherlands. "In 1856 the Rev. K. van den Bosch came as pastor to Noordeloos, having evidently heard of the dissension in the Classis, and he came as a vigorous supporter of Haan's position."⁸ By the early months of 1857, it was evident to the concerned members of Classis Holland that the denomination would not repent of its errors and return to the truth. Four churches and two ministers seceded from Classis Holland, informing the April 8, 1857, meeting of Classis Holland of their actions. For example, here is the letter from Rev. Van den Bosch.⁹

By this I notify you that I can hold no ecclesiastical communion with you, for the reason that I can not hold all of you who have joined the Dutch Reformed Church to be the true church of Jesus Christ, and consequently I renounce all fellowship with you and declare myself no longer to belong to you. I am the more constrained to do this by the fear of God, on account of the abominable and church-corrupting heresy and sins which are rampant among you, which, if the Lord will and we live, I shall present to the next meeting of classis.

I hope that your eyes may yet be opened to see your gross sins, to take them to heart, and to be converted therefrom.

K. van De Bosch
Minister at Noordeloos

⁷ Hinderik Lanning, personal letter to Henderikus Lanning, September 11, 1860, in the Dutch Immigrant Letter Collection in Heritage Hall, Hekman Library (Calvin University), under the entry "Lanning, H." Translated by Heritage Hall.

⁸ Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Tradition*, 111.

⁹ Earl Wm. Kennedy, *A Commentary on the Minutes of the Classis of Holland, 1848–1876*, vol. 2 (Holland, MI: Van Raalte Press, 2018), 704.

The letter from the Graafschap congregation provides the most detail regarding the reasons for its secession.¹⁰

To the Classical Assembly, Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, to be held at Zeeland, 8th April 1857.

Very Reverend Brethren!

We are obliged to give your reverences notice of our present ecclesiastical standpoint, namely, separating ourselves from your denomination, together with all Protestant denominations, with which we thoughtlessly became connected upon our arrival in America. We are uniting ourselves with the Seceded Reformed Church in the Netherlands and admonish your reverences herewith in love to walk on the same path with us. The reasons for this our separation, namely, 113 members, or communicants, are as follows:

1. The collection of eight hundred hymns, introduced contrary to the church order.
2. Inviting [people of] all [religious] persuasions to the Lord's Supper, excepting Roman Catholics.
3. Neglecting regularly to preach the Catechism, to catechize, and [to conduct] house visitation.
4. That no religious books are disseminated without the consent of other denominations, directing your attention to the Sabbath booklet [by Richard Baxter—AL], with the practice, by J. van der Meulen, in 1855.
5. And what grieves our hearts most in all of this is that there are members among you who regard our separation in the Netherlands as not strictly necessary, or [think that] it was untimely.

6. In the report of Rev. Wyckoff, the reverend gives us the freedom to be allowed to follow this ecclesiastical path.

Brethren, we are glad that almost the entire congregation, the number of members given above, with us, the consistory, and our dear little children, again stand upon the same standpoint on which our fathers enjoyed so much blessedness, and, oh, we should rejoice still more if the King of the Church should bring your reverences to this conviction. This is the duty of us all. The God of love be your reverences' counsellor and guide to follow the path of the truth.

Your loving brethren in Christ,

In the name of the Consistory,

J. F. van Anrooij, president

Hk. Strabbing, clerk

Having seceded from Classis Holland, the four churches—Graafschap, Grand Rapids, Noordeloos, and Polkton—and two ministers—Kleijn and Van den Bosch—met in April 1857 and joined in denominational federation, which denomination is known today as the Christian Reformed Church. It was the third of the three April milestones of Classis Holland.

How high are the ways of the Lord and how deep his thoughts. Through strife and persecution, through apostasy and reformation, through transplanting and tribulation, the Lord keeps his church. Though all men are of themselves liars and more vain than vanity itself, the Lord keeps his church. Though the church returns to her errors time and again as a dog to its vomit and a sow to its mire, the Lord keeps his church. It is nothing less than the miracle of the Lord's mercy in Christ to his chosen people that the Lord keeps his church.

How happy, then, is the church. And how full of hope and confidence, then, the church may be

¹⁰ Kennedy, *Commentary on the Minutes*, vol. 2, 712–24. The smaller congregation in Graafschap had already joined the Associate Reformed Church. This letter was from the larger congregation in Graafschap.

in this world. If the church had to look to herself, there could be only despair. How unfaithful we are, always! But look to Jesus Christ and to God's love revealed in him, and there you will find hope and peace. How faithful he is, always! He keeps his remnant and will not let her go.

There are more tales of Christ's church to be told. Another time, perhaps. For now, here is

hope, and here is comfort for the little, beleaguered church in her sojourn here below.

And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. (Ezra 9:8)

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

The Banner

February 24, 1921

(pp. 117–19)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article CVII: The Erroneous Views and Unwarranted Criticisms of Rev. H. Hoeksema

My last article had for its purpose to get clearly before us in concise form some of the main facts in regard to the doctrinal errors of Rev. H. Hoeksema. What was presented thus far by no means exhausts the totality of erroneous views that appear in his articles. It is only one side of the objectionable character of Rev. Hoeksema's articles that has been exposed. Other deviations from the Reformed view far-reaching in their consequences will be pointed out as occasion for it presents itself.

Rev. Hoeksema has subjoined a few remarks of his own to my last week's article. He says that he "was glad to hear" that I "took up the pen again." Such a statement of my critic seems very strange indeed. What are the facts? Rev. Hoeksema was not at all inclined to place my article, and furthermore, the article could have been in the hands of *The Banner* readers one week earlier. Rev. Hoeksema hasn't told his readers why the article finally was placed.

The appended note of Rev. Hoeksema is for still another reason of interest to us, because it shows how he now starts to deny facts and dodge issues. He is trying to comfort his readers by

making them believe that I am misrepresenting him. In answer to this method of his I can refer the reader to Rev. Hoeksema's articles themselves, those articles, namely, that contain his denial of the doctrine of Common Grace and the charges he flings at all those that differ from him. No very careful reading of these articles is required to convince one of the fact of a real break on the part of Rev. Hoeksema with the established doctrine of our Reformed faith. In fact, it is altogether too plain a case, this denial of Common Grace and all that goes with the denial. We are dealing with an intrusion of Anabaptism, with an attempt of the most determined kind to deprive us of one of the fundamental doctrines of our Reformed faith. It isn't Kuyper's or Bavinck's view that Rev. Hoeksema is criticising in the articles that contain the denial of the doctrine. Nothing of the kind. It is the doctrine as such that he attacks and discards in the articles in point. We will not be sidetracked by any attempts or efforts Rev. Hoeksema may put forth. The facts of the denial of Common Grace are too hard and stubborn for that. They are there black on white. They cannot be effaced from the printed page.

It is true, Rev. Hoeksema keeps on inviting to enter upon a discussion of the matter. He has said before and says now, "I would greatly enjoy a friendly controversy on the subject." Very interesting this; but I for one heartily decline.

Another matter I must likewise refer to at this time. In his note Rev. Hoeksema has introduced Dr. Van Lonkhuyzen into the controversy. There can be no objection to that. Matters have developed to such an extent that, unless I am greatly mistaken, the readers like to take it all in. But Rev. Hoeksema has referred to Dr. Van Lonkhuyzen in such a way that the impression left is not a correct one. In justice to all concerned I regard it my duty to embody in my article the following rather lengthy quotation from Dr. Van Lonkhuyzen's "Toekomst" editorial. Dr. Van Lonkhuyzen there writes:

"Indien ook maar de helft waar was van hetgeen Ds. Hoeksema zegt, dan en daar zijn we het mee eens, is er voor zulk een onderwijs en zulk een professor geen plaats aan onze school. Indien ook maar de helft daarvan waar was, dan moet de Commissie van Toezicht uit het Curatorium, die allereerst toezicht op het onderwijs moet houden, wel al deze jaren met blindheid geslagen zijn geweest, dan moet het Curatorium waarin geacht worden de uitnemendste mannen onzer kerkengroep te zitten en die voor het onderwijs moet waken een troep domooren of opzettelijke misleiders der kerken zijn, dan moet de Synode, die de zaak onderzocht en beoordeelde, wel een vergadering van kinderen geweest zijn. Nog eens, als ook maar de helft waar zou wezen dan kan en mag Prof. Janssen geen professor aan onze school zijn. Dan hoort hij er niet thuis. Dan gelooft hij niet in de inspiratie van Gods Heilig Woord waarop heel het onderwijs en heel de school en heel de kerk gebouwd is. En aan de andere hand is het niet

waar wat Ds. H. Hoeksema schrijft, dan is het met Ds. Hoeksema's co-editorship van The Banner gedaan. Want in het officieele blad der kerken komt geen stuk dat een professor der kerken, een school en een Synode der kerk in zulk een licht zet te pas, komt geen stuk dat zonder degelijk bewijs een professor van zulke ketterijen beschuldigt en een Synode van het handhaven van dien professor, te pas. Ketterijen die heel de theologie en heel het bestaan der waarheid als wel der kerk omkeeren. Een van beiden heeft hier grootelijks gezondigd en het vertrouwen der kerken verbeurd. Zeker is dat dit niet zoo kan blijven zietten. Vooralsnog zijn we niet geneigd de 'statements' van Ds. Hoeksema 'at face value' aan te nemen. Natuurlijk kunnen er nieuwe zaken na de Synode aan het licht gekomen zijn, waarvan de Synode niet wist en die de dingen in een geheel ander licht plaatsen. Hoewel in dat geval moesten zulke dingen niet aanstonds gepubliceerd worden, maar in den wettigen weg tot de betrokken autoriteiten gebracht worden. Daar is de Commissie van Toezicht uit het Curatorium voor. En ook kan het ongetwijfeld zijn dat de Synode zich vergist heeft. Dit kan uit nader onderzoek blijken of uit overtuiging van gebrek aan licht dat de Synode had, voorkomen, zoodat we overtuigd zijn dat de Synod misgetast heeft. Critiek op de Synode staat daarom vrij. Mits—en daar ligt het punt—men dan ook wete waar men over spreke, dat men wel ingelicht is, alle gegevens heeft, en uit die gegevens aantoonen kan dat de Synode tot een verkeerde conclusie kwam. En nu is dit wel-ingelicht—zijn het punt dat we, Ds. Hoeksema's schrijven lezende, bij hem in twijfel trekken. Er zijn in zijn schrijven punten die de duidelijke kenmerken dragen van punten te zijn die ook ter Synode geweest zijn en die in Ds. Hoeksema's schrijven heel anders voorgesteld worden dan ze waren. Heel anders."¹

¹ English translation: "If even half of what Rev. Hoeksema says were true, then, and we agree, there is no place for such an education and such a professor at our school. If even half of that were true, then the Supervisory Committee of the Board of Governors, which must first and foremost supervise education, must have been struck with blindness all these years; then the Board of Governors, in which the most excellent men of our church group are supposed to sit and which must watch over education, must be a bunch of fools or deliberate deceivers of the churches; then the Synod, which investigated and judged the matter, must have been a meeting of children. Once again, if even half of this were true, then Prof. Janssen cannot and may not be a professor at our school. Then he does not belong there. Then he does not believe in the inspiration of God's Holy Word, on which all education and the entire school and the

The “Toekomst” editor then goes on and mentions several matters that Rev. Hoeksema brings up in his Banner articles, matters that, as Dr. Van Lonkhuyzen makes clear, were discussed in detail at Synod, yet are again advanced in The Banner, and, to quote the “Toekomst” editor, “worden hier in Ds. Hoeksema’s stuk echter in een heel ander licht gezet. Behalve hetgeen er dan nog bijgevoegt wordt waar de Synode niet van gehoord, of gezien heeft, noch de commissie der Synode, wat dus niet wetting voortgebracht wordt, wat eerst in den kerkelijken weg onderzocht moet worden. Op grond van deze dingen weigeren wij de ‘statements’ van Ds. Hoeksema vooralsnog aan te nemen. * * * Met wilde aanvallen die genoegzamen grond missen schaadt men slechts zich zelven. * * * * We zijn er niet voor, neen, beslist tegen, en we protesteeren daartegen dat men de publieke opinie vergiftigd, zoo de gemoederen in beroering brengt, dat iemand straks geen behoorlijk en rechtvaardig gehoor meer kan krijgen. We zijn er op tegen dat men eerst de kerken in beroering brengt en dan straks mogelijk zegt: de vrede der kerken eischt dat de broeder ontslagen wordt.”²

The undersigned may be allowed a word of comment at the close of the above quotation. It is this: 1. Just as Rev. Hoeksema has been exposed by the “Toekomst” editor as putting in

an entirely wrong light things that were up at Synod, so, similarly, Rev. Hoeksema is falsifying and putting an entirely wrong construction on other things that he regards as new material. 2. It is a sad fact that the time has come, as the “Toekomst” article shows, to sound a warning against attempts to poison public opinion, against attempts to cause a panic in our churches and then use such a panic as an instrument to achieve other purposes.

I wish to add a few more words in this connection. I have shown in my articles that Rev. Hoeksema holds some very pronounced Anabaptistic views. For he denies Common Grace. I must now further state that I fear that Rev. Hoeksema stands for far more than merely the Anabaptistic denial of the Common Grace doctrine. The evidence is continually increasing that Rev. Hoeksema represents a revival of the old Anabaptistic **SPIRIT**. That spirit wrought havoc in the past, it endangered the Reformation in the time of Luther and Calvin. If that spirit spreads much further in our day and becomes a power in our circles, it will simply break our Church to pieces. Of this I and many others likewise are thoroughly convinced.

We now pass to another matter. One point in connection with Common Grace still remains for us to consider. We have thus far spoken of only

entire church are built. And on the other hand, if what Rev. H. Hoeksema writes is not true, then Rev. Hoeksema’s co-editorship of The Banner is over. Because in the official journal of the churches, no article is appropriate that puts a professor of the churches, a school and a Synod of the church in such a light; no article is appropriate that accuses a professor of such heresies without solid evidence and a Synod of maintaining that professor. Heresies that turn all theology and the entire existence of truth, as well as the church, upside down. One of the two has sinned greatly here and forfeited the trust of the churches. It is certain that this cannot continue to be the case. For the time being, we are not inclined to accept the ‘statements’ of Rev. Hoeksema ‘at face value.’ Of course, new matters may have come to light after the Synod, of which the Synod was unaware and which put things in a completely different light. Although in that case, such things should not be published immediately, but should be brought to the authorities concerned in the legal way. That is what the Supervisory Committee of the Curatorium is for. And it can also undoubtedly be that the Synod was mistaken. This can be shown by further investigation or from the conviction of the lack of light that the Synod had, so that we are convinced that the Synod made a mistake. Criticism of the Synod is therefore free. Provided—and that is the point—that one also knows what one is talking about, that one is well-informed, has all the data, and can demonstrate from that data that the Synod came to an incorrect conclusion. And now this well-informedness is the point that we, reading Rev. Hoeksema’s writing, question in him. There are points in his writing that bear the clear characteristics of being points that were also at the Synod and that are presented in Rev. Hoeksema’s writing very differently than they were. Very differently.” (Translation done by Google Translate.)

² English translation: “are, however, put here in Rev. Hoeksema’s piece in a completely different light. Except for what is then added that the Synod has not heard of, or seen, nor the Synod’s committee, which is therefore not produced law, which must first be investigated in the ecclesiastical way. On the basis of these things we refuse to accept the ‘statements’ of Rev. Hoeksema for the time being. * * * * With wild attacks that lack sufficient ground one only harms oneself. * * * * We are not for it, no, definitely against it, and we protest against the fact that public opinion is being poisoned, that emotions are being stirred up in such a way that someone will not be able to get a proper and fair hearing. We are against the fact that the churches are being stirred up first and then possibly say: the peace of the churches demands that the brother be dismissed.” (Translation done by Google Translate.)

the Reformed theologians and their great systems of Reformed thought. Calvin has been referred to and the Reformed theologians after Calvin. Everywhere the doctrine of Common Grace constitutes one of the fundamental teachings in their systems. One matter, however, has not been looked into. It is this: Common Grace and our confessional writings.

We now take up that matter. Let us ask some questions. Was there ever a period in the history of the Reformed Church when any of the important teachings of the Reformed faith were combatted by certain elements in the Reformed Church? Yes, in the beginning of the seventeenth century and in the Netherlands. The name Dort tells it all. What was one of the cardinal questions in the time of Dort? Was it connected with the doctrine of Common Grace? Yes. Did either of the two parties that were arrayed against each other deny Common Grace? No. The Reformed fathers and the Remonstrants both held to the doctrine of Common Grace or, as it was also called, “the Light of Nature.” Both were convinced that God after the fall manifested his Common Grace, that He dispenses the numerous gifts of natural light to all men after the fall.

If neither of the two parties called in question Common Grace or the light of nature, what was the point on which they differed? It was this. The Reformed fathers said: “De mensch kan door zijne natuurlijke krachten die algemeene genade niet recht gebruiken. God geeft den mensch, van wege het goede gebruik der algemeene genade, geen meerdere genade des Evangelies.”³

The Remonstrants said: “De verdorven mensch kan de gemeene genade, die hij heft (dat is, het licht der natuur) recht gebruiken. Als hij dit doet, zoo geeft hem God meerdere en grootere gaven, zoo verre, dat de mensch door dit rechte gebruik der gemeene genade, en door

de gaven, die om deszelfs wil hem gegeven zijn, allengskens bij trappen kan komen tot de zaligmakende genade en tot de kennis des Evangelies.”⁴

Let us now see what decisions the Synod of Dort passed on this controversy. It says in Article 4 under the third and fourth heads of doctrine this: “There remain, however, in man since the fall the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God * * * * and discovers some regard for virtue * * * *. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil.” Article 6: “What therefore neither the light of nature nor the law could do, that God performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit,” etc.

Against the Remonstrants they direct this article (Article 5 of the errors of the Remonstrants): “The Synod rejects the errors of those who teach ‘that the corrupt and natural man can so well use the Common Grace (by which they understand the light of nature) or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, viz., the evangelical or saving grace and salvation itself.’”

It is a plain case. Our confessional writings teach the doctrine of Common Grace in very pronounced form. Rev. Hoeksema’s denial of the doctrine of Common Grace constitutes a radical break with the confession of our Church.

(To be continued)

—R. Janssen

Editor’s note—I really do not care to answer to all sorts of personal insinuations. But sometimes it is necessary. The public might get the impression that I was attempting to deal unjustly with my opponent and keep his articles out of The

³ English translation: “Man cannot use common grace rightly through his natural powers. God does not give man, because of the good use of common grace, any greater grace of the Gospel.” (Translation done by Google Translate.)

⁴ English translation: “The corrupt man can rightly use the common grace which he has (that is, the light of nature). When he does this, God gives him more and greater gifts, so far that man, by this right use of common grace, and by the gifts which are given him for its sake, can gradually come by degrees to saving grace and to the knowledge of the Gospel.” (Translation done by Google Translate.)

Banner. Nothing that is more remote from my intention. Hence, the following explanation:

1. All the articles Prof. Janssen wrote were duly published. Once an article came too late to be published the same week. Once an article was cut in two because it was too lengthy. Otherwise the articles were published as fast as they came.
2. Regarding the previous article, its delay is easily explained. The Publication Committee had intimated in a letter Prof. Janssen received that they might have to discontinue the discussion unless the professor confine himself to the subject and would come to the point. Since the previous article of the professor produced nothing new, was only a review of what we had several times before, I doubted whether the committee would be pleased to have me publish the article. I placed it in their hands. The result was that it was published a week later.
3. I am not dodging anything. I am only refusing to assume responsibility for views that are not my own at all. You distil them out of my writings and try to present them as mine. They are not. And this is the only answer I will ever give to these supposedly erroneous views that are not mine at all. I refuse to be sidetracked.
4. Now, please, professor, write about the subject rather than about me. I did not attack you personally. It is your notes I am attacking. You have not come to the point yet, although you wrote several articles. If I presented your teachings in a wrong light, you shall have a public apology in The Banner. But if I presented them fairly, I maintain that there is no room for them at our school. My person is in no way involved. I am neither excited nor bitter. But I am very serious about this matter.

—H.H.

