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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 if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed: if he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed.

—Exodus 21:18–19

Unbearable Leniency

Here is a curious judgment—so curious that it hardly seems to fit with the other judgments that God delivered to Moses. But here is a very blessed judgment. For in this judgment is proof that justification can only be by faith alone and not by the works of the law. How does one get *that* proof out of *this* judgment, you ask? Let us consider this curious, blessed judgment and see.

This judgment concerned Hebrew men who got into a fistfight. In their striving together one man struck the other so violently that the injured man was bedridden for a time. Perhaps the man had struck the blow with his fist. Perhaps the man had used a rock as a weapon. But however the blow was struck, it incapacitated the injured man for a time without killing him. When it became clear that the injured man would not die—he rose from his bed and walked again, even if he now needed the assistance of a staff—then the man who had struck the blow would be entirely acquitted before the law. No penalty whatsoever would be exacted of the striker. The man who had struck the blow was responsible to pay for the injured man’s loss of time and provide any medical needs to see the injured man back to full health. But even this was not punishment before the law but simply the duty of a brother restoring his injured brother to health.

What a curious judgment! What makes it so curious is its lenience toward the offenders. None of God’s other judgments were lenient toward the offenders. Rather, God’s judgments

were just and fair. The principle upon which God’s judgments were founded was *an eye for an eye*. That is, the injury that a man inflicted on his fellow man was to be punished by the same injury’s being inflicted on him. But there was no such principle behind the judgment concerning fistfights. Both men in the fistfight were offenders. The brethren should not have come to blows. But both offenders—both the injured and the injuring—were thoroughly acquitted before the law. Fist fighting was a crime with no punishment. How curious that the holy law of the holy God should be so astoundingly lenient to the offenders.

Here, finally, was a law that man could keep! Here, finally, was a punishment that man could bear! The rest of God’s law was so strict. God is just and perfectly righteous. In his perfect righteousness God does not suffer disobedience to go unpunished. God’s perfect justice against sin must be satisfied. Sin committed against the most high majesty of God must be punished with the extreme punishment of God’s everlasting curse. But here, finally, was some lenience! Here, finally, was a law and a punishment that men could keep and bear!

Or could they? Let us hear what the apostles had to say about it. The Pharisees said that salvation came by keeping the law. “But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). For salvation man

must keep the law of Moses—the whole law of Moses, including the bearable judgment about fist fighting. But the apostle Peter stood up and taught that no one had ever been able to bear the law of Moses. “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” (v. 10).

And therein lies the gospel! We cannot bear the law. We cannot bear any of the law. We cannot even bear the lenient part of the law. For salvation the law is unbearable! Thanks be to God that salvation does not come by the law but by Jesus Christ. For the law of Moses is unbearable. “But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (Acts 15:11).

—AL

FROM THE EDITOR

A warm welcome to our readers near and far. Here at *Reformed Pavilion*, the promise of spring is in the air. The sap is flowing in the trees. Robins and cranes have been sighted. The clocks are poised to “spring” ahead. Our Lord walks through the earth and calls it back to life. So he has promised, and so it comes to pass, year after year, without fail. “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22).

This issue of *Reformed Pavilion* marks a milestone: the one hundredth installment of Herman Hoeksema’s *Banner* articles. Sometime back in 1920, the editor of the *Banner* became mistaken in his numbering of the installments. Inexplicably, the installment republished last week was

originally listed as “89,” the installment republished this week was listed as “1,” and the installment that will be republished next week (D.V.) was listed as “90.” That minor numbering error aside, this week’s installment is the one hundredth. Hoeksema gave the entire space for the article to Prof. Ralph Janssen, which is about as anti-climactic as it gets for a hundredth installment. Nevertheless, it is edifying to see the controversy between Hoeksema and Janssen unfold issue by issue. The editor of the *Banner* in those days, Henry Beets, also included a brief editorial item that the reader will find interesting.

The rest of the articles in *Reformed Pavilion* this week are either self-explanatory or have a brief introduction attached. Without further ado, happy reading!

—AL



As Often As Ye Eat This Bread and Drink This Cup (3)

In these editorials we are investigating the curious Reformed tradition of administering the Lord’s supper infrequently. Whereas Reformed churches meet more than one hundred times each year for worship, most of them administer the Lord’s supper only four to six times per year. This Reformed tradition is curious because the Reformed doctrine of the Lord’s supper is so rich and fulsome. The Reformed doctrine of eating and drinking Christ’s body and blood by faith implies that Reformed churches would administer such a nourishing sacrament often. How is it that Reformed churches have settled on such an infrequent—even stingy—administration of the sacrament?

In our investigation thus far, we have examined Jesus’ institution of the sacrament, the early church’s practice during the time of the apostles, and the early church’s practice during the days of the church fathers. The evidence points to frequent administration of the Lord’s supper by the early church. Prof. Hanks summarizes this period of the church thus:

Because the Lord had commanded the church to celebrate this sacrament in remembrance of him, it was administered every Lord’s Day and frequently at every service, but without the lengthy liturgical form that we use today.¹

This time we turn our attention to the church’s decline into very infrequent administration of the Lord’s supper.

The Corruption of the Lord’s Supper

It did not take long for the doctrine of the Lord’s supper to be corrupted. The true doctrine of the

Lord’s supper is that our Lord made the one necessary sacrifice for the sins of his people by his death on the cross and that he appointed the Lord’s supper to direct our faith to his one and only sacrifice. “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” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 80).

But the idea began to arise early on in the church that the Lord’s supper was actually a repetition of the cross. According to Prof. Hanks, “The idea developed that the Lord’s supper was an unbloody sacrifice that repeated the sacrifice Christ offered on the cross.”²

The corruption of doctrine led to the corruption of practice. If the Lord’s supper were actually a holy repetition of Jesus’ dying on the cross, then only worthy people should be allowed to witness the reenactment. As one historian explains,

The worship service became sharply divided between the administration of Word and sacrament. The whole church gathered for the ministry of the Word, but before the Lord’s supper could begin, three groups were dismissed from the church: the children, the catechumens and those under discipline. The bread and the wine of the Lord’s supper were regarded as things so holy that not only must noncommunicant members and visitors be excluded from *eating* and *drinking* the bread and wine, but also from witnessing the breaking of bread and the distribution of both elements.

¹ Herman Hanks, *Christ and His Church Through the Ages*, vol. 1, *The Ancient Church: AD 30–590*, 2nd edition, ed. Dan Van Uffelen (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2021), 113.

² Hanks, *Christ and His Church Through the Ages*, 173.

The theological motive for this exclusion was that the bread and wine were increasingly thought of as a propitiatory sacrifice that had to be laid on an altar, and the minister of the Word was seen more and more as a priest officiating at the altar. The high point of the Lord's supper was no longer the communion which believers have with Jesus through faith when they eat and drink; the high point became the moment of consecration, when the common bread and wine became holy bread and wine, that is, when the bread and wine was transubstantiated into the real body and blood of Christ. The liturgy became more elaborate as censors, chants, set formulas, formal gestures and so on were introduced. The people were taught to be content with the privilege of witnessing what the priest was doing at the altar on their behalf. The focus of blessing in the Lord's supper shifted from the act of personally eating and drinking bread and wine, to witnessing the bread and wine manipulated by priests at the front of the church building. In fact, people began to regard the work of the priests as being the only means of grace so that it became quite unnecessary and irrelevant to personally eat or drink.³

The false doctrine regarding the Lord's supper and the corrupt practice of administering it did not appear everywhere at once. But once apostasy creeps into the church, it steadily creeps its way through the entire church. Already by the fourth century, most people in the church never partook of the Lord's supper, which was by then

commonly known as the Eucharist. The church held Eucharist services often; but the church did not administer that sacrament to the people, who were excluded from eating and drinking. Some church leaders encouraged the people to receive the Lord's supper regularly, but the overwhelming practice of the church was not to administer the sacrament to the people. For example, John Chrysostom complained that no one came to the table of the Lord.

O custom, O presumption! In vain, therefore, is a daily offering made; in vain we stand before the altar; there is no one who will partake along with us.⁴

As the centuries rolled on, church councils stepped in by requiring a minimum number of times each year that the people should receive the Lord's supper. These rules were enforced by discipline, so that anyone who missed the minimum number of times could be excommunicated. The Council of Agde (AD 506) mandated that church members receive the sacrament at least three times per year—Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. The Fourth Lateran Council (AD 1215) mandated that church members receive the sacrament at least once per year—Easter.

A church historian summarizes this period of decline as follows:

After a period of renewal in the church during the fourth century, communion became less frequent despite the protests of church councils. By the sixth century it was declared that churches must celebrate Eucharist at least three times per year (Christmas, Easter and Pentecost). By 1215, the minimum requirement was reduced to one (Easter), at which time

³ P. Aasman, "Celebration of the Lord's Supper—How Often?," *Clarion* 46, nos. 4–5 (1997), reprinted at <https://www.spindleworks.com/library/aasman/lshowmany.htm#1>.

⁴ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Ephesians*, as quoted in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., Library of Christian Classics 20–21 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 4.17.46, 2:1425. Chrysostom (ca. AD 347–407) was one of the later church fathers. He was famous for his sound, eloquent preaching, for which he received his name "Golden-mouth" (Chryso-stom). Chrysostom referred to the Lord's supper as a "sacrifice," by which he meant a sacrifice of thanksgiving, not a repetition of Christ's sacrifice. Chrysostom also referred to the Lord's table as the "altar," by which he meant that place where Christians gather to offer themselves as a sacrifice to God. Nevertheless, the language of "sacrifice" and "altar" was not proper, for it too easily came to mean that place where Christ is sacrificed to God again in a non-bloody repetition of his sacrifice.

the cup was withheld from the “laity” by church law. A theologian of that time, James of Vitry, explains the decline in frequency thus: “Since sins have so multiplied in the land, it is permitted that communion be received by the laity only one time per year, that is, at Easter.”

After the period of the early church, the whole celebration of the Lord’s supper began to change. It was detached from the preaching of the gospel, and exalted as a mystery fit only for the few. The sacrament was emphasized as a necessary means of grace for adults, while at the same time, it was shrouded under mysterious liturgical actions. As the doctrine of transubstantiation took firm hold in the church, the congregation became afraid to personally participate in the sacrament, and consequently, they were satisfied to merely witness the sacrament rather than personally participate in it. Consequently, over a period of 1200 years, the frequency with which one actually participated in the Lord’s supper declined from every Sunday (52 times each year) to every Easter (1 time each year), although the church leaders tried at times to prevent this decline.⁵

It is striking how closely the present Reformed tradition of infrequent administration mirrors the Roman Catholic tradition during the Middle Ages. The synods and councils of the Middle Ages had to set a minimum number of administrations—at least three times per year or at least once per year. So also the Reformed tradition is stated in terms of a minimum

number of administrations—“at least every two or three months” (Church Order 63). The synods and councils of the Middle Ages set a very low number of administrations—three times or one time. So also the Reformed tradition sets a very low number of administrations—four times or six times. The Reformed doctrine of the Lord’s supper is very different from the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Lord’s supper! But the Reformed tradition gives the Lord’s supper to God’s hungry and thirsty people only slightly more frequently than the Roman Catholic Church did in the Middle Ages.

Next time we will look at the recovery of the Lord’s supper during the Reformation. To whet our appetites for that recovery, let us hear from John Calvin.

Plainly this custom which enjoins us to take communion once a year is a veritable invention of the devil, whoever was instrumental in introducing it...It should have been done far differently: the Lord’s Table should have been spread at least once a week for the assembly of Christians, and the promises declared in it should feed us spiritually.⁶

John Calvin is fine, but what really whets our appetites is the Lord. Let us close this article by hearing from him.

This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come. (I Cor. 11:25–26)

To be continued...

—AL

⁵ Aasman, “Celebration of the Lord’s Supper—How Often?”

⁶ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.46, 2:1424.

How to Whitewash a Sepulcher

The following paragraph is from the March 1, 2025, *Standard Bearer* (SB). Prof. Brian Huizinga is interviewing Prof. Barry Gritters about Professor Gritters' experience as one of the three co-editors of the SB. The occasion for the interview is Professor Gritters' recent retirement from that position. In the particular question and answer quoted here, Professor Gritters mentions the "most recent schism" in the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) as the greatest challenge during his years as co-editor of the SB. The schism to which Professor Gritters refers was the departure of some families from the PRC in 2021, which families formed the Reformed Protestant Churches.

10. What were some of the challenges (or, your greatest challenge) in serving as editor? The full story of our greatest challenge—I judge it to be during the PRC's most recent schism—may be able to be told some day; today is probably too soon. I must say, though, that I am very grateful for especially two things during those tumultuous years. First, the RFPA Society membership came out in large numbers at one crucial meeting when there was an effort to turn the SB in a different direction. The society's vote was a clear mandate and sign of support for the editorial staff. This interview would not be taking place, and the SB would not be what it is today, had that society meeting gone differently. Second, that sad history brings up another reason I am thankful that we had three editors. No one man had to make those hard decisions of what to publish and what to refuse. One editor calling all the shots may have made matters simpler, because calling scores of meetings with the three editors took time and sapped our strength. But as I look back on those very unpleasant years, I thank God that faithful and trusted colleagues could

assemble and make decisions together, prayerfully.¹

Professor Gritters is not ready to tell the full story of the most recent schism in the Protestant Reformed Churches. And who can blame him? The history of that schism reveals the Protestant Reformed denomination to be a sepulcher full of dead men's bones. I wouldn't want that story to be told either, if I were him; not now, not ever. But even though Professor Gritters is not ready to tell the full story of that schism, he is perfectly ready to apply a thick coat of whitewash to his churches' and his magazine's role in that schism. And who can blame him? The only way for the PRC to live with themselves for their rejection of the gospel is forever to admire the pretty white paint that their leaders keep applying to their charnel house; just be sure not to look inside.

But let us take a quick peek inside anyway, shall we? Just to see for a moment what lies behind the gleaming lies?

2019 RFPA Society Meeting

Professor Gritters mentions a meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA) society in 2019 for which he is grateful.

First, the RFPA Society membership came out in large numbers at one crucial meeting when there was an effort to turn the SB in a different direction. The society's vote was a clear mandate and sign of support for the editorial staff. This interview would not be taking place, and the SB would not be what it is today, had that society meeting gone differently.

What a handsome coat of whitewash! Professor Gritters' telling of that RFPA meeting implies that the *Standard Bearer* had been soldiering on as a free Reformed magazine for nearly a century but that suddenly an effort arose to hijack the SB. If not for the heroic members of the RFPA society's turning out *en masse*, the

¹ Brian Huizinga, "An Interview with Prof. Barry Gritters, Former SB Editor (2)," *Standard Bearer* 101, no. 7 (March 2025): 207.

SB may well have been lost. But thanks to the ringing vote of confidence for the three editors, the magazine was saved for posterity.

The reality is that by the time of that crucial meeting of the RFPA in 2019, the *Standard Bearer* had ceased to be a Reformed magazine. The magazine had raised the banner of Arminianism and was bearing it as the standard of the Protestant Reformed Churches. If that language sounds too harsh to anyone, remember what Editor Kenneth Koole had written in 2018 and had been vigorously defending—with the conniving of Editor Barry Gritters and Editor Russell Dykstra—against all critics: “If a man would be saved, there is that which he *must* do.”² That Arminian theology stinks in the nostrils of God. But Editor Koole enjoyed every considerable protection that the RFPA, the SB editors, and the PRC could muster for him, while those who opposed him suffered every considerable injury that the RFPA, the SB editors, and the PRC could inflict upon them. Editor Koole has his reward.

The reality is also that by the time of that crucial meeting of the RFPA in 2019, the *Standard Bearer* had ceased to be a free magazine. The editors were free to write and defend Arminianism. But if one were minded to fight against Editor Koole for the sake of the Reformed faith, it was nearly impossible to submit material and get it published. If that language sounds too harsh to anyone, a timeline is found elsewhere in this issue of *Reformed Pavilion*, recording the months of phone calls and meetings it took to get just one letter published.

Contrary to Professor Gritters’ whitewash, the reality is that the “effort” underway in 2019 to “turn the SB in a different direction” was not an effort to hijack the magazine from its free Reformed moorings but was a last-ditch effort

to rescue the *Standard Bearer* from the censorious, Arminian editors who had stolen it. The RFPA society meeting did not save the magazine but doomed the magazine and gave the lie to the “R” and the “F” in its “RFPA.”

Three Prayerful Editors

Professor Gritters also mentions his gratitude for having three editors during those tumultuous years.

Second, that sad history brings up another reason I am thankful that we had three editors. No one man had to make those hard decisions of what to publish and what to refuse. One editor calling all the shots may have made matters simpler, because calling scores of meetings with the three editors took time and sapped our strength. But as I look back on those very unpleasant years, I thank God that faithful and trusted colleagues could assemble and make decisions together, prayerfully.

What a handsome coat of whitewash! Professor Gritters’ telling of the editors’ work implies that they were a godly band of brothers industriously and prayerfully running the magazine together. How often they met together! How carefully they decided what to publish and what to refuse! How much time and strength they spent in their noble cause!

The reality is that the editors of the *Standard Bearer* were asleep at the wheel while the controversy raged in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Prior to the crucial meeting of Synod 2018, the one and only thing that the *Standard Bearer* had to say about the controversy was that protests in the assemblies were getting too long.³ The magazine gave no instruction in the

² Kenneth Koole, “What Must I Do...?,” *Standard Bearer* 95, no. 1 (October 1, 2018): 7.

³ Russell Dykstra, “PRC Synod 2018, Agenda,” *Standard Bearer* 94, no. 16 (May 15, 2018): 367. Here is the *Standard Bearer*’s entire contribution to the controversy prior to Synod 2018: “Also at Synod are four protests of statements or actions of the Synod of 2017, and an appeal of a decision of a classis. These protests make up 264 pages of the 427-page agenda. Synod may be forced to appoint a study committee to address the problem of ballooning protests and appeals. There is no good reason that protests or appeals should number in the scores, much less hundreds of pages. All consistories are willing in good faith to assist members so that they can bring the clearest, most precise protest/appeal with all the supporting documents needed. It is positively detrimental to overload the ecclesiastical assemblies with a mountain of documents. To put it into perspective, how many of us recently picked up a book of 427 pages, and not only *read* it in a month, but *studied* it in order to be qualified to discuss and make decisions on its content? That is what we are asking all the delegates to synod to do.”

doctrinal issues but maintained a studied silence on the controversy. After the crucial meeting of Synod 2018, when the undersigned all but begged the editors to explain the controversy in the magazine, they refused. Editor Dykstra used the pages of the *SB* to threaten discipline against anyone who would say that the false doctrine that had been taught in the PRC was “heresy.”⁴ To top it all off, Editor Koole bounded onto the scene by calling Herman Hoeksema’s doctrine of faith “nonsense” and insisting instead that if a man would be saved, there is that which he must do.⁵

Far from being industrious editors of a Reformed magazine in the Protestant Reformed hour of need, the three editors of the *Standard Bearer* were worse than useless for the cause of the truth. Perhaps the editors did a lot of praying, as Professor Gritters alleges, but God did not hear their prayers. And if that sounds harsh to anyone, then I invite that one to write in with his explanation of how Editor Koole’s “If a man would be saved, there is that which he *must* do” was God’s gracious answer to the editors’ fervent prayers.

The editors of the *Standard Bearer* slept soundly through the defamation of God’s name and honor in the doctrinal controversy, but they came wide awake in defense of their own name and honor. A group of concerned men sent the editors and the RFPA board letters explaining our dissatisfaction with the editors of the *Standard Bearer*. When the editors feared that their names might be besmirched by these letters, they went on a rampage. They charged men with sin and invented their own rules for how the charged men should respond. The editors made such an awful mess of things in their hairy zeal for their own honor that even the likes of Classis East—as corrupt an ecclesiastical assembly as there is—could not uphold the editors’ case.

Contrary to Professor Gritters’ whitewash, the three editors of the *Standard Bearer* were not industriously and prayerfully laboring for the cause of the truth in the Protestant Reformed hour of need. Rather, they industriously and prayerfully trampled the name of Christ, while industriously and prayerfully guarding their own names.

Again: Come Out

Is there no one left in the Protestant Reformed Churches who grows weary of the lies? O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn Christ’s glory into shame? How long will ye love vanity and seek after lying? (Ps. 4:2). Your Protestant Reformed leaders tell you it is too soon to tell the story of the most critical episode in the churches’ history since 1953. But when they do say anything about it, they lie. The Protestant Reformed Churches are whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly but are within full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness (Matt. 23:27–28). Come out from among them! Save yourself from this untoward generation! Find or form a true church, where the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached.

And those who have been delivered from the Protestant Reformed Churches, let us remember from whence we came. Our deliverance was not because of us but in spite of us. For if it had not been the Lord who was on our side; yea, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick when their wrath was kindled against us. Blessed be the Lord! Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth (Ps. 124).

—AL

⁴ Russell Dykstra, “Synod 2018: Obedience and Covenant Fellowship,” *Standard Bearer* 94, no. 18 (July 2018): 415. “Let this be clear. Anyone who, from this date on, concerning the minister, consistory, committee to assist the consistory, or Classis East, anyone, I say, who alleges that those individuals or ecclesiastical bodies taught heresy, or justification by faith and works, or Federal Vision, or a conditional covenant, is guilty of slander. Such a one must be rebuked. Slander against officebearers, such serious slander, is the devil’s tool to divide the church of Jesus Christ. This is the sin of schism, a sin so serious that officebearers are deposed for it. And members excommunicated for it.”

⁵ Kenneth Koole, “Response,” *Standard Bearer* 95, no. 12 (March 15, 2019): 279.

Timeline of Letter

The following timeline records how difficult it was to get a single letter published in the *Standard Bearer* during the “most recent schism” that Prof. Barry Gritters refers to, as spoken of elsewhere in this issue. The editors of the *Standard Bearer* refused to publish a letter from Rev. Nathan Langerak and then refused to publish a letter from Rev. Martin Vander Wal. The editors only published a letter from the undersigned after months of meetings and discussions. The undersigned compiled the timeline as the events were unfolding. Why? It was a dangerous time to stand for the truth of the gospel in the Protestant Reformed Churches, and it seemed like a good idea to keep a careful record of everything that was happening.

The *Standard Bearer* boasts of being a “free” magazine, as enshrined in the name of its publishing association—the Reformed Free Publishing Association. But the three editors were the heaviest-handed censors at a time when the Protestant Reformed Churches desperately needed a free magazine. Let the reader see through the whitewash that Professor Gritters slaps on the history.

The timeline is published here without editing, except for correcting a few spelling errors from the original. The timeline covers the years 2018–19.

—AL

Timeline of A. Lanning’s SB Letter

- October 1 Rev. Koole’s editorial “What must I do ...?” is published in the SB.
In my judgment, the editorial promoted the same false doctrine that was condemned by Synod 2018. I considered sending a letter to the SB, but I heard that Rev. VanderWal and Rev. N. Langerak were both writing letters. I decided to wait to see what they would write and what response the SB would have.
- October ? At some point in late October, the editors of the SB refused to publish Rev. N. Langerak’s letter as submitted.
- October 30 Rev. N. Langerak’s post “In Response to ‘What Must I Do?’ Editorial in the Standard Bearer” is published on the RFPB Blog.
- November ? At some point in early November, the editors of the SB refused to print Rev. Vanderwal’s letter as submitted.
- November 1 I tried to call Rev. Koole to discuss my own doctrinal objections to his editorial. I could not get through, so I emailed him instead, but had the wrong email address.
- November 2 I emailed Rev. Koole at his correct email address to lay out my concerns and propose a discussion between us.

Ken:

I tried to reach you by phone, but I’m not sure if I have your correct phone numbers. I hope everything has gone well with your move.

I wanted to discuss your editorial in the SB, entitled “What must I do...?” I agree with the main doctrinal point that you were making, that is, we regenerated men have the duty to obey God and the ability to obey God by virtue of the Holy Spirit’s work in us. However, I have three concerns about the article that I would like to discuss with you when you have a chance.

1. It seems to me that the article makes faith merely another work of obedience, and does not distinguish faith as one thing and works of obedience as something else entirely.
2. It seems to me that the article makes the role of obedience to be unto salvation, rather than because of salvation.
3. It seems that you perceive some threat to the PRC that you are opposing by your article. It seems that you are warning us that in the controversy in the PRC, the danger is those who deny the regenerated believer's activity of obedience. But I wonder where that threat is actually found in the PRC. My concern here is the same as Nathan Langerak's in his blog post, that the approach of the editorial perpetuates the confusion about what doctrine was actually at stake in the controversy. I list this last, however, because I am mainly concerned about the first two things I mentioned.

I am not trying to be confrontational with this email. I am asking in good faith for a discussion of these doctrinal points.

If you are OK discussing this over the phone, that is fine with me. (Home) 878-3255 or (cell) 269-286-3379. If you want to meet face to face I am fine with that too. Or if you have some other proposed way to discuss this, perhaps by email, I'm all ears.

Thanks Ken.

Warmly in Christ,
Andy

- November 6 Rev. Koole responded to set up a telephone meeting on the following day.
- November 7 Rev. Koole and I spoke about his editorial on the phone for about 30 minutes. Although our conversation was brotherly, we were in sharp disagreement. In the course of our conversation, my concerns about the editorial were confirmed. I was as fair-minded as I could be as I listened to Rev. Koole, but his view of works and my view of works were very different. Rev. Koole himself had the same evaluation of our positions. He told me that my teaching was very dangerous for the PRC. I had these specific concerns from our conversation:
- i) Regarding Peter's call to the men in Acts 2 to repent, Rev. Koole said that Peter was not denying the premise of their question, "What must we do?" but was affirming the premise of their question that they must indeed do something to be saved. While explaining this, Rev. Koole said, "We must repent for justification."
 - ii) Rev. Koole informed me that he also had a problem with my teaching. He referred to my sermon on Noah Building the Ark, and my explanation of Hebrews 11:7 that Noah was saved from God's wrath in the flood entirely by grace alone through faith alone. Rev. Koole asked me, "Who built the ark? Noah did, to the saving of his house." Rev. Koole went on to explain that this means that God graciously took into account what Noah did by faith and obedience to save Noah. He also said that one of the motives to obey God is that along the way of obedience we will experience justification and peace with God.

- iii) Trying to understand what he meant, I asked Rev. Koole if anything that we receive depends upon our working. His immediate and vigorous response was, “Andy, Yes!” He referred to prayer as an example of our work to receive the Holy Spirit. He told me that I was afraid of good language like “depends” because it was so pregnant with meaning. He told me, “Fear of the language must not disable us from saying that you must do something to get something.”
- iv) I began to inform Rev. Koole about HH’s sermon on the Philippian jailor. Rev. Koole immediately knew what I was talking about and cut me off, saying that he had a copy of that sermon. He told me, “Hoeksema was dead wrong in that sermon.” This was another main point that convinced me that there is a sharp difference between Rev. Koole and myself. I take HH’s sermon on the Philippian jailor to be the correct way that the unconditional covenant explains the call of the gospel.
- v) Rev. Koole informed me that the danger to our people is not false doctrine. Rather, the danger is that we have all our t’s crossed and i’s dotted, and the world comes in like a flood. Although he did not use the term, he was convinced the danger to us was not false doctrine, but was dead orthodoxy.
- vi) Rev. Koole closed our conversation by insisting, “To inherit eternity, there is something you must do.”

November 7 After speaking with Rev. Koole, I immediately called Prof. Dykstra to seek his advice about what I should do. I shared with him how troubled I was by the editorial, and that my conversation with Rev. Koole had only confirmed my concerns. I informed Prof. Dykstra that I was considering sending a letter, but that I wanted to give the SB the chance to handle this internally first. He appreciated this approach. Prof. Dykstra assured me that he would not rest until he had spoken to Rev. Koole to hear for himself, and that he would meet with Rev. Koole and respond to me by November 16.

November 12 Prof. Dykstra arranged a phone call with me. He informed me that he had not talked to Rev. Koole yet, but that he was sure that Rev. Koole and I were on the same page theologically. I responded that I hoped and prayed we were on the same page, but that I was completely opposed to the theology in the October 1 editorial. Prof. Dykstra said that it would be good for Rev. Koole and I to meet, with the other editors (Profs. Dykstra and Gritters) in attendance as well. I agreed to this, but said that I would like Prof. Dykstra to follow up with Rev. Koole himself first so that the SB could handle this internally.

November 15 Rev. Koole’s response to Rev. N. Langerak, “A charge answered,” is published in the SB.

November 17 Having not heard any more from Prof. Dykstra, I called him to see if he had had a chance to speak with Rev. Koole yet. He had not yet spoken to him, but said again that it would be best to have a meeting between the editors and me. I informed him that I had no objection to this and was willing to meet, but that I still had an objection to the editorial. It appeared to me that the editors were not taking any steps to address the editorial themselves, but were instead treating my objections to the editorial as a misunderstanding. Nevertheless, I agreed that it would be good to meet. Prof. Dykstra and I were in agreement that I could still send a letter to the SB.

- November 19 Because it appeared to me that the SB was not going to deal with my concerns internally, I began drafting a letter to the SB.
- November 20 I finished the letter to the SB and sent it to a few colleagues for their comment and advice. I also sent a copy to Byron Center's Consistory for their review and discussion.
- November 21 Prof. Dykstra sent an email to the SB editors and to me in order to arrange a meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to "come to a better understanding of each other's positions." I replied that I had already spoken to Rev. Koole and understood his position, and that I had already written a letter to the SB to be sent on the weekend. Nevertheless, I was willing to meet.
- November 21 Byron Center's Consistory discussed the letter.
- November 24 Prof. Dykstra wrote an email suggesting that it was not Rev. Koole who had taken an erroneous position, but that I might be "changing longstanding Reformed positions and language." I replied that my position was "salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, with good works as the fruit," but that if he knew of specific instances where I had changed Reformed positions and language, to please let me know them so that I could consider them. Prof. Dykstra has never responded to this.
- November 24 Rev. Koole wrote an email to the editors and me saying that if I already had a letter written, there was little value in meeting now.
- November 24 Since it appeared that there would be no meeting, I officially submitted my letter to the *Standard Bearer* in an email to the three editors.
- November 27 Having heard nothing from any of the editors, and thinking that our last exchange called for some discussion, I called Prof. Dykstra to arrange a meeting with him.
- November 27 Elder _____ of Byron Center sent a letter to Byron Center's Consistory recommending that I "have a face to face meeting with Rev. Koole to see if they can come to a better understanding of each other."
- November 29 Prof. Dykstra and I met at seminary and had a cordial, brotherly meeting. We discussed the theology in the editorial for a bit, and related theological questions for a longer time. We also discussed my letter. Prof. Dykstra had two main objections to my letter. First, he thought that a letter of this sort would cause trouble in the PRC, because it would be a public statement that two PRC ministers disagreed with each other theologically. I replied that the letter was in no way schismatic, not in tone, in purpose, or in content. I also replied that, as far as I am concerned, synod settled the controversy in the PRC. The problem, however, is that the SB continues to undermine synod's decision by downplaying the seriousness of the false doctrines that were taught. The Oct. 1 editorial went even further by proposing the same false doctrine that synod had condemned, giving works a place and function they do not have in our salvation. The trouble, then, is not letters to the SB that call the SB to account, but the SB editorials in the first place. Prof. Dykstra suggested that I do a complete rewrite of the letter so that the letter would make suggestions rather than state objections. Prof. Dykstra's second concern was that I wrote to the "editors" and "the *Standard Bearer*," rather than to Rev. Koole alone. I replied that I had just assumed that letters about an editorial would be submitted to the editors. Prof. Dykstra said that the way I had

phrased it would only inflame those who are already distrustful of the SB. We also discussed the possibility of a meeting with Rev. Koole so that he could explain his own thinking in the editorial. I replied again that this was a good idea and I could meet, but that the editorial as it already exists is the problem and must be addressed in the SB. Nevertheless, I readily agreed to meet to discuss these things more fully. Prof. Dykstra said that he would make arrangements for a meeting. I think it is ambiguous at this point whether my letter remains submitted to the SB or not.

- December 3 Having heard nothing from anyone, I emailed Rev. Koole to try to arrange a phone call and a meeting.
- December 4 Rev. Koole responded and we scheduled a meeting for Tuesday, December 11, at 9:30 AM at seminary. My plan for the meeting was to meet with the editors to hear their thoughts. I believe that I have given the editors every opportunity to deal with this internally. Although I am glad to meet and discuss these things, the editorial itself must still be addressed in the SB. Subsequently, the meeting was changed to December 12.
- December 12 The three editors (Dykstra, Koole, and Gritters) and I met at seminary to discuss the editorial and my letter. The meeting was cordial and was conducted in a brotherly spirit. The editors did not back down at all from the editorial but maintained that it was a proper explanation of the truth. We discussed the point whether faith is a good work. The editors maintained that the article did not make faith a work, but only recognized that it is an activity. I maintained that the way the article dealt with faith was still wrong, making salvation depend upon our activity. When I asked whether our salvation depends in any sense upon our works, Prof. Gritters repeatedly and enthusiastically denied that our salvation depends upon our works. On the other hand, Prof. Dykstra said that our works do not merit, but if the idea of “depend” only means that there is a connection between our obedience and our salvation, then it can be said that our salvation depends on our good works. Rev. Koole would not reject out of hand the idea that salvation depends on our good works, although he did not commit himself to that idea as vigorously as he did in our phone conversation. The editors said that my letter was as strong a throwing down the gauntlet as could be. That it was a direct challenge to the editors and to the SB and that it came across as a demand that the SB fly its flag over against my flag. The editors also warned that there was such a climate of suspicion and distrust in the churches that my letter would be inflammatory and throw things into more confusion. The editors further warned that my letter was really an open charge of sin, and more properly belonged before Rev. Koole’s consistory. I was told that if I sent my letter to the SB, I would have to send another copy to Grandville’s consistory and ask them to discipline their emeritus minister. Overall, the meeting was characterized by confusion and theological smoke and fog. The discussion kept jumping away from the actual editorial to other issues, such as whether repentance was part of faith or a work of faith, and whether the idea of “obedience unto salvation” was defined or not. I was questioned whether I agreed with synod. I was questioned about whether we will inevitably do good works as the work of Christ in us. The impression that was left with me was that the editors thought I was misunderstanding and misjudging the editorial because I contended that the editorial made faith a work. The editors also expressed their judgment that it was “unfortunate” that HH had explained the call of the gospel to believe to mean

“nothing.” At the conclusion of the meeting we thanked each other for meeting and shook hands. A brotherly spirit was still evident, but there was not unity of thought on the editorial. The editors impressed upon me that they wanted a letter and hoped I wrote a letter, which implied that they did not want this letter. I assured them in good faith that I would consider what they had said and that their words carried weight with me.

- December 19 After considering what the editors had said, and talking it over with some colleagues, I reread the editorial several times and realized that I had the exact same objections to it as I did before the meeting. However, I came to the conclusion that I needed to revise certain portions of the letter. The revised version sticks closer to the language of the editorial so that my objection can be more clearly spelled out. The final draft of the letter is dated December 18, and was submitted to the editors via email on December 19.
- March 1 The SB (available to e-subscribers on Feb. 22) published my first letter, with part one of Rev. Koole’s response. The letter that the SB printed was the first letter, not the revised second letter.
- February 22 I emailed Prof. Dykstra to inform him that the SB had published the wrong letter. He replied with apology that this must have been a mistake, that he didn’t know about a second letter, and that he would check into it.
- February 25 I emailed Prof. Dykstra to ask him if he had any suggestions for how to handle this oversight.
- February 27 Prof. Dykstra replied that the only thing he could think of was to publish the revised letter on March 15 with an apology. I replied that his suggestion was good and thanked him for taking care of this.
- March 15 The SB (available to e-subscribers on March 11) published my revised letter, with a note and an apology for publishing the wrong letter March 1. The SB also carried part two of Rev. Koole’s response.



The following editorial item from Editor Henry Beets appeared in the *Banner* of December 30, 1920, the same issue from which Herman Hoeksema's *Our Doctrine* article is reprinted this week. Editor Beets is reflecting upon and responding to a letter that was sent to him by anonymous subscribers to the *Banner*, which letter Beets prints in full.

The letter sheds interesting light on how the controversy between Hoeksema and Janssen was being received by the readership of the *Banner*. The spiritual heirs of Herman Hoeksema will undoubtedly read this entry with a sympathetic twinge of heart for the harried readers. If we in the present day have been frustrated with Ralph Janssen as we have followed his evasions and slanders, then imagine the frustration of God's people more than a century ago as they had to endure each new entry. We might even agree with Editor Beets that the subscribers were wrong to send an anonymous letter, that the subscribers were complaining to the wrong party, and that Janssen should have all the space necessary to have his say. But even agreeing with all that, one sympathizes deeply with the

poor saints of that day who had had their fill of Professor Janssen. At least we readers of *Reformed Pavilion* in 2025 know how it all would turn out—God's glorious reformation of his church in 1924, in which reformation the lovely gospel of God's sovereign grace shone brightly over against every charge that it was Anabaptist. But for the readers of the *Banner* in 1920, Janssen's chipping and chopping away at Herman Hoeksema and his doctrine must have been intolerable.

Of course, the readers who sent this letter represented only one point of view in the Christian Reformed Church of the day, and it would turn out to be the minority view. When the dust of the early 1920s had settled, it would be official Christian Reformed dogma that God's grace is common; and by official (but illegal) discipline, Herman Hoeksema would be cast out of the Christian Reformed Church.

How wonderful are the ways of God, who works all things according to his own counsel in his own time for his own glory in Jesus Christ. And how blessed to know that God uses sharp controversy to sharpen his people's understanding of his truth.

—AL

Dr. Janssen and Rev. H. Hoeksema

by Henry Beets

Note from the editor in the *Banner*, December 30, 1920

Of course, it is our rule not to mind anonymous letters. There is only one place for communications when we see there is no authentic signature—the waste basket. But there is an exception to every rule, and that applies to a letter we received expressing great indignation caused by the debate now carried on in our columns between the two men named above.

The letter, dated Grand Rapids, Mich., December 18, 1920, reads as follows:

“Rev. H. Beets, City.

“Sir:

“Will you kindly stop the writings of Dr. Janssen in The Banner?”

“It certainly is a disgrace to our Church in general, and also to Calvin College and Seminary, that one of the professors uses such language, or rather writings, against one of our best preachers in our Church, and besides Rev. Hoeksema is far from being an ‘Anabaptist.’

“The readers of *The Banner* certainly are not being edified by such writings. Therefore, kindly stop Dr. Janssen immediately, and if you do not wish to do so, we lose respect for the editor, *The Banner* and also for Calvin College and will stop our subscriptions for *The Banner*!

“SEVERAL SUBSCRIBERS

“P.S.—It certainly is not to the glory of God.”

Now, what shall the poor editor say about this? Well, here is our reply. If it is really true that several subscribers are involved in this, we refer them one and all to our Publication Committee. It meets every first Tuesday of each month in the office, 214 Pearl street, N. W., two flights up. The

articles were inserted not by us, but by Rev. Hoeksema, in the department for which he and not the editor-in-chief, is responsible. We have no authority to prohibit their publication, even if we wished to do so. We are sorry if this means loss of “respect” for us personally, but we can’t help it. And, by the way, we would entertain more respect for the writer of the anonymous note, if he (or she) had added the right name. Why not? And finally, another question: do these “several subscribers” consider it fair and Christian-like to keep any man whose orthodoxy and standing is involved from explaining his position and defending himself? Is it not a good rule to “hear both sides?”

The Banner

December 30, 1920

(p. 798)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article C: Reply to Rev. H. Hoeksema

Our last article ended with a discussion of the method by which Rev. Hoeksema manages to get rid of Common Grace. It is the method of reason, we saw, that enabled him to win out in his attack on this objectionable Calvinistic doctrine—reason, a most powerful weapon, the weapon higher criticism uses so effectively. With the critics, faith succumbs before the onslaught of reason. In Rev. Hoeksema’s case likewise faith succumbed, faith in Common Grace. He reasoned it out carefully and it was found inconceivable that God assumes an attitude of favor, of general grace to all men, the pious and the impious, the elect and the reprobate. Common Grace had to clear the field. And that, too, in spite of all previous Reformed testimony, in spite of Calvin himself and the greatest Calvinistic theologians.

Anabaptism won the day in Rev. Hoeksema’s thinking on this question and now holds the place to which “de Gereformeerde leer van de algemeene genade,”¹ as Dr. Bavinck calls it, has a rightful claim.

Another point we looked into was Rev. Hoeksema’s observation that those who choose to differ from him and hold the view that God does assume an attitude of general grace to all men take the viewpoint of the Arminian or Semi-pelagian. This might intimidate almost anybody. However, we should remember it is in this case the language and the spirit, not of Calvin and Reformed theology, but of Anabaptism that is making the threat. Over against Anabaptism we will be courageous, bold and fearless.

¹ English translation: “the Reformed doctrine of common grace.”

We proceed now to some new material. It stands in close connection with what has just been mentioned; in fact, it is supplementary to it. Rev. Hoeksema makes a determined effort, using every means to lodge his views in our minds and convictions. This is a specimen which will illustrate what I mean: “To maintain that, objectively speaking, God can assume an attitude of grace to them [those that are not in Christ, the reprobate], say for six thousand years, is to make an attack upon God’s holiness and righteousness. No sinner can stand in any relation to the holiness of God without being deprived of all grace.” In other words those who hold to the doctrine of Common Grace, who maintain with Calvin and the Reformed theologians that Common Grace is withheld not even from the reprobate, those are guilty of attacking God. It is nothing short of appalling to be confronted by this kind of invective of Rev. Hoeksema’s. It is sad indeed. But sadder still in the un-Reformed, unscriptural doctrine of God that lies at the bottom of Rev. Hoeksema’s thinking.

Were we wrong when in a former article we pointed out that much more was involved in Rev. Hoeksema’s denial of Common Grace? The doctrine of God, we know, is central and basic in our theology, and that central doctrine, we here discover, is affected by the denial of Common Grace. Go wrong there and your whole theology is wrong. It is a plain case that Rev. Hoeksema along with his denial of Common Grace holds erroneous views of God, and is un-Reformed in the central doctrine of Reformed theology. We shall see later whether his error stops here or extends also to other doctrines of the Reformed system.

We pass to another point. The reader will recall some of the rather lengthy passages quoted from Rev. Hoeksema’s articles. We want to return to these once more. This time with the definite purpose to find out what Rev. Hoeksema’s starting point is in his denial of Common Grace. The passages quoted have been

considerably abridged, but even in the form in which they occur will give us the required light in Rev. Hoeksema’s starting point. At any rate the passages in their original, unabridged form are sure to supply the needed light. In the starting point passages Rev. Hoeksema is speaking continually of the elect and the reprobate, of those whom God “knew with divine love in Christ from before the foundation of the world” and those who from eternity are the “objects of his wrath.” “Jacob is the child of election, Esau of reprobation,” so Rev. Hoeksema reminds us in his argumentative passages. One sees clearly that it is the doctrine of predestination, more correctly, Rev. Hoeksema’s interpretation of that doctrine that is the point of departure for his denial of Common Grace. We must, in a way, give our critic credit for going back far and trying to think deep. It is the immutable decrees of God, the mysteries of his eternal counsel that he turns to for light. And he gets the light that he needs for his purpose. But in this case, too, it is nothing short of appalling to see what he does, what use he makes of predestination, what use he makes of that light. The doctrine of predestination, the decree of election and reprobation, more properly Rev. Hoeksema’s view of election and reprobation, are made to serve the purpose of overthrowing the doctrine of Common Grace. It is stupendous. The characteristic doctrines of Calvinism, that of predestination and of Common Grace are brought into conflict and warfare the one with the other. And that warfare is made to terminate in the elimination of the doctrine of Common Grace. We get in this way a “zelf-vernietiging”² of Reformed theology. Turn now to the Canons of Dordrecht I, Art. 14, to see what legitimate use of the doctrine of predestination they prescribe, and to the “conclusion” of these canons to see what exhortation the Synod of Dordrecht gives. The article and the conclusion (toward the close) read respectively as follows: “As the doctrine of divine election by the most wise counsel of God, was declared by the prophets, by Christ himself,

² English translation: “self-destruction.”

and by the apostles, and is clearly revealed in the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, so it is still to be published in due time and place in the Church of God, for which it was peculiarly designed, provided it be done with reverence, in the spirit of discretion and piety, for the glory of God's most holy name, and for enlivening and comforting his people, without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High." The passage in the conclusion:

"Finally, this synod exhorts all their brethren in the gospel of Christ to conduct themselves piously and religiously in handling this doctrine, both in the universities and churches; to direct it, as well in discourse as in writing, to the glory of the divine name, to holiness of life, and to the consolation of afflicted souls," etc.

—R. Janssen
(To be continued)

