

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*

in the supplemental material (agenda, pp. 125-179).

1. In his sermon on Jeremiah 23:4, 14, [he] charges the delegates of Classis East, February 2018, with a sin that he said was like the sin of all the delegates taking off their clothes and committing public sodomy with each other, for which they should have been deposed (agenda, p. 161, 183).

a. In this point it is stated that Rev. Lanning “charges the delegates of Classis East, February 2018 with a sin that he said was like the sin of all the delegates taking off their clothes and committing public sodomy.” The teeth of this point lies in the word *charges*, as this is used as evidence that Rev. Lanning was indeed guilty of schism. Using this point as evidence of schism has several major problems, which I will attempt to illustrate.

1) The sin Rev. Lanning charges the delegates of Classis East of committing has already been confessed by Classis East. This was not a new or unsubstantiated charge. Rev. Lanning was speaking of historical fact here in order to impress upon his congregation the seriousness of spiritual whoredom in light of God’s Word.

a) The sin Rev. Lanning is charging the delegates of Classis East with committing is the sin of defending theology that displaces the perfect work of Christ. We as a denomination have quibbled over what to call such a theology, but if a theology displaces Christ’s perfect work it must be false. If a theology is false it must be of the devil. This devil’s theology was exposed at Synod 2018. Shortly after Synod 2018 Classis East confessed that they had erred in their decisions of February 28, and the decisions of Synod 2018 are quoted and used as a ground (Arts. 15-17). Rev. Lanning agreed with that confession. He used God’s Word to explain what exactly had been confessed; he has now been deposed for it.

2) Included in this point is the assertion that it was Rev. Lanning’s word that likened Classis East’s sin to the sin of sodomy. In this there is serious error. Rev. Lanning was indeed the instrument, but he did not come with his own word. This was the word of his text and of many other texts in the Bible. This was God’s word.

a) God’s word in Jeremiah 23 verse 14 is quite plain.

There were false teachers in the land. These false teachers were adulterers, they walked in lies, and strengthened the hand of evildoers so that there was no repentance in the land. God's judgment of them is that they are as Sodom. Reviewing Rev. Lanning's sermon on this, I see charity. In his sermon he did not focus on the delegates of Classis East, but instead focused on the sin committed and its seriousness. He faithfully applied this powerfully graphic text to his congregation, warning against the temptation to minimize the perverting of God's word.

3) In the conclusion of this point, Classis asserts that Rev. Lanning believes that all of Classis East should have been deposed for their sin of defending false doctrine. After reviewing the supporting material for this point, I find no evidence that supports this assertion.

a) Rev. Lanning did state that if Classis East had in fact committed the act of sodomy on the floor of Classis, they undoubtedly would have been swiftly deposed. This is different from saying all of Classis East should have been deposed.

2. *[He] charges the ministers, officebearers, and churches of not repenting of this sin, and continuing to teach and minimize this error (this is clearly demonstrated on pages 161-163 of the agenda and pages 184, 185). 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. At the same time [he] said that the only rejection of this lie is found in his preaching and in the Sword and Shield magazine (p. 185) : ...Show us where the lie is today. I've done that. I've done that publicly in writing. I've done that now in the pulpit. But let me ask you a question. You want to know from me where is the lie. I want to know from you where is the rejection of the lie today? Where do you hear condemnation of the devil's theology as the devil's theology? Is that the message you hear pouring out of the Protestant Reformed Churches today? Is that what you read in letters from consistories to congregations warning against a magazine? Is that what you hear—rejection of the lie? I don't hear it. I don't hear it. Except in one place consistently. One magazine. ... d. Thus he divides the congregation and denomination, preaching that most officebearers are unrepentant unbelievers in contrast to himself and those who*

stand with him.

a. Rev. Lanning here is said to have charged ministers, officebearers, and churches of not repenting for sin, and of casting suspicion upon the delegates of Classis East.

1) After reading the suggested support material, I have been unable to find any specific charge against a minister, officebearer, or church. Specific evidence is given, without naming individuals, to illustrate the validity of Rev. Lanning's concern for the spiritual health of our denomination.

a) These were public writings. I have read many articles from past controversies within our own denomination. Public writings have always been aptly met with a public response. For many years this was a primary function of editors within our beloved *Standard Bearer*. Is it truly our position that public writings may now only be disagreed with privately?

(1) Article 55 of the Church Order speaks directly to this issue. "To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation or warning, and of admonition, as well in the ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visiting."

2) For the charge of Rev. Lanning casting suspicion upon the delegates of Classis East.

a) Suspicion of the delegates of Classis East started the day that those delegates defended false doctrine over against the truth. When a minister brings anything other than the pure gospel of Jesus Christ to his congregation, he abuses his congregation. When an ecclesiastical body upholds the lie over against the truth, they abuse the denomination. This abuse is the source of division, the lie of the devil is the source of division.

(1) Rev. Lanning came with the trumpet sound of God's word, instructing all of us to abhor false doctrine, to take it seriously. To stop minimizing it in any way. He pointed out examples of how we have all transgressed. He came with God's word, and therefore with the exact remedy that our denomination needed to hear. This word was

the exact solution to all suspicion and division in the church. We have deposed him for it. We have called that word schism and have named it even to be the source of suspicion.

B. [His] schismatic actions of publicly charging officebearers with sin are contrary to Scripture.

1. *Every member of the church, especially its officebearers, must under every circumstance endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This is for the safety and welfare of the church. James 3:16, "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." Or again, Galatians 5:14-15, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."*

2. *This love of the neighbor and the church lies at the heart of Matthew 18:15-20. The principle of Matthew 18:15-20 is to protect in as much as possible the honor and good character of a brother or sister even when sin has been committed. This is accomplished, not by preaching such sin to others, but by keeping sin private, as much as possible.*

3. *The principle of Matthew 18 is applied by the apostle Paul to those who hold office in the church. He writes in I Timothy 5:17-19, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.... Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." 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. To publish the perceived error publicly in the church contradicts the principle of Matthew 18. This is true even when dealing with an accusation of heresy. If an accusation of heresy is preached from the pulpit rather than following the way of protest and appeal through the ecclesiastical assemblies it is a failure to follow the Word of God in Titus 3:10, "A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject." This verse points to the truth that in dealing with heresy the church must follow the careful way of discipline. Such discipline of heresy takes place through the deliberation of those appointed by God to do this. This is the way of love not only, but this is the proper way to show respect for the office one holds.*

a. Once again, the charge is made that Rev. Lanning is guilty of schism due to his warnings of sin present in the church, accompanied by specific evidence including quotes from public writings.

1) ...to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This is for the safety and welfare of the church.

a) Ephesians 4:3 speaks of unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This starts and ends with the Spirit's work in us, but the exhortation is a call to personal humility and an attitude of love between brothers and sisters in Christ. The warning then comes that when the church lacks this "unity of the Spirit" and instead there is envy and strife, the consequence is the destruction of the church through the consuming one of another. This attitude of love is then applied to the way of Mathew 18. It is at this point that a charge is made against Rev. Lanning based on the way of Mathew 18.

(1) This charge is essentially that Rev. Lanning violated the charitable way of dealing with sin laid out in Mathew 18. This is an abuse of Mathew 18, as this text deals with the proper procedure for treating private sin. This is a misapplication of the text due to the sin in question here being public. The procedure laid out in Mathew 18 is therefore not applicable.

(a) If we as a denomination are going to apply the way of Mathew 18 to the sin of publicly militating against the Word of God, our church will soon be destroyed by false teachers from within.

1. This position would allow false teachers to publicly promote the lie with no timely public opposition. God's people would sit under heretical preaching and writing for weeks and even months or years before it was officially dealt with. Are we really taking the position that if someone today wrote in the *Standard Bearer* that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, a public response against that word would be unloving and schismatic?

a. If we take the position that public

sins like promoting heresy must be dealt with privately, we must end the practice of the council shaking the hand of the minister after a sermon is preached. That handshake signifies public approval for the sermon preached. Classis' position here would charge with schism the elder or deacon who, due to heresy in the sermon, refuses to approve of that sermon with a firm handshake. This would clearly violate the way outlined in Mathew 18 if it applied.

4. *By publicly leveling accusations against ecclesiastical bodies without so much as protesting their decisions [the pastor] does not show charity, dishonors the officebearers of the church and by doing so, contrary to the command of Christ, creates discord and division in the church of Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves."*

a. Once again, the charge Rev. Lanning directs towards Classis East February 2018 was a charge Classis has already acknowledged its guilt in and officially confessed. Therefore Rev. Lanning does not militate against the decision but confirms it.

b. Here it is said that Rev. Lanning did not protest decisions, which is just not true. Rev. Lanning has recently had two protests before ecclesiastical bodies and was even in the process of protest when he was deposed.

c. Without these grounds this charge falls away.

C. *[His] schismatic actions of publicly charging officebearers are contrary to our Confessions.*

1. *He has not followed in his preaching or conduct the sixth commandment as explained in the Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 107, "But is it enough that we do not kill any man in the manner above mentioned? No; for when God forbids envy, hatred, and anger, He commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves; to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness towards him, and prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; and that we do good, even to our enemies."*

a. Calling the sinner to repentance is love, and warning one's congregation of pertinent errors within the church is not divisive. Rev. Lanning faithfully followed his calling to feed and protect the flock in his care against false teachings and errors. The charge that in preaching and conduct Rev. Lanning broke the 6th commandment is untrue and unsubstantiated. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

1) Parents who call their children to repentance are parents who truly love their children. It is the unloving parent that keeps his silence while the children walk in sin. This principle applies to all relations between believers. We are called to support and exhort one another in the truth.

a) This principle is truly brought to its conclusion in excommunication. Is it a lack of love that causes a believing family member to withdraw the hand of fellowship from unrepentant loved ones? The world judges this to be hate. However, Christ's church understands that this is true love. For God uses the way of admonition, instruction, and even the cutting off of fellowship to bring his children to repentance.

(1) Rev. Lanning's preaching and conduct showed true love in that he did not ignore sin, minimize it, or excuse it. He called for repentance. This is not hate but love.

2. *Article 31 of the Belgic Confession when speaking of Christ's establishment of the offices in the church instructs us, "Moreover, that this holy ordinance of God may not be violated or slighted, we say that everyone ought to esteem the ministers of God's Word and the elders of the church very highly for their work's sake, and be at peace with them without murmuring, strife, or contention, as much as possible."*

a. In Article 31 the following qualification is made, "as much as possible." That qualification is made out of necessity since earthly ministers and elders are sinners. Due to this indwelling sin there are circumstances in which one must not be at peace with the ministers and elders of the church. This article does not say respect ministers period, it states that we must respect "ministers of God's Word."

1) When ministers and elders pervert God's Word and

come instead with the wisdom of man, one must not be at peace but must contend for the faith.

a) This is obvious based on the warring history of the church. Our own beloved Protestant Reformed churches were born out of controversy.

b. Classis does not address this exception. Rev. Lanning was battling for the truth as it has been attacked in the PRC. Article 31 does not convict Rev. Lanning and the charge falls away.

D. [The pastor's] schismatic actions of publicly charging officebearers with sin are contrary to the teaching of the Church Order in Article 74, which is built on the foundation of the Scriptures and Confessions quoted above.

1. By leveling public charges of sin against officebearers (agenda, p. 160, 181) and demanding repentance publicly in his preaching without bringing charges to the consistories of these men [the pastor] violates Article 74 of the Church Order: "If anyone, having been admonished in love concerning a secret sin by two or three persons, does not give heed, or otherwise has committed a public sin, the matter shall be reported to the consistory."

2. The way appointed by Christ is not to bring charges of sin to the court of public opinion, not even public sin. All charges of sin are to be brought to the consistory as the sole court Christ appointed to judge and treat such sins. There are no other options.

a. Once again, Rev. Lanning did not charge individuals with sin. Over and over this has been stated as a fact, yet I see no evidence that this is true.

b. Article 74 of the Church Order is used here. It is stated in this article that when a public sin is committed, "the matter shall be reported to the consistory." What this article does not state is that it is wrong or schismatic to address that sin in love for the sinner and those whom the sinner may have led astray. This article positively asserts that public sin should be reported to the consistory to be dealt with, but to draw from this that this excludes any other action is to misuse this article.

c. This charge then falls away.

II. [The pastor's] actions in the sermons he preached and in his subsequent defense of these actions constitutes public schism when he slandered the officebearers in the churches through his characterizations, accusations, and charges, which is a violation of the 9th commandment.

A. In his public accusations of officebearers of Classis East [the pastor] dealt with brothers in the Lord as if they were his enemies,

going so far as to imply they were unbelievers.

1. *He does this when he portrays the men of Classis East as homosexuals deserving the punishment of Sodom. Such a horrible accusation against the officebearers of Classis East could not possibly come out of a proper exegesis of Jeremiah 23:14. Jeremiah was able to say this because the God who knows the hearts of the prophets of Jerusalem gave this to Jeremiah by direct revelation. [The pastor] may not make this same claim.*

a. Here Rev. Lanning is charged with slander due to his charge that the sin of Classis East February 2018 was like unto the sin of sodomy.

1) Classis makes this judgment without ever addressing Rev. Lanning's text. They make this judgment based on the assertion that "such a horrible accusation against the officebearers of Classis East could not possibly come out of a proper exegesis of Jeremiah 23:14."

a) Why is it that this accusation could not possibly be true? Is our denomination not capable of certain sins? Which sins are these?

(1) Classis erred in not accepting the very real possibility that this charge could be true.

(2) Due to their outright refusal to even consider the validity of such a charge, they do not actually exegete the text to prove their assertion that the application made by Rev. Lanning was wrong.

(3) Classis also does not prove false Rev. Lanning's charge that the PRC is guilty of excusing and minimizing false doctrine within our denomination.

2) Classis charges Rev. Lanning with slander, but never interacts with his warning to the denomination. They never address the specific evidences given. This is pride, it is pride that says our denomination, or our minister, is not capable of such great sin. Classis did not prove false anything Rev. Lanning said or wrote. Therefore, the charge of schism due to slander must fall away.

2. *Also in his sermon on Jeremiah 23 he denounced rashly and unheard by consistory, classis, or synod, a professor of our seminary and editor of the Standard Bearer as minimizing and covering up the sin of false doctrine (Agenda, page 184).*

a. Here Classis refers once again to a specific evidence given by Rev. Lanning to support his admonition that the spiritual state of the PRC is concerning. Once again Classis does not

enter into whether Rev. Lanning's charge was true, but instead reasserts that Rev. Lanning charged individuals with sin.

1) No names were given, no individual was charged with sin. This charge is given once again without evidence.

2) This was a public writing in the *Standard Bearer*. If Rev. Lanning had written in to the *Standard Bearer* to publicly disagree with Prof. Dykstra in a letter would that have been schism? If that constitutes schism, then 13 consistories of the Protestant Reformed Churches must all be deposed for publicly militating against the writers and board of the *Sword and Shield*, instead of privately taking their grievances up with those individuals' consistories.

a) The inconsistency in upholding the principle that public sin must be dealt with privately is a major concern to me. On one hand Rev. Lanning is guilty of schism because he uses as evidence public writings. While on the other hand 13 consistories write 13 letters in which they denounce not only individual writings, but the overall motive of a whole publication.

(1) I cannot help but wonder if this is due to Classis East's agreement with the consistories' letters, and disagreement with Rev. Lanning's warning. What other explanation could there be for such an obvious double standard? If this is the case, then why don't we as a denomination deal with the root issue. Is the Protestant Reformed Church innocent of the charge of minimizing and excusing false doctrine? Are the charges of Rev. Lanning and the *Sword and Shield* false? If this is the position of the denomination, let it then be proved. Deal with Rev. Lanning's evidences, actually exegete Jeremiah 23:14 and prove that it does not apply to Classis East February 2018. This instruction would be profitable.

3. In standing behind his sermon on Jeremiah 100%, [he] informs the elders of BCPRC that they "have gone to the prophets of Egypt for understanding by going to the Church Visitors." And, "the Church Visitors will not counsel you to your profit, but to your shame" (Agenda, page 138).

a. In this point Rev. Lanning is quoted sharing his view of the church visitor's advice with his consistory. He believes that the advice is unbiblical and exhorts his consistory to not accept

the evil counsel brought.

1) As the charge is public schism, I am not sure why this is brought, as it occurred in the privacy of the consistory.

2) I see no ground for a charge here. If the counsel brought was not in accordance with the Word of God, then it could correctly be characterized as advice from the prophets of Egypt. Part of Rev. Lanning's point here is that he had already advised the consistory of their God-given calling. So going to the church visitors for advice and taking their advice over against the Word of God could aptly be characterized as going to the prophets of Egypt.

a) Rev. Lanning faithfully preached and applied his text. The church visitors call God's word to the PRC sin. That advice then is the advice of Satan. Exposing the error of following that horrible advice is not schism.

(1) Once again here Rev. Lanning is charged with schism due to his condemnation of the lie, and his defense of God's word.

4. *Later in his sermon on Ecclesiastes [he] does not promote the honor and good character of the church visitors when he says, "Beloved congregation, we stand at a crossroads. We stand before that calling: go to the house of mourning. Do not go to the house of feasting as a church, as a congregation. We stand before that crossroads right now, this day, as a congregation. Will we go to the house of mourning, or will we be a house of feasting? The essence of the church visitors' advice to this church is that the rebuke against our sin as a church and as a denomination of displacing the perfect work of Christ is not allowed in this pulpit. That is the essence of this advice" (Agenda, p. 200). This rash accusation is aimed at officebearers in the church in order to discredit them as enemies of the cause of Christ, without the congregation even knowing that the church visitors gave advice to the consistory or proving that this advice was in error.*

a. This accusation was aimed at the advice brought by the church visitors, not the church visitors themselves. The advice of the church visitors to depose Rev. Lanning for public schism was wrong. The church visitors call the Word of God properly applied by Rev. Lanning schismatic.

b. If through this process the church visitors were discredited, they discredited themselves by their horrible advice. Classis has repeatedly throughout this process accused Rev. Lanning of speaking ill of men, or of being unloving, or of being rash.

Every time Rev. Lanning is accused of these things, he is defending the Word of God, or condemning the lie. This is not schism.

c. The church visitors came with advice to depose Rev. Lanning. Rev. Lanning was convicted that he had faithfully brought the Word of God. Because Rev. Lanning publicly condemned the church visitors' advice, he is guilty of schism? Should he have remained silent if he believed the advice to be dead wrong?

d. Classis here speaks to the motive of Rev. Lanning in denouncing the church visitors' advice. Classis assumes he did this to discredit the church visitors. Classis earlier advises Rev. Lanning that he does not have the divine revelation granted Jeremiah. Classis does not have this divine revelation, and so it is erroneous for classis to assume to know the motive of Rev. Lanning in this. Since this charge centers around motive, it must fall away.

5. *[He] 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).*

a. The statement that the lie cannot be found in the minutes of the assemblies of our churches is true in the sense that those lies have now been denounced.

1) It is interesting that Classis makes this point. Previously Rev. Lanning has been reprimanded multiple times for not bringing more formal protests to the ecclesiastical assemblies.

a) If the lie is not present officially in the minutes of the assemblies, what should Rev. Lanning be protesting?

(1) Can the lie be present in a denomination without being included in the minutes of ecclesiastical assemblies? The clear answer is yes, the lie can flourish without being adopted. Rev. Lanning's point repeatedly in his sermons is that the condemnation of the lie is what is lacking. This point that it is not

in the minutes of the assemblies is of no value then.

B. *[The pastor] in his sermons and defense has violated Scripture and the confessions.*

1. *He violates the requirement of the 9th commandment, which is explained by the Heidelberg Catechism in LD 43: "that I be no backbiter, nor slanderer, that I do not judge, nor join in condemning any man rashly or unheard, but...that also I defend and promote, as much as I am able, the honor and good character of my neighbor."*

a. Classis does not prove their charge that Rev. Lanning said anything false, so the charge of slander is unsubstantiated.

b. Classis does not prove that Rev. Lanning judged rashly or unheard.

c. Classis does not prove that Rev. Lanning failed in promoting the honor and good character of the neighbor.

1) In charging Rev. Lanning with these things, and not proving their charge, Classis itself commits the very errors they charge Rev. Lanning with.

2. *He violates Scripture, which teaches in II Thessalonians 3:14, 15 that, even in the case of one who does not obey the Word of God, "yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."*

a. Classis does not prove the charge that Rev. Lanning counted brethren as enemies.

1) In Classis' extremely hasty judgment of Rev. Lanning, once again Classis commits the very error they charge Rev. Lanning with. Was there work done, was there admonishment?

a) Rev. Lanning was suspended and deposed in a matter of months.

III. *[The pastor's] actions in the sermons he preached constitute public schism by insubordination to the authority in the church in violation of the 5th commandment.*

A. *[He] expressed grievances which contradict the decisions of Classis East at its September 12, 2018 meeting.*

1. *In his sermon on Jeremiah 23, [he] charges that the officebearers of Classis East remain guilty for the wrong decisions they made and must repent; that they continue to walk in lies, twist, pervert, and corrupt the truth, commit spiritual fornication, and strengthen the hand of the evildoer.*

2. *But Classis East formally declared three times "that Classis East erred in its decisions of February 28, 2018, which decisions are then quoted, and the decisions of Synod 2018 are quoted and*

used as a ground (Art. 15-17).

3. *By this action of charging Classis East with failing to repent or condemn the doctrinal error, [the pastor] militates against the decisions of Classis East.*

4. *By this action, [the pastor] leads others into this same disagreement of Classis' decisions, which constitutes public schism.*

a. Rev. Lanning here is charged with committing the sin of public schism due to his supposed militating against the formal decision where Classis East recognized it erred.

1) Rev. Lanning does not deny that Classis East made an official decision that it had erred. Rev. Lanning exposes that there has not been true repentance. Classis did in a sense confess wrongdoing. However, an ecclesiastical body cannot make a formal decision to repent, as repentance is personal, and from the heart. This charge is therefore a false charge.

b. Rev. Lanning is warranted in doubting the true repentance of many ministers and elders in our denomination.

1) An article was written by Prof. Dykstra shortly after Synod 2018 that condemned calling the rejected doctrine of Rev. Overway heresy. In the article Prof. Dykstra condemns any who refer to Rev. Overway's doctrine as heresy. He goes so far as to accuse such of slander and schism.

a) All in the Protestant Reformed Churches who read those words and kept their silence, or supported such talk, are guilty of ignoring the minimization of the perversion of God's Word.

b) If the Protest Reformed Churches were truly repentant, if the delegates of Classis East were truly repentant, this type of writing would not have been allowed to pass without outcry. The truly repentant sinner does not allow for the excusing or minimizing of his sin. He understands its horror, and will be the first to tell of the seriousness of it.

B. [The pastor] expressed public disagreement with the decision of his consistory to the congregation and denomination through the pulpit, thus showing insubordination to his overseers, the elders.

1. Nowhere did I find that Rev. Lanning in any way publicly expressed disagreement with any decision of his consistory in the sermons listed as evidence. This is pure conjecture. Once again Classis attempts to interpret the heart of Rev. Lanning. This is done in error, only God knows man's heart.

a. These are incredibly weak and unsubstantiated points.

1) Why is Classis grasping at straws to charge Rev. Lanning with sin? Classis continues to make itself guilty of the very charges they bring against Rev. Lanning. They are uncharitable, and rash in these judgments.

C. [The pastor] 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.

1. Rev. Lanning did publicly disagree and condemn the advice of the church visitors.

a. However, the church visitors had no authority over Rev. Lanning.

b. The church visitors do not make binding decisions.

c. Rev. Lanning had every right to instruct his consistory and congregation as to the merits of this advice in the light of God's Word. His condemnation of that advice in light of God's Word is commendable, and there is no support here for any charge.

D. The sin of public schism is listed in Church Order, Article 80 as "among the gross sins which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office."

1. The charge of public schism is not proven by Classis. Rev. Lanning is not guilty of this charge.

In conclusion, the deposition of Rev. Lanning did not happen in a vacuum. Of all the evidence I see of an unrepentant spirit in the PRC, the hasty and unfounded deposition of Rev. Lanning is the most damning. First we had the situation at Hope PRC, then we had our ecclesiastical bodies support gross false doctrine for years. Distrust and suspicion began to flourish as the orthodoxy of our leadership was called into question. I rejoiced in 2018 when a beautiful decision was made exposing the lie and defending the gospel. My joy slowly evaporated as articles started to surface hinting at the same old lie. Then came the repeated minimization of the error exposed, and the rejection of the *Sword and Shield*. I pray that God may use this synod to root out the lie here in our midst. May we once again be a steadfast polemical church with a deep love and zeal for God's truth.