

The Standard Bearer

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Seeing Jesus Crowned

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

Hebrews 2:9

Like the multitudes of Jesus' day, many today want an earthly Jesus who will satisfy their carnal desires by creating an earthly kingdom of peace and prosperity. They minimize and ignore His ascension and its significance. But by grace we rejoice in the ascension and exaltation of Christ. We see how necessary it was for the salvation of the church. We understand that had Christ remained on this earth, His coming in our flesh would contain no advantage for us at all.

Even more, by faith we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor at God's right hand! No, we could not be there with the disciples to see this side of the ascension. But by faith we see Christ exalted on the glorious, heav-

enly side! We behold His coronation and see Him set at God's right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, (Eph. 1:20, 21). The very sight of Him in His glory ought to fill our hearts with joy and peace. And see Him we do according to this Word of God!

A Glorious Exaltation

Yes, Jesus was made a little lower than the angels. The reference here is to Psalm 8:5. In taking upon Himself our flesh, Christ was made a little lower than the angels. What humiliation for our Lord and Savior! The angels were created spiritual beings, not bound to an earthly body. The angels were made to dwell in heaven and have a far more intimate fellowship with God than the earthly creature. Man, even Adam in the beginning, was made a little lower than the angels.

But Christ did not come as an angel. He came as a man, like unto us in all things, sin excepted. The human nature and flesh He assumed was not that of Adam and Eve before they fell. Rather, it was the flesh that is subject to affliction, weakness, misery, pain, and death.

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Thank God that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels! For all our hope of getting above our present misery and shame is that He came into it, as one of us, to be lifted up at His ascension to glory and honor. Only because He came as one of us could He suffer death for us. He was made to be even as we are, that He might lift us up to new life and ultimately into heavenly glory!

And thus, by faith, we see Him at God's right hand crowned with glory and honor. Christ has dominion over land and sea. Now He has a name above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee must bow and every tongue must confess that He is Lord to the glory of God. All this He received when He ascended up into heaven. He ascended into heaven that He might receive the kingdom and all its blessings to bestow upon His church. Christ is crowned with glory and honor; power and dominion are given Him; but all of this He receives for His church.

A Gracious Purpose

How great a salvation Christ has accomplished for us! Being made a little lower than the angels that He might save us who have fallen into the depths of sin and death! But notice how the apostle puts it here: "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." We must ponder this amazing truth: He *tasted* death! That does not mean that He took just a little sip or nibble, just to know what it was like. But our Lord Jesus Christ went into death fully and tasted all that death holds as punishment for our sins. Father's cup, over which He had agonized in Gethsemane, filled with the bitterness of God's wrath against sin, He drank—yea, every drop.

He tasted every drop of anguish that was in that cup. He did not gulp it down in one big swallow to get it over with, to taste as little of it as possible. In fact, Christ began to drink of that cup the moment He came into our flesh. Every step of His earthly way He found the sting of death and the wrath of God against our sins. His tasting of death came to a climax beginning in Gethsemane, and it continued until He cried out from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" So that He could also cry, "It is finished." Yes, He drank and drank and drank until all the punishment of our sins was removed from that cup. He tasted every drop! For whatever He would have left behind we would have to drink.

But no, He tasted death, all of it, the full cup of the wrath of God against our sins. Indeed, He tasted death as no man ever tasted it. It was no mere sip of death. It was a tasting of all that death contains.

This He did for "every man" according to the text. No, this does not mean for every man, head for head, soul for soul. Scripture never speaks that way about salvation. Always this language is limited and specified by the rest of the Word of God, if not by an element in the verse itself that shows for whom it is meant. Christ tasted death for every one of God's elect. He laid down His life for His sheep. In fact, the verse qualifies this when it states that He did so "by the grace of God." God's grace is always particular—only upon those whom God chose in Christ. We did not deserve this gift of the Son of God coming in our flesh and tasting death for us. We deserve to taste that death ourselves. But to represent His people who were made a little lower than the angels, and to suffer their punishment, Christ came in our flesh, in the grace of God, to taste our death and remove it forever!

And because He did this, Christ is crowned with glory and honor, as we read, "...for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." In this deep way of His humiliation Jesus is highly exalted. This is His reward—because He tasted death, He was crowned with glory and honor. And so, we see that the gracious purpose of God in crowning Christ with glory and honor is to glorify the people for whom Christ tasted death. He certainly did not need to taste death for Himself. There is no reason why Christ should suffer such humiliation, if you forget that He came to glorify His people. As the eternal Son of God, He certainly possessed the highest glory and honor that there is. Why be made a little lower than the angels? Why taste death? Because in the grace of God Christ came to bring glory and honor to us!

Christ did not forsake and forget His people when He ascended up into heaven. He did not leave us for selfish reasons. In amazing love He went up on high, in order that we, who also are lower than the angels and worthy of tasting all that death contains, may instead have glory and honor far above the angels. Christ was crowned with glory that we might be crowned with glory.

A Marvelous Comfort

What comfort the exaltation of Christ affords us! We


may face the future with courage and confidence. With the natural eye what we see is frightening and discouraging. For, as we note from the preceding verse, “But now we see not yet all things put under him.” We see man far, far lower than the angels—yea, in the depths of depravity. We see abounding iniquity and immorality. We see a generation of the ungodly having apparent control in this world, committing horrible atrocities. We see the faithful church hated and persecuted as never before. We see the powers of darkness increasing in their bold and wicked attempt to destroy the church of God. We see our place in this world becoming smaller and smaller. From the perspective of Psalm 2, we see the heathen rage. We see the kings and rulers conspire together against the Lord and against His Anointed.

But listen, listen with the ear of faith! We hear the sound of laughter, mighty laughter, holy laughter. He who laughs is the sovereign God. He sits in the heavens. He laughs, but He also speaks. It is a word of wrath and vexation unto the wicked. But it is a beautiful Word, a Word of comfort for the people of God. “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” He is the ascended, exalted Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, things may appear chaotic, also in our land. The principles of God’s Word, His precepts, are increasingly undermined and trampled underfoot. Most rulers and judges manifest little wisdom or willingness to be instructed. But let us not despair! For we see Jesus, crowned with glory and honor!

With the eye of faith we see Him in perfect control over all these enemies of the church. We see Him with the book of the seven seals of God’s counsel. He faithfully and powerfully accomplishes all things that must shortly come to pass, in order that He may return to glorify His church. By faith we see that we are secure and that our salvation is absolutely sure. Seeing Jesus crowned with glory and honor means that the victory is already ours! We are now more than conquerors!

As long as we see Him there, all is well. How blessed it is to look into heaven by faith and see Jesus there in His glory and honor, working all things for our good! Make no mistake, all things work together for good exactly because Christ was crowned with glory and honor for all those for whom He tasted death.

Do you see Jesus there? If you do, it is because from His throne in glory He has given you the eye of faith. Christ has, in His glory and honor, the power to humble the rebellious heart and to open the eyes of the spiritually blind. The honor, glory, power, and blessing that He receives, He receives for us, His people. The glorious Christ enthrones Himself also in the hearts of His elect. Blessed is that people that have received eyes to see! Let us ever sing with the psalmist (Ps. 47):

With shouts ascends our King,
With trumpet’s stirring call;
Praise God, praise God, His praises sing,
For God is Lord of all. 

EDITOR’S NOTE

Often the editorial for the May 15 issue of the *SB* previews the agenda of the synod of the PRCA. This year, however, for the sake of continuity, we decided to print Prof. B.Gritters’ second editorial on the *implications* of Calvinism, in his series on “What It Means to Be Reformed.” Prof. Gritters will be laying down his pen for the summer in order to speak and preach for a month in Singapore, and we judge it best to include this editorial before the series is interrupted.

Accordingly, the annual preview of the agenda for the PRCA’s Synod (to begin on June 9 in Faith PRC, Jenison,

MI) will be placed in the June 1 issue. We realize that some *SB* subscribers might like to see this preview earlier than the June issue normally appears. For their sake, we will post the “Preview of Synod” article online at the rfpa.org website and at prca.org no later than June 1.

One article in the present issue is a small preview of synod. The article submitted by the Committee for Contact with other Churches reports on one contact that the CC has been enjoying for some years—the Reformed Congregation in Giessen, Germany.

—The Editors 

What It Means to Be Reformed (7)

CALVINISTIC—Implications (2)

There is one more implication of Calvinism that deserves treatment on its own. Last time we saw that Calvinism's doctrines of grace, genuinely embraced, will lead to humility—humble worship, humble assurance, and humble treatment of others. That is, proud worship, proud assurance, and haughty treatment of others may be traced back to a counterfeit Calvinism. We also saw that genuine Calvinism leads to *those* Christian graces of godly living, and *not* to what opponents of Calvinism charge.

Being militant

Calvinism is also militant. In fact, militancy is not so much an implication of Calvinism as it is an essential aspect of it. If a Christian is a Calvinist, he is a warrior for truth. This does not surprise anyone who knows even a little bit about Calvinism.

To be militant is to be polemical.¹

¹ In 2012, from the issues of June 1 through September 15, I wrote a series of SB editorials entitled "Polemics: Fighting Words." There, I described carefully what polemics is. Here, the emphasis is more that being polemical, or militant, is an essential aspect of being *Reformed* and being *Calvinist*.

Previous article in this series: May 1, 2015, p. 340.

Polemics is the activity of exposing, opposing, resisting, and ultimately (by the power and grace of God) eliminating error—error of teaching, or error of conduct. Polemics is being militant.

Reformed Christians must be willing to fight for the truth of God—His name and reputation, His works, and centrally His work in Jesus Christ to save His covenant people. Answer the questions: *How* did God save His people? How today does He accomplish that wonder-work? *Why* does He save them? The answer to those questions is *truth*. And for that truth, Reformed Christians are willing to fight. Lies about God's work must be exposed. Spades must be called spades. And if Pelagianism is again resurrected out of hell in 2015, we must be willing to call it so, to expose and eliminate it, just as our fathers did at Dordt 400 years ago.

—WIMTBR—
COVENANTAL
CALVINISTIC
Implications (2)
CHURCH
CONFESSIONAL
CHRISTIAN LIFE

**Being Militant
is being Reformed**

Not pugnacious or contentious, the Reformers nevertheless were soldiers, "willing to endure hardships" for the gospel (II Tim. 2:3). If there is a truism in our definition of Reformed, it would be: "Reformed is militancy." Militancy against the errors of Roman Catholicism is the origin of Reformed. Exposing Roman Catholic error, Calvin said, "I have gained some advantage if I have stripped these asses of their lion's skin."² Luther's humble but defiant, "Here I stand, I cannot and will not recant," let loose the avalanche that created our wonderful Protestant and Reformed heritage.

The five *solas* themselves are more than a hint that the Reformation was militant. The fathers were not content to say, "Christ." Everyone said "Christ." But as soon as they said, "Christ *alone!*" the battle was joined, as they themselves knew it would be. Not permitted merely to say "grace," they said "grace *alone!*" which became fighting words. It was easy to confess "salvation is by faith." Roman Catholicism confessed that. But when the trumpet blasted, "Salvation by faith *alone, without*

² *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV.19.37.

works!” the fathers had to soldier on, even to death.

With some reluctance, I must refrain from putting together a string of pearls from Reformers who expressed determination to be militant, because our determined purpose is to define “Reformed” from ecclesiastical documents rather than from individuals. When the Reformed churchmen assembled in synods and classes, their deliberations led them to declare the mandate to the churches: Be militant!

The Three Forms of Unity are themselves *models* of fighting for truth. In each creed of the three, truth is confessed over against error. False doctrines are exposed, and sometimes given fairly harsh monikers—like “gross errors,” “injurious errors,” “damnable errors.” Who today, writing in church magazines, will label errors “false doctrines” or “the lie,” much less these descriptors from the confessions? The *Heidelberg Catechism*, committed to living peaceably as much as possible (Rom. 12:18), nevertheless warns sharply about those who “boast of him in words, yet in deeds...deny Jesus the only deliverer and Savior.” It has sharp polemics in Lord’s Day 30—naming the popish mass an “accursed idolatry.” The *Belgic Confession* manifests the wisdom of a Reformed confession when its primary emphasis is the positive confession, “this we believe.” But the reader cannot miss its regular and emphatic interjections of the Reformation’s *solas*—in almost every article. *Solas* are polemical! Then, when militancy was needed most—when the Reformed faith itself was assaulted by the Remonstrants—the *Canons of Dordt*

became intensely militant. To give but a few examples, they compare Arminianism to Pelagianism, a “destructive poison” and a “proud heresy” brought “again out of hell.” These Reformed fathers also spelled out carefully their “Rejection of Errors” after each head of doctrine. These rejections should not be omitted in the instruction given to the youth when they learn the five points of Calvinism in the Canons. The youth need to learn militancy.

The *example* of the Reformed creeds is strengthened by the *mandate* of the Reformed Church Order of Dordt. Professors of theology have the solemn duty to “vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors” (Art. 18). Every minister and every elder, by taking his office, commits “to ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings” (Art. 55). And, most powerfully, the Church Order obliges every officebearer to sign the unmistakably clear Formula of Subscription.³ The Formula calls for a kind of warfare against theological error that is better read directly than described here. Consistories could consider reading and studying the document once per year in their meetings. Simple honesty requires any man to study this document carefully before he accepts a nomination to church office.

The example of Presbyterian confessions is much the same. And as to Presbyterian *mandate*, when the Westminster divines gave their churches instructions for examin-

ing future ministers of the gospel, their Form of Church-Government requires inquiry into the man’s “ability to *defend* the orthodox doctrine...against all unsound and erroneous opinions...” and “his zeal and faithfulness in maintaining the truth of the gospel...*against* error and schism.”⁴

Calvinism is militant against...

The main purpose of calling attention to Calvinism’s militancy, however, is to show *what* Calvinism must oppose regarding the doctrines of grace. False doctrines have always dogged Calvinism’s confession of grace—particular, sovereign, irresistible grace. The false doctrine is some form of Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, or Arminianism, which in the end are more or less subtle forms of the same error. They deny particular, sovereign, irresistible grace.

Calvinism is not friendly with those who are “revisionist Reformed,” a deceitful term used by those who want to appear Reformed, but are fatally compromising the doctrines of grace. Calvinism is a foe of those who, rather than openly adopt Arminianism, would instead “ameliorate Calvinism,” which is another way of describing a fatal compromise of the doctrines of Dordt. What these pseudo-Reformed are doing is akin to the fathers at Dordt, at the end of their six months of work

³ Arts. 53, 54; the Formula itself can be found on page 141 in the back of *The Psalter*, or at prca.org.

⁴ Found in paragraphs 2 and 6 under “The Rules for Examination are these.” Emphasis mine. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1976, 413.

(November to May), patting the Remonstrants' backs, calling them "evangelical brothers," and sending them away with a benevolent: "We'll just agree to disagree, but we can expect to work together at future synods and especially on the mission field, because we both preach essentially the same evangelical gospel."⁵

...Also against common grace and the well-meant offer

The PRC's opposition to the doctrine of common grace and its concomitant "well-meant offer" is explained by her Calvinism. Her Calvinism compelled her to oppose the teaching that God's grace and love were in some way common. Her Calvinism drove her to become militant when the doctrine of common grace asserted that natural man was not actually totally depraved, but only corrupt in every part of

him—there was still some good in every part also. Her Calvinism explains her fierce opposition to the doctrine that God desires all men to be saved and that the preaching of the gospel must express that desire.

I trust that all young people in the PRC are taught that the five points of Calvinism stand behind her rejection of the well-meant gospel offer. This is how I taught them when I was in the pastorate:

First, the well-meant offer threatens the doctrine of *Total Depravity*, because the well-meant offer implies the ability of those to whom the offer comes to accept the offer. Accepting the offer is a good work, which good work an unsaved man cannot perform if total depravity is true. When it is claimed that grace (common grace?) and not their own natural ability, enables men to accept the offer, we ask: Why then do not *all* men who receive this common grace accept the offer? (For it is obvious that not all accept it.) The answer cannot be "the grace given them," because others had the same grace and did not accept the offer. The only logical answer is: man's own willingness to use that common grace. To teenagers in catechism it is not hard to understand that this is a compromise of total depravity (as well as a creative invention of another kind of grace that is resistible; see below.)

Second, the well-meant offer threatens the doctrine of *Unconditional Election*. Unconditional election is the teaching that God chose, *in love*, and chose *to love* some and only some.⁶ Calvinism

teaches God's exclusive, loving choice of *some*, His determination in that love to save only *some*, His decree to give *only those* to Christ to be saved by Him. The well-meant offer of the gospel is an expression of the love of God for *all* who hear the gospel, the desire of God to save *more* than He gave to Jesus to be saved.

Third, it threatens the doctrine of *Limited Atonement*. Calvinism teaches that the death of Christ was an offering made for the elect alone—an offering *intended* for the elect alone.⁷ The well-meant offer of the gospel makes salvation available to all. Of course, Reformed men who teach the well-meant offer of the gospel attempt to maintain the Reformed doctrine of limited atonement, but the attempts all end in a quagmire of nuances and qualifications, in complicated explanations and appeals to distinctions that few can understand; and finally lead many of them to "revisionist Calvinism" which is not Calvinism.⁸

that election is unconditional, but shows the close connection between election and God's love. His choosing is a choosing *in love*.

⁷ Since Dordt, it is common to distinguish between the *sufficiency* of the atonement, which the Canons describe as *infinite and unlimited*; and the *efficiency* of the atonement, which the Canons teaches is limited to God's elect. But the "revisionist Reformed" are now using that *sufficiency* doctrine to teach that God's *intentions* in the death of Christ extended beyond the elect. A clear reading of Canons II:8 shows the impossibility of this.

⁸ Roger E. Olson, self-described Arminian, says that "Limited Atonement" is the Achilles' heel of Calvinists, because it "makes it impossible reasonably (!) to make a well-meant offer of the gospel of salvation

⁵ Disturbingly, Michael Horton's friendly "Forward" in Roger Olson's *Against Calvinism* (as well as Olson's friendly "Forward" in Horton's *For Calvinism*) shows nothing of the spirit of Dordt when the fathers summarily dismissed and deposed the Arminians in 1619. Horton's claim that it would be "reckless" of him to accuse Olson of Pelagianism is obvious, but it begs the question of what a Reformed Christian must think of Pelagianism's transmogrified offspring, Arminianism. It is also of a very different spirit than what most Dutch Reformed young people learned in generations past in the Christian High School's "Ref-Doc" class when they read B.K. Kuiper's description of it in his widely-used *The Church in History*. Read Kuiper's clear denunciation of Arminianism in chapter 33, under the heading, "Departures from historic Protestantism." (*The Church in History* was first published in 1951 by the National Union of Christian Schools, later called Christian Schools International.)

⁶ Deuteronomy 7:7, 8 not only teaches

Fourth, the well-meant offer threatens the doctrine of *Irresistible Grace*. If *grace* is manifested in the well-meant offer of the gospel, then that grace is a resistible grace.⁹ The explanation by defenders of the “well-meant offer”? There are two kinds of grace—an irresistible saving grace and a resistible common grace. Then the young people must harmonize what cannot be harmonized: the fourth point of Calvinism that God’s saving grace is irresistible; and the preaching of the *gospel of salvation* as a grace that is resistible. I am thankful that I am not called to attempt that.¹⁰

to everyone indiscriminately.” (*Against Calvinism*, 137; also 60, 61) This educated Arminian cannot understand the nuances of the “well-meant offer” Calvinists.

⁹ Remember, the “well-meant offer” was presented as proof of the doctrine of common grace by the CRC Synod of 1924—the *gospel* offer was presented as proof of a *common* grace.

¹⁰ The reader will recognize the unmis-

...Militant against a conditional covenant


Calvinism also explains our opposition to a conditional covenant.¹¹ Teaching the doctrine of an *unconditional* covenant is necessary to

takable similarity between “well-meant offer” theology and Arminian doctrine. The difference is the name given to this second kind of ‘grace.’ In Arminianism the grace is called “prevenient grace,” and among professed Calvinists it is called “common grace.”

¹¹ And, our opposition to the conditional covenant’s recently adopted family member, the Federal Vision. Not everyone in the “conditional covenant” family is fond of the appearance of this “relative” doctrine—and declare it to be an illegitimate intruder in the family. The PRC have argued not only that the Federal Vision is essentially Arminianism, but also that it is a necessary offspring of conditional covenant theology. For a thorough treatment of the doctrine, see David J. Engelsma, *Federal Vision: Heresy at the Root*, Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2012.

do justice to the biblical teaching of a completely *gracious* salvation. Grace from beginning to end is the only explanation of a man’s salvation. And, since having a covenant relationship with God is being God’s friend—and therefore, is being *saved!*—being in the covenant is explained by nothing else than grace. It cannot be explained by a man fulfilling conditions.

Yes, faith is the only *way* to enjoy this covenant friendship—but faith, remember, that is the gracious gift of God to His elect alone. God provides faith graciously, to His elect. As the Canons say, faith is election’s fruit (Canons I:9). Thus, even the God-mandated *way* of covenant salvation is His own gift of grace, inseparably tied to the doctrine of *election*.

That is how we understand Calvinism. Unrevised. Un-“ameliorated.” Reformed. 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

MR. DON DOEZEMA

Upon This Rock (18)

Robbing Christ of His Honor (10)

In our last article we examined briefly the “veil,” as Calvin called it, that separated the Law from the Gospel such that the saints of old were not able to “see more closely the things that are now revealed to our eyes.” The object of their hope, we saw, was *mystery*—which

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Previous article in this series: February 15, 2014, p. 226.

by definition is something that is beyond the reach of the human mind, apart from *revelation*. Christ Himself demonstrated the truth of that when, after His resurrection, He breathed on His disciples, saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22), and then proceeded to show from the Old Testament Scriptures that what they had seen before their eyes in the past several days was not only exactly what He Himself had predicted beforetime but also what the

prophets of old had foretold (Luke 24:44). Enlightened thus by the Spirit, the disciples at long last understood.

Understood, that is, the death and resurrection of their Lord. Other aspects of the 'mystery of Christ' could conceivably have been revealed at the same time. After all, if the disciples could be made to understand the *death* and the *resurrection* of Christ, they could also be made to understand His *exaltation*. But the Master Teacher chose not to do that. Though His reasons and methodology in this instance belong surely to those "ways" that are "past finding out" (Rom. 11:33), we can see and appreciate some of the wisdom of it. We do well to recall, first of all, that the things that Christ was making manifest to His disciples were not only mysteries but *mind-boggling* mysteries. If Christ were to have dispersed the shadows with, as it were, one sweep of His hand, so that all the treasures of heavenly wisdom were displayed at once, the disciples would have been simply overwhelmed, dazzled, by it. Jesus would help them, and give them time, to 'process' one glorious aspect of the mystery at a time.

Besides, pedagogically speaking, as we noted also last time, no better exposition of the prophecies of the Old Testament can be found than the *event* itself. The psalmists and the prophets had indeed spoken of the wonder of the incarnation, and of the death and resurrection of the Christ, and of His exaltation. But when was it that each of those prophecies was *explained*? Not till the angel Gabriel could speak of the supernatural conception in the womb of the virgin Mary. Not till the angel of the Lord could point the shepherds to a stable in Bethlehem. Not till Christ could direct the attention of His disciples to a cross on Calvary. Not till He could stand suddenly in their midst in the upper room without having gone through the door, and then show them His hands and His feet. Not till He ascended, bodily, before their very eyes. Prophecies explained...by the *events*.

With Jesus' help, therefore, the Eleven had come a long way in their understanding of the mystery of Christ. Not yet, however, were they able to take up their role as "witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48). "Wait," Jesus told them, "for the promise of the Father.... Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:4, 8).

The apostles learned the truth of that ten days later,

when a fisherman by trade, Peter by name, faced unexpectedly a crowd of people numbering in the thousands and he...preached a sermon! Extemporaneously!

A difficult situation, by anyone's estimation. And the confidence with which Peter simply became master of it must have surprised him fully as much as the sudden ability to speak in foreign languages surprised all the disciples who had discovered it in themselves moments before. "Ye shall receive power." Ah, yes, the disciples were learning fast what Jesus had meant by *that*.

The sermon of Peter was a masterpiece. With unerring logic and well-reasoned argumentation he developed the theme of it, which was this, that salvation is in Jesus, who is the promised Messiah, and that the Holy Spirit is, in fact, the Spirit of the risen Lord. His conclusion: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). "The summing up," says Lenski, "is so masterly that it could have been made only by inspiration from the Spirit even as the entire sermon bears the plainest marks of the Spirit."

On reflection, especially in consideration of the amazing *fruits* of that sermon (no fewer than *three thousand* "gladly received his word" and were "added unto them," Acts 2:41), Peter must have been astounded at how powerfully the Lord had used him that day.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Surely it would seem, would it not, that the apostles were equipped now with all they needed in order to carry out that commission of their resurrected and ascended Lord.

But they were not. Another great aspect of the mystery of Christ remained still to be revealed. And, in keeping with the methodology of the Master Teacher as we mentioned above, it would be revealed in close connection with its practical application to the church's labors. We refer, of course, to the calling of the Gentiles.

That was huge. Paul, in fact, in his letter to the Ephesians, calls it *the* mystery: "...by revelation he made known unto me the mystery...which in other ages [that is, in all the centuries of the old dispensation] was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (3:3-6).

But why do we concern ourselves with that in this series of articles? Because, as it seems to me, this history demonstrates the beauty, and the obscurity, of the shadows; the difficulty involved in making the transition from the old to the new covenant; and the wisdom of the Spirit's method of instruction. I would like, therefore, in this and the next article or two, to look at the bringing of Christ's "other sheep" into the fold (John 10:16), or, as Paul put it in Ephesians 2, the breaking down of the "middle wall of partition," making both Jew and Gentile one.

At the time of the writing of his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul was imprisoned in Rome. Fascinating history forms the backdrop of that imprisonment. We draw attention here only to its occasion, that is, what it was that brought Paul into the Roman judicial system. It happened at the conclusion of his third missionary journey. Paul, you will remember, had come to Jerusalem, where he was recognized by some Asian Jews as the apostle to the Gentiles. They recognized also Paul's companion at the time, an Ephesian by the name of Trophimus. On seeing Paul later in the temple, they simply assumed that Paul had taken Trophimus into this sacred place (Acts 21:29). Infuriated by the very thought of it, they stirred up the people by hurling two charges against the apostle. The second, and the more inflammatory of the two, was that Paul had "brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath [by so doing] polluted this holy place" (v. 28).

Paul was set upon forthwith by a mob of Jews who, having seized him and dragged him out of the temple, "went about to kill him" (21:31)—only to have him rescued from their hands by Roman "soldiers and centurions" (v. 32).

In stark contrast to the spirit of his assailants, who were bent on killing him, Paul thought to use the occasion to try to win over his countrymen to the cause of Christ. "I beseech thee," said Paul to the chief captain, "suffer me to speak unto the people" (v. 39).

Perhaps awed by this unexpected development, the people actually quieted down, for we read that, when there "was made a great silence" (21:40), Paul gave his defense. He explained to them how it happened that one who had once himself been consumed by a murderous zeal against the followers of Christ had been subdued by nothing less than an oracle from heaven.

And the Jews actually listened quietly—until he got to this point: "And he [the ascended Lord] said unto me, Depart [from Jerusalem], for I will send thee far hence unto the *Gentiles*" (22:21). "They gave him audience unto *this word*, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live" (22:22).

Making mention of his *mission to the Gentiles* was like touching a raw nerve in this gathering. Throwing off their outer robes, as if in preparation for a stoning, they scooped up dust, which was all they could get their hands on here, and threw it in the direction of Paul (v. 23). Such was their pride, writes Calvin, that "not only did they despise the whole world in comparison with themselves, but they fought more passionately for their own dignity than for the Law itself, as if the whole of religion turned on this point, that the descendants of Abraham excelled over all other mortals."

Not that the Jews believed that no Gentile could be saved. Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus said, would "compass sea and land to make one proselyte" (Matt. 23:15). *Conversion* of Gentiles—yes. But by way of *proselytization*. For a Gentile to have any hope of heaven, he would have to buy into the entire Levitical and traditional system of Jewry. No wonder is it that Christ pronounced His woe on the Pharisees for making such a convert "twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." No wonder, either, is it, then, that the Jews in Jerusalem would anathematize Paul. They knew full well what Paul was doing in the provinces. Gentiles were being welcomed into the church as "fellow-heirs" of the promise of God to Abraham. Gentiles, that is, *as Gentiles*. Paul made *proselytes* of...none of them.

That was the mystery to which Paul was referring in the first verses of the third chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians—"the mystery...that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs...." The mystery, further, that "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men...."

Paul may very well have been able to quote Isaiah 11:10 from memory: "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek...." What, then, could he have meant by declaring here, concerning the calling of the Gentiles, that it was "not made known in other ages"? More on that...next time.

... to be continued. 

■ PC-USA's Tolerance of Homosexuality becomes Official

The news media covered this story well, so many of our readers already know about it. But it is still worthwhile to take note of the Presbyterian Church-USA's official redefinition of marriage that approves homosexual unions. Holly Yan of CNN reports:¹

The country's largest Presbyterian denomination has changed its definition of marriage to include gay couples—though not explicitly.

Presbyterian Church (USA) approved an amendment to its constitution after most of its 171 presbyteries—or governing bodies—voted for it, PC (USA) said Tuesday.

Before, the definition said marriage was between “a man and a woman.”

The new definition says, in part, that “marriage involves a unique commitment between two people, traditionally a man and a woman, to love and support each other for the rest of their lives.”

Already, PC (USA) ministers can perform same-sex marriages in states where such marriages are legal, the group said. But no teaching elder or session can be forced to conduct same-sex marriage ceremonies if they do not believe they are appropriate.

Not all members supported the decision.

In a post on PC (USA)'s website, Jean and Robert Gorney accused the church of going against the Bible and threatened to leave.

“We are not to change the Bible,” their post said. “I don't care who disagrees.”

But the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, which says it supports “a fully inclusive church,” welcomed the news Tuesday night.

“The change aligns the church's constitution with a reality that has long been true: Both same-gender and opposite-gender couples have been living in relationships

that demonstrate covenant faithfulness, shared discipleship and mutual love,” the group said.

“We are also aware that the discussion has been a difficult one for many, and that some will feel a deep sense of pain over this decision. The Covenant Network is committed to fostering healthy dialogue and working with those who hold a view different from ours, seeking opportunities for us to model an authentic and productive unity.”

The amendment will take effect on June 21.

It should be understood that homosexual unions are not sanctioned by every Presbyterian denomination. There are many Presbyterian denominations that continue to hold to the biblical view of marriage as a union between one man and one woman. It is perhaps especially important to note that the PC-USA and the PCA (Presbyterian Church in America) are distinct denominations. In response to the PC-USA's redefinition of marriage Dr. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk of the PCA, released a statement explaining that the PCA *does not* approve of homosexual unions.²

The PC-USA's decision to change the definition of marriage now brings its official policy in line with what has been practiced in the denomination for years. For years, even though the denomination officially condemned homosexuality, homosexuality has been tolerated in the denomination. It is only logical that official policy be changed to conform with accepted practice. The lesson to be learned, by those who are willing to listen, is that if the church will not exercise discipline and demand turning from a sin, the passive toleration of that sin will one day lead to its active approval.

■ Boys and Girls Will Be Hens

The following is a report by Rick Noack for the *Washington Post*:³

¹ Holly Yan, “Presbyterian group changes marriage definition to include same-sex couples,” March 17, 2015, www.cnn.com/2015/03/17/us/presbyterian-church-gay-marriage.

² L. Roy Taylor, “The PCA's position Human Sexuality,” July 6, 2011, theaquilareport.com/the-pcas-position-on-human-sexuality.

³ Nick Noack, “Sweden Is About to Add a Gender-neutral Pronoun to Its Official Dictionary,” April 1, 2015, www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2015/04/01/sweden-is-about-to-add-a-gender-neutral-pronoun-to-its-official-dictionary.

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In the Egalia, a preschool in Stockholm, there are no male or female students. Instead, all children are referred to as 'hen'—a gender-neutral pronoun that has become so established in Sweden that it will be recognized next month in the newest edition of the country's official dictionary.

The Swedish Academy's SAOL dictionary, which is updated every 10 years and will be republished April 15, will feature 'hen' as an alternative to the male pronoun 'han' and the female 'hon.' The revised edition will also include thousands of other new words.

According to linguistic expert Sofia Malmgård, the gender-neutral term can be used in two ways. "First, if the gender is unknown or not relevant (as in: "If anyone needs to smoke, 'hen' may do so outside"). Second, it can be used as a pronoun for inter-gender people (as in: "Kim is neither boy or girl, 'hen' is inter-gender")," she explained.

To many Swedes, the decision of the Swedish Academy reflects how quickly their society has embraced gender-neutral language. "Over the last few years, the word 'hen' has more and more found its way into the Swedish language," Malmgård told the *Washington Post*.

Five years ago, barely anyone in Sweden was aware of the word. The decision to now include 'hen' in the authoritative SAOL dictionary is expected to facilitate an even more frequent use of it in everyday conversations. Set up in 1785, the academy was established with the aim to adapt the Swedish languages to changing cultural and societal influences—a role the institution still feels committed to.

According to experts, the 'hen'-revolution in Sweden has two primary origins: LGBT groups have promoted the pronoun as a way to raise awareness for their cause. However, support for the idea has also come from a more unexpected side: Nurseries, kindergartens and preschools such as Egalia increasingly argue that the pronoun's usage allows children to grow up without feeling the impact of gender biases. "The public debate over the pronoun actually only started after the publication of the country's first gender-neutral children's book," Lann Hornscheidt, an professor of Scandinavian languages and gender studies at Berlin's Humboldt University explained.

Gender-neutral education in Sweden goes far beyond linguistics. As the BBC already observed in 2011, toys and games in some nurseries are placed deliberately next to each other, in the hope that children will feel free to choose the items they feel most comfortable spending their time with.

To Hornscheidt, the popularity of 'hen' has not come


as a surprise. "The introduction of a pronoun which challenges binary gender norms has been an important step, following a more thorough debate over the construction of gender within the last 10 years," he said.

This article answers the question, how can the world increase in wickedness? This was a question that I once heard a man pose because he had recently read the account of the men of Sodom wanting to "know" the angels who visited Lot as recorded in Genesis 19. Genesis 19 shows us that there is nothing "new under the sun" when it comes to the depravity of man. Homosexuality is a sin that men have fallen into for thousands of years. But man is increasing in wickedness. Now the LGBT movement is spearheading an attack on God's authority to decide that human beings shall be "male and female." If you don't want to be a man or a woman you can be gender neutral—a "hen" in Sweden.

Included in this idea of gender neutrality is an assault on God's sovereign right to determine whether an individual is male or female. The Bible tells us that each human being is fashioned by God (Ps. 139:14). God, therefore, determines the gender of each individual. After the fall into sin, there are some unusual cases. But the norm is that, when a baby is born, it is very easy to determine the gender He has sovereignly chosen for that individual. And God obviously demands that people submit to His will and live their lives according to the gender God has chosen for them at birth. But men and women are not content to submit to God's will in choosing their genders. Men may choose to feel and act like women. Women may choose to feel and act like men. And in some cases, men and women may feel and act like they have no gender or have both genders. The chaos of rebellion against God ensues.

This rebellion against God's gender norms is also a devastating attack on marriage and the family. Society is in the process of redefining marriage to open it up to same-sex or same-gender couples. Soon marriage may be redefined in a way that abolishes any notion of gender. Today, marriage involves some combination of men and women. But tomorrow the "spouses" may both decide to be men or to be gender neutral "hens." Of course, there will be no male headship in these "marriages." Who knows who the male is anyway?

And what of children? They are forced to accept this confusion already in nurseries! They are taught from a young age to deny and rebel against God's will concerning their genders and what that means for how they must live. There is no family structure for them. They do not

know if they have one dad and one mom or two dads or two moms—the possibilities are really endless for man to do whatever he pleases. The effects of this confusion on children will be catastrophic in terms of increased rebellion, depression, and a host of other problems. 

O COME LET US WORSHIP

REV. CORY GRIESS

God Judges the Church's Worship (11a)

Psalm 50:3-4 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. **Psalm 50:7** Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. **Psalm 50:14-15** Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

Introduction

Those who advocate a simple, reverent worship, as the early church did, as the Reformers did, as faithful Reformed and Presbyterian churches today do, are sometimes accused of having no heart in their worship. They are at times accused of formalism. Their accusers will point to their own often raucous services and will say, "Look, we are very excited when we worship, and you are not. You have dead, lifeless worship, and ours is full of vigor." I challenge the notion that the accusers' worship is always truly heartfelt. Without judging every person or every instance, motives are easily self-centered, when the goal is to attain a spiritual high. The focus easily becomes the person and his feelings and not God, which by its very

definition precludes it being true, heartfelt *worship*. And while there is without doubt an experience, the purity and depth of experience will be determined by the theology, which today is all too often shallow.

Nonetheless, we must be careful not to prove the charge of formalism correct. For if there is not a heartfelt love for God in our worship, our worship it is not truly worship either. We are called to worship God in the way He commands in His Word, but we must remember that part of what He commands in His Word is worship from a heart that pants after Him. Worship is not merely outward but involves the inward motions of the heart. While getting whipped up into an emotional frenzy is not heartfelt worship, neither is simply going to church and going through the motions.

Simple, reverent, biblical worship for the child of God who understands what it is and knows the depths of the grace of God can and must be worship from the heart. Calvin's worship in Geneva was even simpler than Protestant Reformed worship. Calvin believed it unbiblical to play any musical instrument in the official, corporate worship service. The Psalms were sung with tunes simpler than ours. Yet listen to this testimony of worship in Calvin's church:

Shall it be said that the Calvinian worship was cold and impoverished?

Those who were present at the services have told us that often they could not keep back the tears of their emotion and joy. Singings and prayers, adoration, edifica-

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tion, confession and absolution of sins...all the essential elements of worship were there. And perhaps not less important, they were united in an organism that was very simple, yet supple and strong.¹

Worship experience was sustained by a deep understanding of the Word of God and what was taking place in worship. The Word brought the experience of conviction and joy, and even emotion, at times. For the people knew and loved and were bound together by the Word. God in His law and gospel was their deep delight. Is that true among us?

Psalm 50 tells us that for all the other things worship must be, it must also be brought from the heart. It must be brought with the right motive, a motive that is only possible by understanding the gospel of grace. I close this series of articles on public, corporate worship with three articles of warning and correction from God Himself in Psalm 50 regarding the heart in worship. The true worship of God is the height of our callings as Christians. And that is why God does not hesitate to reveal Himself in Psalm 50 in all His glory and purity to judge His people's worship. As the psalm puts it, "Our God shall come, and he will not keep silence."

The God Who Judges

Psalm 50 presents to us a divine court scene. God Himself is presented as the Judge here: "for God is judge himself" (v. 6). He is described as mighty and worthy to judge, as well as righteous in His assessment. In verse 1 He is given three names. They are translated as two in the KJV, "the Mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken." In fact, these are three names listed in succession: "The Mighty (One), God, The LORD (Jehovah) hath spoken." He is the one who is powerful over all, who must be revered and honored, and who is the covenant God over His people. This presentation of God at the beginning of the psalm is like the presentation of a king to a crowd. A forerunner would come ahead of the king and announce the king's arrival. And he would often give a string of names and descriptions. "The mighty King Peter, the magnificent." Verse 1 is announcing before all the

¹ Doumergue, quoted in William D. Maxwell *A History of Christian Worship*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982, 119.

earth the coming of the Mighty (One), God, Jehovah, the King over all who will judge. Or, to stick with the idea of God as Judge, verse 1 describes what still happens when a judge enters court: "All rise for the honorable judge...."

God comes for judgment. Verses 2-3 tell us that He shines forth out of Zion, that a fire goes before Him, and that a tempest is swirling about Him. This makes us think of God's coming down to the earth on Mt. Sinai. Then too there was rain and thunder and fire. Only now He does not descend upon Mt. Sinai, but He shines forth out of Zion (v. 2). Out of the temple, where He dwells among His people in covenant fellowship, He shines forth. His glory radiates from there before all the world. God is coming, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

All the world is called to come to these court proceedings. In verse 1 the mighty God calls the earth from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun, that is, from the east to the west. And all the earth responds to the call of God to be present as the Judge takes to His bench. But not only are all beings called from the earth, but they are called from heaven as well. "He calls from the heavens above and the earth below" (v. 4). All angels too must come and witness this day in court. No one may be left out, for God has come to judge.

God's People, the Accused.

At this point there is something we are not at first suspecting in the psalm. Even though all the earth and all heaven are called to come to the proceedings, it is not all heaven and all earth that are on trial. Rather, God's own people will be judged this day. "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, *that he may judge his people*. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (vv. 4, 5). The heavens and earth are commissioned to gather God's people, to round them up and bring them to court, for they will be tried before their God. These people of God are all that are in the visible church. They include the believers, but also unbelievers that are mixed in with true believers in the visible church. They are collectively called *His people*, for they are the visible body that engages in worship.

God has something to speak against that visible body. "Hear O my people, I will speak, O Israel, and I will tes-

tify against thee” (v. 7). That is something you can imagine God’s church was not expecting to hear. It brings out the truth that is recorded for us in I Peter 4:17, “Judgment begins at the house of God.” As the apostle points out, the whole world that is called to come witness the judgment must be on guard as well: “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, *what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?* And if the righteous scarcely be saved, *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*” (I Pet. 4:17-18). But He comes to judge His church first. There ought to be sober reflection in this for us, as we see God sitting behind the Judge’s bench in this psalm. “The LORD is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him” (Hab. 2:20).

The Indictments

As Judge, God brings two charges in this psalm. Both

are against aspects of the visible church. One charge is against the believing people in the visible church. The other one is against the unbelieving element in the visible church.² Both charges have to do with worship.

This shows us the importance of worship to God. We have been saying throughout this series of articles that the chief end of man is to worship God. This is the most important thing we do. We have also said that flowing out of the public, corporate worship of God should be an entire life of worship to Him. This psalm confirms that notion. What drives God to call all the earth and all the heaven to court this day according to Psalm 50? The people called by His name have neglected to worship Him with a heart of thanksgiving and love. We will pursue these indictments next time. ∞

² That second charge does not begin until verse 16 with the words, *But unto the wicked God saith....*

STRENGTH OF YOUTH

REV. BRIAN HUIZINGA

“To Teach Them War” (6)

Knowing War’s Origin: In the Angelic Realm

What a lovely world of beauty and perfect peace God made in the beginning! All creatures in the heavens above and earth beneath were fully consecrated to God’s glory. “Good,” declared God, beholding all He had made, “very good.” The divinely inspired narrative of literal history in Genesis says so.

Then, without any warning, a talking, man-tempting,

God-slandering serpent appears on the scene (Gen. 3:1). Evil. Very evil. It gets worse. The serpent tempts the woman Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Eve sins. Eve tempts her husband Adam. Adam sins. Because Adam is the federal (covenant) head of humanity and the king of creation, all men become enemies of God and all of creation comes under God’s curse. This is unseemliness and disharmony. This is rebellion against God. This is war.

Who is this serpent? What is his origin? How is he evil? Why is he against God? From where did this evil creature in the good creation come?

The opening chapters of Genesis, and what follows in Scripture, emphasize God’s dealings with *man*, providing

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the history and details of *man's* creation, fall, and redemption. Only gradually, as the revelation progressively unfolds, do we come to an understanding of the *angelic* realm. To that angelic realm we must turn our attention in order to understand the introduction of warfare into God's good creation.

That talking, tempting, slandering serpent was the devil (Rev. 12:9). Or, more accurately, the devil was the rational, moral subject speaking through the serpent. The devil belongs to the angelic realm. Therefore, we must go back, past Adam and Eve and past the serpent, to the devil to get a proper understanding of warfare in creation and in history. What the Genesis account presupposes, we must explain, namely, that actual warfare against God in His good creation was introduced by Satan into the angelic realm, and from the angelic realm warfare extended to the human race through the serpent. The very first assault upon God and His kingdom was orchestrated by Satan. Warfare against God did not begin on earth with man, but with the angels in the heavens before the throne of God.

Satan's Assault on God

Under the righteous God's sovereign government, according to the righteous God's eternal, determinative counsel, and for the glory of the righteous God's own name, warfare broke out in the heavenly realm—warfare that came under the righteous God's heavy condemnation. Nowhere does Scripture furnish a comprehensive historical account of the creation and fall of angels. Scant but sufficient are the little details scattered throughout the Bible to piece together the story.

Angels were created. Just because the opening chapters of Genesis do not tell us angels were created does not mean they are eternal beings or have their origin of themselves, as the Manichees of old taught. We do not know precisely when in the six days of creation the angels were created, but they were created (Col. 1:16). Satan is an angelic being (Matt. 25:41; II Cor. 11:14; Jude 6; Rev. 12:9), one of the many angels God created.

It seems Satan was created as the highest angelic being. He is prince. He is called "the prince of this world" and "the prince of the power of the air" (John 12:31; 16:11; Eph. 2:2). Some have even said Satan was probably greater than the archangel Michael who, when

contending with Satan about the body of Moses, "durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee (Jude 9).

Like all the creatures, this princely angel Satan was created good. He was morally upright and devoted to God. He was "in the truth" (John 8:44). His primitive state was most excellent.

But Satan sinned and fell. The Bible does not tell us when. It does teach he "was a murderer from the beginning," (John 8:44). Sometime after the first seven days, when all was declared good and before the serpent came to Eve, Satan fell. Nor does the Bible answer the question older catechumens occasionally ask, "How did evil arise in this good creature Satan?" We know that at some point Satan was filled with pride. I Timothy 3:6 warns against appointing a novice to office, "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

Evidently, Satan became proud and attempted to seize God's throne. He was not content. He wanted what God had. He did not want to be a prince of the angels, qualified to lead them all in loving service to God. He wanted to be God. He wanted God and all creatures *under* him and *serving* him. Although the Lucifer of Isaiah 14:12ff. does not refer directly to Satan, but to the king of Babylon, that Lucifer is a type of the coming antichrist and an example of the devil in attitude and conduct. Of Lucifer we read, "How art thou fallen from heaven...! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (Is. 14:12-14).

Satan was the first adversary of God. He is forever the greatest foe of God. As God is pure goodness and love, Satan is pure evil and hatred. Satan hates God, hates God's good creative work—chiefly man as God's greatest work, despises God's Son in man's flesh, hates the church, hates the Bible, hates the gospel, and hates you and me. He is an unimaginably powerful liar and murderer. He lives for God's destruction. His aim is to dethrone God. The greatest of all battles is not between the world and the church, or the antichrist and the Christ, but between Satan and the triune God. To our tremendous comfort, Satan is not merely God's enemy; he is also and always God's unwitting servant. God uses

Satan for His good purposes, and when finished, will cast him into the lake of fire and brimstone to be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:10). When we go to heaven in the last day, we will never face this enemy again.

Satan was not content as the only foe of God. His hatred for God was so intense he instigated an uprising by rallying many angels around him and against God. To this Revelation 12:4 refers when it states that the tail of the great red dragon “drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.” The devil now has “his angels” (Matt. 25:41). They are “angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (Jude 6). Not all the angels fell. Satan was not a federal head in whom every angel fell. Many angels remained steadfast in their primitive state and are “holy” (Mark 8:38) and “elect” (I Tim. 5:21). Those angels who were seduced by Satan and who willingly revolted against God are reprobate and reserved unto judgment (II Pet. 2:4).

What an awful assault against God! Instead of beholding the face of the Father in heaven, doing His commandments, and hearkening unto the voice of His Word as joyful hosts, the fallen angels dwell in Satan’s camp, follow his marching orders, fight for his cause against God, and to the utmost of their power watch to ruin the church and every member thereof. How the elect angels must have been filled with righteous indignation and how they must have watched in horror as war was declared against God! A creature declared war against the overflowing Fountain of all good, in whom all live and move and have their being?! Evil. Very evil.


Although God was angry with the creature Satan, God did not destroy the creature Satan immediately. Rather, He would use this enemy, who would become increasingly foolish and wicked throughout history, to accomplish His redemptive purposes in Jesus. It was this enemy of God named Satan who came to man through the serpent in the garden, seducing man to join him and his angels in his militaristic cause of wickedness in assaulting the most High.

An Important Consideration

A consideration of the origin of warfare in the angelic realm is important. The importance must not be overstated, so that we make more of the angelic realm than

the Bible permits. Nonetheless, this early mark on the timeline of history, subsequent to the mark of creation, is important. First, it gives the background to the greatest enemy of our God, to our Savior Jesus Christ, to the universal church, and to you and me in our own personal life of spiritual warfare. Later in this series, we will examine our enemies and take special note of the devil in his methods and wiles. Here we note his identity, nature, and origin. We must know everything Scripture teaches about our enemy, so that we are better prepared to resist him. We must not become practical Sadducees who speak of Satan and his angels, but regard him so lightly in our daily life of spiritual warfare that we essentially deny him.

Second, what the devil did personally, in the beginning, in the heavens, he will do in climactic fashion through the antichrist, at the end, on the earth. The obscure but literal history of Satan’s uprising against God was a beginning no man saw. But the end all the living shall see. The antichrist whose coming is after the working of Satan will oppose and exalt himself “above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (II Thess. 2:4-9). He, as the head of his world-kingdom, will attempt to lead all men against God in worship of himself (Rev. 13). Knowing Satan’s beginning prepares us for his efforts in the end.

Third, knowledge of Satan’s beginning moves us to humble adoration of God’s sovereignty. What a dramatic beginning of history! What an apparently sudden turn of events! Very good to very evil. It is almost frightening. It is almost discouraging. Until we confess and apply the truth that Scripture proclaims from beginning to end: God is God, and therefore sovereign. God ordained this disturbing introduction of warfare and this Lucifer to serve the purpose of His own glory *in Jesus Christ*. According to God’s perfect plan there had to be, through all of history, a chief antagonist to the kingdom that Jesus would establish and perfect. There had to be a chief antagonist whom Jesus could triumphantly crush, as He reconciles His people and the whole creation to the Father through the cross. In that way, Jesus could not only be our King (and kings are glorious), but our *triumphant* King (and triumphant kings who subdue great opposition are especially glorious). 

The BERG— The Confessing Protestant Reformed Congregation of Giessen, Germany

The members of the Protestant Reformed Churches believe with their hearts and confess each week “an holy catholic church.” In order to put this firm faith into practice, their denomination through her synod has established a standing committee, the Contact Committee, and given that committee the responsibility to seek and develop unity in the truth with those who share the pure Reformed faith with them. This responsibility is stated in the preamble of the Constitution of the Committee for Contact with Other Churches (on p. 42 of *The Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, or on the PRC website—prca.org).

The Protestant Reformed Churches in America, in obedience to Scripture as interpreted in our Three Forms of Unity, confess that there is one holy, catholic church. They believe, further, that it is their sacred duty to manifest the true unity and catholicity of the Church on earth in as far as that is possible, not only in their denominational fellowship but also in conjunction with all churches which have obtained like precious faith with us, both domestic and foreign.

One of the ways the Contact Committee carries out its mandate is to have discussions with churches with which the PRC are exploring the possibility of an official relationship. Currently, one of the congregations with which the Contact Committee is in regular communication is the Bekennende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde, or BERG. In English, that is the Confessing Protestant Reformed Congregation of Giessen, Germany. Our contacts with the BERG have become a regular

part of the work of the Contact Committee and of our reports to synod. For that reason the Contact Committee would like to re-call this faithful congregation to the attention of our people and to encourage readers of the *Standard Bearer* to remember the members of the BERG in their prayers.

The BERG is a Reformed congregation that was founded in 1999 in Giessen, Germany. Giessen is about a one-hour drive north of Frankfurt in the German province of Hessa. The congregation took its name, Confessing Protestant Reformed Congregation, not in emulation of the PRCA, but for much the same reasons as our forefathers took the name that we bear. They wanted to confess that they are a congregation that is based on and that testifies to the Reformed confessions, and that they are the spiritual heirs of the Reformed wing of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth-century. The congregation began in the living room of Dr. Jurgen-Burkhard Klautke and his wife, Ute, with one other family. Since then the congregation has grown to about 12 families and regular visitors in addition to that, with approximately 40 people at each worship service. The congregation consists of families with children as well as of individuals. They now have a regular meeting place in an office building in Giessen.

The preaching of the BERG is deliberately Reformed and free of any sort of conditionalism. The sermons expound God’s Word and apply it to the lives of its members. Their preaching is also antithetical, refuting the errors that its members encounter in twenty-first century Europe. The congregation uses the Reformed forms for

baptism and the Lord's Supper. The congregation's worship is simple, orderly, and biblical. The BERG uses the German translation of the Geneva Psalter with organ accompaniment and some hymns. The Consistory of the BERG has adopted a church order that is an adaptation of many of the Reformed principles of church polity to an individual congregation. It is the prayer of the congregation, and the focus of much of their efforts at outreach, that there may be again a confessional, Reformed denomination in the land in which the Reformation began.

After its morning worship service, the BERG has a service to teach her creeds to the members and to help them comprehend and apply the truths that their creeds contain. In addition there are weekly Bible studies for the members. The Consistory of the BERG testifies and preaches the truths that are contained in the Three Forms of Unity. The creeds that have been adopted by the Consistory of the BERG are the Heidelberg Catechism, the Berlin Declaration against Pentecostalism [1909], the Chicago Declaration on the Infallibility of the Bible [1978], and the Theological Declaration of the Kamen Initiative [2000].

The last three are statements that were written in the twentieth-century and that address errors that have afflicted the church of Christ in Germany during the twentieth-century and into the twenty-first. They spell out the broad outline of the Reformed faith and assert the infallibility of Scripture, the truths concerning the church and the Holy Spirit over against Pentecostalism, and the truths related to justification by grace alone through faith alone. The three latter statements are unfamiliar to most members of the PRCA. The Contact Committee has spent some time studying these statements and discussing them with the consistory of the BERG. The Chicago Declaration on the Infallibility of the Bible and the Theological Declaration of the Kamen Initiative can be found in English on the Internet.

The contacts with members of the BERG go back to 2004 or 2005, and began with personal visits. One of the members of the BERG had found the website of the PRCA and asked permission to translate into German some of the sermons that appear on our website for his own website. This member persuaded the two elders of the congregation, Dr. Jurgen-Burkhard Klautke and Mr. Thomas Tanetschek, to initiate personal contacts in the

PRCA. Since then, there have been both official and unofficial visits between members of the two churches. Also, some young people from the BERG have come to Grand Rapids at different times to stay with some Protestant Reformed families. While these teenagers were here, they sat in on classes at Covenant Christian High, visited our seminary, or attended the Young People's Convention.

Official contacts began in 2006, when Dr. Klautke met with the Contact Committee and spoke to Grand Rapids area PRC pastors on the state of the Reformed faith in Germany. This speech was published in the November 2007 edition of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* (available online at the Seminary's website—prca.org). In our meeting we discussed each other's understandings of the Canons of Dordt; and it became apparent that there was a common interpretation of this basic creed of the Reformed faith. Since then, there have been exchanges of visits in 2007, 2011, 2012, and 2014 as well as a conference call. Dr. Klautke spoke again for Grand Rapids area pastors at the PRC seminary in 2011. That speech appears in the April 2012 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* (also available online). Readers of the *Standard Bearer* who attended the Heidelberg Catechism conference in 2013 will remember the speech that Dr. Klautke gave on the history of the Catechism.

Two things will be seen from this history of interaction between the BERG and the PRCA. First, both the consistory of the BERG and the Contact Committee are content with the fact that it takes time and effort to develop true and lasting unity in the Reformed faith. This is particularly true with two churches that have grown up in different nations and under different circumstances. The two bodies have made real efforts to get to know each other and to understand each other's standpoints and emphases. Second, our relationship up to this point has been informal. That is, no official relationship has been established between our synod and their consistory. But it has been an active friendship in which each side has helped the other in the ways that each group is able.

In all of our reading of the BERG's materials, listening to its preaching, and our meetings together, the Contact Committee has found a soundly Reformed group, whose leaders are able and willing to assert the Reformed faith, the infallibility of the Scriptures, and the antithetical life,

and to refute the errors of doctrine and life that they encounter in their country. The preaching of the BERG assumes the unconditional nature of God's sovereign work of salvation. There is extensive agreement on the doctrine of the covenant.

The members of the BERG are active in spreading the Reformed faith in the German-speaking nations (these are Germany, Switzerland, and Austria). Along with some other Reformed believers in Germany, they publish a journal called *The Confessing Church*—in German, *Bekennende Kirche*. Their journal is published quarterly and has a circulation of about 3,700 hard copies and 8,500 Internet downloads per issue. They also maintain a small seminary, the Academy for Reformed Theology, or ART. A pastor of a neighboring Reformed congregation recently completed his thesis for his Master's Degree in Theology from the ART. Dr. Klautke currently instructs four young men in a less formal manner in Reformed doctrine and in the application of the Reformed faith to practical questions. It is hoped that some of these young men will be able to begin formal seminary instruction in the near future.

The leadership of the BERG and some other German Reformed believers had maintained the ART for some years, with support from Reformed theologians and Reformed denominations in the Netherlands. Within the past few years, the faithfulness of the elders of the BERG to the inerrancy of Scripture, their consistency in the Reformed faith, their willingness to refute error publicly, and their growing friendship with the PRCA have resulted in the nearly complete loss of the seminary's support from the Netherlands. For that reason, for the past few years our Faith, Jenison (MI) congregation has been taking collections for their seminary and their journal.

The four men referred to above, all in their twenties and recent college graduates, along with another Reformed believer from Switzerland, have recently formed an organization to apply the Reformed faith to questions of life and walk for young German believers. They call their organization "Josia." The young men wrote and published their own book, whose title, in English, is *Living to the Glory of God*, and set up a website and weekly blog for their organization—www.josiablog.de. "Josia" has held two conferences in Giessen within the

past eighteen months, with each conference having more than 200 attendees.

Several members of the PRCA have visited the worship services of the BERG during their trips to Germany. There is normally at least one member of the congregation who will translate the sermon for English-speaking guests. For readers of the *Standard Bearer* who can read German, or who are willing to copy and paste German text into Google-translate, the website of the BERG is www.berg-giessen.de; of *The Confessing Church*, www.bekennende-kirche.de; and of the ART, www.reformatio.de.

The PRC Acts of Synod of 2008, 2012, 2013, and 2014 contain a good deal of information about the BERG and our discussions with its consistory. The Contact Committee plans to report to the Synod of 2015 on the current state of our discussions over doctrine and practice. Interested readers will want to consult these Acts for more information than we can provide in this article.

The BERG has borne her cross for her confession and for her faithfulness. The willingness of the elders of the congregation publically to criticize errors related to Scripture and to women in office has cost them the loss of friends in other Reformed churches in Europe. The consistory knows that compromises in the areas of the covenant, infant baptism, and marriage would also have allowed them to retain members and enjoy greater numerical growth; but the elders were not willing to make compromises that in today's church world would be considered only small concessions.

Our contacts to date have been beneficial for the members of both the PRCA and the BERG. Members of the BERG have said that they are thankful for the faithfulness of the PRCA, especially in the truths of the infallibility of the Bible. When her young people come to Grand Rapids, they enjoy visiting the services of as many Protestant Reformed Churches as they can; and they always say how good it is to get to know so many Reformed young people. Members of the PRCA have been encouraged and edified by the material that the leadership of the BERG has produced, by their testimony and by their faithfulness, as they live their lives as Reformed believers in a spiritual wilderness that is even more desolate than the wilderness in which many

members of the PRCA find themselves. During each of the Contact Committee's visits to Giessen, the elders have told us, "You don't know how much it means to us to

know that Protestant Reformed people pray for us." And so we want to ask the readers of the *Standard Bearer*, again, to remember the BERG in your prayers. ☞

BRING THE BOOKS...

MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA, review editor

Everyone's a Theologian: an Introduction to Systematic Theology, by R.C. Sproul. Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2014. Pp. 357. [Reviewed by Ryan Barnhill.]

R.C. Sproul, popular speaker and author, has added yet another book to his long list of titles. *Everyone's a Theologian: an Introduction to Systematic Theology* is a primer or introduction to systematic theology. Sproul organizes his material according to the six loci: Theology, Anthropology, Christology (and Pneumatology), Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology.

The title hints at the approach Sproul takes in his book: everyone should be able to understand theology. Not that every person holds a theology degree from a seminary and teaches theology in an official capacity, but that everyone *does* read Scripture and strive to understand it. As such, theology should be *presented* in a readable and understandable way.

This approach makes *Everyone's a Theologian* a fairly easy read, recommended for those looking to refresh themselves in the basics of theology, or for those looking for concise answers to their doctrinal questions. Each locus of doctrine is broken up into brief chapters, quickly read in one sitting. Sproul shows himself to be the teacher that he is, presenting the material in a logical way, breaking down complex concepts, and carefully explaining his terms.

The reader will find Sproul's chapter on common grace to be interesting. Sproul's inclusion of a chapter on com-

mon grace demonstrates that the doctrine is certainly not forgotten in theological circles. Rightly, Sproul identifies grace as a *vital* doctrine: "The central concern among Reformed theologians who study salvation is the concept of grace. G.C. Berkhouwer once observed that the very essence of theology is grace" (215). Since grace is such a key doctrine, it is necessary that we understand what Sproul means by *common* grace.

Sproul makes a distinction between special and common grace: "Special grace involves the redemption that God gives to the saved. By contrast, common grace is called 'common' because it is virtually universal. It is the grace that God gives to all people indiscriminately. Common grace is the mercy and kindness that God extends to the human race" (216).

Sproul applies common grace in a couple ways. First, God's dealings in the world show His common grace. The rain upon both the devout and the pagan farmer is an example of common grace. The rising standard of living in the world—including quality of life, improved health, and better safety—is evidence of God's common grace upon mankind. Second, the church is called to a *ministry* of common grace. Christians should be concerned about poverty, disease, and hunger in the world. The reason for such concern? God *loves* all men, in a non-saving way.

Without going into the usual arguments against common grace, two things come to mind after reading this chapter.


First, do events we see in the world *really* demonstrate God's mercy and kindness toward all mankind? True, the standard of living is rising in some areas of the world. But what about the rioting in cities across America in the last few months—common grace? What about corruption in Washington—common grace? What about ISIS' cruel, bloody activity—common grace? What about the breakout of Ebola in countries in Africa—common grace?

Mr. Barnhill is a fourth-year student in the Protestant Reformed Seminary and member of the Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

And these are not *isolated* counterexamples to Sproul's argument; rather, reports of wickedness, lawlessness, and disease *fill* the news, day after day. If improvement in safety, health, and living is an indication of God's common grace, that common grace utterly fails.

Second, although this connection is never explicitly made in the book, we should recognize that Sproul's "ministry of common grace" is the platform that Christian colleges need to push their "conquer the world for Christ" agenda. Common grace and Postmillennialism go hand in hand. God's non-saving love and favor upon all humans is the *only hope* for world-wide change.

Common grace is a point of contact, something to work with, in the establishing of Christ's kingdom on this earth. Read Sproul's chapter on common grace, and see for yourself some of these implied connections. Our children must be aware of this before they head off to the Christian college. Common grace is a worldview. Common grace is a *damaging* worldview.

As indicated above, *Everyone's a Theologian* contains teachings with which we disagree—even *strongly* disagree. As always, discernment is necessary. Nevertheless, the reader will benefit from Sproul's clear, logical presentation. The book is recommended. 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

School Activities

The Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School Foundation planned to host their third annual Sporting Clay fund-raiser at the Kent County Conservation League in Ada, MI on Saturday, May 9. More than 20 five-person teams were entered and competed in shooting sporting clays and trap targets. Prizes were to be awarded and lunch provided. We imagine the scatter guns were oiled and blazing and a good time was had by all. Those of us who lived too far away to compete felt a bit jealous, especially a couple left-handed shooters we know.

Mr. Van Edgom is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa.

Thursday evening, April 16, the bands of Trinity Christian High School of Hull, IA and Covenant Christian High School of Grand Rapids, MI met together in Trinity's gym for a combined program. Each band performed separately, and then joined together for some numbers to conclude the program. The next night both bands joined with six other bands from Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan at the biennial Dordt College high school band festival, held in Sioux Center, IA. The Dordt College campus-community band and concert band also took part in this event. The mass band numbers at the end are always amazing to behold and to hear, as nearly 400 musicians play together to conclude the evening. This year some of

the selections were *British Eighth March*, *If Thou Be Near, Lead On*, *O King Eternal*, and *Lone Star Celebration*.

Mission Activities

The former Smit residence, house number twelve on 7th Avenue in the Beverly Hills Subdivision of Antipolo/Taytay, Rizal, Republic of the Philippines is certainly quieter with the Smit family gone. But it is not desolate. In addition to the occasional house lizard, there are human occupants there! And that is good. The Doon Council and the FMC agreed early on to continue the rental agreement for that property. We hope that in the near future another PRC missionary family will move in. In the meantime, the young lady that helped

the Smits as a groundskeeper, Liza, and her husband Lino have taken up residence there. Until another missionary occupies the home, it is anticipated that future delegations and visiting ministers will use the house for a temporary lodging. This is ideal, as the property is only about a ten-minute walk from the Kleyn residence at 34 Sunrise Drive in the same subdivision.

Missionary-pastor Martyn McGeown of the Limerick Reformed Fellowship in Northern Ireland gave a lecture entitled "Christian Comfort" at the round chapel in Port Talbot on Thursday, April 23.

Minister Activities

On April 26, Rev. Nathan Decker, pastor of the Trinity PRC of Hudsonville, MI, after considering the call extended to him to be the denomination's next missionary to the land of the Philippines, declined that call.

Peace PRC located in Lansing, IL announced a new trio consisting of Rev. Nathan Decker (Trinity PRC, Hudsonville, MI), Rev. Garry Eriks (Hudsonville, MI PRC), and Rev. Steven Key (Loveland, CO PRC).

On April 26, Peace extended the call to Rev. Nathan Decker.

Rev. Richard Smit was installed as the pastor of First PRC, Grand Rapids, MI on April 19, with Prof. Herman Hanko leading the service. Rev. Smit preached his inaugural sermon that evening from II Kings 2:9-15 on the theme "Taking up the Mantle." May God bless the congregation of First PRC and the Smit family as Rev. Smit takes up his labors there.

Congregation Activities


The congregation of First PRC, Grand Rapids, MI held a welcome program for their new pastor, Rev. Richard Smit, and his family after their evening service on April 19. A light lunch was served, followed by the program. An enjoyable time of fellowship was experienced, and the members gave thanks to God for His gracious provision of a minister.

Various musical groups of Calvary PRC in Hull, IA presented their spring program after the evening service on April 19, inviting area congregations to join the listeners. Numbers were presented by the church choir, band, men's chorus, women's chorus, woodwind

ensemble, and brass ensemble with a theme centered on Christ's work for His people. The program was enjoyed by a large audience, and sentiments were voiced that this become an annual event.

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of Crete, IL PRC held a fundraiser entitled "Night of Song" on April 17. The Young People's Society along with the Heritage Christian High School alumni choir, the current Heritage choir, the junior high choir of the Protestant Reformed Christian School, and a mass choir comprised of members of the choirs from Peace PRC, Crete PRC, and Cornerstone PRC all gave special numbers. The kindergarteners and first graders presented special numbers too. An offering was taken to defray expenses involved with sending the Crete young people to the upcoming convention, and refreshments were enjoyed after the program. No doubt an enjoyable evening for those in attendance!

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:3 

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Men's Society of Hope PRC expresses sincere Christian sympathy to fellow member Dan DeMeester and his family in the death of their beloved wife, mother, and grandmother,

KATHY DE MEESTER.

May they find comfort and strength from God's Word: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Harry Langerak, President
Gary Nienhuis, Secretary

Reminder

■ The *Standard Bearer* is published only once a month in the months of June, July, and August.

Standard Bearer

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Jenison, MI 49428-7137

PERIODICAL
POSTAGE
PAID
AT JENISON,
MICHIGAN

Call to Synod!!

■ Synod 2014 appointed Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan the calling church for the 2015 Synod.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 2015 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 9, 2015 at 8:30 A.M., in the Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 8 at 7:00 P.M. Rev. Koole, president of the 2014 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

Consistory of
Faith Protestant Reformed Church
Doug Dykstra Clerk.

Wedding Anniversary

■ The Lord willing, on May 30, 2015, our parents,

DARYLE (DOC) and JAN KUIPER,

will commemorate their 40th wedding anniversary. We are grateful to God for the years He has given them together and for the godly instruction and love they have shown to us over the years. Our prayer is that the Lord may richly bless them with His grace in the years ahead and that they may enjoy that blessed peace that is found in Christ alone.

Psalm 90:16, 17: "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

✿ Brent and Michelle Kuiper

Klayton, Carter, Alyssa, Kylie, Courtney, Austin, Kaden

✿ Brad and Becky Butgereit

Bradley, Hannah, Jacob, Sydney

✿ Brad and Paula Kuiper

Lucas, Tyler, Blake

✿ Dewey and Dawn Engelsma

Lillian, Dewey, Ethan, Liam, Reid, David, Stefan

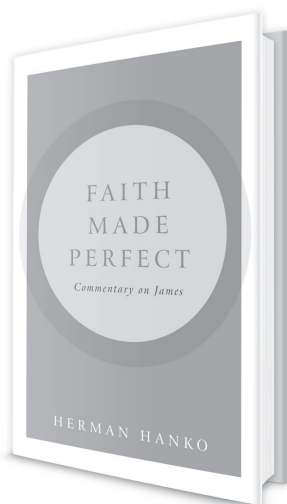
✿ Brad and Beth VanSingel

Eliza, Conner, Nolan

✿ Derek and Lydia Kuiper

Hailey, Cody

Grandville, Michigan



COMING JUNE 2015

Faith Made Perfect (Commentary on James)

by Herman Hanko

The early Christians that James is writing to faced many problems as they made the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament. James addresses these issues including trials and temptations, true religion, wisdom, the use of the tongue, the judgment of the rich, patience, and spiritual help in trouble.

This eminently practical book gives instruction for living the Christian life in many of its aspects. A salient feature is the relation between justification and works, which James explains by the examples of Abraham and Rahab.

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