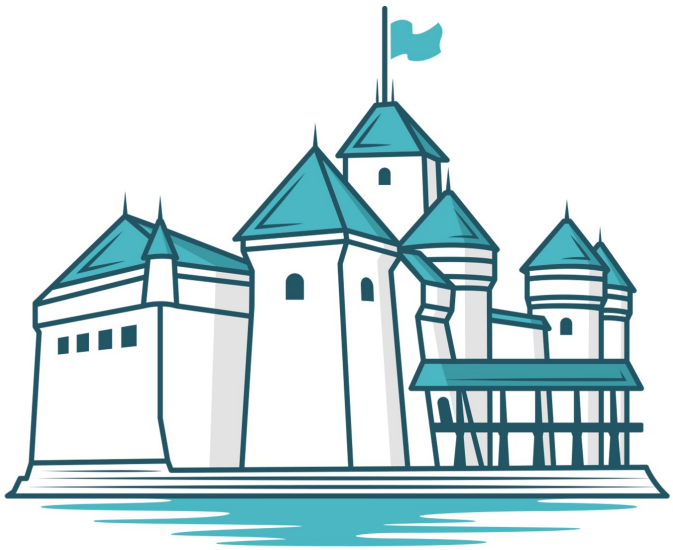

REFORMED PAVILION

Volume 3 Issue 41

January 17, 2026

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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And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water.

—Exodus 29:4 (See also 40:12.)

Washed with Pure Water

The first consecration ceremony was washing with water. This washing was very simple in practice; indeed, it could hardly have been simpler. Aaron and his four sons—Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar—clad in the white breeches of their office, were brought before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. There Moses washed their bodies with pure water.

This washing was simple in practice but profound in meaning. First, the washing of Aaron and his sons testified of the awful reality of sin's defilement. In the course of a man's day, his body becomes covered in sweat. To his body stick the dirt of his work and the grime of his travel. His hands and feet bleed and blister and callous and scab with the injuries of his vocation. Matted in his hair, smeared on his face, jammed under his fingernails, and enfolded in the creases of his skin, he carries pollution with him. In the strain and toil of his labor, he stinks. Such is the filth that defiles a man's body. The washing of Aaron and his sons testified that just as dirt defiles a man's body, so sin defiles a man's soul. Sin is filth. Sin is pollution. Sin is a stain. Man, defiled in his sin, stinks spiritually in the nostrils of God. "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness" (Ps. 38:5). How awful is the reality of man's sin!

Second, the washing of Aaron and his sons testified that the priests were free from sin's defilement. When a man is washed with water, the dirt of his body is carried away. The sweat and grime of the day are cleansed. The pollution of his hands and feet is washed from him. He is rid of the stink of his exertions. He comes forth from his ablutions clean and pure and undefiled. The washing of Aaron and his sons testified that just as washing removes filth from a man's body, so the priests' souls were free from the filth of sin.

But how could such a thing be? Were the priests' souls truly free from sin? Were not Aaron and his sons sinful men? Would not Aaron soon make a golden calf for Israel? Would not Nadab and Abihu soon offer strange fire before the Lord? How could it be, then, that the very beginning of their consecration included a ceremony that testified that they were undefiled with sin?

Ah, but the consecration ceremony was not meant to testify of the purity of mere men in themselves. Rather, the consecration ceremony testified of the purity of the true high priest, Jesus Christ. Behold the purity of our savior, who is undefiled with the filth of sin. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26).

The ceremony of washing pointed to what Christ is: undefiled! And the ceremony of washing pointed to what Christ would do for his church: wash away our sins in his blood. We sinners are clean from the guilt and defilement of our sin by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 1:5–6). What love there is in such a

washing! For "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25–26). What comfort there is for us in such a washing by our undefiled high priest! "And having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:21–22).

It was the consecration ceremony of washing. It was the gospel of our undefiled high priest.

—AL

From the Ramparts

The Life of James Arminius (9)

At this point in the narrative,[1] biographer Kaspar Brandt makes an admission regarding Arminius, namely, that on the subject of divine predestination, he would "stretch somewhat beyond the limits of the Belgic Confession, and transcend the doctrine prevailingly taught in the churches of the Reformed."[2] Brandt does not blush in making this admission, even acknowledging that Arminius' most devoted supporters would concede as much. As for the controversy that followed him, Brandt attributes it to nothing more than "a crushing load of jealousy" (159).

Brandt then expresses, almost with surprise, that a rumor began to circulate that the professors at Leiden differed among themselves. The fact that he calls this a rumor, when he had just recorded that one professor had entered into open war with another, exposes again Brandt's myopic defense of Arminius. Brandt states that many who were grossly ignorant of the controversy were attributing to Arminius the views of Gomarus and to Gomarus the views of Arminius. Although attributing gross ignorance to your critics allows you to brush their criticisms aside, Brandt's statement does perhaps reveal the confusion that was present during this time of controversy.

Brandt proceeds to note, without apparent concern, that Arminius was in the habit of distributing to his disciples treatises he had written on the very subjects under dispute, though he had previously promised not to disseminate opinions contrary to the accepted teachings, either publicly or privately. Brandt claims the churches would have sustained no injury if the debate had remained within academic walls but that when discussion reached the laity, "immense damage was done" because "many put the worst construction on his best words and deeds" (160).

Arminius' teaching spread, now by way of his students. Brandt disparages those who said that Arminius' students who had graduated from Leiden or transferred elsewhere were now disputing and contradicting the Reformed faith. Naturally, this action of the students was inevitable: when a man is appointed professor, he will teach his theology to students who then propagate it abroad. Brandt excuses this by saying that the young men were "somewhat unguarded and stretched beyond the mind of their master"; and if nothing else, these students were watched "more sternly than was meet" (163).

[1] See Dewey Engelsma, "The Life of James Arminius (8)," *Reformed Pavilion* 3, no. 39 (January 3, 2026): 4–6.

[2] Kaspar Brandt, *The Life of James Arminius, D. D., Professor of Theology in the University of Leyden, Holland*, trans. John Guthrie (Charleston, SC: Legare Street Press, 2023; originally published London: Ward, 1854), 159. Page numbers for subsequent quotations from this book are given in text.

One student in particular, John Narsius of Dordt, was required to undergo an additional written examination on his views. Brandt says Narsius performed admirably, just as he had in his synodical examination for the ministry, but this did not satisfy those whom Brandt dismissively calls "ecclesiastical Aristarchuses."[3] This supposed "harassment," Brandt insists, drove poor Narsius from the Reformed church, so that, after Arminius' death, he ended up joining the Remonstrants and began "openly to patronize their opinions and their cause" (168).

In response to these developments, the churches of North and South Holland sent deputies to question Arminius. They reported that ministerial candidates were giving answers contrary to the Reformed faith and claiming Arminius' authority as their defense. The deputies asked him to enter into conference with them.

Arminius indignantly refused, saying that to agree to this would subject him to endless interrogations and that, if they had problems with the students' theology, they should address the students directly. When the deputies pressed him further, Arminius again declined, arguing that, as official deputies, they would draft a report of their meeting; and therefore, he could not participate without the consent of his superiors. He added that he doubted they would accurately convey his words to the synod. However, if they would lay aside their official capacity and meet as ordinary pastors, he would confer with them, provided that, if disagreement remained, no report be submitted to the churches. When the deputies rejected these conditions, they left without achieving their purpose.

This account aligns with that in the historical foreword to the *Acts of the National Synod of Dordrecht*, though Brandt goes further, listing the reasons Arminius gave the civil authorities for refusing this conference. First, he said he was not answerable to the churches of North or South Holland but to other superiors, and without their consent he could not properly engage in the conference. Second, to do so would concede to the deputies an authority over him that they did not possess. Third, there was inequality between them: he was a pastor, while they came with public authority and were bound to defend their superiors "to the last extremity." Finally, he claimed that any report they made would likely be filled with error, whether by "defect of understanding or of memory, or by prejudiced feelings" (175–76).

Soon after, the consistory of the Leiden church, of which Arminius was a member, sent two elders to admonish him and to make a similar request: that he take part in a conference to determine whether he agreed with his colleagues and the received doctrine of the Reformed faith. Brandt attributes this to "the instigation of certain zealots" (177), whereas the Reformed believer recognizes in it the proper exercise of church discipline.

Again, Arminius refused, repeating that he needed the permission of the curators of the academy and that he saw no profit for the churches in such a conference.

Around this same time, when the annual synod of North and South Holland convened, the classis of Dordt submitted a protest urging the synod to investigate the controversies and to determine "the best means by which these controversies may be most advantageously and speedily allayed; in order that all schisms and scandals which might thence arise may be seasonably put out of the way, and the union of the Reformed churches be preserved in contrariety to the calumnies of adversaries" (179).

In response the curators of the academy and the civil authorities of Leiden produced a letter of testimony from the professors stating that they wished the classis of Dordt had acted more prudently, since "there was no dissension" among the professors, only among some students (180). This declaration was delivered

[3] The translator explains this term this way: "Aristarchus was a grammarian of Alexandria, who subjected Homer's poetry to very hard criticism. Hence his name became a proverbial designation for any severe critic" (168).

to the regent of the theological college, J. Kuchlinus, who affirmed that he agreed entirely with it.

That this statement was indeed made is confirmed by the historical foreword to the *Acts of the National Synod of Dordrecht*. What surprised most people was that even Gomarus signed it, despite being "notorious" for his opposition to Arminius, both in his public disputations and from the pulpit, where he declared the controversy no small matter but one that touched the fundamentals of the faith (180).

Why, then, did Gomarus put his name to such a declaration, when there was clearly dissension among the professors? Was this, perhaps, an instance of what the poets call "Homer nodding"? More likely, Gomarus feared that if word of the discord reached the magistrates, they would further interfere in theological affairs. His signature, then, may have been an act of prudence, intended to keep the "prying fingers" of the civil authorities out of the church's business. Indeed, when pressed later and required to give a clearer explanation, he confessed "that between himself and Arminius there did lurk some dissension; but that, in his view, it was highly expedient and prejudicial *to the liberty of the churches* to explain the nature of it at this [later] time and in this place" (251; emphasis added).

Whether his action was driven by prudence or expediency, the fact remains that real division existed between the professors, and Gomarus should not have signed a document declaring otherwise. Let the child of God be reminded that "every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (Ps. 39:5) and that our confidence must rest in Christ alone and not in any man. I hope to say more about this later in the series.

The synod of the South Holland churches met in Rotterdam on August 30, 1605, and one of the main items of business was to treat the protest (or gravamen, as Brandt calls it) from the classis of Dordt. After deliberation the synod charged its deputies to investigate the doctrinal differences reportedly emerging among the students and to request that the curators of the academy ascertain from the professors what their views on these doctrines were.

The deputies drafted nine questions, which they delivered to the curators with the request that these be submitted to the professors so their opinions might be fully disclosed. The curators declined, reasoning that it would be more prudent to wait for the convening of a national synod rather than risk further inflaming the existing strife.

Arminius, having learned of this list and managing to obtain a copy, prepared written answers for the benefit of his "disciples," and, as Brandt notes, also drew up "as many questions in return" to oppose those presented to him (184).

Meanwhile, despite growing opposition, both private and public, Arminius continued his teaching and lecturing. Brandt remarks that Arminius was encouraged by the large number of attendees drawn to his public lectures by "the singular grace of his style, both of speaking and teaching, and his lucid interpretation of the Sacred Writings" (187). Undoubtedly, Brandt observes, his audiences would have been larger still had many not feared that too close an association with Arminius might harm their reputations or prospects.

In the midst of his duties, Brandt claims, Arminius made an effort to remain within the bounds of the confessions—though, as Brandt admits, he "had probably observed some things which at times appeared to favor the sentiments opposed to those he had embraced," and he wished that those confessional formulas "harmonized more closely with his own opinions" (185).

Around this time, according to the usual academic rotation, Arminius resigned his rectorate. On that occasion he delivered an oration, ironically enough, on "Religious Dissension,"

in which he expressed the "intense grief" that he felt in his heart "on account of that religious discord which has been festering like a gangrene, and pervading the whole of Christianity."[4]

(To be continued)

—DE

[4] James Arminius, "Oration V: On Reconciling Religious Dissensions Among Christians," in *The Works of James Arminius*, trans. James Nichols, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986 [repr. of 1825 ed.]), accessed October 22, 2025, https://ccel.org/ccel/arminius/works1/works1.ii.vi.html.

Herman Hoeksema's *Banner* Articles

The Banner February 9, 1922 (pp. 86–87)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article CXLV: The New King and His Kingdom: Prophecy

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you."—I Pet. 1:10

The law, taken in its broadest sense, accomplished three things. First of all it regulated the life of the people of God in the old dispensation. They were to be God's people in the world. They were to manifest themselves as a kingdom of God, as a nation that was in a special sense consecrated to Jehovah. And the law served to regulate in detail their outward manifestation as the kingdom of God in the world. Canaan was the land of Jehovah's dominion, and its people constituted the kingdom of God. Jerusalem was the city of God, the temple was Jehovah's dwelling place. Their king was king under God, and their armies were Jehovah's host. Their battles were Jehovah's battles, and their enemies were the enemies of the kingdom of God. In short, they were the kingdom of God in national form, and the law they received served to regulate the outward manifestation of the life of that kingdom in the world.

Secondly, the law served the purpose of bringing to light in definite offences the natural corruptness of the people in themselves. Instead of the law restraining the power and the manifestation of sin, it much rather provoked to sin. Not because the law was sinful and corrupt. On the contrary, the law is holy and good. But human nature is corrupt. And the corruption of human nature is brought to light in definite transgression through the law. And thus we actually notice that the line of Israel's history declines more and more the nearer the time approaches that Immanuel is to appear to save his people from their sin. The law enjoins upon Israel that they shall have no other gods before Jehovah. But Israel apostatizes from the very moment the law is announced, is continually inclined to seek the gods of the nations till the people are literally worshipping all the abominations of the heathen. Before the law Israel must be a separate people unto Jehovah, separate from the nations round about. But Israel is continually inclined to seek amalgamation with the nations round about till she is almost swallowed up by these heathen nations. There is actually but a brief period in Israel's history, during the reign of David and Solomon, that the kingdom of God among them reveals itself in its full power and glory. After that period there is a fast decline. And the result is that the ten tribes are led into captivity, never to return, and that also the kingdom of Judah apparently submerges and is swallowed up by Babylon. And although a remnant returns, Israel

never approaches again its former glory, never is able to again assume its place as a kingdom of God among the nations. The remnant that returns, in the first place, is small. It is but a shadow of the former nation. The temple is rebuilt, truly and gradually is remodeled into a structure externally more magnificent than the first temple, but the most holy place is empty; the ark of the covenant never returned to the temple of Jehovah, and as a nation the people of God were the continual prey of the nations round about. Outwardly the scepter had departed from Judah long before Shiloh appeared. Now it was subject to Egypt, now to Syria. And when Immanuel comes it groans under the yoke of Roman bondage. All Israel's history taught the believing people of God very plainly that they could not expect righteousness through the law, and prepared them for the coming of him that would fulfill the law for them. All the history of Israel teaches unmistakably that the national form of the kingdom could not be the permanent form. All the outward forms must disappear, gradually to make room for the kingdom of heaven that is announced and established by him who would hold Judah's scepter and sit on David's throne forever. For though the shadows gradually disappeared, the kingdom of God in reality never was overcome. Though the people as a nation lose their significance and power, the remnant always remains. Though the scepter departed from Judah apparently and Israel could no more maintain itself as an independent nation among the powers of the world, in reality that scepter was still there. Though for a time it disappears from view, it reappears again when Shiloh comes and assumes his place at the right hand of his Father. All that outward life of Israel gradually loses in power and significance. Under the law Israel succumbs. There is no salvation if it must be expected from the keeping of the law.

Thirdly, however, we also saw that in the law there was a gospel. Though the law teaches plainly that there is no possibility of righteousness through it, taken in its broadest sense, it also pointed to the salvation that was to come. We pointed to the sanctuary as such, which was a continual witness of God's covenant as it was to be established through the blood of him that was to come. And the sacrifices testified the same thing. Continually in these sacrifices Israel was reminded of their sin. Continually, too, Israel was reminded by these sacrifices of the great sacrifice that would atone once for all. And thus in the shadow of the law there was the gospel of the reality that was to come. The law was its own testimony to the believing Israelite that salvation was still to come through him that would fulfill all things.

In this connection we must point to one more element that cannot be separated from Israel's history. We refer to that of prophecy. And then we refer especially to that element in prophecy that was predictive of better things in the future. Surely, we admit that Israelitish prophecy implies more than prediction. The prophets do not only foretell the future; they also are preachers of righteousness in the specific Israelitish sense of the word. No, we refuse to call them social reformers, as our age prefers often to call them, for this term is both too vague and too general to be applied to the prophets of Israel. But true it is that the prophets were much more than mere foretellers of the future. In a time of corruption they serve to call the apostate people back to the law and to the testimony and announce to them that there shall be no morning for them if they do not heed the precepts of Jehovah. The element of prediction is often very small in the prophets' message to the people. Especially the prophets that arose after Samuel's time were men that by word and deed served to rekindle the fear of Jehovah, call the people to return from their apostasy, and instruct them in the precepts of the Lord. "The prophets were, in a peculiar sense, the spiritual watchmen of Judah and Israel, the representatives of divine truth and holiness, whose part it was to keep a wakeful and jealous eye upon the manners of the times, to detect and reprove the symptoms of

defection which appeared, and by every means in their power foster and encourage the spirit of real godliness. And such preeminently was Elijah, who is therefore taken in Scripture itself as the type of the whole prophetical order in this earlier stage of its development, a man of heroic energy of action rather than of prolific thought or excellent discourse. The words he spake were few, but they were words spoken as from the secret place of thunder, and seemed more like decrees issuing straight from the presence of the Eternal than the utterances of one of like passions as ourselves. Appearing at a time when the very foundations were out of course, and the most flagrant enormities were openly practiced in the high places of the land, he boldly stood forth in the name of God as a wrestler in the cause of righteousness, not so much to plead for it as to avenge and vindicate it, as if the time had come for deciding the controversy by deeds rather than by words. For this gigantic work power was given him to smite the earth with plagues, and to torment those who dwelt on it, and who were corrupting it by their wicked deeds (Rev. 9). But when the results aimed at by this severe and stern agency were in a good measure accomplished, when by terrible things in righteousness the daring of the adversary had been quelled, and an open field had been won for active operations, his mission called him to work of another kind—such work as was fitly symbolized by the still small voice at Horeb, at which now, and not in the whirlwind, the earthquake, or fire the Lord made himself known to his servant. Enough, it was virtually said to the prophet, of such overawing displays of power as have hitherto been put forth. They have already served their more immediate purpose, but work of a more peaceful and regenerative nature still remains to be done. The decayed schools of the prophets must be revived and spiritual labors prosecuted if haply through such instrumentality the hearts of the children may be quickened unto newness of life and turned back to the Lord their God. And so, after he had by patient and faithful exertion approved himself also in this part of his prophetical mission, he was received up to heaven in a chariot of glory" (Fairbairn on prophecy, pp. 24–26).

All this we admit. The work of the prophets was by no means confined to disclose the hidden mysteries of the future in respect to the kingdom of God. Their work was also related to their own time and people. They were called to preach righteousness and repentance and return to the Lord to the people in times of apostasy and danger. But it is not to this element of prophecy that we must refer in this connection. It is rather to the predictive character of their prophetic messages that we wish to call attention. As Israel outwardly declined, and as it became more and more apparent that it would succumb under the law, as the outward then existing order of the kingdom plainly showed signs of corruption and ultimate ruin, the light of prophecy became clearer and clearer, pointing to another dispensation, to the coming of a better state of things, that would be established by him who was Israel's hope.

The more clearly we see this development of prophecy among Israel, the more we will acknowledge that Israel's history and its prophecy belong together.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.