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*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*

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Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment. Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause...Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause. Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

—Exodus 23:1–3, 6–8

Judging a Cause Rightly

Among the people of Israel, judgment was needed. Israelites suffered at the hands of their brethren, as brother would defraud brother, Israelite would injure Israelite, and Hebrew would sin against Hebrew. Every man insisted that he was in the right and that his cause was just. Men had to come before the judges, who would discern whose cause was right, render their verdict concerning the case, and assign the appropriate sentence.

It was of utmost importance that the causes be judged rightly. God is a just God. God does “not justify the wicked,” nor does he condemn the innocent. Therefore, the judges in Israel must judge the causes rightly.

How many ways there were—and are!—to pervert judgment. Over there was a man spreading a report that he had heard, but the report was false. By spreading that false report, the man joined his hand with the wicked as an unrighteous witness against the victim of the false report. Over there was another man, who knew the truth of a matter. He knew that the innocent was innocent and that the guilty was guilty. But the majority of men were prepared to wrest judgment by declaring the innocent guilty and the guilty innocent. Afraid of standing alone, the man who knew the truth of the matter followed the multitude in doing evil. Over there was a judge who pitied the poor in the land and who looked askance at men of power. When the poor

came before this judge, he judged in favor of the poor and against the powerful simply because the poor were poor and the powerful were powerful, even when the poor had sinned. Over there was another judge, who despised the poor in the land and who courted men of power. When the poor came before this judge, he wrested their judgment to curry favor with the powerful. Over there was a judge who knew which men were innocent and which men were guilty but who allowed a false matter to stand because of a technicality in the case. Because of the technicality, the judge slew the innocent and justified the wicked. And over there was a judge who liked gifts. He told himself and everyone else that he could remain impartial in judgment, even when one of the parties in a case was lavishing him with gifts. The gifts blinded him and turned his judgment into perversity. How many ways there were—and are!—to pervert judgment.

But the causes must be judged rightly!

And now would we like to behold the supreme instance of right judgment? We must go to the cross of the savior. There the innocent—Jesus—is condemned! There the guilty—you and I—are acquitted! “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor. 5:21).

How is this the supreme instance of judging a cause rightly? Listen to the savior as he sings of his own coming, according to the counsel and

promise of God, to stand in our place and atone for our sins.

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not

required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. (Ps. 40:6–8)

—AL

EDITORIAL

God of God: Nicea's Septendecicentennial (2)

“There Was When He Was Not”

The occasion for the great Council of Nicea (AD 325) was the doctrine that was being taught by the influential presbyter Arius (c. 250–336). Arius labored in the bustling seaport of Alexandria, Egypt. He enjoyed considerable prestige for his day, being such a prominent officebearer in such a prominent church as that of Alexandria. He had significant reach among his fellow clergy and could spread his views far and wide by his preaching and teaching. Arius was also quite popular with the people, for he was known to be a pious, able, learned, and well-mannered scholar.

Arius used his influence to advance his doctrine of Jesus. The essence of Arius' doctrine was that Jesus is not truly God. Arius would acknowledge that Jesus was more than a mere man. Arius would even say that Jesus was a god and that he had existed before his incarnation in the flesh. Arius referred to this “god” part of Jesus as the Logos, or the Word. Though Arius used the biblical language of Jesus as the Word, Arius meant something quite different than scripture. Arius would say that because the Word was begotten by God, the Word was the greatest and highest of all God's creatures. But Arius maintained that the Word was only a very great creature—a god, not the God. Arius' doctrine was that the Father and the Word were two different beings. The Father was a divine being—God; the Word was a created being—a god. Arius' doctrine, boiled down to its essence, was that Jesus is not truly God.

Arius taught his doctrine to the masses of his Greek world by the use of a clever hymn. The words of Arius' hymn were a masterpiece of lyrical cadence: *ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν* (pronounced: ain PO-teh HO-teh ouk ain). It is hard to capture the Greek cadence in an English translation: there was when he was not. But one can see in Greek that the first and last words are identical and that the second and third words rhyme. To a Greek speaker of Arius' day these lyrics would have been unforgettable, instantly lodging themselves in one's mind. Arius set his lyrics to a catchy street tune that was universally known. The combination of the indelible lyrics with the irresistible tune meant that all of Alexandrian society—from the sailors on the docks to the housewives at their chores to the scholars at their books—could be heard chanting and singing and humming Arius' doctrine of Jesus: there was when he was not.

Arius' hymn summarized his doctrine of Jesus by making the claim that Jesus was not eternal. Arius' pithy summary—there was when he was not—meant that there was a time before the creation of the world when the Father existed but the Son did not yet exist—there was [a time] when he [the Son] was not. At some unspecified point in eternity, the Father begat the Son by an act of the Father's will. Therefore, only the Father was eternal and divine; the Son—the Word, the Logos—was not eternal and was not divine. The lyrics of Arius' hymn put on the lips of all Alexandria Arius' doctrine that

Jesus is not truly God—there was when he was not.

Arius' tactic of indoctrinating the masses through song was deviously brilliant. As is true of all devilish plots, Arius subverted God's good ordinances for his own ends. For God indoctrinates his people in the truth of the gospel through song. God gave his church the book of psalms, by which the word of Christ dwells richly in them. The church is taught the gospel by the psalms and has the gospel brought continually before her mind by the psalms. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). But Arius subverted God's good ordinance of song in order to indoctrinate the people in the lie. By Arius' evil hymn the word of Arius dwelt in people's minds fully in all folly. By Arius' hymn people sang with unbelief in their hearts against the Lord.

Arius would not be the last heretic to sing error into the church through hymns. He was simply one of the first of many through the centuries. Hundreds and hundreds of years later, God's people would still need to be warned

against the false doctrine that inevitably creeps into the church through the flood of man-made hymns. Just before the *Afscheiding* of 1834 in the Netherlands, Hendrik de Cock reminded the Reformed churches of what Arius had done with his hymn, highlighting the danger that the state church's hymnbook posed to the churches.

Hymns were never introduced into the church, except to cause degeneration and contempt for the welfare of the church, or perhaps in cases of incomplete Reformation...

It is true that we find even early references to heretics that our Church rejects, such as Arius, Paul of Samosata, and the Valentinians in the second, third, and fourth century. These heretics, I say, had innovations in mind, and caused the congregations to become perverse, blinded through errors, and they did these things by means of new songs of human composition.¹

Over against Arius' doctrine that Jesus is not truly God stood Alexander and his doctrine that Jesus is truly God.

To be continued...

—AL



¹ Hendrik de Cock, "The So-Called Evangelical Hymns..." reprinted in *Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 3 (April 29, 2023): 40–41.

Two Free Public Lectures

Speech One:

THE SOVEREIGN GOD OF SALVATION

How can a sinner be saved? That question is not hypothetical but very personal and real. It is not a question about some person somewhere – how can he be saved? Rather, it is a question about you; it is a question about me. How can you be saved? How can I be saved? There are really only two possible answers to that question. Either God saves us, or we save ourselves. Either God is the Saviour, or Man is the Saviour. Either God is sovereign, or Man is sovereign. Either God is God, or Man is God. If I must save myself, even by the smallest contribution, then I am lost. But if God saves me, completely and fully, then I am saved, indeed.

Thanks be to God that God is God and that He sovereignly saves His people through Jesus Christ. On Saturday, 7 June, join us for a lecture on this most comforting truth of God's sovereignty in salvation.

Theme: The Sovereign God of Salvation
Speaker: Rev. Andrew Lanning

Date: 7 June 2025 (Saturday)
Time: 10 AM

Speech Two:

THE PSALMS OF JESUS

God gave His people a lovely song book called The Psalms. The book of Psalms opens with a resounding blessing: "Blessed is the man" (Psalm 1:1). The book of Psalms closes with a ringing doxology: "Praise ye the LORD" (Psalm 150:6). In between are all the things that belong to God's people in this life -- joys and sorrows, sin and righteousness, suffering and victory, death and life. No matter what God's people are going through, the Psalms help them give voice to it. What makes the book of Psalms especially lovely is that the Psalms are Jesus' songs. Jesus is the blessed man of the opening blessing and Jesus praises God in the closing doxology. All the things in between that belong to God's people in this life first belonged to Jesus -- joys and sorrows, sin and righteousness, suffering and victory, death and life.

What a lovely song book God has given us: the Psalms of the blessed man for the praise of God! On Saturday, 14 June, join us for a lecture on this most lovely book of Psalms.

Theme: The Psalms of Jesus
Speaker: Rev. Andrew Lanning

Date: 14 June 2025 (Saturday)
Time: 10 AM

Venue: 371 Beach Road, #02-42, City Gate, Singapore 199597

Directions: Nicoll Highway MRT (Yellow Circle Line), From MRT station, walk along link bridge to City Gate

Programme: Lecture followed by Q&A, fellowship and refreshments

Organiser: Remnant Reformed Church and Redeemed Reformed Fellowship

Article CXI: On Common Grace

After weeks and weeks of waiting for what the professor, whose instruction at school is to us a cause of anxiety, would say as to the connection between his views and “common grace,” we finally saw some light on the subject in last week’s article by the professor.

That I criticized the act of Synod regarding the professor’s teachings was also an act of Anabaptism! Revolutionary! The professor does not wish to be in company of such revolutionary men. To answer their charges would bring him in their company. Hence, the professor suggests that it were most probably more in harmony with his Reformed conviction not to answer his critic!

Well, I say, that’s a neat way of getting rid of a troublesome critic! It might pay us to remember this method. All you do is take your critic to the dump of Anabaptism. There you bury him. You take care that he is way under. Don’t be afraid of using an extra shovel full to put him completely out of sight. Heap it over him. And then you stand at the edge of the dump and say: “Now, my poor man, I would like to answer your charges, but you’re gone anyway. I would only dig myself in with you if I should answer. Pax tecum! I take my leave!”

Yes, that’s a neat way of doing things. If it works, it means the end of your opponent * * * * forever!

But what’s the trouble?

The trouble is that the professor buried the wrong party. He took hold of an Anabaptist, a denier of the sovereignty of God, a rationalist, etc. Him the professor buried. While he was busy doing so, we stood, very much alive, safely

outside of the dump behind our would-be grave digger and informed him that he had the wrong man. But the professor insisted that he was right. He buried the party. And on his tombstone he placed the inscription: “Here rests Rev. H. Hoeksema!” But when the professor returns from his funeral, he discovers that the opponent he buried is still alive, and he meets him again the very first thing * * * * !

At first we did not deem it necessary to show that the professor’s grave-digging was a case of mistaken identity. We considered it a case clear to all. Besides, we were afraid if the attention of our people were called too much to this mistake, we might lose sight of the thing that demanded our attention in the first place. But we changed our mind on this subject. After all, to some people the mistake might not be so evident. They might pay an occasional visit to the tombstone bearing our name and shed a tear or two over our sad end. And so we determined to prove that the party buried under that tombstone, in the deep grave of Anabaptism, is not to be identified with me.

But let me get away from this melodramatic allegory and speak in plain language.

We mean to say that at first we did not intend to write again on the subject of common grace in connection with our present controversy with the professor. First of all, because we did not care to have the attention shifted from one subject to another. We wrote not on common grace, but on the decision of Synod of 1920 regarding the instruction of Prof. Janssen at our Theological School. We wrote that to us this constituted a cause for anxiety. We were not

satisfied. And the way in which the professor has tried to defend himself surely was but little conducive to set our hearts at rest. All he did was make the attempt to change the subject deliberately and shift the attention from his teachings as I have them embodied in his notes to the subject of common grace. The relation between that subject and the views of the professor as given in his notes was never pointed out. It was a year and a half ago that I had written on the subject of common grace. And since I was afraid that the attention might be shifted from the main topic, I did not care to be sidetracked in this way, and did not intend to write on the subject of common grace in this connection.

Besides, all we ever taught regarding common grace we wrote in public. It is now nearly three years that we are writing as department-editor under Our Doctrine in The Banner. As I said, it is about a year and a half ago that we expressed our views on the subject of common grace. We then expressed our objections against the view as developed by Dr. A. Kuyper. Then no one took up the pen against us, although that would have been the proper time. I naturally thought that our people might well be referred to the articles we wrote at that time and that it would hardly be necessary to repeat them. Anybody who read the articles at that time, and who has at all followed our discussion in The Banner, may well know that the presentation of our critic in this matter is nothing but a distortion of my views. And thus we did not deem it necessary to write on this subject once more.

But we changed our mind on this question.

In the first place, because the question of common grace is of no mean practical significance. It is a live question. The question of the antithesis between God's people and the world is inseparably connected with it. Clearly, if in some spheres of life God's people and the world live from a common principle which is called grace, the antithesis is a delusion. Besides, although Prof. Janssen neither undertook to develop his conception of common grace, nor pointed

out the connection between the latter and our conception of special revelation, it is very well conceivable that there is a connection between these two. Once having our foot on the slippery path that leads to obliteration of the distinction between God's people and the world, there is no saying what the end may be. At any rate, we consider the matter of common grace of great importance. It is, no doubt, a live question. And it is well worthy of our earnest consideration.

In the second place, by developing in full, in positive form our view of common grace, I can answer at the same time to the distortions of our view as presented by Dr. Janssen. After all, the fact is that the professor called us fundamentally un-Reformed, an Anabaptist, a rationalist, a denier of the sovereignty of God, etc. Our people have a right to know whether this is true. Many of them, undoubtedly, never read the articles that were written a year and a half ago from which Prof. Janssen quotes as he pleases. Others that read them do not have their contents plainly before their mind at this time, while The Banner numbers in which I wrote on the subject are no more in their possession. And because of these facts the distortion of our views as recently presented by Prof. Janssen might be more successful than I would expect. And, therefore, it may be best to show that the picture our critic drew in recent Banner numbers is not our picture. To be silent on this matter might probably leave the impression that we were afraid to have the public know all that we believe in this connection.

And this is not true. We always write and speak in public. We openly express our views. We did so also on the subject of common grace in The Banner. The Church knows it all. After we had written for two years under Our Doctrine, and, therefore, after we had publicly expressed our conception of "common grace," the Church in synodical gathering appointed us again to write "Our Doctrine." We never did hide our views, neither would we employ diplomacy to carry them into our Church. We believe in being open and above board.

And, therefore, we shall give a full exposition of our view in this connection in a few separate articles.

These articles shall not be presented in the form of a controversy with Dr. Janssen. Even on the subject of common grace the professor said nothing. The whole attack I consider as unscholarly as possible. Least of all shall I enter into all the little, insignificant personal things the professor tried to drag into our discussion. It would be very easy for me to show that what the professor called an untruth on our part was nothing but the plain truth. But what would be the use?

The public is not interested in these personal things. And the mind that is naturally suspicious of the motives and methods of others may think of the Dutch proverb: “Zooals de waard is, zoo vertrouwt hij zijn gasten.”¹

I will, therefore, in the main, write in positive form. I will present a full discussion of the subject of common grace. And the public may compare and judge as to whether my views were fairly reproduced in the articles of Prof. Janssen.

In the meantime, let us not forget what I wrote on the notes of Dr. Janssen still stands. That part of our controversy remains separate.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

The Erroneous Views and Unwarranted Criticisms of Rev. H. Hoeksema (continued)

We have had occasion more than once to call into question certain statements of Rev. Hoeksema's from the point of view of their truthfulness. For example, Rev. Hoeksema, as was pointed out in one of my last articles, says that the doctrine of common grace is not found in our confessional writings. These are his words: “I here deny that it is.” It is a plain fact, however, that the doctrine is there in the Confession, and likewise that it is there in a very emphatic form.

Furthermore, Rev. Hoeksema said that the Publication Committee wrote me, “that they might have to discontinue the discussion unless the professor confine himself to the subject and would come to the point.” What the Publication Committee decided to write me was this: “U vriendelijk te verzoeken (dit verzoek ook te richten aan Ds. Hoeksema) om u in uw schrijven beknoptelijk te willen houden aan de zaak waarover het gaat, uwe artikelen te doen verschijnen in opeenvolgende Banner-nummers.”²

In this article I purpose to look into the matter of the truthfulness of Rev. Hoeksema's statements a little further. We have here reached the point Rev. Hoeksema so anxiously longed that we would come to. We are up to the “professor's dictations,” as Rev. Hoeksema has called them. We have come to the charges Rev. Hoeksema prefers against the professor. It is the “dictations” in which Rev. Hoeksema is so much interested. He has told the Banner readers what he has found in these “dictations” (“notes” he has latterly chosen to call them). He has found there certain “facts,” to use his own word. This is literally what Rev. Hoeksema writes: “These facts are gathered from the notes of the students. And it is these [facts] that cause my concern.” Or still another quotation: “The following facts constitute for me a cause of grave concern.” What are “these facts” that Rev. Hoeksema presents to his readers? Let us take one. There is an interesting one concerning the five books of Moses. Rev. Hoeksema puts the “fact” in the

¹ English translation: “As the innkeeper is, so he trusts his guests.”

² English translation: “You are kindly requested (this request to be directed to Rev. Hoeksema as well) to keep your writing concise with regard to the matter at hand, and to have your articles appear in consecutive issues of the Banner.” (Translation done by Google Translate, with slight editing.)

following words: “The possibility is even granted that the entire Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, were originally written in Babylonian and, therefore, long before Moses wrote.” This “fact” of Rev. Hoeksema is undoubtedly a very serious charge. It implies that the Mosaic laws were written long before the time of Moses. Still, what Rev. Hoeksema writes must be so, for, as we saw, he assures his readers that “these facts are gathered from the notes of the students.” Let us turn to the notes. They read as follows: “At present the theory is that the whole Pentateuch was originally written in Babylonia. If these narratives go back so far there is good reason to favor such a theory.” Neither here nor elsewhere in the notes is there a word to be found to the effect that the five books of Moses were originally written “long before Moses wrote.” It is a case of Rev. Hoeksema distorting and falsifying matters.

Take another example. Rev. Hoeksema writes, “The incident of Rebekah’s inquiring of the Lord at the time she was pregnant of Esau and Jacob is explained as follows: Rebekah turns to a sanctuary in Canaan. The functionary (the priest) at the sanctuary gives her an oracle. The oracle is: ‘The elder shall serve the younger.’ This oracle may also mean, ‘The younger shall serve the elder,’ as the object of the sentence may be the subject. Thus the functionary at the sanctuary is always safe.” Let us be reminded once more that these statements of Rev. Hoeksema are “facts” and that he has taken “these facts from the notes,” to use again his own words. In the notes he finds this, that “Rebekah turns to a sanctuary in Canaan.” Does Rev. Hoeksema mean by “a sanctuary in Canaan” a Canaanitish sanctuary? One would think so. For there is nothing in this expression that would point to anything different. But how about the students’ notes on this expression? They do not contain the phrase “in Canaan” at all. Are then the notes silent as to what kind of a sanctuary is meant? No. The notes state that Rebekah receives “an oracle from Jehovah.” It is, therefore, a Jehovah sanctuary she goes to.

For “a divine utterance” she goes there, to use another phrase occurring in the notes.

Furthermore, as you will have noticed, we read in Rev. Hoeksema’s statement as given above the following: “Thus the functionary at the sanctuary is always safe.” Again let me inform the readers that not a word of this is to be found in the notes. On the contrary, the notes do say that Rebekah and Jacob “**had prophecy IN THEIR FAVOR.**” This is the very opposite of Rev. Hoeksema’s “the functionary at the sanctuary is always safe.” We are here again, as in the previous example, dealing with a falsification of the students’ notes by Rev. Hoeksema.

Rev. Hoeksema has added a note to my last article in which he says, “I hope our church-public is not deceived by Dr. Janssen’s method.” I do not know what Rev. Hoeksema exactly means by this, except that he insinuates. As for me, I have also a hope. It is this, that the eyes of the Banner readers are being opened more and more to the fact that (1) Rev. Hoeksema as co-editor of our official church paper has been presenting to our people un-Reformed, Anabaptistic doctrine, and (2) to the fact that Rev. Hoeksema is an untrue witness, bearing false testimony, misrepresenting and falsifying matters, and causing by his false testimony a stir in the churches that threatens to develop into a break.

One word more. The readers will realize that we have at present two versions of the professor’s teachings, two sets of notes. The notes of the students and the notes of Rev. H. Hoeksema. The notes of the students are not complete or perfect. They do not claim to be complete or perfect. But when compared with Rev. Hoeksema’s notes or rather “facts” (for so he calls his statements), how does the matter stand? This question, it will be realized, has almost become superfluous. The answer is no longer doubtful. Rev. Hoeksema’s “facts” are full of falsifications and false testimony. This is one thing to be borne in mind. Another thing we want to look into is Rev. Hoeksema’s remarks in regard to the students and the students’ notes. He writes

(Banner Jan. 27) as follows: “If the case is thus at school, that the students cannot take notes any more, and receive different erroneous ideas from a professor that teaches the straight Reformed truth, there must be some evil spirit somewhere in the school classrooms, and it were time that he be cast out.” These words of Rev. Hoeksema, I wish to say, sound strange, to express it mildly. A demon in the halls of the Seminary (Does Rev. Hoeksema mean all the halls?) when our theological students are there to receive instruction. And the very next thought of Rev. Hoeksema, to cast out the evil spirit. I for one take a different view. I believe that not a demon, but that the Spirit of God, the Spirit that leadeth into all truth, is there present with us in all our work. That, at least, constitutes an article

of my faith. We are there to study the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God, which we accept and love, which we search as we are bidden to do by these Scriptures themselves, which Word of God we know but in part and the truths of which have not yet all been discovered. Rev. Hoeksema’s idea of a demon being there in the classroom constitutes a very strange problem. In connection with his un-Reformed views as we have become acquainted with them, this idea of his demands investigation. I purpose to look into it in the first part of my next article.

—R. Janssen

In another article we will quote Dr. Janssen’s notes literally, then the public may judge.

—Editor.

