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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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And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death...And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

—Exodus 21:15, 17

The Clever, Cursed Curser

The laws concerning father and mother were straightforward. The man that smote his father or his mother must be put to death. The man that cursed his father or his mother must be put to death. How grievous was the sin of striking father or mother, whether with one's hand or with one's tongue! God gives men their life and existence through father and mother. To smite father or mother is to smite God. To curse father or mother is to curse God. The God-smiter and the God-curser must die.

The law was very hard: death to him that smiteth his father or mother. But the law was very clear: death to him that smiteth his father or mother. The hard punishment made the law's requirement as clear as could be: honor thy father and thy mother.

What does man do with such a clear law? Does he love it and obey it? Does he cherish it and keep it? By no means! Man evades God's clear law. Man excuses himself from the keeping of God's clear law. Man thinks himself very clever and appeals to his great piety to confuse and confound and contradict God's clear law concerning father and mother.

Behold the Pharisee. His aged father and mother were poor and needed their son's care. The Pharisee had in his possession a bullock. The sale or slaughter of their son's bullock would have greatly profited the father and mother, providing their lack and relieving their misery. But the Pharisee would lose the remaining years of the bullock's strength if the bullock were sold or slaughtered. The Pharisee stood to make

a handsome profit for himself by keeping the bullock and reaping the fruits of the bullock's work. What would the Pharisee do? Would he honor his father and mother by providing for their needs when it was in his power to profit them? Not at all. Instead, the Pharisee designated his bullock *Corban*. That is, the Pharisee pledged his bullock to be offered as a sacrifice in the temple at some future date. Oh, one can hear the Pharisee's pious speech to his parents: "I really want to help you, you know. But what can I do? My hands are tied. I have pledged my bullock to the Lord. Would you have me steal from the Lord to give to you?" In the meantime the Pharisee would enrich himself during the remaining years of the bullock's strength until the time came for his pledge to be fulfilled.

Jesus cursed such clever cursing of father and mother.

And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. (Mark 7:9–13)

What the Pharisee did with this law reveals what man does with all of God's law. Man rejects the commandment of God that he may keep his own tradition, according to his own will. Man makes the word of God of none effect by replacing its clear commands with his own willful traditions. Man's law is man. Man's worship is man. Man's doctrine is man. Man's gospel is man. How ugly is the stubborn heart of man! How perverse is the crooked will of man! How ugly and perverse are you and I, we Pharisees at heart!

But now behold our Lord. What did our Lord do with the clear law of God? Why, he loved it

with all his heart. "O how love I thy law!" (Ps. 119:97). What did our Lord do with God's will? Why, he delighted in it. "I delight to do thy will, O my God" (40:8). Our Lord was subject to his earthly mother and adoptive father. "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them" (Luke 2:51). Our Lord honored his heavenly Father by doing his will. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). And all of this was for the righteousness and salvation of us clever cursers, that we might never be cursed of God.

—AL

EDITORIAL

As Often As Ye Eat This Bread and Drink This Cup (1)

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 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).

The Lord's supper is a most nourishing and satisfying meal for God's people. But Reformed churches follow the curious tradition of administering the Lord's supper very infrequently. Most Reformed churches administer the Lord's supper once every three months—four times per year. The Church Order that most Reformed churches have used since the Synod of Dordt includes this article: "The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least every two or three months" (art. 63). Assuming that a Reformed church has at least 104 worship services a year—two services per Sunday—a Reformed church has one hundred services without the Lord's supper and a mere four services with the Lord's supper. Even when Reformed churches administer the Lord's supper every two months, or also administer the Lord's supper on special

services like Good Friday and Christmas, those churches only administer the Lord's supper six to ten times per year at most.

When it comes to the frequency of administering the Lord's supper, the Reformed tradition is ungenerous and stingy. Instead of setting the nourishing sacrament of Christ's body and blood before God's people often, Reformed churches restrict the number of administrations to the barest of minimums. It would be difficult to administer the sacrament fewer times a year than Reformed churches currently do. In Reformed churches Jesus' "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup" (I Cor. 11:26) turns out to be not very often at all.

The Reformed tradition's stinginess in the frequency of administering the supper is surprising because the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper is very generous and rich. The Reformed confessions can hardly contain themselves in extolling the wonders and blessings of the Lord's supper. The Belgic Confession exults in the supper thus:

This feast is a spiritual table, at which Christ communicates himself with all his benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both himself and the merits of his sufferings and death, nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of his flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of his blood. (art. 35)

The Heidelberg Catechism trumpets the supper thus:

Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread and to drink of this cup in remembrance of him, adding these promises: first, that his body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and his blood shed for me, as certainly as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup communicated to me; and further, that he feeds and nourishes my soul to

everlasting life, with his crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ. (L.D. 28, Q&A 75)

The Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper lauds the supper thus:

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; that, whereas you should otherwise have suffered eternal death, I have given my body to the death of the cross and shed my blood for you; and as certainly feed and nourish your hungry and thirsty souls with my crucified body and shed blood to everlasting life, as this bread is broken before your eyes, and this cup is given to you, and you eat and drink the same with your mouth in remembrance of me.

The Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper is anything but miserly! The Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper overflows with comfort and refreshment for God's weary people. And no wonder. For the Lord's supper is the gospel, and the gospel is rich. The Lord's supper is Christ, and Christ is infinitely abundant. In the Lord's supper God's poor are given the kingdom, God's mourners are comforted, and God's hungry and thirsty are filled. In the Lord's supper the blind and the starving taste and see that God is good. In the Lord's supper the thirsty come to the waters, and those who have no money buy wine and milk without money and without price.

If the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper is so rich, how is it that Reformed churches so infrequently administer the Lord's supper? How is it that the Reformed churches practice what John Calvin called a defective custom of infrequent administration? In order to answer

these questions, we shall have to go back to the Reformation and look at some of the thorny problems that the churches faced as God brought

them out of Roman Catholic darkness into the gospel's light.

To be continued...

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

The Banner

December 16, 1920

(pp. 763–65)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article XCVIII. The New King and His Kingdom: In the Line of Shem

That the covenant with Noah is actually no other covenant than that established with Abraham is at least also suggested by the typical significance attributed in Scripture to the flood and the salvation of Noah and his family through the waters of the deluge.

We are all acquainted with our form for the administration of baptism. We have all heard it read several times, how in the prayer offered immediately before the administration of baptism reference is made to the flood as well as to the passing of Israel through the Red Sea as signifying baptism typically. God punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world with the flood and saved believing Noah and his family, thus the prayer has it, and by this baptism was signified.

And this reference in the baptism form to the deluge is based directly on the Word of God. The holy apostle in I Peter 3:20, 21 is speaking of the days when “the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

It is instructive to ask the question: in what manner is the flood a type of holy baptism? Was not the water of the deluge destructive in purpose and character; and is not the water of

holy baptism symbol of directly the opposite? Was not the water of the flood a manifestation of God's wrath executing judgment; and is not the water in baptism a sign of God's saving grace? Where is the point of comparison between the waters of the flood and the water in baptism?

Let us note in the first place that the apostle Peter considers the waters rather than the ark to have been the medium of salvation for Noah and his family. In the ark Noah and his family were saved **through water**. The water was the means of salvation for the few, that is, eight souls. Now, this can never be understood as long as you simply view the family of Noah as representatives and progenitors of the human race in general. As mere human beings, as representatives of the human race in general, they were not saved through the waters of the flood, but through the ark the Lord had commanded Noah to build. That same water that destroyed the wicked world would also have destroyed them if it had not been for the ark. But the thing becomes quite clear if you remember that Noah and his family represented the holy line, the line of God's covenant. You do not state the case fully and correctly if you simply assert that God saved the human race in the ark. He saved his covenant, his people, his Church. In Noah and his family the line of the holy seed was to be continued. It is for that reason that Noah must build the ark. But if you look at the little family

drifting on the destructive waters in that light, it will become quite plain that the waters were a means of salvation to them, that they were saved as God's covenant people through water. For what was the situation before the flood? That the whole world was given to wickedness. The imagination of man's heart was only evil continually. The world was abounding in wickedness. Even as we may expect it once more immediately before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ for judgment. There was, evidently, just one family that still feared the Lord. By a process of amalgamation the sons of God had identified themselves with the daughters of men. The world was fast swallowing up God's covenant people. If this process had been allowed to continue, it is not so difficult to see that within a comparatively short period the people of God would have been no more in the world. Or, if they had been able to maintain themselves spiritually, the wicked world would have destroyed them by main force. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He was not silent over against the world that departed from God, but as member of God's covenant, as God's party in the world, he witnessed, he preached and condemned the world. It is not likely that the world would have tolerated this preaching. How easy it would have been to silence this lonely preacher, and to extinguish the whole race of God's people as represented by his lonely family. And if you consider the history from this point of view, it is perfectly lucid how the Apostle Peter can say that they were saved through water. It was the water of the flood that vanquished for them the power of opposition. It was the deluge that separated them from the enemy. It was the flood that placed God's covenant people out of reach, so that they were saved from a wicked world. Or, to use the figure of baptism with reference to the flood, God submerged the whole human race in the flood only to let his covenant people emerge and survive.

Thus it is also plain in what respect the flood is a type of baptism. If you keep before you the full form of baptism, the form of immersion, the point of comparison between it and the flood is immediately evident. For then it is plain that

baptism signifies the submersion of the old man of sin, and the emersion of the new man in Christ. And what is true of the individual believer that is baptized is also true of God's people as a whole. The water of baptism makes separation between the old and the new, between what is of God's covenant and what is of the old root of sin. It becomes to God's people in the world a sign of separation, a sign that they are of God's party in the world. Even as the waters of the flood made separation between the world and God's covenant people, so also the water of baptism separates the people of God's covenant.

By this typical significance of the flood it is clearly suggested that the covenant with Noah was a covenant with Noah not simply as a second father of the human race, but as the bearer of the holy seed. In the ark the church was saved. The purpose of the flood was to save the church from the wicked world. It is with that church, that was saved in the ark through the waters of the flood, that God established his covenant. The covenant with Noah is the covenant of grace.

But, although the covenant with Noah appears at first as established with the human race in general, with Noah and his three sons and their seed, and although in that general form of this covenant we have already a foreshadowing of the cosmic realization of the covenant in a future dispensation; the principle of separation soon becomes evident. The occasion for this is Noah's intoxication and Ham's sin. We all know the history. Noah, having taken too much of the fruit of the vine, becomes the object of scorn and mockery of sensuous Ham. And it is after Noah wakes up and realizes what has taken place that he prophetically announces the future of his three sons.

The seed of Ham is to be cursed, and his lot is slavery. Canaan shall serve both Shem and Japheth. Jehovah shall be Shem's God. With him the covenant of grace is to be continued in the immediate future. From his loins is to come the seed of the woman. But Japheth's place shall be

enlarged, and he shall ultimately dwell in Shem's tents.

All of which does not mean that no descendants of Ham shall ever be received into God's Kingdom, no more than it signifies that all the descendants of Shem shall be children of Jehovah, and all the descendants of Japheth spiritual indwellers in the tents of Shem. But which implies, as also history points out, that the line of God's covenant is to be continued in Shem's descendants. From him shall come the Seed of the woman, who shall spread the tent of God's covenant. It shall, therefore, always be Shem's tent. But the tents of Shem shall ultimately be occupied by Japheth's descendants, as it is in the new dispensation.

Hence, from Noah the holy line of God's covenant is to run, not through Canaan, nor through Japheth, but through Shem, over Arphachsad and Peleg to Abraham.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

REPLY TO REV. H. HOEKSEMA

In the articles thus far contributed we have been looking for a little into the theological convictions of Rev. H. Hoeksema. To familiarize ourselves with these, it will be remembered, was to constitute the first part of our reply to his criticism. Our purpose was to first acquaint ourselves with the critic's fundamental views, then to take up his criticism. First discover his theological make-up, then to examine his critical output. First scrutinize the opponent (in this case he professes to be an innocent one, not actuated by animosity, not prompted by malice), then analyze the attack. This method, it is true, is rather the longer course to pursue, at least so it seems at the outset, but in the long run it will, I think, prove to be the only satisfactory one.

Our examination of Rev. Hoeksema's theological ideas is, at the point we have now reached, well under way. That examination has furthermore led to some very tangible results. Calvin

and the Reformed theologians supplied the reliable touchstone. The test was applied and we got considerable reaction. (The touchstone of the confessional writings will be applied later.) In our last article we presented some findings in regard to Rev. Hoeksema's views. These findings are almost sufficient to enable us to see what his entire theological platform looks like. The outstanding fact in it is his Anabaptist denial of the Reformed doctrine of Common Grace. That is the outspoken conviction of Rev. Hoeksema standing forth in bold relief. A cardinal Calvinistic teaching is taken hold of in a high handed, spirited way and boldly brushed aside. A foundation stone that contributes an essential part to the structure of Reformed thought (Reformed theology calls it "een alles beheerschende grondovertuiging rechtstreeks afgeleid uit de soevereiniteit des Heeren."¹) is violently torn away without Rev. Hoeksema realizing the damage that he is doing to the whole body of Reformed truth. Surely, Anabaptism isn't as harmless as it looks. It frequently speaks a language devout and saintly, eloquent and persuasive, for which there is required a discriminating judgment to detect its baneful influence.

But we were speaking of the findings that we had submitted at a previous time. Besides the denial of Common Grace there were several other findings. These, be it now said, were all stated in the briefest possible form and require some explanation to make them entirely intelligible. To this work of further elucidation we can, therefore, address ourselves for a little before proceeding to take up other main points of our enquiry. However, I should at this juncture like to call, first of all, the attention of the reader to a misprint that occurs in *The Banner* of Nov. 18, 1920. It is in my second article. You there read the following sentence: "From the Arminian or Semi-Pelagian point of view this were impossible."² This should be, "From the Arminian or Semi-Pelagian point of view this were possible." The manuscript which I handed in, and which is

¹ English translation: "an all-governing, foundational belief derived directly from the sovereignty of the Lord."

² R. Janssen, "Reply to Rev. H. Hoeksema," reprinted in *Reformed Pavilion* 2, no. 42 (January 25, 2025): 16.

still at The Banner office, has the correct reading. The misprint had its origin apparently in some unexplainable way and was not detected at the final proofreading. The corrected sentence, it is to be borne in mind, is a quotation from Rev. Hoeksema's article of April 17, 1919,³ and is very significant. It is worthwhile that we pause a moment to consider its implication. Rev. Hoeksema is there arguing that it is "utterly impossible" that God in some way, to a certain extent, in a certain measure assume an attitude of favor, of general grace to all men. And then immediately in the next sentence he tells us that from the Arminian or Semi-Pelagian standpoint this is possible. The verdict Rev. Hoeksema here pronounces is a very remarkable one, indeed, especially since it is the specific doctrine of Calvin and Reformed theology that God does show his general grace to all men. One sees somewhat what Rev. Hoeksema's Anabaptistic dogma is headed for. We who hold to the doctrine of Common Grace have the viewpoint of the Arminian or Semi-Pelagian! We are not sure what step will be Rev. Hoeksema's next one. We owe him apologies now, as it is, for holding to certain fundamental Calvinistic principles. If the Anabaptistic leaven of Rev. Hoeksema leavens the dough to an appreciable extent, will mere apologies be accepted any longer? This, at least, is sure, that a thorough-going, enthusiastic Anabaptist is not so gentle an individual as one may think, but is particularistic, fanatic, and thoroughly intolerant. So much for the small yet important correction and for the commentary to elucidate the sentence as corrected.

We come, then, to the further elucidation of some of the findings. One of these was that Rev. Hoeksema in his approach to the question of Common Grace and in his rejection of the doctrine of Common Grace gives a controlling place to reason. He starts out by telling us that there are two kinds of people in this world, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

These two have naturally the same life...talents and powers, etc. Is there a second kind of grace, a Common Grace, he then asks, in which the sinners as well as the believers share? This, he points out, is the problem. And the solution of the problem, it is then very significantly said, implies two fundamental questions. The first question touches the idea of God, and Rev. Hoeksema asks whether, objectively speaking, it is conceivable that God assume an attitude of favor to those that are not in Christ. The second question touches the idea of man, of natural man, and Rev. Hoeksema here asks whether our conception of natural man admits of a receptivity in him for God's Common Grace. Both of these questions are answered in the negative. We are told again and again that it is inconceivable that God assumes an attitude of favor to natural man, and likewise, that there is no receptivity in natural man for God's Common Grace. Rev. Hoeksema also tells us that the above two fundamental questions have never received careful treatment in all that the theologians have written on Common Grace.

This whole procedure of Rev. Hoeksema shows plainly that reason virtually decides the matter for him. The Reformed doctrine of Common Grace is called before the bar of reason. If it cannot stand the test that reason may impose, well that ends it. What here cannot commend itself to reason, cannot retain a place in our faith. And as to Rev. Hoeksema's observation that the two fundamental questions have never been adequately treated in the history of Reformed theology, I would remark that our Reformed theologians knew better than to give the doctrine of Common Grace a rationalistic basis.

But who are they that accord to reason the deciding vote? That have the bias of reason and not the bias of faith, least of all the "Reformed bias," as Rev. Hoeksema calls it? (Compare Banner September 16, 1920, where in language

³ Herman Hoeksema, "Article XXIX: The Fallen King and His Kingdom (continued)," reprinted in *Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 29 (October 28, 2023): 6–8.

glowing and devout Rev. Hoeksema inculcates the “Reformed bias” on his readers.⁴) Who are they? Rev. Hoeksema himself gives the answer. They are the higher critics. Higher criticism appeals to reason. It refuses to be bound by anything else. What is out of harmony with reason cannot be permanent in faith. What cannot bear the light of reason is doomed to pass away. Such is the attitude, such the method of the higher critics. Rev. Hoeksema himself illustrates this attitude and the method from the book of the higher critic Peake. We wonder how

Prof. Peake would feel if he saw Rev. Hoeksema, by a strong appeal to reason, throwing overboard the Reformed doctrine of Common Grace. Could we be much surprised if Prof. Peake, seeing Rev. Hoeksema’s strong appeal to reason in discarding Common Grace and reading also Rev. Hoeksema’s condemnation of the bar-of-reason method of higher criticism, should cry out, “Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye”?

—R. Janssen
(To be continued)



⁴ Herman Hoeksema, “Article LXXXVI: The New King and His Kingdom: Sons of God (continued),” reprinted in *Reformed Pavilion* 2, no. 34 (November 30, 2024): 10–12.