

## Protest-Les Kamps

- b. Nothing here provides concrete direction for future reference. Some is specific to this appeal. Other is more general. What is consistent is that none of it can be referenced in the future for clear guidance on construction of an appeal.
  - c. It is unenforceable and not good precedent as it is so wide open for interpretation and not grounded in the confessions, Scripture, and the Church Order that no future assembly can even rightfully cite this decision as precedent.
6. It does not properly respect an appellant.
    - a. This is eerily like countercharging someone who brings a concern. Synod completed ruling on the appeals, which appeals were declared legal and valid appeals. They were declared legal and valid appeals because they were just that. Thus, they and the appellant, Mr. Doezema, do not deserve to be uncharitably judged as to contain serious flaws with no grounding in the confessions, Scripture, or the Church Order.
    - b. It discourages future protests or appeals by the appellant in this case and others. The appellant in this case and others devote countless hours of their time bringing a matter to an assembly. This decision only serves to place fear in potential future appellants that despite their pain and hours spent trying their best to organize and explain, a broader assembly may humiliate them by judging their work as containing serious flaws.
  7. This is not the proper place for a decision of this type.
    - a. If any more guidance is needed for appellants or protestants, it would be best for it to be put in the "Rules for Synodical Procedure" as that is the reference source available to an appellant or protestant.
    - b. Burying this decision in the *Acts of Synod* only serves to make adherence with Article 46 of the Church Order much more difficult.

### Protest of Mr. Les Kamps

4/13/21

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches  
to convene June 8, 2021  
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Mi

Dear Brothers,

After prayerful consideration and examination, I am compelled by my conscience to bring a protest to synod protesting the Synodical Deputies' approval of and concurrence with Classis East, January 13, 2021 decision to concur with Byron Center's decision to depose Rev. Andrew Lanning and to advise Byron Center's Consistory to proceed with the deposition of Rev. A. Lanning.

**Synodical Deputies concurrence with Classis East** (Classis East, January 13, 2021, Supplement 52; Art. 39) [Cf. Classis minutes, p. 325.]

“Dear esteemed brethren,

With heartfelt sorrow, the delegates ad examina of Classis West concur with the decision of Classis East to advise Byron Center PRC to proceed with the deposition of Rev. Andrew Lanning from the office of Minister of the Word and sacraments for the sin of public schism according to the grounds adopted by Classis East.”

**Classis East, January 13, 2021 decision, Art. 37, 38**

“That Classis East concur with Byron Center’s decision to depose Rev. A. Lanning and advise Byron Center’s Consistory to proceed with the deposition of Rev. A. Lanning from the office of the word and sacraments.” (See the full decision with the grounds in Classis Minutes, Arts. 37, 38.)

I am aggrieved by the Synodical Deputies’ approval of and concurrence with the decision of Classis East to advise Byron Center PRC to proceed with the deposition of Rev. Andrew Lanning.

In the decision to concur with Byron Center’s decision to depose Rev. Andy Lanning, Classis East misrepresents and mischaracterizes the statements in the sermons referenced in the decision. The judgment of Classis is based on these misrepresentations and mischaracterizations and therefore Classis East and the Synodical Deputies, in their concurrence with Classis East, grievously err in concurring with Byron Center’s consistory’s decision to depose Rev. Andrew Lanning.

The decision is based on misrepresentations and mischaracterizations and is not based on truth and fact. Therefore, it is a decision of an unjust deposition. This aggrieves me because to charge one with schism and slander based on untrue evidence and grounds is committing the sin of bearing false witness, a sin against the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment. This the church of God must not be marked with.

In addition, I am aggrieved because an unjust deposition is a grievous sin against one called and ordained by God to minister unto His church. This also must not mark the church of God.

In my protest I seek to demonstrate that the decision to depose Rev. Andrew Lanning was based on misrepresentations and mischaracterizations of his statements in the sermons for which he is charged.

**Ground A:** “Rev. Lanning’s actions in the sermons he preached on Jeremiah 23:4,14; II Timothy 4:1-4; and Ecclesiastes 7:2-6 constitute the sin of public schism. With statements made in these sermons, Rev. Lanning has sinfully divided the congregation and the churches into factions. These statements are not false doctrine, but his own wrong applications of

the teaching of the texts, by which he divided the church and churches.”

In ground A, Classis misrepresents and mischaracterizes the statements made in the sermons on Jeremiah 23:4,14; II Timothy 4:1-4; and Ecclesiastes 7:2-6 and therefore are not a basis for judgment of public schism.

In ground A, 1, a, Classis East states that “Rev. Lanning charges the delegates with a sin.” However, these statements made in the sermon on Jeremiah 23:4, 14 were not a public charge of sin against the delegates of Classis East but rather a statement made in the light of what Synod 2018 already declared regarding the actions of Classis East, February 2018. “Classis failed to deal with doctrinal error contained in sermons Mrs. Meyer protested to Hope’s Consistory” (Acts of Synod 2018, Art. 62, p. 79).

Classis “failed to deal with the doctrinal error” by way of rejecting the appellant’s protest and appeal against the doctrinal error and by defending Hope’s defense of the statements that the appellant protested, which contained the doctrinal errors. “Classis East decision of Article 44 is based on its decision of Articles 41/43 to reject Mrs. Meyer’s protest. However, synod sustained her appeal of Art. 41/43 because Mrs. Meyer correctly demonstrated that there was doctrinal error being defended by the Consistory” (Acts of Synod 2018, Art. 67, pp. 85-86). In the sermon, after citing the statements that contained the errors that Synod 2018 exposed, Rev. Lanning said, “The whole classis rose up and excused it.” Merriam-Webster’s definition for “excused” is “seek to defend or justify.” Rev. Lanning’s use of the term “excused” is in harmony with synod’s declaration regarding the actions of Classis East February 2018. Certainly, the declaration of synod is hard to hear, but we ought not to respond to this statement of Rev. Lanning as if it is a public charge of sin anew, which requires the application of Article 74 of the Church Order, but rather acknowledge it in humility. Contrary to ground A, 4, a, the statement of Rev. Andy Lanning regarding February 2018 Classis East’s excusing doctrinal error is not a public charge of sin requiring application of CO Article 74 but is a statement in harmony with 2018 Synod’s declaration that “Classis failed to deal with doctrinal error.”

The graphic illustration, which required the imagination of the congregation, was employed to impress upon the consciousness of the congregation and denomination the seriousness of the grievous error that the congregation and denomination was corporately responsible for, as is evidenced by the statement “That’s how much he [God] hates those lies and the corruption of His Word. Do we know that? How are we going to get that? How will that live in our consciousness that God hates it?” (Classis East Agenda, p. 183). The truth of the text of Jeremiah 23:14

indeed includes that God's view of the perversion of His Word (doctrinal error) is to Him as grievous a sin as the sin of sodomy. It is fitting then that this be impressed upon the congregation and denomination so that our repentance reflects the knowledge of the seriousness of the perversion of God's Word. The purpose of this illustration was not to serve a "public charge of sin" but rather to impress upon the congregation and denomination the seriousness of excusing doctrinal error, so that our repentance reflects the knowledge of that seriousness.

In ground A, 1, a, January 2021 Classis East also states that Rev. Lanning said that the delegates "should have been deposed," but this misquotes and misrepresents what was said. Rather, he said "the consistory **would** have deposed them" (emphasis added, LK). In saying that he said that the delegates "should have been deposed," Classis presents the case that Rev. Lanning's purpose was to declare that all the delegates of Classis East February 2018 should have been deposed. Rather, his purpose was to convey the reality that we all readily recognize that the sin of public sodomy makes one worthy of deposition. Classis errs in misquoting and misrepresenting Rev. Lanning's words.

The statements made by Rev. Andy Lanning, to which ground A, 1, a refer, do not constitute the sin of public schism. They were not cited to "sinfully divide the congregation and the churches" but rather it was cited to impress upon the consciousness of the congregation and denomination the seriousness of doctrinal error (perverting the Word of God) and to remind them of their corporate responsibility to it with a view to our deep repentance, as is evidenced by his statement, "There is one calling for the congregation and denomination. Repent" (January 13, 2021 Classis East Agenda, p. 182).

Stating that February 2018 Classis East "excused" doctrinal error and the illustration employed to impress upon the congregation the seriousness of perverting the Word of God was done not to divide or charge anew but to serve the rebuke in the sermon which follows this statement.

In ground A, 1, b, Classis states, "**Rev. Lanning charges the ministers, officebearers, and churches** of not repenting of this sin, and continuing to teach and minimize this error" (emphasis, LK). However, Rev. Lanning did not so specify these groups in his charge and therefore may not be charged with these specifics. Indeed, there was a charge of sin and call to repentance in the Jeremiah 23:4, 14 sermon. Specifically that charge was, "Minimizing that hateful corruption of the Word of God" (Jer. 23:4, 14 sermon, Agenda, p. 184). This charge (accusation) was to the congregation and denomination: "That's the work being done right now. That's the work that we are laboring at as churches right now, to minimize" (Jeremiah sermon, Agenda, p. 184). This charge is not singling

out individuals or singling out individual churches, but rather is a charge to the congregation and the denomination as a corporate whole. This charge came in the way of rebuke through the public preaching of the Word of God.

Ground A, 1, b states that Rev. Lanning “casts suspicion on the doctrinal orthodoxy of ministers and elders of Classis East.” However, stating what is in harmony with what Synod 2018 already declared regarding February 2018 Classis East decisions does not make Rev. Lanning guilty of “casting suspicion.” When Rev. Lanning in the rebuke of the sermon charges the congregation and denomination with minimizing, and calls the congregation and denomination to repentance, it is not an action designed by him to cast suspicion on the doctrinal orthodoxy of most of the ministers and elders of Classis East, but rather it is designed to seek the repentance and spiritual well-being of the congregation and denomination.

When Classis, in ground A, 1, b, states, “At the very least he casts suspicion on the doctrinal orthodoxy of most of the ministers and elders of Classis East without ever bringing formal charges of sin, protests, or appeals to any assembly,” it necessarily implies that one cannot charge or accuse his congregation of error without “bringing formal charges of sin, protests, or appeals to” the assemblies of the church and churches. It necessarily implies it because the statements referenced by the ground are found on pages 184 and 185 of the agenda of Classis East, which statements were made in the context of the rebuke to the congregation and denomination as a corporate whole. However, this is in error and does harm to the very calling of a minister of the Word of God and so binds the minister that he is not able to rebuke the congregation in the preaching of the Word as he is called by Christ to do. “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke” (II Tim. 4:2). A rebuke necessarily requires and involves a charge or accusation of error and sin. Scriptural examples of a rebuke demonstrate this. Christ rebukes Peter: “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matt. 16:23). Peter rebukes the Jews (Acts 2:22-23); the apostle Paul rebukes the congregations of Galatia (Gal. 3:1-4). Certainly Christ, who calls the minister to rebuke, allows for and calls the faithful minister to make charges and accusations in connection with the rebuke. To require that one must bring “formal charges of sin, protests, or appeals to” the assemblies of the church(es) before he can charge the congregation of error when he rebukes in the preaching is clearly contrary to the Scriptures.

In ground A, 1, c, Classis states, “Rev. Lanning said that the only rejection of this lie is found in his preaching and in the *Sword and Shield*

magazine.” However, this is a misrepresentation of what Rev. Andy Lanning said. He said, “Where is the rejection of the lie today?...I don’t hear it.... Except in one place consistently. One magazine....” Classis stated that he said, “the **only** rejection of the lie is **found**” but Rev. Lanning said that “he does not **hear** it.” If one were to say that the rhetorical questions asked regarding what the congregation may hear clearly indicates that he meant that the rejection of the lie is not found anywhere in the PRC except in his own preaching and in the *Sword and Shield* would also be in error. The rhetorical questions were asked to serve the rebuke in that the congregation and denomination are presently minimizing the lie exposed by Synod 2018. The implication of these questions is that if, in the life of the congregation and denomination, the rejection of the lie is readily heard, that would indicate that the congregation and denomination is not minimizing the errors exposed by Synod 2018. These questions presented do not define Rev. Lanning’s statement “I do not hear it” and his acknowledgment of where he does hear it to mean “the only rejection of the lie is found in his preaching and in the *Sword and Shield*.” To declare that Rev. Lanning said that the only place where the rejection of the lie is found is in his preaching or the *Sword and Shield* is a misrepresentation and mischaracterization of his words.

In ground A, 1, d, Classis states, “Thus he divides the congregation and denomination, preaching that most officebearers are unrepentant unbelievers in contrast to himself and those who stand with him.” This statement is Classis’ conclusion to the foregoing grounds. This ground is in error and misrepresents what Rev. Lanning said. The ground states that Rev. Lanning is “preaching that most officebearers are...unbelievers.” However, nowhere in the sermons upon which he is charged has he expressed explicitly or by implication that “most officebearers are...unbelievers.”

In addition, Classis states that “he divides the congregation and denomination” by preaching this, “in contrast to himself and to those who stand with him.” This also is a misrepresentation of both what he said and the intent of what he said. When he said, “The whole classis rose up and excused” the error exposed by Synod 2018, we must remember that Rev. Lanning was a delegate of February 2018 Classis East and therefore includes himself in the whole. He also includes himself in the whole when he illustrates that excusing the perversion of the truth is to God as those who commit open acts of sodomy. In regard to the charges/accusations made in his rebuke for “minimizing the hateful corruption of the Word of God,” he presents this accusation as he himself is part of the corporate whole. As examples: “And that’s where we are right now.... That’s the work we are laboring at as churches, right now.” “You know what

we were waiting to do?...we were waiting by the door...." "Here's what we're doing.... How is any going to repent if we cannot even acknowledge the lie" (Classis Agenda, pp. 184-185). These are not the words or actions of one who is "dividing" by contrasting himself with others, nor are they words that contrast his repentance with the repentance of other officebearers or members of the PRC. In fact, it is evident that the words were not meant to divide but serve unto unity in confession of the truth and rejection of the lie as the rebuke of the sermon sought.

In ground A, 2, Classis states the pastor was "publicly charging officebearers with sin." However, this cannot be charged to Rev. Lanning as Classis presents it. Rev. Lanning did not so specify "officebearers" with any charges and therefore cannot be charged with "public schism" based on this. But rather the charge of sin ("Minimizing that hateful corruption of the Word of God" Jeremiah 23:4, 14 sermon, Agenda, p. 184) was charged to the congregation and denomination. This charge was in service to the rebuke to the congregation and denomination, which was in accord with the doctrine of corporate responsibility. Classis misrepresents his words and his intent.

Classis errs in applying grounds A, 2, a; A, 2, b; A, 2, c; and A, 2, d to the case. These grounds assume that Rev. Lanning, in the sermons, publicly charged specific individuals or specific bodies within the PRC with sin, calling those specific individuals or bodies to repentance. These grounds were: "If an accusation is to be leveled against an elder, pastor, or deacon, it must not be published to everyone in the church but must be carefully proven to the elders of the church. Likewise, if a consistory is felt to be in error, then it must be taken to classis. If a classis is thought to be in error, it must be taken to the synod." However, there is not found in these sermons any formal ("belonging to or constituting the form or essence of a thing": Merriam-Webster) charge of sin to specific individuals or bodies in the PRC. Therefore also, the requirement of following Matthew 18 does not apply. The charges/accusations made were in the service of the rebuke to the congregation and denomination as a whole body as that corporate body lives out its decisions.

These grounds present the pastor as not "seeking the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," but instead exercising in "envying and strife"; and as not exercising in the love of the neighbor but as one that "bite(s) and devour(s)." However, Rev. Lanning's rebuke to the congregation and denomination through preaching and its application was done seeking the unity in the bond of peace and not done in "biting and devouring." This is evident in statements in the Jeremiah 4:4, 14 sermon. By way of rebuke the pastor was seeking unity, reminding the congregation that we confess that "I adhere to this doctrine of the confessions and the Word

of God, and I reject all heresies repugnant thereto. There's our unity" (Classis agenda, p. 185).

By way of rebuke and bringing the congregation to the good news and comfort of the gospel, the pastor was seeking that unity "in the bond of peace." The pastor pointed out the error of the congregation and denomination, expressing "That's the work that we are laboring at...right now, to minimize" and "Here's what we're doing" (Classis agenda, p. 184). The pastor included himself in the responsibility of the error pointed out, and brought the congregation and himself to the comfort of the gospel. "What hope is there for me and for you? ...The only hope for the church of Jesus Christ is Jesus Christ...and this is His name...The Lord Our Righteousness. The Lord Jesus took...our perversion of the Word on Himself. He took it to the cross. And bore that away. The Lord Our Righteousness is our salvation from our sin, from our perversion of the Word" (Classis agenda, p. 186). This is that "bond of peace" wherein we are bound together.

**Ground B:** "Rev. Lanning's actions in the sermons he preached and in his subsequent defense of these actions constitute public schism when he slandered the officebearers in the churches through his characterizations, accusations, and charges, which is a violation of the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment."

This ground does not deal with nor take into consideration the text of Scripture that Rev. Lanning was preaching and expounding. It is necessary to do this because applications in the sermon must arise out of the text preached and its doctrine. A faithfully expounded doctrine of the text demands a certain application to the life of the congregation in its present circumstances. The Word of God, brought faithfully in doctrine and application, is not slanderous and schismatic, nor can it be.

In ground B, 1, a, Classis states that the pastor slandered "when he portrays the men of Classis East as homosexuals." However, this is in error because Classis misrepresents and mischaracterizes these statements in the Jeremiah 23:4, 14 sermon and therefore cannot be used as a ground for slander and schism. The truth of the text is that God views the perversion of His Word (doctrinal error) the same as He views the sin of sodomy. "They are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah" (Jer. 23:14). The circumstances of the congregation and denomination were that in the decisions of Classis we committed the gross sin of false doctrine. We taught, defended, and tolerated it. It is faithful to the text, then, that it be impressed on the congregation that God views that sin equally abhorrent as the sin of sodomy. The illustration of the delegates performing homosexual acts was not used to judge them as unbelievers. Rather, it was used to impress upon the congregation that



when one perverts God's Word, to God that is as abhorrent as when one sins the sin of sodomy, which we readily recognize as abhorrent. This is evident from the sermon. "Imagine this. That at that February Classis, in 2018,... if the appeal came to the floor to condemn the devil's theology, and the chairman called for the vote,..., and all of those stately ministers and elders...committed homosexual fornication" (Classis agenda, p. 183—emphasis added, LK). The pastor did not say "when the appeal" came to condemn the error by vote, the ministers and elders rose to commit the abhorrent acts. The purpose was not to portray the delegates as homosexuals, but rather to demonstrate that we would readily see the act of sodomy as abhorrent.

In ground B, 1, b, Classis states that Rev. Lanning "denounced rashly and unheard...a professor of our seminary and editor of the *Standard Bearer* as minimizing and covering up the sin of false doctrine." This is a misrepresentation and mischaracterization of what was said and therefore cannot be used as a ground for slander and schism. The referenced statement in the sermon did not charge an individual or even speak of one's office or function in the *Standard Bearer*, nor was an individual in the focus of the statement. The point was not to draw attention to an individual but, rather, the pastor used the citation from the *Standard Bearer*, to demonstrate what was going on in the life of the membership of the denomination and its thinking regarding the doctrinal error exposed by Synod 2018.

The statement, referenced in ground B, 1, c, that the elders of Byron Center PRC, in going to the church visitors for understanding, are going to the prophets of Egypt and that the church visitors will not counsel them to their profit was said by Rev. Lanning in private, in the consistory room, and therefore cannot be said to "constitute public schism," as Ground B states, nor can it then be a ground for public schism.

This statement is presented as ground for the charge of slander. However, when we charge someone with slander, it must be demonstrated that the statement is false and that, considering the broader context in which these statements were made, there is no sense in which this statement can be used in truth. The great seriousness of deposing one who "has been called of God" to be minister of the Word requires that when charges are made, they must be demonstrated. The charge is slander. Slander is "the utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another's reputation" (Merriam-Webster's definition), and "slander is always the lie. It is always a false report about a neighbor or brother" (HH, *The Triple Knowledge*, vol. 3, p. 415). Neither Classis, the church visitors, nor the consistories of Byron Center and Trinity demonstrated the falsehood of the statement. This charge of slander yet remains an un-

founded charge and therefore cannot be used in judgment for the discipline of deposition.

The statements made by Rev. Lanning in the Ecclesiastes 7:2-6 sermon are presented, in ground B, 1, d, as evidence of slander. Classis states that by these statements Rev. Lanning “does not promote the honor and good character of the church visitors” and that “this rash accusation is aimed at officebearers in the church in order to discredit them as enemies of the cause of Christ.” However, Classis does not demonstrate that the statements are false. Slander is always a lie, but discipline may not be exercised on a person because he was accused of lying but only after it is demonstrated he is lying. Indeed, the essence of the advice from the church visitors was removing the minister from the pulpit in Byron Center. That advice for removal was occasioned by his sermon on Jeremiah 23:4, 14, in which he rebuked the congregation and the denomination. That it is, was because of his rebuke for minimizing the doctrinal error is evidenced in the advice of the church visitors. After the church visitors laid out their perspective of the decision of 2018 regarding whether we may call the error exposed by that synod as heresy, they state in the advice, “Rev. Lanning militated against this position of the 2018 Synod in his sermon. He did this by his criticism of the statement of the *Standard Bearer* editorial he cited” (Classis Agenda, p. 145). The advice went on to quote what the editor of the *Standard Bearer* wrote and then quoted what they expressed was Rev. Lanning’s response to the cited statement of the *Standard Bearer*. “You know what we were waiting at the door to do? Not to say to every officebearer who had ever defended that lie, ‘You’re deposed.’ But we were waiting by the door to say to anyone who would say ‘that was heresy’ or ‘the devil’s theology’ to say to him ‘You’re deposed and excommunicated, too.’ That’s minimizing the sin of that false doctrine” (Church Visitors advice, Classis Agenda, p. 146). This quote from the sermon that the church visitors quoted is part of the rebuke in the sermon of “minimizing the sin of that false doctrine.” The implication of his rebuke is that we may call it (the doctrinal error exposed by Synod 2018) heresy, and if we say that “we may not call it heresy and that those that do are under the threat of deposition and excommunication” is minimizing the sin of that false doctrine exposed by Synod 2018.

It must be noted that this rebuke is in harmony with the decision of Byron Center PRC’s consistory as evidenced in the Agenda of Classis, page 177.

Motion: That Byron Center PRC Consistory sustain ground 5 of Rev. Lanning’s protest against the second ground of our charge, namely, that he militated against the decision of Synod. CARRIES

1. Rev. Lanning makes a legitimate argument that synod “did

not forbid calling the doctrinal errors 'heresy' or the like" even though it called certain characterizations "extreme," and left whether they were "necessary...up to an appellant's conscience."

2. Although Synod 2018 did not explicitly call the doctrinal errors heresy, it is reasonable for him to conclude that Synod 2018 and Synod 2019 did ascribe them as such.

a. Synod 2018 described them as "out of harmony with the Reformed confessions," and said they "compromise[d] the gospel of Jesus Christ," "compromised the doctrines of the unconditional covenant (fellowship with God), and justification by faith alone."

b. Synod 2019 said the error was "serious enough to warrant a Formula of Subscription exam." It also said that although "synod ought not equate the errors," the doctrinal error condemned by Synod 2018 was "one error among several that together make up the false teachings of the conditional covenant, the Federal Vision, and Rome's doctrine of justification by faith and works" (Acts, Art. 85, p. 65).

When Rev. Lanning contradicted the essence of the church visitors' advice, it did not have anything to do with "their honor or good reputation." Contradicting one's advice is not contrary to his "honor or good reputation." The judgment, in the referenced statement, that the essence of the church visitor's advice leads to the house of feasting rather than the house of mourning was not "aimed at" the officebearers of the church but was aimed at the essence of the advice. The purpose of the expressed judgment of the advice was to warn regarding the removal of the "rebuke against our sin as a congregation and as a denomination of displacing the perfect work of Christ" and "The rebuke that says.... We minimize the error" (Classis Agenda, p. 200). The warning that the removal of the rebuke leads to the house of feasting is faithful to the truth of the text in Ecclesiastes. "It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise" (Eccl. 7:5).

Rev. Lanning's statements in the Jeremiah 23:4, 14 sermon in connection with the church visitor's advice cannot be a ground for slander. Slander is always the lie, a false statement, but Rev. Lanning's statements were true.

Classis, in ground B, 1, e, states that "Rev. Lanning judges and condemns the Protestant Reformed denomination as embracing the lie when such a lie can be found nowhere in the minutes of the assemblies of our churches: *That makes this word [Jeremiah 23:4, 14] a perfect word for our congregation in these days because the same situation characterizes the Protestant Reformed Churches.... The form is there just like it always was in the days of our fathers and fathers' fathers, but there's something*

wrong. *There is something so dreadfully wrong in the Protestant Reformed Churches and in Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church. The Word of God was perverted. Corrupted. Twisted...*" (Agenda, p. 181). Classis presents the referenced statement made in the Jeremiah sermon as evidence of slander. This judgment appeals to the minutes of the assemblies of the PRC as evidence that there is not something dreadfully wrong in the PRC, that there is not the minimizing of the error exposed by Synod 2018. This judgment is based on the assumption that the decisions of the assemblies are the only thing to be evaluated in order to judge if a denomination is faithful. The church is not Reformed merely by good decisions in its assemblies, as important as that is, but the church is Reformed when the church, in its organic life, lives out those good decisions in their writing, conversation, and walk. Both the decisions of the assemblies and the life of the church must be evaluated to determine the health and faithfulness of a denomination. The statement cited by Classis is not evidence of slander, nor can it be a ground for the charge of slander, since it is not demonstrated that the statement is false.

As was necessary for the rebuke in the Jeremiah 23:4, 14 sermon, Rev. Lanning demonstrated by examples what we are doing in the life of our denomination that are expressions of minimizing the error exposed by Synod 2018. Examples of writings, communications of consistories to their congregation, communications of members one to another, attitudes displayed and the lack of the rejection of the error that was exposed by Synod 2018 being readily heard among us. The rebuke was regarding the minimizing of the error exposed by 2018 and that that minimizing was done in the life of the denomination. The statement referenced by Classis as evidence of slander cannot be used as a ground for the charge of slander, since it is truthful that prior to Synod 2018 the Word of God was perverted, corrupted, and twisted. The dreadful condition that Rev. Lanning was pointing out was that this was done in our churches but is not recognized to be as serious as God's evaluation of false doctrine as evidenced in the examples he presented.

**Ground C:** "Rev. Lanning's actions in the sermons he preached constitute public schism by insubordination to the authority in the church in violation of the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment."

This ground is in error since it is based on a misrepresentation of the Jeremiah 23:4, 14 sermon.

It is not true, as ground C, 1 states, that "Rev. Lanning expressed grievances which contradict the decisions of Classis East at its September 12, 2018 meeting." Classis errs in construing the Jeremiah sermon as charges against officebearers and assemblies. As expressed earlier in my protest,

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Rev. Lanning was not making a new formal charge against the delegates of Classis East February 2018. In the sermon there was a rebuke to the congregation and denomination as a corporate whole. Involved in this rebuke were charges/accusations that served the purpose of the rebuke, but the charges were not "leveled against" officebearers or assemblies. Rev. Lanning was calling the congregation and denomination to live according to the decisions of Classis East Sept. 2018 meeting. In harmony with the decisions of Classis East September 2018 and its agreement with Synod 2018 decisions, Rev. Lanning rebuked the congregation and denomination for minimizing the error exposed and to live according to the seriousness of the error as expressed by Classis East September 2018 when they acknowledged their error and expressed agreement to the decisions of Synod 2018. It is a misrepresentation of the sermon to maintain that he contradicted the decisions of Classis East September 2018, and therefore cannot be used as ground for "public schism by insubordination to the authority in the church."

Classis, in ground III, B, claims that "Rev. Lanning expressed public disagreement with the decision of his consistory to the congregation and the denomination through the pulpit, thus showing insubordination to his overseers, the elders." However, this ground is in error. The sermon on Jeremiah 23:4, 14, was not a "public expression of his disagreement with the November 1, 2020 decision of his consistory that required him to resign as editor-in-chief of the *Sword and Shield*, and about which decision the congregation had just been informed" (ground C, 2, a). To come to this conclusion is not to reckon with the objective content of the sermon, nor does it reckon with what was not in the sermon. A "public expression of his disagreement" with the decision of the consistory was not in the sermon. Nowhere in the sermon can you find an expression of disagreement of the decision, nor can you find any expression about being an editor or not being an editor. Rather, the whole sermon was an application of the truth of the text as a rebuke for the minimizing of the doctrinal error exposed by Synod 2018.

Rev. Lanning did acknowledge that the decision of the consistory was the occasion for the sermon, but this acknowledgment of Rev. Lanning can in no way define the sermon as "an expression of disagreement" with the consistory's decision. Saying that the decision was the occasion for the sermon is not the same as saying the sermon was an expression of disagreement. When the sermon does not express a word about being an editor or not being an editor or an expressed word of disagreement with the decision, and yet to base the judgment that the sermon was a "public expression against the consistory's decision" on the "reaction of many" and that the pastor "made no attempt to urge the congregation to submit to

the decision" is a subjective judgment alone. There is nothing objective for the consistory to point to.

It also cannot be charged that Rev. Lanning was publicly expressing disagreement with the decision of the consistory in the II Timothy 4:1-4 sermon. The quotes referenced by the Byron Center consistory found on page 170 of the Classis Agenda is a faithful application of the truth of the text. Faithfully applying the truth of God's Word as the text demands it is not an expression of disagreement with the consistory's decision to request the help from the church visitors. In addition, there is no "expressed" disagreement with the decision. This is not an action of insubordination to authority. Rather, applying the truth of the text as it requires, even if it causes me pain in conscience, is subordination to the authority of God's Word.

Classis, in ground C, 3, claims that "Rev. Lanning expressed publicly his disagreement and condemned the advice of the church visitors, and urged both his consistory and church to reject it before it was decided upon." This Rev. Lanning indeed did do. However, this action cannot be a ground for the charge of "public schism by insubordination to the authority in the church." The advice of the church visitors is not the settled and binding advice of Classis or Synod. The church visitors' advice is advice, but only advice. This advice of the church visitors may be rejected. This advice does not have the so-called "teeth" of an ecclesiastical assembly.

The advice of the church visitors was not yet decided upon by the consistory. The consistory had not yet made it their own position, and therefore expressing disagreement with the advice cannot be grounds for insubordination to his consistory. Indeed, this expressed-disagreement and condemnation the church visitors' advice is not insubordination to the authority in the church and therefore cannot be used as grounds for the charge of "public schism by insubordination to the authority in the church."

Rather than insubordination, Rev. Lanning was exercising subordination. Rev. Lanning was applying the truth of the text in Ecclesiastes 7:2-6 to the advice of the church visitors. This is subordination to the authority of the Word of God. Recognizing that the essence of the church visitors' advice was the removal from the pulpit of Byron Center PRC the rebuke for the error of minimizing the doctrinal error exposed by Synod 2018, Rev. Lanning is called by God as a watchman on the walls of Zion to call out the warning of the danger that threatens God's church. "I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezek. 3:17). The application of the truth of the text instructs us that this rebuke will lead to the house of mourning. Indeed, even as the members of Zion might not yet see the

## Protest-Luke Kamps

threat, the watchman is called to cry out the warning lest he be guilty of the blood shed by the threat.

Based on the above, the grounds and evidence presented by Classis East are in error, and thus Rev. Andrew Lanning is not guilty of public schism and slander, making the charges and discipline done against him to be in error.

I request that synod not approve the concurrence of the Synodical Deputies with the decision of Classis East January 2021 to concur with Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church's Consistory's decision to depose Rev. Andrew Lanning and advise them to proceed with deposition.

I request that synod declare that the Synodical Deputies, Classis East, and Byron Protestant Reformed Church's Consistory erred in the approval of deposition, and the deposition of Rev. Andrew Lanning.

I pray, that the Lord will strengthen you with His Spirit for the work He has laid before you.

Your brother in Christ,  
Les Kamp

### Protest of Mr. Luke Kamps

I write this in protest of the deposition of Andy Lanning. I write this out of love for the Protestant Reformed Churches and her members. If my protest is sustained, I ask that the deposition of Rev. Lanning be reversed. That he be reinstated as a minister in good standing in the Protestant Reformed Churches. That an official apology be made to Rev. Lanning and all those who left with him, and that synod consider examining all those involved with his wrongful deposition. I have tried to be brief and have followed the format of the grounds given by Classis East for deposition. I protest each ground given for the deposition of Rev. Lanning. Jeremiah 23:9: "Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness."

I. *[The pastor's] actions in the sermons he preached on Jeremiah 23:4, 14; II Timothy 4:1-4; and Ecclesiastes 7:2-6 constitute the sin of public schism. With statements made in these sermons, [he] has sinfully divided the congregation and the churches into factions. These statements are not false doctrine, but his own wrong applications of the teaching of the texts, by which he divided the church and churches.*

A. *In these sermons he publicly charges ministers and officebearers of the PRC with unrepentant sin. The statements in his sermons and his subsequent actions are enumerated by the BC consistory, the advice of the church visitors, and set forth clearly by Trinity PRC consistory*