SWORD AND SHIELD

A REFORMED MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee,
O people saved by the LORD*, the shield of thy help,*
and who is the sword of thy excellency!
and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee;
and thou shalt tread upon their high places.
Deuteronomy 33:29

JULY 2026 | VOLUME 7 | NUMBER 2

CONTENTS

3 **MEDITATION**
GOD'S HORSES AND CHARIOTS
Rev. Herman Hoeksema

6 **FROM THE EDITOR**
Rev. Nathan Langerak

7 **EDITORIAL**
THE END OF ALL THINGS (6): ANTICHRIST AS WORLD POWER
Rev. Nathan Langerak

13 **OUR DOCTRINE**
SACRIFICES (15): THE *SHELAMIM*, OR PEACE OFFERING, CONCLUDED
Rev. Luke Bomers

20 **WONDROUS WORKS**
PERNICIOUS PELAGIAN POISON
Rev. Earl Kamps

27 **RUNNING FOOTMEN**
AMALGAMATION
Aaron J. Cleveland

32 **FINALLY, BRETHREN, FAREWELL**
Rev. Nathan Langerak

Sword and Shield is a monthly periodical published by Reformed Believers Publishing.

Editor in chief
Rev. Nathan J. Langerak

All quotations from scripture are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Quotations from the Reformed and ecumenical creeds, Church Order, and liturgical forms are taken from *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), unless otherwise noted.

Every writer is solely responsible for the content of his own writing.

Signed letters and submissions of general interest may be sent to the editor in chief at natelangerak@att.net or to

Rev. Nathan J. Langerak
705 Pettibone St
Crown Point, IN 46307

Sword and Shield does not accept advertising.

Please send all business correspondence, subscription requests, and requests to join Reformed Believers Publishing to one of the following:

Reformed Believers Publishing
325 84th St SW, Suite 102
Byron Center, MI 49315
Website: reformedbelieverspub.org
Email: office@reformedbelieverspub.org

Reformed Believers Publishing maintains the privacy and trust of its subscribers by not sharing with any person, organization, or church any information regarding *Sword and Shield* subscribers.

GOD'S HORSES AND CHARIOTS

In the vision in Zechariah 6:1–8, there is closure!

In this closure there is rest, the rest of God's Spirit!

Exactly because God is the Alpha, he is also the Omega. He performs a perfect work. The end, the cutting off of God's work in time, is his entrance into the rest. The Spirit of the Lord will rest in the north country.

The victory!

God's victory!

Then will be the revelation before the whole creation of God's eternal victory, a revelation that he is eternally and always the victorious one! He is the victorious one because he is not only the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, but he is also the whole alphabet of all world history. From the Alpha his work proceeds in a straight line to the Omega.

Therefore, in this vision there is closure.

This vision is the last of the visions shown to the prophet on that momentous night of the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month of the second year of the reign of King Darius. Jerusalem is still a prey to devastation. In the eyes of the oppressed, faint-hearted band that has returned from Babylon, it scarcely seems likely that God's cause—the cause of his kingdom and his eternal covenant—ever will have the victory.

This vision in many respects is similar to the first vision recorded in Zechariah 1:7–17, and this vision appears to be a return to the first vision. In both visions the prophet sees a cavalry troop, a military force; in both visions the emphasis apparently falls on the colors of the horses; and in both visions the cavalry goes to and fro throughout the earth.

But God's work always goes straight on; the Almighty never returns in history to retrace his steps.

History always surges forward to the Omega!

The consummation!

Therefore, both visions are not alike; there is a significant difference between them. In this vision the prophet sees black horses, which were not in the first vision. In this vision the prophet sees horses and chariots emerging from between two brass mountains; but in the first vision, the prophet had seen horses among the myrtles. In this vision the horses set forth; but in the first vision, they recently had returned from traversing the earth. In this vision the horses do their work and carry out their tasks; but in the first vision, they merely had reported that the whole earth sits still and is at rest.

But the greatest difference is that in this vision the prophet sees the end, God's end.

For indeed, those who go forth to the north country cause God's Spirit to rest in the north country.

In this vision there is an entering into rest!

Into the rest of God!

God's horses!

In this vision there are also chariots. However, the presence of chariots makes no essential difference regarding the meaning of the vision. But the chariots abundantly make clear that the prophet sees a fighting force, for the chariots are war chariots.

God's fighting force!

Only from this perspective must we see these strong horses—these powers—prancing with impatience to traverse the earth.

Red, black, white, and speckled horses.[1]

Oh, yes, if you would view these powers—especially the red, black, and speckled horses—from an earthly, a human, or a purely historical perspective, you would say that the horses are not God's powers that execute the will of the Most High, do his work, and achieve his purpose. And from a historical perspective, the white horses would seem to be unimportant, for they do not resemble a fighting force nor appear as a triumphant power in the world like the other horses. Here on earth we certainly see these horses as forces: forces of war, the hatred of nations, destruction, and bloodshed—the red horse; powers of scarcity and want, hunger and misery—the black horse; terrors of death and the grave that ceaselessly mow down humans, both young and old, rich and poor, and weak

1 For the color of the fourth set of horses, the King James Version in Zechariah 6:3 has "grisled and bay." "Grisled" refers to hair streaked with gray. "Bay" refers to a reddish color. The two Hebrew words translated as "grisled and bay" should be translated as *flecked with snow* and *strong*. Neither Hebrew word has anything to do with a bay coloring. Hoeksema used the *Statenvertaling*, the standard Dutch translation of scripture. An English translation of the Dutch for these two Hebrew words is *speckled and strong*. The Dutch word that I translate as "speckled" is a very rare, old word that literally means *flecked with hail*, apparently in an effort to capture the idea of the Hebrew word. I will follow Hoeksema's Dutch throughout the translation, although I will use the word "speckled" to refer to the "grisled and bay" horses. The Hebrew word that means *strong* and appears in verse 3 to describe only the "grisled and bay" horses is in fact a description of all the horses.

and strong—the speckled, which is the "pale horse" of Revelation 6:8. And we see the white horse as the power of the preaching of the word, of the church, and of the cause of the kingdom of heaven in the world.

We see these horses at all times throughout all history.

Always these horses go to and fro throughout the whole earth.

Everywhere these horses do their work. They were present in the past. They are present now too. They grow ever stronger, ever more impatient—except perhaps the white horses. In our day we behold these three horses in all the terror of their formidable power, in all the horror of the devastation they wreak. They arrive with thundering force and reveal their might upon the earth, in the air, and in the depths of the sea. They rage and storm. The red horses furiously foam at their mouths, spew fire and brimstone, and crush everything beneath their mighty hooves. The earth trembles and rends; the air is filled with crashing and rolling thunder; cities are crushed; and people—defenseless men, women, and children—meet cruel deaths. The sea is tempestuous and knows not why. Those who sail upon the sea—in ships small and large—are dragged mercilessly down to the depths.

In the tracks of the red horses follow the black and speckled horses.

They are strong too, yet they work in silence, certain of victory. They stalk about like the pestilences in the night. They find people in their homes and on the battlefields. There is no escape. These powers spread hunger, pestilence, misery, and death.

And ever onward the white horses pursue their mission—they are the power of Christ's kingdom—gripping people by their hearts and subjecting them to the King of kings and Lord of lords!

But are not the red, black, and speckled horses worldly powers? And for this reason, will the white horses not be compelled to halt their mission? Or, at least, would one not expect the force represented by the white horses to be depicted as engaging in a life-and-death struggle against the other horses? Are not the other horses, then, the powers of godless men who are bent on world domination and who rage against the Lord's Anointed? Are they not the powers of the oppressors of this age—the Nimrods and the Pharaohs, the Zebahs and the Zalmunnas, the Nebuchadnezzars and the Alexanders, the Caesars and the Napoleons, and the Hitlers and the Mussolinis? Do they not unleash these powers of war, death, and destruction in order to execute their wills and to secure the victory for the powers of darkness?

The horses and chariots of men!

Forces of the ungodly world, of the spirit of antichrist, and of the son of perdition!

Or again, is not the power of the white horses the well-nigh desperate struggles of a poor church who seeks to maintain and expand herself and strives to bring the world into subjection to the authority of her king?

Viewed from our perspective, it seems that all these forces are the horses and chariots of men. Upon the world stage where these forces appear, struggle, advance, and wreak havoc and death, the law of cause and effect is actively at work. Human beings—rational, responsible, and sinful human beings, who are dead through their sins and transgressions—appear on the world stage. These human beings stand in the service of the prince of darkness and churn up mire and mud like the driven sea. They are causes—co-causes, secondary causes—of the emergence of the powers of destruction upon the world stage, and thereby these humans heap up for themselves treasures of wrath against the day of judgment!

Other people—redeemed, reborn people; children of light; and coworkers together of God in Christ—also appear and struggle on the world stage. To them it is given by grace in the cause of Christ not only to believe in him but also to suffer for and with him. On the world stage they are seeking, working, and striving in the cause of the white horses and looking toward the reward that is laid up for them on Christ's day!

That these are the horses and chariots of men is not the last word.

If it were, then there could be no hope and ardent expectation!

Another light, a light from above, falls on these powers and their struggles.

It is a light that brings order to the apparent confusion and gives purpose to the seemingly aimless turmoil of the nations.

It is a light that reveals all these powers to us as servants of the Lord who are doing his work, executing his counsel, attaining his objective, and culminating in his end: the Omega!

It is a light in which all these powers are seen as working according to a fixed program—not striving against one another but cooperating and following one another.

It is the light of God's eternal good pleasure, in which all earthly and human causes ultimately become secondary causes, dependent causes, and subservient causes.

Why do the heathen rage?

Why do the people imagine a vain thing?

He who sits in the heavens shall laugh!

They stand in God's service!

God's horses and chariots!

Powers of the Most High, bringing about war and the turmoil of nations, death and destruction, famine and pestilence, and establishing and working toward the consummation: God's eternal covenant and kingdom!

In this way—and in this way alone—must we view these powers represented by the horses and chariots.

For these horses and chariots emerge from between two brass mountains. They do not originate from the palaces of the kings of this earth or from the strongholds of the rulers of this world, nor from the gates of hell. No, in the light of God's program, in the light of prophecy, we see these horses issue from between two mountains—mountains of brass—to go to and fro throughout the earth. And between those mountains the horses and chariots stand before the face of the Lord of the whole earth. They await his bidding. They are ready to do his will.

These are the mountains of God—symbols of his truth and righteousness: steadfast, unshakable, awe-inspiringly high, and majestic.

> 5. Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.
> 6. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep. (Ps. 36:5–6)

These mountains of God are of brass not only because they are steadfast and strong, like the bones of Behemoth, but also because these mountains of God's righteousness stand as signs of his judgment and wrath, like the brazen serpent and like the fine, burnt-brass feet of him who will come to judge. These powers go out from two brass mountains because the powers proceed from the discriminating justice of God.

These powers go forth to uphold God's justice, to execute his judgment. For this reason these powers also serve to bring about the coming of God's kingdom along the way of his righteousness.

Indeed, these powers may also be designated as "the four spirits of the heavens." For so says the angel to the prophet: "These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth." Understand that the Hebrew word translated as "spirits" means *winds*. And the winds of heaven are not powers that stand under human control, nor are the winds sent forth or governed by human beings. Rather, the winds are powers of God, influences and workings of the Most High—whether mediate or immediate—upon the vast sea of nations to stir it up. The winds are powers of God that bring to pass the perishing of one kingdom and the rising of another kingdom that exalts itself. As these winds burst forth upon the great world-sea and stir it up, one beast after another rises out of the sea. It is as Daniel saw in his vision:

> 2. I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.
> 3. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. (Dan. 7:2–3)

For God is at work in his righteous wrath among godless nations and even amidst the lusts of the flesh and the stirrings of sin. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). And then matters grow worse; then judgment comes; then the world seeks its own destruction in war, revolution, famine, misery, and death. God is at work also in his almighty grace, and then the power of sin and death is overcome, and his kingdom is established.

God's powers—all four of them!

Therefore, they await his bidding!

They stand in the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

Therefore, when God wills it, these powers go wherever he sends them, and he controls their works and influences.

No matter how impatient these horses may be to traverse the entire earth, only when God says, "Get you hence; walk to and fro through the earth," are they able to go.

At the supreme command from the Lord's own lips, all these things come to pass!

Let not your heart be troubled!

God reigns!

The Omega!

The end—God's end, the consummation of all things—is being reached!

And the Omega is not a mere return to the Alpha, but the Omega is the coming of the eternal and heavenly perfection of God's covenant.

And these powers—all these powers—must cooperate and serve to bring this end, even if a godless world does not intend it so.

These horses range everywhere; they roam far and wide. Throughout the entire world and in all history, they carry out their work. True indeed in this vision granted to the prophet, the work of these warring forces is revealed from the specific historical vantage point of the prophet's own time. And so we see the black horses heading toward the north country—Babylon and further into the north—with the white horses following closely behind. Then the speckled horses make their way to the south country—Egypt. And for a moment we lose sight of the red horses.

But ultimately all these strong horses—and all the horses are strong, not only the speckled ones—traverse the whole earth to execute God's command and counsel to the very end.

And that end is this: God's Spirit finds rest in the north country! Oh, the north country is Babylon; yes, she above all is the world power. There—yes, there, emphatically—resides the spirit of antichrist. There the dragon reigns! But God's Spirit shall find rest in Babylon, and therefore throughout the entire world, which shall be conquered to make way for the tabernacle of God among men forevermore.

Behold, I will make all things new!

Soon it will be Sabbath!

The rest of God's Spirit!

—Herman Hoeksema

"Professor Engelsma paints a picture of the PRC that is completely at odds with reality." Such is the assessment of Aaron Cleveland in his article in the *Running Footmen* rubric this month. And the assessment is true. Professor Engelsma's recent article in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* gives the impression that the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) still stand alone as the one voice that is crying in the wilderness against the apostasy of the modern Reformed church world, its amalgamation with the world, and its development of the false doctrine of salvation by the willing and working of man. But that impression is false. Reverend McGeown alone is proof of that with his deceitful use of scripture and his cry for peace among all professing Christians.

Professor Engelsma writes against modernism. But what is *modernism*? It is nothing more than a word to encapsulate the massive apostasy from the truth of the broader Reformed church world as it adopts the thinking, language, and goals of the world around it. In modernism the thoughts and wisdom of man are the rule of truth, and modernism inevitably gives way to postmodernism, in which there is no objective truth and every man does what is right in his own eyes. The PRC and her members not only do not stand against modernism, but they also have progressed to postmodernism, in which everyone who says he is a Christian is considered to be a real Christian, regardless of what he confesses and believes. The PRC belongs to the world, and Professor Engelsma has helped to bring the denomination there. The PRC embodies that corrupt religious organization called Babylon in scripture.

The world to which the PRC belongs is being swept along on the raging torrent of time as time rushes to bring the end of all things with the final coming of Jesus Christ. As part of that coming of Christ, there must come the final form of antichrist as a religious entity who causes all the world to wonder after antichrist as a political entity, who is a deified man and his deified state. All Christian sects and all the world's religions must become unified. And they will become unified under the principle of the salvation of man by his willing and working. They will worship man and the abilities and accomplishments of man. Man will become the measure of what is true and right. This unified religious entity will cause all men to worship the deified antichristian political power, who will throw off all semblance of the worship of a god and will declare himself and his worldwide government to be God. Of this the PRC is a part. Of this all churches and religious entities who deny the gospel of Jesus Christ and his full and free righteousness received by faith alone for God's elect alone are a part. Jesus Christ alone is the rock that God set as the headstone of the corner. Indeed, he is rejected of men to their own destruction. But he is precious and sure for all who place their trust in him. In him alone there is safety from that raging torrent that sweeps the whole world toward the damning worship of antichrist, which is nothing other than the worship of man.

At *Sword and Shield* we are privileged to be witnesses of these developments, to be witnesses against these developments, and to be witnesses for the truth of Jesus Christ, the rock, in whom alone there is salvation and safety.

In this issue the editor continues his series on the end of all things by beginning a treatment of the subject of antichrist. Antichrist in scripture is a multifaceted reality. What is important to remember is that as fearsome as antichrist is in scripture, he is but a creature and a tool in the hands of the Lord of lords and the King of kings, Jesus Christ. There is also a new rubric, *Wondrous Works*, by our newest regular writer, Rev. Earl Kamps. He writes on the pernicious error of the Pelagians. Reverend Bomers continues his edifying series on the Old Testament sacrifices by concluding his treatment of the peace offering. We hope that his series will benefit the readers not only in their reading of the articles but also in their reading of those sections of the Old Testament that speak of these sacrifices. We hope that these articles will help the readers to see Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

The meditation is again a translation by the editor of a meditation originally written by Rev. Herman Hoeksema in Dutch and published in *The Standard Bearer* in the early 1940s. It is a very comforting meditation that reminds the child of God during the upheavals that characterize the end of all things that every power, every event, and every creature are soldiers in the army of the Almighty who do his bidding and accomplish his work for the destruction of the ungodly, for the salvation of God's elect people, and for the coming of God's eternal purpose in Christ. What a great God we have who has set his king, Jesus Christ, upon his holy hill in Zion!

—NJL

THE END OF ALL THINGS (6): ANTICHRIST AS WORLD POWER

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. —1 John 2:18

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. —1 John 2:22

Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. —1 John 4:3

Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. —2 John 7

Introduction

This editorial is a continuation of my series on the end of all things that will culminate in the final coming of Jesus Christ, who will declare himself judge of the quick and the dead. This coming of Christ is preceded by clear signs that the church can observe and from which signs she can know that the coming of Christ draws near and approaches quickly. These signs are related to the coming of Jesus Christ as cause and effect. Christ always is coming throughout history. His coming is the grand event that defines and effects all history in both the old and new dispensations. When the signs of Christ's coming take place, then the comfort of the church is that all those signs are under the control of him who is the Lord of lords and the King of kings, who holds in his hands the book of God's counsel and loosens its seals to carry out the plan of God for the end of all things.

Belonging to those signs of Christ's coming is a closely related triumvirate of signs: the working of the mystery of iniquity, the coming of apostasy, and the rise of antichrist. I have treated the working of the mystery of iniquity and the coming of apostasy. In this editorial I turn to the rise of antichrist. Antichrist in his final forms is the culmination of apostasy. That apostasy began with Adam in the garden of Eden when in his lust to be God, Adam rebelled against God and departed from God, who was Adam's life. That apostasy will have its final form in the personal man of sin and in his worldwide kingdom of sin, in which a man will be worshiped as God. Behind that man stands Satan in his history-long rebellion against God. Satan gathers the nations into antichrist's kingdom, and Satan will give his seat, power, and authority to that antichrist.

The Idea and Definition of Antichrist

When we think about the word *antichrist*, what usually arises in our minds is a vision of what we call the personal antichrist, that man of sin who will stand at the head of the antichristian world power at the end of time. But in scripture *antichrist* is a phenomenon as much as an individual. The phenomenon of antichrist has several aspects and includes movements in history and a multitude of individuals. Those movements in history include opposition to Christ by world powers and opposition to Christ by the false church and world religions. The multitude of individuals includes all those who stand in the service of those movements by world powers and false religions to oppose Christ. All this will culminate in the final antichrist, the man of sin, the son of perdition, and his worldwide kingdom.

The word *antichrist* occurs only in the epistles of the apostle John in the passages that are cited at the beginning of this editorial. The word occurs in both its singular and plural forms: *antichrist* and *antichrists*. The prefix *anti-* in the Greek in connection with the word *christ* has two basic meanings: *opposition to* and *displacement of*. So the idea of the term *antichrist* is one who stands opposed to Christ and seeks to displace Christ. The old Reformed theologians sometimes referred to antichrist as the ape of Christ, that is, one who in his opposition to Christ and in

his desire to displace Christ seeks also to imitate Christ. For instance, the personal antichrist has a time and a coming, and he will work signs and wonders, although he will perform them in the service of and under the power of the lie. Since antichrist no longer can oppose Christ personally, the form of the warfare between Christ and antichrist is the battle between Christ's church and the world and the false church.

Thus a*ntichrist* can be defined as that movement in world history under the influence of the power of Satan to oppose Christ and his kingdom and to set up in this world the kingdom of Satan. Antichrist has three basic aspects: it is a world power; it is a false religion; and it is individuals who labor in those wicked causes.

First, nations and governments throughout history have corrupted the power of the sword and turned it to destroy God's church, the form of God's kingdom in the world, and sought to establish themselves as the power in the world. This we may call the antichristian world power. It is a political movement. A significant part of this aspect of antichrist is a history-long effort to unify the nations under the world power by a willing coalition or by a force of arms. This antichristian world power has appeared repeatedly throughout history as nations rise and fall according to the determinate counsel of God. This antichristian world power will have its final form of antichrist at the end of history in the kingdom that will rule over the entire world.

Second, throughout world history there is apostasy from the truth. The result of apostasy is a false church who is the enemy of the true church and who seeks to destroy the true church by means of false doctrine and persecution. The false church often tries to turn the government against the church and to incite the government to use the power of the sword to persecute the church and to destroy her. We may call this the religious aspect of antichrist. Belonging to this aspect of antichrist is a history-long effort to unify the false church and all false religions. The final form of this religious aspect of antichrist will be the unification of the false church and all false religions into a movement that will stand in the service of the worldwide government and cause all men to worship that government and the man who stands at its head.

Third, throughout history there have been individuals who have stood at the head of the antichristian movements or stood in the service of these movements. The Agags, the Pharaohs, the Nebuchadnezzars, the Caesars, the popes, the Hitlers, the Stalins, all their minions, and a whole host of false teachers and false prophets have appeared throughout history. All these men will have their fulfillment and final form in the personal antichrist, who will stand at the head of the final worldwide kingdom and will demand and receive divine worship as though he were God.

In the Old Dispensation

This antichristian kingdom appeared in the Old Testament. It appeared at Babel with the kingdom of Nimrod, whose kingdom was a deliberate act of rebellion against the authority of Noah and Seth and the command of God to spread out over the earth. Through Nimrod's leadership and force of personality, the people sought to build a tower that reached unto heaven. It was at Babel where God confounded the one language of men and made Nimrod's dream impossible for the time being. This act of God the apostle John refers to in Revelation 13:

> 1. I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.
> 2. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.
> 3. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. (vv. 1–3)

That deadly wound was at Babel and the confounding of the language of men. At the end of time, that deadly wound will be healed, so that "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (Rev. 20:7–8). This refers to the gathering of the nations into the kingdom of antichrist at the end of time.

God's confounding the language at Babel did not diminish Nimrod's lust for power. Immediately after God had confounded the language and put an end to Nimrod's efforts to unify the people in a willing coalition, Nimrod went out to establish an empire by force of arms:

> 8. Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.
> 9. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.
> 10. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. (Gen. 10:8–10)

The great continuation of Nimrod's dream was Babylon, at the head of which stood Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon was succeeded first by the Medes and Persians, then by the Greco-Macedonian kingdom of Alexander, then by Rome, and finally by the amalgamation of nations in the Christian West. All this was shown to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream of the metallic man:

> 31. Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.
> 32. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,
> 33. His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.
> 34. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.
> 35. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. (Dan. 2:31–35)

In deliberate rebellion against the word of God in his dream—that Nebuchadnezzar was only a *head* of gold and that his kingdom would have an end and be replaced by a kingdom of silver—Nebuchadnezzar made an all-gold replica of the image, thereby signifying that his kingdom would endure. By demanding worship of that image, and thus demanding worship of himself and his kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar rebelled also against the main point of the vision—that the kingdoms of man will be smashed to smithereens by the kingdom of God and thus that God is God and man is not God.

In his visions recorded in chapter 7, the prophet Daniel saw the foreshadowing of the future worldwide kingdom of antichrist in the rise of four different kingdoms pictured as four different beasts that thrust themselves to prominence out of the tumultuous sea of nations:

> 2. Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.
> 3. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.
> 4. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.
> 5. And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.
> 6. After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.
> 7. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.
> 8. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. (Dan. 7:2–8)

Later Daniel revealed that these four beasts are four kings and their kingdoms that oppose God, his saints, and his kingdom:

> 17. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.
> 18. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.
>
> 23. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.
> 24. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.
> 25. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. (Dan. 7:17–18, 23–25)

These four kingdoms, then, are old-dispensational, typical manifestations of the final kingdom of antichrist that shall arise at the end of time after the gospel has gone to the ends of the earth.

In the First Vision of Revelation 13

The imagery of Daniel is picked up in Revelation 13:1–10 in John's vision of antichrist as a world power and the beast that arises out of the sea. I will focus on this vision for the main details about antichrist as a world power.

The vision that John sees on the seashore reveals to us a terrible beast. John sees this beast as he begins to rise out of the sea. John describes the beast as he emerges from the sea. First, John sees the seven heads pushing out of the sea, and on those heads are seven horns, and on the horns are ten crowns. The horns are indicative of the beast's power, and the crowns indicate his royal rule and authority.

John also sees that on the heads of the beast is the name of blasphemy, or a blasphemous name. And the beast carries into action his blasphemous reputation because he speaks great blasphemies against God, God's tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. That the beast's name is blasphemy means that he is blasphemy incarnate, its culmination, and its final and greatest form.

This beast emerges out of the stormy and turbulent sea. The sea stands symbolically for the sea of nations. This is clear from a number of passages of scripture. For instance, Isaiah 57:20: "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Decisive is Revelation 17:15: "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." That the waters are depicted as a sea shows that the nations are under and develop under the principle of sin and the dominion of Satan. This sea is windswept, roaring, and raging; out of this foaming sea, the beast comes.

As the beast pushes his heads clear of the foaming and roaring waves, John sees clearly the beast's terrible body. He is a composite beast, a mixture of beasts. He has the dappled coat of a leopard covering his body, the sturdy feet of a bear, and the tawny mouth of a lion.

John sees that the dragon gives his power, seat, and great authority to this terrible beast. Sitting behind this beast, influencing and controlling this beast, are the power, seat, and authority of the great red dragon, who is Satan, that old serpent.

As this beast stands clear of the water, John notices that one of the beast's heads appears to have been smitten to death and that this deadly wound is now healed.

Revelation 13:1–10 is a vision of antichrist particularly as a world power headed by its king. He is a beast, a great and wild beast who is a great power in the world. The book of Daniel gives the definitive answer regarding what this beast represents. He is a movement and a power that take the form of a great kingdom in the world. In Daniel 7:23 the fourth beast that Daniel saw was a kingdom. Thus the beast in Revelation 13 represents a kingdom, a great power in the world.

The form that this movement takes is a kingdom of universal dominion that arises out of the sea of nations and dominates these nations, so that the whole world wonders after and worships this beast. While the vision in Daniel 7 is similar to the vision in Revelation 13, Daniel's vision is different because in it are distinct beasts, whereas in John's vision there is an amalgamation of beasts. This tells us something regarding the form of this antichristian kingdom. In the old dispensation the form of this kingdom was successive, individual nations—Babylon, Persia, Greece, and finally Rome—that forced their wills and dominion on the nation that each nation conquered.

The composite form of the beast in Revelation 13:1–10 represents a willing coalition of nations. This willing coalition is not only evident in the composite form of the beast, but it is also the reason that the whole world wonders after the beast. The world is enamored and awed by the beast's presence and declares, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to make war with him?" And the world actually worships the beast. The kingdoms of the world, which normally have existed in hostility toward one another, succeed in forming a willing coalition. All the powers, ambitions, and glory of these kingdoms are united and made subservient to the one aim of the kingdom of the beast.

There will be a return to Nimrod and Babel!

And make no mistake: This kingdom will be grand and universal in scope! The vision's further details reveal that this kingdom will possess absolute dominion in society, so that all the institutions of society will be under the beast's dominion. The beast will speak of great things, great ambitions, and great ideas. Man will subdue the earth. Man will be on display. It will be a splendid time for the world—a time of peace and great accomplishments in the earth. This kingdom will impress men with its greatness, like its earlier typical forms impressed men: Babylon with her buildings, cities, armies, and learning; Rome with her legions and roads; Greece with her philosophy, art, and science; and Persia with her sheer size and astounding wealth. And awed by the glory and might of this kingdom, all the world willingly will obey and be in subjection to the beast. If it were possible, even the elect would be deceived by the grandeur of this kingdom and would worship the beast.

And all this will be under the control of one man, for with the kingdom must be a king who rules and directs that kingdom. This ought to be clear from the great historical types of this terrible beast. Babylon was not without her Nebuchadnezzar, neither Rome without her Caesars, nor Greece without her Alexander, nor Persia without her

kings. And this, too, is found in Daniel's vision, in which the first three beasts are kings (7:17). Certain things in the vision in Revelation 13 can be applied only to a person. First, a mouth is given to the beast. Take that to mean mouthpiece; there will be one who expresses, is the leader of, and is the spokesman for this beast. Second, a man's heart is given to the beast, which means that the culmination of this movement or kingdom will be in a man. Thus the beast in Revelation 13 represents a kingdom and its king.

Important for identifying this beast is that he comes. This beast as kingdom and king animated by the spirit of the dragon has been, is already, and still comes. Revelation 13:1 says that he is rising out of the sea. He is in the act of rising when John sees him, and finally the beast appears fully astride the turbulent waters of the sea of nations, and he exercises his full dominion.

And in this light too, we understand that the head that had been wounded is healed. This beast has appeared before, but just as his head was emerging from the waves and before he could appear fully and take his power and authority, someone had smitten that head to death, and the beast sank back into the waves. However, in the vision one head appears as having been wounded, but the wound is healed. The idea is that the beast always appears against opposition that would seem to stop him from coming, but he always survives the deadly wound, for it is healed. Thus the beast always appears with his wound healed. The wound is Babel and God's confounding the language there. This beast is not synonymous with any one nation, but it is a movement; a power; a spirit of opposition to God, Christ, and his kingdom that lives in the hearts of wicked men and is fired as it were by the dragon himself, whom God allows to give his power to the beast.

Throughout history this beast has been coming. He comes. He arose in the tower of Babel when Nimrod sought the willing coalition of men against God to build a tower that reached to heaven. And God smote the beast on the head by confusing the language of men and making certain enmity between the races, tribes, tongues, and nations of men. This beast also came in the four beasts of Daniel 7. He came in every attempt of a nation to overstep the bounds that God had set for her. The beast came in the empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Macedonia, and he was powerfully evident in the Roman Empire. Always the beast's head was being smitten and wounded. God struck down Belshazzar in a night; God put enmity between Greece and Persia; and he brought the barbarians against Rome and another confusion of tongues, when before the language had been nearly one. And it is not outside the bounds of the vision in Revelation to see modern risings of the beast. The beast comes throughout history and in every age. He was rising in the ascent of Hitler, and he is in every other movement that seeks to unite the nations under one head and government with one common goal.

And the culmination of this beast, who throughout history has had different forms, will be in the man who leads this movement, the one man of sin, antichrist as we commonly understand him. And in his kingdom of world dominion, all nations of the earth willingly will give their power, authority, and glory to him.

His Spiritual Character

John is shown also the true, spiritual character of this beast, which for all his glory and grandeur is thoroughly antichristian. This kingdom will not be devoid of religion, for antichrist will don a religious cloak. I am not referring yet to the religious aspect of antichrist. That will be seen in the next vision in Revelation 13 of the beast out of the earth. But I am referring to the political aspect of antichrist. He is all the more dangerous in his present appearance because the rhetoric of religiosity abounds in antichrist. But the religion of the final antichristian kingdom will be man. That is present in John's vision too. Antichrist, like the dragon, grabs for himself the number seven. I view that as a reflection of his mimicry of Christ. Antichrist will take that number in the form of religious tones as he presses his program for the earth. He will speak of hope and redemption and salvation. He will speak of worship and adoration. He will speak of heaven and happiness and blessings. He will speak of life and liberty and freedom. Furthermore, he will be about worship, but it will be a blasphemous, idolatrous worship of himself, and a religious-type fervor will follow him.

Still more, his message will be one of peace. Because his message will be "I have established peace," his subjects will cry, "Who is able to make war with him?" Even his appearance will have a peaceful feel to it, for he will not appear as a monstrous snake; but he will appear with the dappled beauty of a leopard, the firm strength of a bear, and the royal bearing of a lion. The world will wonder at him because his appearance will be impressive. Although he is evil incarnate, he will appear under the species of the good.

The spiritual character of this beast is anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-church.

This spiritual character will be evident, first, in the source of the beast's authority and power, which is the dragon. The man who will sit at the head of that kingdom, as the spokesman and human agent to direct the work of the kingdom, will be the embodiment of the power and authority of Satan. Satan has a power among the nations as those nations develop along the lines of

sin. We might say that since the fall there have been two kingdoms developing in the world. The one is the kingdom of God, which has been developing along the lines of grace and redemption. The other is the kingdom of Satan, which has been developing along the lines of sin and depravity.

This beast will be the earthly agent of the dragon's goal to set up his kingdom. The dragon has been trying throughout history to set up his kingdom, but there always has been failure. The works of Babylon, Persia, and Rome will seem as child's play compared to what will come when the whole world is subject to Satan. And that Satan stands behind this tells us that opposition to God is the principle that will drive this kingdom. Satan will use all the powers, talents, gifts, and might that the world has to oppose God and his Christ. That is all that Satan has done, and that is the principle that governs his existence, and that principle will govern the kingdom that he establishes in the beast as well. The vision in Revelation 13 tells us that all attempts to establish a union of nations apart from Jesus Christ are demonic in origin.

The beast's spiritual character will be clearly evident, second, in his message. The name on his heads is blasphemy. That his name is blasphemy means that his very essence is blasphemy. He will receive a mouth that will speak blasphemies. He will blaspheme God, his name, his tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. Nothing will be sacred to this beast. There will be nothing higher than himself. This blasphemy will evidence his sheer ambition. He will set himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped. And he will demand of the world the worship of himself and his kingdom, and he will receive it. The whole world will wonder after and worship this beast and accord divine honors not only to the kingdom but also to the man—the king of that kingdom. From him they will expect all things, and in him they will place their trust. Him they will worship, and him they will thank for their wonderful prosperity.

And in worshiping the beast, they will worship Satan. Satan worship that takes the gross form of men who call themselves Satanists is rather odd. Satan worship has a much more subtle form that is practiced by the intellectual, the educated, and the religious; and that is the worship of and trust in movements that always have cropped up in the world to unite the nations in a peaceful kingdom, in the worship of unrighteous mammon, and in the worship of the deified state.

The beast's spiritual character will be evident, third, in his war on the saints. There is one class of people that has not and will not bow to or worship the beast. These people are the elect of God, those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. The whole world will worship the beast, but the elect will not. Revelation 13:7 tells us of the great tribulation that will be the work of this beast. He will make war on the saints and will overcome them.

This, too, has been seen in the great historical types of the antichrist. Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, the holy city. Persia attempted the destruction of the whole Jewish race. Greece gave rise to Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the great historical types of antichrist, who defiled the temple and the holy city. Rome, through her representative Pilate together with Herod and the apostate Jews, set herself against God and his holy child Jesus; and she thoroughly persecuted the church of God, slew the apostles, and killed the saints.

And so the beast's kingdom will wear out the saints of God. Those days of persecution and suffering will be worse for the saints than in any former days; they will be difficult days, so that if they were not shortened, the very elect would perish.

The beast will reign only forty-two months. His time will be cut short. He will have a rapid ascent and an even more precipitous demise. His whole regime is and always will be one of captivity and killing with the sword. With his captivity and sword, he will wear out the saints of God, and he himself will perish with the sword and in captivity. He will perish with the brightness of the coming of Jesus Christ and the sword that proceeds out of his mouth, and the beast will go eternally into the captivity of hell. Christ already has defeated the beast's master and cast him out of heaven, and Christ with his coming will cast the master into hell too.

We view the present political developments in this light. Do not suppose that the final antichrist has come already. He has not. There is as yet no power that corresponds to the kingdom and king so presented. There have been types, but the final revelation of this antichristian kingdom awaits. In this there is for the believer the assurance that he has a little space yet in which to live in the world. Be not soon shaken as though the day of the Lord can come at any moment. The man of sin, the son of perdition, must be revealed yet. We see developments that point to his revelation. Up to this point in history, one nation has always attempted to dominate over the other nations. We do not see that today. Rather, we see a willing coalition of the nations; we see a kingdom and government established by common consent and a thorough disgust with all things Christian. This beast is rising, and he will appear in God's appointed time. The beast's final appearance will be aided by the religious aspect of antichrist, which, the Lord willing, I will explain in my next editorial.

—NJL

Til I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.—1 Timothy 4:13

SACRIFICES (15): THE *SHELAMIM*, OR PEACE OFFERING, CONCLUDED

If his oblation be a sacrifice of peace offering…"—Leviticus 3:1

Safeguarding Holy Flesh

In the present article I conclude my treatment of the peace offering by explaining the tremendous significance of the following section of its law that is recorded in Leviticus 7:15–21:

> 15. The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any of it until the morning.
> 16. But if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow, or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice: and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten:
> 17. But the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire.
> 18. And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity.
> 19. And the flesh that toucheth any unclean thing shall not be eaten; it shall be burnt with fire: and as for the flesh, all that be clean shall eat thereof.
> 20. But the soul that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, that pertain unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.
> 21. Moreover the soul that shall touch any unclean thing, as the uncleanness of man, or any unclean beast, or any abominable unclean thing, and eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which pertain unto the LORD, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.

Let me briefly point out two things from this section of the law that I have already explained in the two foregoing articles about the peace offering.

First, this section of the law reminds us that "the flesh of the sacrifice of [the] peace offerings…shall be eaten" (Lev. 7:15).[1] What especially distinguished the peace offering from the other three bloody sacrifices—the burnt, sin, and trespass offerings—was that the Israelites feasted upon the flesh of the peace offering, through which meal God testified to his sinful but elect people that the promised blood of his lamb satisfies for all their sins and ushers in a new relationship of peace whereby they are graciously seated at God's heavenly table to eat the lamb's flesh and be nourished unto everlasting life.

Second, this section of the law reminds us that there were "peace offerings for thanksgiving" (Lev. 7:15) and "a vow, or a voluntary offering" (v. 16).[2] The thanksgiving, vow, and voluntary offerings were three kinds of peace offerings that were required at different times, yet altogether they taught the Israelites to receive everything that God sent into their lives—whether good or evil, happiness or sorrow, much or little, health or sickness, rest or tribulation—by faith in the blood of God's lamb, to believe that God is at peace with them and working all things for their advantage and eternal good, and to worship their God of peace with thanksgiving.

Everything else in this section of the law awaits explanation.

We begin by observing that Leviticus 7:15–21 contains a list of extraordinary regulations governing the

1 See Luke Bomers, "Sacrifices (13): The *Shelamim*, or Peace Offering," *Sword and Shield* 6, no. 6 (November 2025): 13–18.
2 See Luke Bomers, "Sacrifices (14): The *Shelamim*, or Peace Offering, Continued," *Sword and Shield* 6, no. 12 (May 2026): 19–20.

meal of the peace offering. These regulations are divided into two parts.

The first part (vv. 15–18) imposed a strict timeframe upon the meal, so that an Israelite had to eat the flesh of his offering within one or two days. In the case of the thanksgiving offering, that flesh had to be eaten on the very same day it was sacrificed. For the other two kinds of peace offerings, it was permissible for the flesh to be eaten on the second day. (I do not have a good explanation of why the former kind of peace offering had stricter eating requirements compared to the latter kinds, and so I cannot say if this has any meaningful significance.) Any flesh that remained beyond the appointed time could not be casually discarded but had to be burned with fire. On the third day the flesh became an abomination, and the law imputed guilt to any Israelite who ate this expired flesh.

The second part (vv. 19–21) demanded that the meal be kept from all external sources of uncleanness. Any flesh that came into contact with an unclean thing had to be burned. The flesh could be eaten only by those who were ceremonially clean. All persons rendered unclean either from an impurity in their own bodies or from touching an unclean object were forbidden to eat upon penalty of being excluded from the congregation.

Such extraordinary regulations clearly exalted the eating of the peace offering's flesh above any common meal. Moreover, we can deduce that God legislated Leviticus 7 to safeguard the sacred character of the flesh.

Elsewhere scripture explicitly identifies the peace offering's flesh as sacred: It is called "the hallowed thing of the Lord" (Lev. 19:8) and "holy flesh" (Hag. 2:12). But that is not the case in Leviticus 7:15–21. This section of the law never calls the flesh holy. Instead, this section of the law regulated the sacrificial meal upon the premise that this flesh was holy and according to the presumption that every Israelite understood that. In other words, the holiness of the flesh was obvious.

The obvious holiness of the peace offering's flesh was, first, that it was God's flesh. The law emphasized this in Leviticus 7 when it prohibited all unclean persons from the sacrificial meal, stating that the peace offerings "pertain unto the Lord" (v. 21). This flesh was holy by virtue of being God's covenant possession. Holiness is that fundamental ethical perfection of God's divine being. Holy is God as he is eternally consecrated to himself as the only good and ever-blessed God. Holy is a divine person.

Holy is the Spirit whom the Father breathes to the Son and whom the Son breathes to the Father as they seek one another's eternal blessedness and glory. Holy is the triune God as he is absolutely exalted in his infinite and immutable and incomparable goodness above all that is common and profane. And the *sine qua non* for any of God's covenant possessions is that they must be holy as he is holy.

Second, the obvious holiness of the peace offering's flesh was that God himself had appointed that flesh to serve in behalf of his holy covenant. No one or no thing can serve God without being appointed to his holy service because *God*—not the creature, but God—consecrates all things for his own glory. And God publicly designated the peace offering's flesh as holy by the ritual where an Israelite laid "his hand upon the head of his offering" (Lev. 3:2). God instituted this ritual in the sacrificial liturgy before the animal's slaughter to testify to the Israelite who was forcefully pressing his hand upon the head of the sacrificial victim that *God*—not the Israelite, but God—imputed that sinner's guilt to the sacrificial victim because *God*—not the Israelite, but God—had authorized and appointed this substitute to bear the burden of sin and to suffer the penalty of death in that man's place.[3]

Third, the obvious holiness of the peace offering's flesh was its spotless nature that God had prepared. An Israelite was required to present at God's bloody altar a sacrificial victim "without blemish before the Lord" (Lev. 3:1). Every sacrifice had to be free from blindness, lameness, disease, mutilation, or any other observable defect in its nature because God's holiness is absolutely separate from corruption and defilement. And if an Israelite found a spotless animal within his flock, it was only because God had first prepared and given that creature to the Israelite for God's holy service.

Finally, the obvious holiness of the peace offering's flesh was its satisfactory service as a vicarious substitute for the sinner, being imputed the sinner's guilt, suffering the sinner's death, and being consumed upon God's holy altar. By that holy service God accomplished his purpose with his holy flesh, so that it ascended as "a sweet savour unto the Lord" (Lev. 3:5). By that holy service God glorified his strict justice against all sin and magnified his tender mercies toward his people. By that holy service God created peace with his enemies, cleansed sinners from all their iniquities, and drew a destitute people into his blessed fellowship.

To safeguard this sacred character of the flesh is why the law imposed a strict timeframe upon the meal. Any meat exposed to a Middle Eastern climate for three days begins to rot. Fetid and stinky is the root idea of the Hebrew word translated as "an abomination" in Leviticus 7:18: "[The flesh of the peace offerings on the third day] shall be an abomination." And since corruption is incompatible with

3 This ritual is explained in Luke Bomers, "Sacrifices (7): *Samak*," *Sword and Shield* 5, no. 9 (February 2025): 21–26.

holiness, the law could not suffer any flesh that it regarded as holy to see corruption. The law required that all expired flesh be burned instead of discarded, lest that flesh decay on a trash heap before the eyes of Israel.

To safeguard this sacred character of the flesh is also why the law forbade any unclean thing from touching the meal. There is an inviolable "difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean" (Lev. 10:10). Not only could the law not suffer the flesh itself to see corruption, but the law could not suffer any corruption to have fellowship with that flesh. Should the flesh touch an unclean platter or utensil, the flesh had to be burned. Should any unclean garment brush against the flesh, the flesh had to be burned. Should an Israelite accidently crush a lizard or an insect with his foot on the way to Jerusalem, he could not lay a finger on that flesh until he was first cleansed. Should an Israelite begin menstruating as soon as she had sat down for the meal, she and anyone else who might touch her were barred from eating.

For the explicit and distinctive purpose of safeguarding this sacred character of his flesh, God legislated Leviticus 7. He imposed its strict regulations. He demanded its severe penalties. Israel understood that.

Yet by faith Israel also understood that God did not safeguard this holy flesh because he had any pleasure in perishable animal meat. Over against unbelief in the Old Testament that confided in the multitude of sacrifices, faith confessed before God, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire…burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required" (Ps. 40:6). And again, "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it" (Ps. 51:16).

By faith Israel had respect unto God's word of faith, so that with an eye upon this type and shadow, the believer in the old dispensation also heard Christ speak, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:7–8). By faith Israel knew that God legislated Leviticus 7 so strictly and severely because he was jealous for his promise of Christ. By faith Israel possessed certain knowledge of the holy one whom God had decreed and exalted among his brethren. By faith Israel was assuredly confident that God's covenant stood fast with Christ.

Now, if the law could reckon animal meat as holy, what shall we say then about the holiness of the antitype—God's own beloved Son? Can we comprehend the boundless delight of God's eternal will to be known and glorified in this holy one? For him and by him, God created all things in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible. Can we ascend unto the exalted nature of Christ's flesh? It is that ineffable wonder where God brings forth a clean seed from the unclean womb of the woman. Can we plumb the depths of his acceptable service? Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God but made himself of no reputation, took upon himself the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man humbled himself and became obedient to the death of the cross. Can we tell all his worthiness and praise? It is God who has highly exalted him and given him a name above every name, so that before him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess his lordship.

Moreover, if God so strictly and severely guarded a dim, fleeting, and unprofitable shadow of the law, how much more will he not keep from all profanity the glorious, true, and priceless flesh of Jesus Christ?

Let us then give separate consideration to the two distinct parts of Leviticus 7:15–21, both the timeframe imposed on the meal and the keeping of that meal from uncleanness. Let us observe first how Leviticus 7 completed the peace offering's dim, earthly silhouette of the glorious, heavenly body of Jesus Christ—for he is our peace and the end of the law for righteousness—and, second, let us give heed unto the inviolable and unprofanable character of his holy flesh.

Safeguarding an Inviolable Testimony

As the sacrificial liturgy of the bloody sacrifices drew to a close and an Israelite sat down at meat to eat the flesh of the peace offering, he reminded himself and his family that they had to eat their meal quickly lest it should become an abomination. Here the law confronted the Israelite with an inviolable testimony, a testimony that today also confronts all who hear the gospel of Christ's holiness. This is that inviolable testimony: God's holy flesh possesses true and saving efficacy.

God's holy flesh possesses true and saving efficacy because what operates in that flesh is God's mighty arm. Holy flesh is efficacious because God came into that flesh, and God worked out in that flesh the *perfection* of his eternal will and good pleasure. Holy flesh is efficacious because through that flesh God *has consecrated* his most holy name. Without hindrance he *has finished* his glorious work.

God's holy flesh always possesses true and saving efficacy. As this abiding principle applied to Christ's flesh, so it applied to the animal's flesh of the peace offering. Indeed, the peace offering had an efficacy exactly because it was the law's imprint of Christ's efficacious offering. However, the character of that peace offering's efficacy was in harmony with the character of the Old Testament economy to which it belonged. Its efficacy was "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things" (Heb. 10:1). Its efficacy was earthly and fleeting,

so that the only thing it could perfect was to bring sin into remembrance again.[4]

The efficacy of the peace offering granted a shadowy covering for sin, so that the law did not impute guilt to the Israelite while he stood in God's earthly sanctuary among the congregation. Yet the efficacy of that animal flesh lasted only until the third day, at which time the law refused the flesh and warned that "the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity" (Lev. 7:18).

But the efficacy of Christ's flesh is the perfection of all God's good pleasure, accomplished once upon the accursed tree and glorifying God, who hates sin and who shows mercy toward an elect people by satisfying his justice against their sins according to his word of promise: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Unlike its shadow, Christ's offering is one; for where sin is remitted, there is no more offering for sin. In Christ's holy flesh is the complete forgiveness of sins, yesterday and today and forever.

The efficacy of the peace offering granted an Israelite only to reside for a brief time in the courts of an earthly sanctuary but never permitted him to go past the veil. The peace offering afforded an Israelite only an earthly meal that could never satisfy his belly for more than a day. And at the end of the peace offering, an Israelite returned to only a shadow inheritance and blood-soaked piece of ground encompassed by all the sorrows of death.

But the efficacy of Christ's flesh is a meat that endures unto everlasting life. Those who eat his flesh never hunger. The efficacy of Christ's flesh is to consecrate and open a new and living way unto God, having himself entered into heaven before the presence of God. Those who eat Christ's flesh have boldness to enter the holiest that was not made with hands. The efficacy of Christ's flesh is to lift the creation from under the curse, unite earth with heaven, and subject every last particle of creation unto the glory of God.

The inviolable testimony of the peace offering, negatively, was that the law could give an Israelite nothing but corruption because the efficacy of the law's holy flesh became null on the third day on account of corruption. Positively, the inviolable testimony of the peace offering was that God had promised true and saving efficacy in the seed of the woman. And when that promise was fulfilled in the fullness of time, that promised seed did not see corruption on the third day because he arose from the dead.

He could not see corruption because his flesh is personally united to God without division, change, confusion, or separation. He could not see corruption because Adam's guilt cannot be imputed to the Lord from glory. Though his flesh was formed from the corrupt genetic substance of the virgin and though his flesh was conceived in a womb of corruption, the Spirit preserved him holy and undefiled. He could not see corruption because he so overcame death legally that he can never die again. Though he was born under the law and the sins of the elect so thoroughly were imputed to him that he cried, "My sins are more than I can count!" he also so thoroughly exhausted the infinite wrath of God in his flesh that corruption had no claim on him. He could not see corruption because his flesh is exalted above sin, condemnation, death, the grave, and hell. He could not see corruption because his flesh devours corruption and brings immortality and life to light.

This inviolable testimony is what confronts all who hear the holy gospel. This testimony was proclaimed by Peter in the sermon on Pentecost: "[Him] God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him…thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:24–27). God's holy one cannot see corruption because his holiness overcomes corruption, and he became lord over corruption.

Whenever the holiness of Christ's person and natures and works is preached, all who hear are confronted with the sole, saving efficacy of his flesh. That his flesh could never see corruption means that God's people *are* saved. They were as saved at the cross as they will ever be in their lives. That his flesh could never see corruption means those who belong to God's covenant are forgiven of all their sins, are delivered from all sin's dominion, and are passed from death to life before they even were born. That his flesh could never see corruption means that there is not a single work of obedience or a single tear of repentance or a single act of believing that is needed for the elect to be pardoned of all their sins and to enter into the peace and joy of God's fellowship. That his flesh could not see corruption means that it does not matter how grievously the elect sin in their lives or how poorly they repent or how little they believe because nothing can hinder them from being received of God in mercy. That Jesus' flesh could not see corruption means it is impossible that there be conditions in God's covenant, that man cannot experience God's fellowship without his own holy walk as an obedient person, that man must first act for him to be blessed by God, that a child of God can be unforgiven, and that a child of God must repent to be forgiven (all these are the doctrines of the Protestant Reformed Churches and clearly are incompatible with the gospel's testimony about Christ's holy flesh). That his flesh could not see corruption means that the entrance

4 For a more thorough explanation of this, see Luke Bomers, "Sacrifices (8): Shadow-Atonement," *Sword and Shield* 5, no. 10 (March 2025): 24–29.

of the elect into the enjoyment of eternal life—both its beginning now and its fullness in the endless ages of heaven—rests solely upon the holiness of Christ's flesh. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).

That testimony is inviolable. It is inviolable because whatever is holy is incapable of error. It is inviolable because whatever is holy cannot lie. It is inviolable because whatever is holy is exalted above the judgments of men. It is inviolable because whatever is holy cannot be blasphemed.

When the gospel comes and confronts men with God's holy flesh, no man can contradict it. All who believe in Christ are saved. But all who do not believe are condemned and destroyed for contradicting an inviolable testimony.

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses," says the epistolist to the Hebrews (10:28). So inviolable is the testimony of holy flesh that Moses' law demanded the death of an Israelite who contradicted a meager shadow of good things, and whose contradiction involved merely the eating of expired meat!

But today there is a contradiction that incurs much sorer punishment.

> 28. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:
> 29. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:28–29)

Who is this gainsayer? This gainsayer is one who "hath trodden under foot the Son of God," which implies that he had heard Jesus Christ speak to him by means of the preaching. This gainsayer "hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing," which implies that he outwardly had been incorporated into God's covenant by the sacrament of baptism, externally had possessed membership in the true church, publicly had confessed the forgiveness of sins, and visibly had participated in the eating and drinking of the Lord's table. And this gainsayer "hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace," which implies that he had been convicted in the depths of his being by the Spirit's personal witness of the true and saving efficacy of Christ's holy flesh.

This gainsayer was born and raised under the gospel. Or this gainsayer came into the church because he found the gospel attractive for a time. But the time came when this gainsayer could no longer tolerate the preaching, and he departed in tears or in anger saying "that is not the truth!" and forsook the assembling together of the church. This gainsayer intelligently and willfully and maliciously contradicted the gospel's testimony of Christ's holy flesh.

Yet we must not fail to explain the cause of this gainsayer's contradiction in light of Christ's holy flesh. The saving efficacy of that flesh did not fail in the case of this gainsayer, so that the promise of God became of none effect. In light of Christ's holy flesh, this gainsayer never belonged to the Son of God. This gainsayer came into the sphere of the covenant a hypocrite and as profane as Esau. Though this gainsayer outwardly was sanctified and separated from the corruption of this world, he was never truly washed by the blood of the covenant. Though the Spirit of grace witnessed to him and convicted him of the truth, that operation of the Spirit was not gracious. The Spirit reproved him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, in order to harden him and to leave him without excuse.

No, the true and saving efficacy of Christ's holy flesh did not fail. Rather, it was the very efficacy of that flesh that made this gainsayer manifest as a hypocrite and profane. And it was the inviolable testimony of Christ's flesh that became to this gainsayer a savor of death unto death.

Whenever this contradiction occurs in the church, Christ has efficaciously manifested a man or woman who loves mammon and not God. Like the Israelite who willfully transgressed Moses' law because he would rather eat rotting meat, so today the gainsayer willfully trods underfoot the Son of God and counts the blood of the covenant unholy and does despite to the Spirit because he would rather have a portion in this rotting earth, carnal family relationships that are broken by death, and gold that thieves steal.

Whenever this contradiction occurs in the church, Christ has also efficaciously manifested to whose fellowship this gainsayer belongs. The gainsayer detests and forsakes the assembly of those who say "Christ's flesh *is* salvation." This gainsayer does not belong to that fellowship in the truth. The gainsayer is delivered to fellowship with the lie, so that he has pleasure in the assembly of those who say "Christ's flesh makes salvation *possible.*" Having contradicted the truth, this gainsayer's fellowship is with those who believe that if a man would be saved, there is that which he must do; with those who teach that the holy flesh of Jesus Christ is not enough; with those who preach that the holy flesh of Jesus Christ only gets a man so far before that man's own holiness determines when and how he experiences joy and peace with God. Christ efficaciously manifested this gainsayer as one in league with the lie and the father of the lie.

Indeed, such contradiction happens today. I have already witnessed it many times in the Reformed Protestant Churches. Within her churches the Son of God speaks, the blood of the covenant cleanses, and the Spirit operates in the preaching of the gospel. With my own eyes I have seen, and over against my pure preaching, I have heard this contradiction occur in First, Sovereign, Zion, and Faith. I am also well aware of gainsayers who

arose in Second, Cornerstone, the Berean fellowship in Singapore, and that church in Edmonton.

It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness.

> 4. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,
> 5. And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,
> 6. If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. (Heb. 6:4–6)

"But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:22).

Take heed; the testimony of holy flesh is inviolable!

Safeguarding an Unprofanable Fellowship

As an Israelite sat at meat to eat of the peace offering's flesh, he also reminded himself and his family that they could not touch that flesh if they were unclean, lest they should be cut off from the congregation. Here the law confronted that Israelite with the unprofanable fellowship that holy flesh forms.

The truth of that unprofanable fellowship is, first, that it belongs to a peculiar, holy people. That the fellowship of holy flesh belongs to a definite people necessarily follows from the true and saving efficacy of God's holy flesh. To eat holy flesh—whether it be the shadow or the very image—is to partake of its true and saving efficacy.

To partake of the law's holy flesh of the peace offering was to receive a shadowy covering for sin, a brief stay within God's courts, an earthly fellowship limited by distance, and a fleeting existence on a corrupting plot of soil.

To partake of the holy flesh of God's Son is to have the full pardon of sins, everlasting life before God, the fellowship of the Spirit, and an incorruptible inheritance in the new heaven and earth. Since God's holy flesh cannot lie, all those who partake of Christ receive his true and saving efficacy. "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54). And since God's holy flesh is incapable of error, all those who partake of Christ were chosen unto this by God. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (v. 37).

Now, the one who determines the fellowship of holy flesh is God. "I am the Lord which sanctify you" (Lev. 20:8). God determines those who partake of his flesh, and his determination is according to the holy character of his flesh.

It was God who by his law determined a worthy partaker of the peace offering in the Old Testament, and that determination was this: "All that be clean shall eat thereof" (Lev. 7:19). This designation of a worthy partaker as "clean" harmonized with the earthly and fleeting character of the Old Testament economy. A worthy partaker was not clean according to any ethical or moral standards but according to bare, outward, and ceremonial cleanness. A worthy partaker became clean not because his heart was changed but because he was externally washed with water. Besides this, an Israelite under the law could become unclean as easily as he drew breath (just read through Leviticus 11–15), so that the law often barred true saints in the Old Testament from eating that shadowy meal. In the end all that the law accomplished by its designation was to teach Israel that God determines who comes to his table, how quickly a man can defile himself with the corruption of this world, and that the true image of holy flesh had not yet come.

Today, God designates who are worthy partakers as "them that are sanctified." "For by one offering [Christ] hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). The worthy partaker is a saint. And a saint is not a saint because of what he does. A saint is a saint because God separated that person unto himself by his eternal decree and appointed that person as a vessel of mercy for his own glory. A saint is a saint because God desired to live with that person in heaven and to show his praises in that person. A saint is a saint because that person belongs to God's holy one, Jesus Christ. A saint is a saint because God imputes to that person Christ's own holiness. A saint is a saint because that person is separated from the rotten corporation of Adam by God's holy calling. A saint is a saint because Christ's Spirit dwells in that person and by faith incorporates that person into the incorruptible flesh of Christ. A saint is a saint because through faith that person receives Christ's own holiness, and in the heart that person has the beginning of perfect consecration to God and absolute separation from sin.

The truth of that unprofanable fellowship of holy flesh, second, is that its true and saving efficacy forms its own fellowship.

Just as the meal of the peace offering gathered a fellowship in that earthly sanctuary made with hands, so also when Christ breaks into the corruption of this world with the meal of his flesh, he forms his own fellowship and manifests that fellowship in the local, instituted church.

The saints do not make the fellowship. The minister does not make the fellowship. The elders do not make the fellowship. The building does not make the fellowship.

God does not need something of man to enrich or advance the fellowship of his holy flesh. All that man brings into the fellowship is that from which God must cleanse him, namely, his sin.

When men try to determine the fellowship of the church, all that they end up with is a monstrously profane institution. Throughout history religious man does nothing different than what Nimrod did at the time of Babel: Man is always working on his own man-centered and man-pleasing fellowship. And what does man's religious fellowship look like? It is the profane fellowship of Pontius Pilate and Herod and the Jews, who all hated each other but who became friends after they crucified the Lord. Man always forms his religious fellowship in hatred and opposition to the truth. And at the end of time, his fellowship will take the form of a seven-headed beast that comes up out of the sea, saying, "I am God, and I must be worshiped."

I have observed with my own eyes how vigorously religious man goes about forming his own fellowship after he contradicts the inviolable testimony of the gospel and forsakes the truth. I have watched those gainsayers depart from the Reformed Protestant Churches and in bristling hatred of the truth go about seeking souls to incorporate into their body and to form after their own image. It is monstrous, for the nature of that fellowship is in blatant antithesis to God's holy flesh. It is a fellowship that tries to yoke conflicting doctrines. It is a fellowship that willfully ignores impenitence in sin. It is a fellowship that supersedes denominational unity because it is more concerned about family ties and business partnerships and personal ambitions than denominational unity. It is a fellowship of politeness and smiles and talk about the weather, subsisting in love of self and hatred of God's holy flesh. Such fellowship is not of God but is carnal, sensual, and devilish.

The fellowship of holy flesh is a wholly divine creation that God conceived in eternity and that God brought into existence by the cross and that God manifests in the gathering by the gospel into the local church. The fellowship of holy flesh is God's condescending in Christ and through the Spirit to draw a people unto himself by feeding them with his own heavenly food and every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. The fellowship of holy flesh is God's making his elect to be partakers of the divine nature, so that they reflect his glory unto his praise.

Therefore, not all have a right to God's table. God does not offer his holy flesh to men or make it available to men. No one is invited into this fellowship. God does not leave it up to man to decide if he can partake worthily or not. The fellowship of holy people belongs to a definite people. There are worthy partakers at God's table, and there are those unworthy of God's fellowship. There are saints in gracious distinction from the rest of men who are dead. And God manifests his saints as saints by gathering them into the fellowship of his holy flesh in the local church through that inviolable testimony of his holy flesh, so that all those who will not separate themselves from the world and the false church simply manifest themselves as dead.

Finally, what follows from this truth that God's holy flesh forms its own fellowship is that God's table must be guarded from all profanity. The church must judge herself according to that inviolable testimony of God's holy flesh in the gospel.

If there are divisions and heresies within her fellowship, if there are false doctrines and unbelief in the truth within her fellowship, if there are impenitent practices inconsistent with the holiness of Christ's flesh, and she lays a hand on the meal of God's table, then her fellowship desecrates the unprofanable body of Jesus Christ—the worst thing that the church can do to corrupt her fellowship in that meal.

Imagine if I brought you into my house to feed you, and you decide to drag along my enemy. And you seat that enemy at my table and watch as my enemy mocks my wife, spits on my children, and smashes my dinnerware on the floor. What do you think I would do? Would I not be within my rights to cast you and your profane guest from my house in righteous anger? But that is exactly what the church does when she admits someone to God's table to eat holy flesh. The church says, as it were, to God, "God, we like this person. We like this person who trods underfoot and who counts the blood of your covenant unholy and who does despite to the Spirit of grace. We like this person who blasphemes your name and mocks at the rule of your house. You are going to fellowship with him because we say so." What do you think God will do?

He judges. He judges because he loves his covenant, and he has no fellowship with iniquity. He judges according to the holy flesh of his Son. He lays the church low, as he laid Corinth low. He humbles the pride of his elect people, he cleans them through the word of his Son, and he delivers them because he chose them in love to be holy and without blame before him. He also casts out profane persons and cuts them out of his congregation because he hated them and decreed their destruction.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16–17).

Take heed; the fellowship of holy flesh is unprofanable!

—LB

I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.—Psalm 145:5

PERNICIOUS PELAGIAN POISON

Introduction

The title of this article is borrowed from the sixth error and rejection of the second head of the Canons of Dordt, in which the Synod of Dordt (and the church) rejected the error of those

> who use the difference between meriting and appropriating, to the end that they may instill into the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced this teaching, that God, as far as He is concerned, has been minded of applying to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; but that, while some obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life and others do not, this difference depends on their own free will, which joins itself to the grace that is offered without exception, and that it is not dependent on the special gift of mercy, which powerfully works in them, that they rather than others should appropriate unto themselves this grace.
>
> Rejection: For these, while they feign that they present this distinction in a sound sense, seek to instill into the people the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors. (*Confessions and Church Order*, 166)

Before getting to the article proper, I will say a few words about the sixth error and rejection made by the synod. To start, we ought to understand the difference between meriting and appropriating. The verb *merit* means *to earn something through actions*. The verb *appropriate* means *to take to oneself*. The sixth error speaks of the difference between meriting and appropriating salvation, the benefits of salvation, and specifically justification, or "the pardon of sin." To merit salvation means that one earns it for himself by his works. He earns justification, sanctification, preservation, and whatever else belongs to the benefits of salvation. To appropriate salvation means that one receives these benefits and applies them to himself, which means that he consciously enjoys these benefits of his salvation.

This appropriation is by faith only. The Heidelberg Catechism refers to this in Lord's Day 23, answer 61: "I cannot receive and apply the same [Christ's righteousness, which is the elect sinner's righteousness before God] to myself any other way than by faith only" (*Confessions and Church Order*, 107). As such, appropriation stands absolutely antithetical to all merit, to the will of man, and to the activity of man. The reason for this is simple. Faith and works are antithetical. Christ merited all the benefits of salvation at the cross. We appropriate Christ's merits. We ourselves do not merit anything. Moreover, faith in its entirety is the work of the Holy Ghost. We must remember this especially when we speak of applying salvation to ourselves. This application is not our activity, but it is divine activity. When the Holy Ghost works faith, he lays hold of a man's heart, mind, and soul, so that the man consciously, experientially, and subjectively knows and is assured that Christ's righteousness is his own. That knowledge and assurance is not man's activity but the Spirit's act of working faith in the elect sinner's heart. The elect sinner's appropriating Christ and his righteousness is what the Spirit's work of applying Christ to that sinner looks like.

Thus there is a vast difference between meriting and appropriating. The sixth error refers to false teachers, Arminians, who perniciously use this difference to make room for the free will of man in salvation. They do this, first, by teaching that God is minded to apply equally to all men the benefits gained by Christ. What is immediately striking is the well-meant offer of the gospel, that is, God desires to save all men. However, we must note that Arminians speak of the merits of Christ; they speak of "the benefits gained by the death of Christ," and they say that Christ merited "the pardon of sin and eternal life." They speak glowingly of Christ and his cross. They say, "Of course, we never merit; we cannot merit; we all fall short; Christ alone merits!" Arminians very obviously have to say these things; otherwise, they would be exposed immediately as heretics who contradict the scriptures. However, it becomes clear that they mean by these things only that Christ objectively merited salvation. Or

to put it another way, Christ made salvation a possibility, and that for all men. Christ established a completely general righteousness—not a particular righteousness for certain, definite persons. But there is still something that has to be done before man is actually saved. Just because Christ merited does not mean that his merits automatically will be applied to the sinner. The Arminians' cross is one of limitless possibility but nothing more—salvation is possible for all men.

But how is this possibility realized? To put it in other words, why do some obtain the pardon of sin and others do not?

Arminians teach, second, that the difference between meriting and appropriating depends on the free will of man. Again, Arminians have faith in view. How does a man appropriate Christ? How do the merits of Christ actually become one's conscious possession? Everyone knows that the answer is faith. The elect receive Christ and his righteousness by faith, of course. But Arminians say that faith is man's activity. Faith is nothing more than the product of man's will and of grace—the available grace that God offers to men without exception. However, the cross of limitless possibility and available grace is always wholly dependent on the careful hand of man's will on the rudder to guide him into the harbor of salvation. This, now, is man's part. This is always the conclusion when Christ's cross is made a cross of limitless possibility.

You might ask the Arminians, "Well, does that not mean that man merits salvation at that point? If there is that which man must do to receive Christ's merits, is that not merit? Do you not say that man has some form of righteousness by his activity, whereby he earns something from God, namely, the application of salvation? Is that not merit?"

Here is where Arminians employ their tricks. They say, "Not at all. We are not talking about *merit*. We are talking only about the *application* of salvation."

We might be more familiar with this language: "We are not talking about salvation in the *objective* sense, but we refer to salvation only in the *subjective* sense, namely, the conscious experience of salvation, the application of Christ's merits to our hearts, minds, and souls. Of course, man cannot earn righteousness. Men are sinners, and they all fall short. Man needs Christ; man needs Christ's righteousness; that is the only righteousness whereby man is saved. However, *man* only must believe."

By this Arminians mean that faith is wholly within the grasp of man's will and power. Man cannot merit his salvation, but there is that which man can do to get Christ's merits. *Man's* act of faith—not the death of Christ—makes all the difference between the saved and the unsaved.

This, the sixth error says, stands opposed to the "special gift of mercy, which powerfully works in them." The "special gift of mercy" refers to the efficacious, irresistible operation of God according to his mercy to save elect sinners. And I note that this "special gift of mercy" implies that God both merits and applies salvation to elect sinners. In other words, when elect sinners appropriate salvation by faith, that belongs to the special gift of God's mercy; that is, it is God's work by his Spirit in mercy for sinners and not man's work. I note also that this "special gift of mercy" belongs to Christ's saving work on the cross, which is, after all, the subject of the second head of the Canons. The point of the Canons is that the cross of Christ saves to the uttermost. This means that Christ's death did not produce a mere possibility of salvation. It is not as though Christ merited for all men everything they need, but then those men must tap into Christ for salvation. Not at all, for Christ merited *salvation* for definite persons, the elect and them only. To put this simply: At the cross Christ earned for the elect their salvation *and* its application to them. Belonging to the merits of Christ for the elect is the gracious application of their salvation through time and history.

The all-important fact is that Christ actually justified *definite persons* at the cross. Remember that lying at the heart of Arminianism is the denial of sovereign double predestination. To put this in different terms, Arminians deny that the matters of salvation and damnation are settled already in eternity in God's decree of election and reprobation. Here specifically we might remember that Arminians apply their denial of predestination to the cross—Christ did not lay down his life for definite persons but for men generally. This makes all the difference. If Christ made satisfaction for a definite number of persons, that is to say, justified them, then those persons have the right to every blessing of God and to eternal life. And indeed, they must be blessed by God with every benefit of salvation, as the psalmist says, "Thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous" (Ps. 5:12).

All of this leads to the conclusion that Arminians feign to present a sound distinction between meriting and appropriating. This means that Arminians actually do teach that man must merit; man must get for himself the merits of Christ. Man must make himself worthy to receive those benefits. This he does by some activity, that is, by doing faith. According to the Arminian conception, faith does not belong to the gifts of salvation that Christ merited, but faith belongs to the will of the sinner. The Arminian conception of salvation does in fact teach that man merits, but Arminians cover this up by saying, "We are talking only about the appropriation

of salvation, of Christ's merits, and of Christ's righteousness. Thus it is with sly craft that Arminians administer Pelagian poison into men.

And we ought to notice that the sixth rejection calls it "Pelagian" poison. Pelagianism is about man. Negatively, it is the teaching that man is not totally depraved; positively, it is the teaching that man is wholly good, or at least he has some goodness remaining in him. As such, man is able to will and to do the good. Man is able to do what he needs to do to get saved. Remember that man can do this only with the assistance of divine grace that is readily available to him, which grace he only must seek, pray for, and employ to do what he must do to receive a blessing from God. But very basically, Pelagianism is all about man. It makes salvation dependent not upon God but upon man. Salvation is not about God's eternal decree; election and reprobation; the limited atonement of Christ; the special gift of God's mercy; the irresistible, efficacious, and at the same time, most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable operations of the Holy Ghost. Oh, Arminians might talk about these things, but they do not matter—man matters. All these things are subjected to man, and man must bring them to fruition. All these things must cross the final checkpoint of man's will and decision. Without man's input, God is brought to ruin. That is Pelagianism. That is Arminianism.

Pelagianism, and by extension Arminianism, is poison. To use the words of the Canons' rejection, Pelagianism is "destructive." Pelagianism kills souls, robs comfort, and leaves desolate, "for vain is the help of man" (Ps. 108:12). Pelagianism certainly is no medicine that gently heals, sweetly comforts, and binds wounds. That is not to say that Pelagian physicians do not promote their poison as medicine. Certainly, they do this. They feign themselves to be good physicians, preachers of good news, and comforters of souls. They proclaim their poison as the finest medicine in all the world with the sweetest, most pleasant effect. It is not obvious that their patients are prey. The physicians are pleasant fellows; their medicine seems harmless, even good; and the medicine is administered in the gentlest manner. Yet with feigned words, they make merchandise of their patients and profiteer their patients' sicknesses. They use sly, slow-acting poison whose deadly characteristics and effects are not immediately apparent. But that poison never heals, and it always makes their patients come back for more, until at last they pine away and die.

Keeping the Hearers Unwary

Now, I turn to the occasion of my article. These Pelagian physicians and their pernicious poison are everywhere. This often amazes me. There are many about whom I could write. This holds true even in the small place where I live—Wingham, Ontario. It is no big city. One is not met with hordes of hedonists. One is not met with much foul behavior and language. One is not met with the sheer ungodliness of men. Rather, to all appearances, the place is greatly religious. There is a church on well-nigh every street in the town. Moreover, there are many so-called Reformed churches in the general area. Many of these churches speak of God, Jesus Christ, salvation, godliness, and love, but what you will find in their pulpits are Pelagian physicians. However, these physicians are amateurs in this devilish, Pelagian practice of medicine. To find the best, professional Pelagian physicians, you must go to the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). These physicians are the finest of this sort. They all received their doctorates of medicine from the finest Pelagian medical school. There they have learned their practice and the ins and outs of medicine—what to say, what not to say, how to present their poison, how to administer it craftily, and how to ensure that their patients remain unwary and are never the wiser to the fact that their physicians are angels of death and that their medicine is a pernicious poison.

Such a doctor there is in Wingham, Ontario. He practices medicine at Wingham Protestant Reformed Church. He is Rev. Daniel Holstege. Let us examine his practice and see that he is a Pelagian physician who administers the pernicious Pelagian poison. One could pick from his sermons at random, but the one I will examine is titled "The Righteousness of God Manifested."[1] Reverend Holstege's text is Romans 3:21–22, and he develops his theme according to these three divisions: Manifested in Christ, Imputed Through Faith, To Believers of All Nations. From the outset I note that he preaches this sermon in connection with Reformation Day. He speaks rather extensively about Martin Luther; the truth of justification by faith alone, which was recovered and developed in 1517; and the greatness of this event. For the most part I will pass over these sections. I note only that this belongs to his general craftiness, as though he (and the PRC) actually believes what justification by faith alone means and as though he (and the PRC) actually cares and rejoices in God and thanks the Holy Spirit for giving his

1 Daniel Holstege, "The Righteousness of God Manifested," sermon preached in Wingham Protestant Reformed Church on November 2, 2025, https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermons/112251756147094. All quotations of Reverend Holstege in this article are from this sermon.

people this marvelous truth. Be that as it may, let us turn to his explanation of the text.

Romans 3:21–22 reads as follows:

> 21. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;
> 22. Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.

Reverend Holstege begins at the proper place by explaining what "the righteousness of God" means. He says that "righteousness" does not refer to God's attribute of righteousness, nor to an infused righteousness into man (man himself becomes a better, righteous person). Holstege says,

> Rather, the apostle Paul means the righteousness which comes from God and which is granted to sinners as a free and gracious gift. He means the righteousness that God gives to those who have no righteousness of our own.

Later, Holstege states,

> When Paul says "the righteousness of God…is manifested," he's talking about that righteousness which is a verdict of the high judge of heaven and earth. He's talking about that righteousness which is coming from God and is imputed to us who have no righteousness.

So far, there is not much on which to comment. Righteousness is perfect harmony with God's will according to God's own judgment. The words "of God" is an absolute qualifier of this righteousness. It means that this righteousness has nothing to do with its object. This righteousness is conceived of by God, decreed by God, worked out by God, given by God to the object, and all this strictly for the glory of God.

And this "righteousness of God," the text says, "is manifested." To manifest something means to reveal it. However, this revelation is always more than a mere disclosure, that is, that something is made known. We must always remember that when God reveals something, he reveals that which is real according to God's own eternal conception. God reveals that which is real. As such, when God manifests something in time, he always realizes that thing. We could express the idea in these terms: God not only makes known his righteousness, but he also brings that righteousness into the conscious possession of his elect.

This righteousness is manifested by God in Jesus Christ. This means several things. First, the righteousness of God is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is wholly worked out by him. Second, the righteousness of God saves to the uttermost, for it is the righteousness of *Jesus Christ.* That is no small point of the text. The point is that the righteousness of God is not an isolated blessing, but it implies all our salvation. For the purpose of this article, I note that the manifestation of this righteousness implies the gift of faith. The righteousness of God cannot be manifested in only an objective way at the cross, but it must be manifested also subjectively in one's heart. And this manifestation is by faith, which is Christ's business; it belongs to his work of manifesting the righteousness of God to his people to work faith effectually in their hearts. Third, the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ is strictly particular. Christ is a corporation, a limited corporation. Not all belong to him. All men do not have a possibility to become members of him. This righteousness of God is particular to the elect and to them only. Fourth, this righteousness of God in Jesus Christ, and by extension in the elect, is an eternal reality. God reveals in time what is eternally true of Christ and his elect corporation. As such, this righteousness of God could be witnessed in the law and prophets, that is, in the old dispensation. This righteousness was real for the elect of the old dispensation long before Christ hung on the accursed tree. This righteousness is an eternal reality that is manifested in time.

But does Holstege teach this? He says,

> The apostle says, "Now, that righteousness of God is manifested"…God has manifested his righteousness by sending and raising up that righteous Branch. God has manifested his righteousness by sending the long-awaited Messiah into the world…Because, you see, the righteousness of God in the text is the righteousness of Christ.

Later, Holstege says, "But what we have in Jesus is the righteous one who wasn't righteous for himself, but was righteous for us." This is alright, I suppose. However, it is not difficult to perceive that this righteousness always stands aloof to God's people. In the interest of fairness, I quoted where Holstege states that Christ was righteous for us, but he does not continue along those lines throughout his sermon. Holstege is not governed by the truths of eternal justification and election and reprobation, and as such, what he says throughout the sermon does not strike those notes. Just a little later when talking about Jesus as the spotless lamb, Holstege says that Christ is merely "the perfect sacrifice for the sins of others." Certainly, Christ died for others. I do not object to that. But Holstege's statement is revelatory that an actual atonement, and certainly a *limited* atonement, is far from his mind.

This is proved by the conclusion of his first point:

> God now stands there at the cross, and through the gospel he manifests to us: "Here is my righteousness; you have no righteousness; you are unrighteous, but here is my righteousness. Look at Jesus…I present to you," God says, "the one only, perfect righteousness that there is for wicked sinners like you who have no righteousness of your own—Jesus Christ, the righteous one."

Now, this is wholly wrong. I wonder how he can get across his lips that God can stand at the cross and through the gospel proclaim to his people, "You are unrighteous," and the only crumbs of comfort that God can scrounge up for his people is this: "Here is my righteousness." God proclaims at the cross, "Behold, I, even I, have made my people righteous!" Moreover, Holstege ends completely generally: At the cross there is righteousness for wicked sinners. There is not righteousness at the cross for wicked sinners. There is righteousness at the cross for wicked, *elect* sinners—but that is all.

The Feigned Distinction

However, Holstege simply is priming his hearers for the introduction of man's will into the text, but he has a little more work to do before they are fully prepared to hear what they must do. He first calms any notion that man gets this righteousness by the works of the law. Holstege says,

> "This righteousness of God," Paul says, "is imputed to us through faith. This righteousness of God," he says, "is manifested without the law."

Holstege does some more explaining and talks rather extensively about Martin Luther before saying,

> "The righteousness of God is manifested," he says, "even the righteousness of God, which is unto and upon all them that believe." Not those who work; those who believe.

Here it becomes increasingly clear that Holstege is an Arminian. He is still in the second point of his sermon, which deals with how this righteousness is manifested, especially now in a man's heart. To put it another way, his point is, *how* does one receive this righteousness? Yet, Holstege takes it upon himself to discuss here already the objects of this righteousness, that is, *who* receives it. This righteousness of God is not unto and upon "those who work" but is unto and upon "those who believe."

What we have to understand, however, is that Holstege is explaining *how* to get this righteousness. His answer is simple: One must believe. This is clear from what he says before this. Before he makes the statements that I have quoted above, he talks about how it is a temptation to think that we are righteous by works, how the whole world is guilty, and how no one can be justified by the works of the law. How does one rise out of this? How does one get out of this mess and get the righteousness of God? Well, do not work, stop trusting in your works, and start believing. I will translate that: Get busy! Get active! I will tell you what Holstege really means, though he does not say it: This righteousness of God is actually manifested with the law. There is actually that which you must do. You, even you, must believe.

Holstege puts faith wholly within the will and power of man. Faith, for Holstege, is nothing more than the activity of man. After saying, "Not those who work; those who believe," he follows with this question: "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus?" I suppose one may ask this question, but it ought to be entirely out of place in a sermon on this text. The point of the text is that God manifests his righteousness in the fullest sense of the word. Again, this implies God's work of faith. But Holstege left his hearers with a general righteousness of Christ at the cross, with only a possibility of righteousness, and so therefore, in his sermon the question is entirely fitting. The crux of Holstege's sermon is not the cross of Christ, but the crux of the matter is whether or not man believes. All of this righteousness of God waits for man's decision by his will and power to believe. Holstege brought the sermon to this point. Now, he asks the urgent, all-important question: "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus?"

And then Holstege explains to the listeners what they have to do:

> Believing in Christ means, first of all, that you know him…It's a knowledge of who Jesus truly is, that he's the Son of God. He's the Messiah. He's come into this world. He had no sin. He was righteous. He died on the cross for sinners [notice how Holstege makes the cross of Christ general for sinners, not the elect]. He rose from the dead…
>
> But it [believing in Christ] is also the assured confidence in Christ so that you don't just know him, but you cling to him. You rely on him. You place your confidence in Jesus, not in yourself, not in anyone or anything else, but in Jesus Christ alone. That's faith.

Never once does Holstege mention that faith is a bond. It is very clear, then, what he means when he says,

> Paul says, "The righteousness is unto you who believe." That means God imputes it to you; he reckons it to your account; he considers it yours. That's justification by faith.

All Holstege means is that by doing faith, God will give you his righteousness. Faith makes you worthy to receive God's righteousness. How else can we understand it? Unless you explain faith as a bond, you cannot talk about righteousness *through* faith. But if you explain faith as a bond that unites elect sinners to Christ, like a graft that unites a branch to a tree, then you can talk about *through* faith. Through the graft the branch receives the life of the tree. So also through faith the elect receive the righteousness of Christ. But when faith is man's activity, you cannot talk about *through* faith. You can talk only about *on account of*. Man's act of faith becomes the condition of salvation, that act whereby man earns (merits) for himself the right to be saved from among the fallen mass of humanity.

Perhaps you think that I am being overly harsh of Holstege, that I am reading into what he is saying. Again, I will let him speak for himself. In the interest of fairness, I quote what he says after explaining faith as believing:

> That faith, that too is the gift of God. It's all the gift of God. The righteousness is a gift of God; the faith is a gift of God; it's all God's gift. Having chosen us, having sent Christ for us, he gives us that faith; he calls us to it, and he gives it to us, and through that faith he makes us to have that righteousness. He imputes it to us, and it becomes ours. And this is the great gospel recovered in the Reformation.

I would be inclined to receive these words as honest if he actually explains the text in these terms. But he does not. Moreover, this is nothing new for Arminians. Arminians speak about election, God's choosing, God's sending Christ for men, and the gift of faith. They use the language, not because they believe it but to sound in harmony with scripture and the Reformed confessions. I will not take the time to quote and explain all this, but you can read all about it in the Canons of Dordt. My comments are nothing more than a passing notice.

It is also important to remember that the sixth rejection says that the Pelagian physicians who administer this poison "feign" to present soundly the distinction between meriting and appropriating. These physicians are pretenders and liars. Holstege says the correct words, but his sermon thus far has proved that he does not believe them, and he certainly has not taught them. However, it is fitting that he takes the time to say the correct words at this point. Arminians pretend to be sound in the interest of instilling Pelagian poison into men. Holstege has proceeded perhaps a little too radically into Arminianism, and he must reel himself back a bit. He is also preparing to pour into his sermon the final dregs of the Pelagian poison. The hearers must remain unwary; they must receive the poison, thinking that they are receiving the sincere milk of the word.

The Last Dregs

Hear now the presentation of the final dosage of poison: "'This inexpressibly sweet gift of God, this righteousness, finally,' Paul says, 'is unto *all* who believe—*all*.'" I add the emphasis in order to convey how Holstege says it. He emphatically stresses the word "all." He does this later as well, saying, "God grants this righteousness to *all* who believe, to *all* who believe." Now, Holstege does this because he is an Arminian, and he believes in the well-meant offer of the gospel. But, you know, delivery can be difficult sometimes when preaching a sermon. So I will deal with him according to his words. It is clear now that he has moved into his third point: Who are the objects of this righteousness of God that is manifested? Well, first Holstege informs his congregation of a reality:

> You know, there are many in this world who will never receive that righteousness of God. They're going about to establish their own righteousness. They're ignorant of God's righteousness. They reject God's righteousness. In their pride they want to establish their own. They think they can make their own way to heaven. They'll perish.

What? If men perish, not receiving the righteousness of God, because they seek their own righteousness and seek not God or his righteousness, then nobody is saved. Hear the words of the same chapter in Romans:

> 9. What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;
> 10. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
> 11. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
> 12. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (Rom. 3:9–12)

Certainly, men perish in unbelief. Certainly, the unbeliever trusts his works and seeks not the righteousness of God. But men perish because according to the decree of reprobation, God sovereignly appointed them to perish. According to reprobation God excluded them from Christ, his righteousness, and thus also from faith.

Men are wholly excluded from this manifestation of the righteousness of God, and they perish, not because they are obstinate, unbelieving, and darkened in their understanding but because God excluded them and appointed them to perish.

Predestination is wholly lacking from Holstege's entire sermon. And just as he makes man's perishing about what man does or does not do, so also he makes man's salvation dependent on the individual:

> "But God imputes his righteousness," Paul says, "to everyone who believes." Everyone, no matter who he or she is, no matter what their background, no matter what color of skin they have, no matter what nation they come from, no matter what their economic status is—God does not distinguish. He is not a respecter of persons.

Alright, so God is not a respecter of persons, but what explains the difference that some receive this righteousness and others do not? Holstege says,

> "There is no difference," Paul says. There is no difference, except for faith. The only thing that distinguishes humanity, ultimately, is faith.

Faith is the *ultimate* difference? Not election and reprobation? What about Acts 13:48, which says that "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed"? Does not that clearly explain that faith is not the ultimate difference, but predestination is the difference?

Holstege continues,

> We look around us, and we see all kinds of differences…But God ultimately only sees one difference—those who believe and those who don't…The fundamental difference is faith, no faith.

Now it is all clear. God *sees* faith, and God *sees* no faith. That is what makes the difference between God's granting his righteousness to one and not to another. The difference is man's act of faith or the lack of man's act of faith. Note how God is entirely reactive. God *sees,* and God acts according to what he sees (not according to what he eternally decrees). And that is not to mention the sheer Pelagianism of man's ability to will and to do faith.

Oh, but I will give the fellow a fair presentation. Mixed into this section of Holstege's sermon are some true statements. They are, however, quite hilarious and nonsensical. One gets the sense that Holstege realizes that he has dug himself so deeply into the pit of Arminianism that he frantically throws in some Reformed statements in order to free himself. After saying that God ultimately only sees the difference between those who believe and those who do not, Holstege says, "That faith is his gift to his chosen ones. God makes the difference." And after saying that the fundamental difference is faith or no faith, he quickly adds, "God grants his righteousness to all those whom he gives faith." This is all jibber-jabber. How can Holstege speak of "chosen ones" when the *ultimate* difference is who does or does not believe? How can Holstege talk about God's making the difference when God has *to see* what man does and then react? How can Holstege talk about faith being a gift when throughout the entire sermon he has described faith as man's act? In fact, he did not even say that God has available grace for man so that he can believe! Arminians at least would say, "Man does this by grace!" And in that way Arminians could at least somewhat explain how faith can be a gift.

Thus Holstege is revealed to be a Pelagian physician and a peddler of poison. He has performed the Arminian trick. Christ's merits have disappeared in a vanishing act; God's hands are tied behind his back; and by clever sleight of hand, appropriation has turned into merit. And what is the hearer left with? Death. His physician has given him man, man's will, man's vital activity—the poison of the Pelagians.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20).

—EDK

And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.—Leviticus 26:7

AMALGAMATION

In the November 15, 2015, issue of *The Standard Bearer*, there appeared a letter to the editor that I wrote, seeking clarification for a statement that editor Prof. Barry Gritters wrote in his October 1, 2015, editorial. The letter I wrote and Professor Gritters' response, quoted below, serve as an introduction to this article on the increasing amalgamation of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) and her members with other nominally Reformed denominations and their members, especially in the West Michigan area.

> In the spirit of "iron sharpening iron," there is a statement in Prof. Gritters' October 1, 2015, editorial that I would like you to clarify.
>
> Near the end of the editorial you wrote, "We will commit ourselves to living among the people of God who are members of the church"—first of our own congregation; then of our denomination; and "*so too the church members who are closest to our denomination in confession and walk*" (emphasis added, AJC). It is this last phrase that I would like you to clarify.
>
> At present, the PRC, as represented by her Contact Committee with the yearly approval of synods, have no ecumenical relations with any Reformed or Presbyterian churches in North America because of significant doctrinal differences. Regarding the URC who, some may argue, are closest to us doctrinally, the *official* position of the PRC is:
>
> 1) As regards the creeds, the PRC are convinced that the creeds address such matters as common grace, the well-meant offer, and a conditional covenant, and in fact that the creeds condemn these errors. The CERCU [of the URC] insists that these matters are not confessional, and thus one may maintain or condemn them and still be within the bounds of the Reformed confessions. For the PRC to accept that position would not only be a compromising of all that we stand for, but would also deny the work of the Spirit of truth who has continued to guide Christ's church into the truth. This we are emphatically unwilling to do (2002 Acts of Synod, 21, 22).
>
> I am left with the impression that you are calling us to put into practice (*living among*) as individuals and families that which we will not do, for significant reasons, as a denomination. The church members you are calling us to live among are sincere members of denominations with which we have serious doctrinal differences—at least this is our official position.
>
> *Living among* carries the idea of friendship, fellowship, and walking together in agreement (Amos 3:3). Am I to understand your exhortation to *live among* those "who confess like precious faith" in the same sense that I am to *live among* "the church members who are closest to our denomination in confession and walk"? Do you have any particular denominations in mind?
>
> Sincerely,
> Aaron J. Cleveland[1]

Response:

> The people of God must be able to see the significant difference between how a *denomination* may act in its official sister relationships and how *individuals* may act in their personal friendships. Although a denominational stance certainly sends a message to the membership in that denomination (there are differences!), it does not mandate what these members may do in their personal friendships. It is a mistake to argue this way: Because the PRC may not engage in *official* relationships with another denomination, PRC members may have no friendship with members of this other denomination.
>
> To be clear: the editorial calls the membership of the PRC to live in the church. That is the main point of the article. Then, the three concentric circles of friendships, beginning with the inner circle, and with an order of priority suggested, was deliberate: First, Christians fellowship with members of

1 Aaron J. Cleveland, "Fellowship with Other Church Members," *Standard Bearer* 92, no. 4 (November 15, 2015): 80.

their own congregation. We give priority to this. This is the body to which we belong and to which we give our energy. Second, as we have time and opportunity, we fellowship with other members of our denomination. This is *sensible* because we live in complete agreement with them. It is also *natural* when many PRCs are found in a certain locale. What with shared church functions, shared school functions, and friendships established in those schools, this is reasonable and healthy. But it does not have the same priority as our own congregational life. The third circle—and this will obviously have a lower, a "third-level" priority—refers to fellowship with other non-PRC Christians, beginning with those who are closest to us.

To have this as my "third level" is a recognition that they are not those whom I want closest to me, because there are differences that I do not want to influence my children. Scripture calls believers to fellowship with "the faithful in the land" (Ps. 101). To the extent that a Christian is less faithful to God according to my judgments, to that extent my fellowship will be less close. Thus, Mr. Cleveland's question is easily answered: No, not "in the same sense," as he asked.

But to *put* other Christians in a circle of friendship is also important. They are Christians. Even though we may believe that they are mistaken in some areas of doctrine or life, we do not judge them to be non-Christians. To refuse fellowship with them would be to say, I will have no fellowship with a *brother*.

To underline this point, I call the readers' attention to an official decision of the PRC (Classis East, 1946) to allow, under certain circumstances, members of non-Protestant Reformed Churches (and, it is to be understood, non-sister-churches) even to partake of communion in a PRC. "...Members of other churches, not in all respects agreeing with our Protestant Reformed faith, may be admitted to our communion table...." Given that, it would be wrong to say, I will have no friendships, at any level, with them.

To conclude: to answer Mr. Cleveland differently would be leading the PRC into sectarianism, would not be following in the footsteps of the PRC "fathers," and would be radicalizing the PRC to our ruin. Read the Belgic Confession, Articles 27 and 29 and remember the circumstances in which this was written.

—BLG[2]

A spirit of amalgamation is working powerfully among the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches today. The PRC and her members have ceased to be a warring denomination and people. That the church is militant upon this earth and that her members are engaged in combat against "mortal enemies" (Lord's Day 52, Q&A 127, in *Confessions and Church Order*, 139) are lost in the PRC. And where a love for the truth is gone and warfare ceases, the inevitable result is amalgamation. By *amalgamation* I mean "the process in which separate organizations unite to form a larger organization or group."[3]

This spirit of amalgamation is described in scripture:

> 3. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [of Christ] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;
>
> 9. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,
> 10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
> 11. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:
> 12. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess. 2:3, 9–12)
>
> 3. The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
> 4. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Tim. 4:3–4)

The entities that are increasingly combining and uniting are the various Reformed and Presbyterian denominations that have traditionally claimed to hold to the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, and the Westminster Confession of Faith. The members of the PRC are active and enthusiastic in their involvement in this process of amalgamation, as seen by their participation in many organizations, gatherings, and events that have taken place recently. To this I will return later in the article.

But first, I turn to Professor Gritters' response in order to understand why this spirit of amalgamation is at work

2 Barrett Gritters, "Response," *Standard Bearer* 92, no. 4 (November 15, 2015): 80–81.
3 Cambridge Dictionary, sv. "amalgamation," https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/amalgamation.

in the PRC. Professor Gritters is careful to make distinctions between the *denomination* and the *individual* and between *official church relationships* and *personal friendships*. His distinctions open the way for members of the denomination to live as they please, divorced from the doctrines to which the PRC *officially* holds. For a couple generations now, the members of the PRC have been taught that they may live as hypocrites. As a denomination and *officially*—that is, on paper—the PRC condemns the doctrines of common grace, the well-meant offer, and a conditional covenant.[4] As individuals and *unofficially*, members in their everyday lives and relationships are free to live divorced from what they *officially* confess to be the truth.

Professor Gritters defines what the culture within the PRC has been for a long time. This culture explains why it took many years, even whole generations, for Protestant Reformed schools to be started. This explains why opposition to Protestant Reformed schools was allowed to fester in congregations for years. This explains why Protestant Reformed parents continued without being disciplined to use Christian Reformed schools when Protestant Reformed schools were available. In part, this explains the rampant culture of abuse that has grown like cancer within the PRC. The *official* confession of the church is one thing. What the individual members confess and how they live is an entirely different thing. Hypocrisy.

And this hypocrisy is not just the way of life for a few of the "mixed multitude" who live on the fringes of the PRC. This is the culture of the leadership in the PRC, in the seminary and in the consistory rooms. From years of personal experience with elders in the PRC, I am aware of their ability to separate the official confession of the church from the daily lives of the members. This is true especially regarding living an antithetical life. Tell a Protestant Reformed elder that you will not maintain fellowship with your so-called nice but impenitent family member because that family member belongs to a church that confesses common grace, the well-meant offer, and unbiblical divorce and remarriage. The response that you will likely get is this: "It is not so much what he believes; it is how he lives." This word was brought to me on an official visit from two Protestant Reformed elders.

This anecdote illustrates the results of the distinctions that Professor Gritters makes in his response. Later in his response Professor Gritters opens the door even wider regarding maintaining friendships with those who confess and live out of their false doctrine. He writes, "We may believe that they are mistaken in some areas of doctrine or life." We must "put" these other Christians in our "circle of friendship." Professor Gritters never explains how this works. He speaks of doctrine in a very tentative way. If a person is only "mistaken" regarding the false doctrine he believes, that is a lot more palatable than maintaining a friendship with someone whom I know full well sincerely holds to false doctrine.

But what kind of friend am I if I allow others whom I put in my "circle of friendship" to go on year after year confessing and living out of their false doctrine, supposedly by mistake? Do I not immediately bring the word of God to that friend to show him the error of his way? And that word will have one of two effects. The friend will be brought to a right understanding of the truth, and we will rejoice together in the truth and in genuine brotherhood, or that word will harden that friend in his commitment to false doctrine and maintaining friendship will become impossible because of his enmity against the truth. Whether he agrees with the truth brought to him or whether he rejects that truth, he ceases to be "mistaken." Do friends not walk together because they are *agreed*? (Amos 3:3). But Professor Gritters wants the unoffensive category of "mistaken," leaving the door wide open for dangerous and corroding friendships that go on for years. There is the truth on one side and false doctrine on the other, with a wide swath of "mistaken" in the middle that allows for amalgamation and the certain corruption of the truth by its mixture with lies.

The amalgamation of the members of the PRC with members of other apostate Reformed denominations that clearly maintain false doctrine is plainly seen in gatherings and events that recently have taken place in the West Michigan area. The Protestant Reformed people are enthusiastic participants in these gatherings. The first of these gatherings is Men Sing Grand Rapids. Participants include Netherlands Reformed, Heritage Reformed, United Reformed, Free Reformed, and Protestant Reformed men and boys. According to the website of Men Sing, the

> vision is to foster a reformed community where music is a shared passion and joy. We believe in the power of music to bring people together. Men Sing Grand Rapids aims to gather men to enjoy the singing of Psalms and Hymns in the heart of Grand Rapids.[5]

4 For a quotation of the *official* decision of the PRC regarding her condemnation of these false doctrines, I refer the reader to the letter I submitted to *The Standard Bearer* in 2015 as quoted earlier in this article. As noted there, the PRC's decision can be found in *Acts of Synod 2002*, 21–22.

5 Men Sing Grand Rapids, https://mensinggrandrapids.com/about-mensinggrandrapids/.

Dr. Mark Kelderman, of the Heritage Reformed Congregations, in his opening remarks at the first meeting of Men Sing Grand Rapids, stated, "We know the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts by faith through repentance through the work of the Spirit."[6] No doubt all the Protestant Reformed men gathered there that evening knew that they were in like-minded company when Dr. Kelderman added the words "through repentance." Both Prof. Brian Huizinga and Prof. Cory Griess have ended these bald-faced ecumenical gatherings with their glowing prayers. The new generation of Protestant Reformed leadership is leading, and the members are following.

Another organization growing in the West Michigan area is the West Michigan Conservative Reformed Young Adults (WMCRYA). Young people from the United Reformed Churches, Heritage Reformed Congregations, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Christian Reformed Church, Messiah Independent Reformed Church, and PRC participate in WMCRYA-sponsored events. These events include Bible studies and hymn sings at various local churches, including Protestant Reformed churches. That Protestant Reformed young people study the Bible and sing hymns with common-grace-and-well-meant-offer-confessing young people is not shocking. They are following their leaders.

What is shocking is that the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, published by the faculty of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary, publishes material expressly denying the amalgamation of the PRC and her members with other modernist denominations. As a matter of principle, Prof. Cory Griess, Prof. Barrett Gritters, Prof. Brian Huizinga, and Prof. Douglas Kuiper should not have published Prof. David Engelsma's April 2026 article in the journal. In his article, "John Bolt, Common Grace, the PRCA, and Theological Modernism," Professor Engelsma paints a picture of the PRC that is completely at odds with reality. And the current Protestant Reformed professors know this. Writes Engelsma:

> From the Netherlands, the infection of modernism in the form of a common grace uniting church and world has spread to the CRC. It threatens all the supposedly "conservative" Reformed and Presbyterian churches that have been influenced by Kuyper and the CRC to embrace the doctrine of a common grace of God. They have the essence of modernism at their vitals. This is, in reality, *the* issue for the churches of NAPARC, not the issue of women in church office, which is merely a symptom of the real issue, and not the most important, but the issue of common grace, which obliterates the antithesis between church and world.
>
> The most important aspect of the three points of common grace adopted by the CRC in 1924 is its main message of a non-saving grace of God that unites church and world. This is the introduction of the essence of modernism into the CRC…
>
> I conclude by observing that this judgment of the three points of common grace adopted by the CRC in 1924 demands a certain analysis of the PRCA and their history. They are not merely another "conservative" Reformed denomination of churches. They are rather the one denomination in North America, if not in the world, that stands up today against the massive, malignant movement of theological and spiritual modernism. They deny that Christ and the world are one in grace. They confess that church and world are radically separated, are in fact at war. And what accounts for the separation and warfare is the grace of God, which is particular…
>
> One small Reformed denomination of churches clearly, boldly, and without (fatal) compromise wars against modernism, resisting its fundamental principle. At a time in history when all other churches are preaching commonality, the PRCA uncompromisingly confess the antithesis…
>
> It [the issue in 1924] was more significant than the PRCA have been aware. But now it is the solemn calling of the PRCA to recognize the strategic position in which God has placed them, and in their defense of particular grace, and condemnation of common grace, vigorously to carry out the calling of this position. They must not weary in this well-doing.[7]

Professor Engelsma notes that modernism in the form of common grace

> threatens all the supposedly "conservative" Reformed and Presbyterian churches that have been influenced by Kuyper and the CRC to embrace the doctrine of a common grace of God. They have the essence of modernism at their vitals.

Engelsma later calls modernism "malignant." Professor Engelsma needs to be honest and admit that this

6 Men Sing Grand Rapids, February 25, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIKB_RqiK_4, time stamp: 2:35–2:41.

7 David J. Engelsma, "John Bolt, Common Grace, the PRCA, and Theological Modernism," *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 59, no. 2 (April 2026): 63–65.

deadly malignancy has *consumed* the "vitals" of these supposedly "conservative" Reformed and Presbyterian churches. They are as dead as the Christian Reformed Church. And everyone in the PRC, from the current professors to the young people, is perfectly fine with blatant violation of the antithesis in the form of amalgamation with those who profess false doctrine. In reality, the leaders and members of the PRC demonstrate that they are doctrinally one with these other denominations.

A third example of this amalgamation is the recent participation of Prof. Brian Huizinga in a Turning Point USA Faith (TPUSA Faith) event at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This amalgamation brings the PRC into the realm of political activism. From the TPUSA Faith website:

> TPUSA Faith exists to serve the American church by resourcing Christians across the nation to boldly stand for truth, liberty, and The Kingdom. We believe in the Gospel, and an outworking of the Gospel is for the Church to be salt and light in every aspect of life, including the public square. When the Church stands boldly for biblical truth and puts its faith into action, our nation will experience a God-breathed transformation as it turns towards Him. In everything we do, we aim to glorify Christ.[8]

Given the "God-breathed transformation…our nation will experience" because the Church is "salt and light," "The Kingdom" to which TPUSA Faith refers is not the spiritual kingdom of God but a postmillennial kingdom established by *man* upon this earth. And make no mistake, this is a kingdom of *man* brought about by the cooperation of the false church and world-political powers. This kingdom is, and increasingly will become, the kingdom of antichrist.

Noah preached righteousness, and the false church and the world were hardened in sin, so that God "spared not the old world…bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Pet. 2:5). In Noah's day

> 11. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.
> 12. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.
> 13. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. (Gen. 6:11–13)

We live in the days of Noah today. The preaching of the righteousness of Christ, the gospel, does not bring about "a God-breathed transformation" in "our nation." But the gospel brings upon the true church the hatred of the false church and the world. Those who actually preach righteousness—not man's righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ—know this. That Prof. Brian Huizinga was invited to speak by a chapter of TPUSA Faith at the thoroughly modernist Calvin University is telling. That the current professor of dogmatics at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary accepted this offer and spoke tells you exactly where the PRC is today.

Officially, as Professor Engelsma would like you to think, the PRC stands against common grace and modernism. *Officially*, as Professor Huizinga would like you to think, the PRC pays tribute to Herman Hoeksema and his Reformed amillennialism.[9] *Unofficially*, and in reality, the PRC and her members increasingly and enthusiastically amalgamate with apostate Reformed Christianity.

As in the days of Noah, righteousness—the righteousness of Christ alone for salvation—was preached in the PRC, and that righteousness was expelled out of the denomination. That which man must do to be saved was put in its place. The result is amalgamation with the false church and the world.

—Aaron J. Cleveland

8 "About TPUSA Faith," TPUSA Faith, https://tpusafaith.com/about/.

9 See Brian Huizinga, "A Tribute to the Reformed Amillennialist Herman Hoeksema," *Standard Bearer* 102, no. 9 (May 1, 2026): 261–265.

Reformed Believers Publishing
325 84th St SW, Suite 102
Byron Center, MI 49315

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

FINALLY, BRETHREN, FAREWELL

***Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*—2 Corinthians 13:11**

He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. —Revelation 13:10

This verse is both a warning and a comfort to the church of Christ in the world as she faces the rising and eventual onslaught of that terrible beast whom John sees rising out of the sea of nations. Satan gives his seat, power, and authority to this beast, who is the final form that antichrist will take in world history. The beast hates God, Christ, and the church of Christ in the world. The elect will refuse to worship the beast and to take his mark on their foreheads or hands. In his hatred of God and Christ, this beast will make war on the church and—as John makes clear in Revelation 11 with the deaths of the two witnesses—the beast will succeed in putting the church institute and the public preaching of the word of the gospel out of existence in the world.

The temptation of the church will be to oppose by the sword the coming and working of antichrist. The sword is simply the ultimate form of earthly power as the means to deprive someone of his life on the earth, and thus the sword stands for all forms of earthly power. The church cannot and may not oppose antichrist with earthly power. His coming, success, and power are ordained of God. Antichrist will come, and he must come. He must have his day, and in his day will be the culmination in him personally and in his kingdom of the history-long development of sin. If one opposes antichrist with the sword and then perishes with the sword, his perishing is just.

Yet in this warning there also is comfort for the beleaguered church. The kingdom of antichrist is nothing more and nothing less than a leading into captivity. Antichrist will deceive the nations and bring them into the bondage of his kingdom, which is bondage to sin and death. He will take the legitimate power of the sword that God has given to the government, and antichrist will turn that sword against the church of God, the apple of God's eye. And antichrist's end will be destruction. For "he that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." Therein is the statement of God's perfect justice, which he will execute against that man, his whole damnable kingdom, and all who belong to it and worship the beast out of the sea. When the Lord appears, the beast and Satan, who will inspire the beast, will be cast into the lowest hell.

Herein, then, are the patience and faith of the saints. In the rise of this glorious but wicked beast, by faith the saints see God, sovereign over all things and reigning through his king, whom God has set upon his holy hill of Zion. The saints see Jesus, ruling over the nations with a rod of iron. They see in that opposition to God and Christ the vain imaginations of the heathen, who want to cast God's yoke from them. And the saints see that he who sits in heaven is laughing at the wicked, who even in their opposition to God are but the instruments of God's sovereign good pleasure. Being united with God's Christ by faith, the saints see that their faith is the victory over the world. And they wait. Yes, they wait; they watch; and they pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

—NJL