Beacon Lights

Magazine of the Protestant Reformed Young People

November 2012

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The Antithesis: Its Source

In the first article on the antithesis we defined it and explained what it means. In the second article we pointed out that it exists between the church and the world, but especially within the church, and we explained that the deepest reason for the existence of the antithesis is God's divine decree of sovereign, double predestination.

We now turn to the practical reality and the working out of the antithesis both in the church and regarding the world. Where does the antithesis come from? Why is it found in the church? How does it work? These questions we will answer in the light of 1 Corinthians 1, especially verses 22–24: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

What is the source of the antithesis? Paul in verse 23 teaches that it is Christ crucified. This answer embodies the entire gospel as taught in Scripture. Implied in the gospel is the fact of universal sin, both original and actual, as transgression of God's law; implied is the guilt of sin, which makes all men liable to eternal punishment; implied is the deadness of sin, which means that all are hopelessly lost. Implied in the gospel is everything connected with who Christ is—the Son of God in human nature, the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, the perfectly sinless

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Beacon Lights is published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. Subscription price is $15. Please send all business correspondence, address changes, and subscriptions to the business office.

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one. Implied is the entire work of Christ as the mediator sent by God to accomplish redemption through his substitutionary atonement for sin. Centrally his work was realized on the cross, on which he suffered to pay for the sins of his people and by which he earned their complete redemption. This is why Paul speaks of "Christ crucified."

We hasten to add that Christ is an antithetical savior. Contrary to what most people believe and to what is taught in most churches today, Christ did not die for all people and earn salvation for everyone. The truth that Scripture clearly teaches is that he died only for some, which means that he did not die for others.

This Christ "we preach," says Paul. The meaning of "preach" is to act as a herald or an announcer for someone else; we are all familiar with a press secretary who speaks for the president of the United States. Christ does not personally preach the gospel, for he is now in heaven, and does not deal directly with mankind. Rather, he speaks the word of the gospel through those whom he calls as his representatives. The content of the message is Christ's and the authority and power of that message is Christ's, but he speaks through the church, which he has commissioned to preach his word. This he does specifically through the office of the ministry, by which he proclaims his truth to the ends of the earth. He announces that in Christ crucified is full salvation, and in him only.

He does this so that wherever the preaching goes, all men, elect and reprobate, may be confronted with Christ crucified as the word of God. That the proclamation of the gospel goes to two kinds of people means that the preaching is a twofold word. It is not two different words, one for the elect and one for the reprobate, for the preaching cannot itself distinguish between the two. But there is one word of God with two aspects. The preaching is the call of God unto salvation through the command to repent and believe, which command comes to all who hear the gospel. The preaching is also the proclamation of the offense of the cross, which for those who refuse to obey the call of God means the word of condemnation and everlasting death.

This is why the preaching is so important, whether in the established church or on the mission field. Young people, you have almost surely encountered opposition to this idea from your friends who attend churches other than Protestant Reformed. Many churches do everything except preach the gospel. They have dramatic presentations, liturgical dancing, testimonies from members, praise bands, choirs, soloists, and any other form of entertainment they can think of. Faced with declining membership, even churches that have been historically Reformed increasingly do everything except preach in an effort to stem the tide of desertion. The more they attempt to fix the problem with bigger and more elaborate entertainment instead of the preaching, the worse it becomes. When their efforts only make the problem worse, they tinker with the little preaching—if it can even be called preaching—they have left. They speak a word of do-goodism, a social gospel that addresses and attempts to solve the problems of mankind; the church must turn the world upside down, healing all social and physical evils to form a universal organization that will sweep the world before it. Perhaps they resort to a health and wealth gospel, or to any of the other errors floating around today. They have the wisdom of the Greeks and want the signs of the Jews.

When none of their efforts are successful, they wonder why. The answer is simple, but they just don't get it. More accurately, they do not want the real answer, the solution that God gives. You know that the answer is the preaching of his word. Perhaps you are criticized or even mocked as being old-fashioned in your worship practices. Who wants to sing a few psalms, have a really long prayer, and then listen to a dry and boring speech from a minister for an hour? Nap time!

Paul calls this "the wisdom of the world" (1 Cor. 1: 20–21). In verse 22 he speaks of the wisdom of the Greeks. More than any other civilization in history, the Greeks were noted for their pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. In their highly developed culture they sought systems of truth and philosophy that would save the world and produce the true meaning of life and happiness. Theirs was the wisdom of man, to be gained through man's understanding and ability and efforts. They exalted the power of reason, not the power of faith. To them the gospel was foolishness. The meaning of life is in Christ crucified? This is not rational. Through one man's death the world is saved? Ridiculous!

The Jews are a bit different in that they looked for a sign (v. 22). They expected Christ to do great and wonderful signs. They would have been happy if Christ would have moved mountains into the sea

and made the moon and stars play hide and go seek, turning heaven and earth upside down. They would have been impressed and grateful if Christ would have broken the power of the hated Romans, fed the multitudes daily, healed every disease, and created a heaven on earth.

Yet the Greeks and the Jews were essentially the same. In different ways both exalted and glorified man, not God. Both sought self-salvation and self-gratification, the only option other than God's salvation, for the principle of the antithesis is God or man, not both. They rejected Christ as he was preached, for the preaching brings into sharp focus the truth of God and confronts man with the question, What will you do with Christ? In rejecting him and his gospel, the Greeks rejected the foolishness of preaching, which is actually the wisdom of God, and the Jews stumbled over that gospel and fell headlong into destruction.

Today the situation is no different. The faithful church still preaches the same Christ crucified. The same antithetical operation of the word preached is at work, and the alternatives are the same. The same word as the wisdom and power of God (v. 24) is still active. The thesis still produces the antithesis. Thus we may say that the source of the antithesis, though it ultimately lies in sovereign, double predestination, is from the viewpoint of historical reality the twofold preaching of the wisdom of God. Because the word is preached there first, the antithesis is the sharpest and clearest in the church.

And it comes to manifestation wherever men come into contact with the foolishness of preaching. I once worked for a brilliant doctor, the inventor of the artificial joint replacements commonly used today. When one day the subject of religion arose, he told me point blank to my face,"I don't need a savior. I can fix my own mistakes and save myself. And I don't believe in that blood theology." It made my blood run cold. There, young people, is the antithesis in a most clear and practical way.

Positively, we believe what Paul teaches. The wisdom of this world is really foolishness in God's eyes. And what men consider to be the foolishness of preaching is really the wisdom of God. That wisdom prevails because it is the power of God against which none can stand. By that power and according to his wisdom, he effectively and irresistibly calls his elect people unto salvation and by that power and according to his wisdom he sends the reprobate to eternal damnation in the way of the foolishness of their own wisdom.

The antithesis stands!

Choosing a Vocation

Brian Van Engen

Attorney

I remember a professor in law school explaining that "lawyers are the grease monkeys of the economy." What he meant was that the primary function of lawyers is to insure that the everyday business of life runs smoothly and in conformity with the laws of the land. That notion may sound far different from the way lawyers are typically portrayed in American culture. Lawyers are often portrayed as trouble makers who cause problems and unnecessarily complicate things. For instance, we often hear that agreements need to be in writing "because of lawyers" who would otherwise try to twist things. We may hear that someone is being sued "by a lawyer." In actuality, lawyers never function on their own, and always act on behalf of a client. If a lawsuit is brought, its because the lawyer's client believes they were wronged somehow. The work of the lawyer is to see that the client's interests are represented within the bounds of the law.

Often the work of the lawyer stems from the fallibility of man itself. Why do agreements have to be in writing? Otherwise two honest men can agree to something, and months later one or both may forget the final terms of the agreement. Two men might

agree on the purchase of a large piece of equipment to be delivered in two years. After two years, they may forget who was going to pay the cost to ship it across the country. Both men may honestly believe that it was the other that was supposed to pay. The written agreement serves to answer the question later when it arises, and avoids conflicts and hard feelings.

Even when an agreement is put in writing, the parties sometimes understand the same provisions differently. It is important to have precise language in legal documents to avoid problems down the road. For instance, perhaps the agreement to ship the equipment says that the seller will arrange for shipping. The seller may believe that while he is making the arrangements, the shipping will be at the buyer's cost. The buyer may have thought that this language meant the seller also would pay for shipping. With a large piece of equipment, shipping could cost thousands of dollars, and the parties now have a serious disagreement. People often look at the wordy agreements that lawyers draft and think that the language could be much simpler, but lawyers try to use language that is precise and that can only be interpreted one way. Lawyers also try to anticipate any questions that could arise and address them in the agreement from the beginning before problems arise.

Looking again at the example of the buyer and seller who are disagreeing about payment for shipping, the parties may not be able to work out their disagreement. They may consult lawyers to assist them. Some people are offended if the other party hires an attorney, but the attorney will understand the law and realize how the law impacts his client's position. It may be that the law favors the position of the other party, and the lawyer will understand this and try to explain in to his client. In reality, most lawyers will apply the rule of law to the transaction and seek to resolve the dispute as quickly and reasonably as possible.

When someone comes to me with a problem, I explain the law to the client and encourage them to work out disagreements with the other party if possible. However, if they are unable to do so, I am always glad to hear that the other party has also hired an attorney, because it is generally much easier to deal with an attorney than with the party himself. The attorney is not upset or emotionally involved and is able to remain somewhat objective. It is usually the client who is upset and wants to fight a matter to the end, and the attorney who counsels that at some point the costs outweigh any benefit to continue fighting.

Approximately two percent of disagreements are not resolved and proceed to court, where a judge or jury determines the facts, and a judge applies the law to those facts. The lawyer must advocate for his client and communicate his client's side of the case to the trier of fact by explaining the case and presenting evidence and witnesses to explain the case. Often a complex matter, such as a business transaction that took place over the course of several years, must be condensed and explained to a jury over a couple of days. The lawyer must carefully choose the most pertinent information and plan when it should be presented. Jurors, like any other people, cannot retain every bit of information given to them, especially when listening to the evidence all day for several days. The lawyers must find ways to highlight the key facts of a case so that the jurors can piece them together at the conclusion of the matter. Communication and organization skills are important to convey a clear message to the jury.

Some lawyers specialize, but many lawyers, including myself, have a general practice. This means that instead of focusing on a particular area, I handle many types of matters, from drafting wills and trusts, to platting property for real estate development, to setting up corporations and drafting agreements for their acquisitions and transactions, to representing clients in litigation in court. I am also currently the city attorney for the City of Sioux Center, Iowa, so I also draft laws and ordinances, prosecute violations of the city code, and draft agreements for the city. I enjoy the variety of cases that comes with a general practice. Oftentimes, cases have interesting or even bizarre sets of facts.

One of the difficult things about practicing law is that the practice is always driven by schedules and deadlines over which the attorney has little control. Sometimes months can go by without a trial, and then two trials will be set a couple of weeks apart by court administration or the judge. Asking for a later trial date could mean that a client has to wait half a year longer for relief from the problem he is facing. To prepare for a trial, documents must be obtained and reviewed, statements and depositions taken from witnesses, research on the law must be performed, pretrial motions must be filed, and pretrial hearings must be held. Then a few weeks prior

to the trial date the final trial preparation begins, and takes about two to three days' preparation for every day that is actually spent in court. Often there are pressing matters from other clients which need to be tended to while this final preparation takes place, and working late into the night is not uncommon. Obviously, times like this leave little time for family or church matters, or even sleep. The attorney has to take great care to try to keep his schedule from overwhelming church and family life.

Sometimes clients come specifically seeking legal advice from a fellow believer. Several years ago I had a case in which grandparents who lived over an hour away came to me indicating that they wanted an attorney who was a Christian. They were seeking custody of their grandchild. The state had become involved and removed the grandchild from their daughter's care because she was addicted to drugs. The state refused to place the child with the grandparents, and when I questioned a social worker about this, she explained it was because they were Christian. She explained that this couple was very radical in their beliefs and insisted that their children read the Bible every day, that they refused to use the public schools and didn't believe in evolution, and a number of other ideas that she felt were outrageous. She was sure that these extreme beliefs must be what caused the daughter to become an addict. Ultimately the judge saw differently and placed the grandchild with the grandparents.

Some cases deal with positive developments. A father may be bringing his son into the family business. A business may be thriving and needs to acquire ground to expand, draft contracts for construction of new facilities, and draft contracts for sales of new products.

On the other hand, an attorney often sees clients when there are problems. Many of these problems are caused by the depravity of man, or at least the fallibility of man. Perhaps an employee has left a company and taken trade secrets with him, or a real estate transaction falls apart because of a problem with the title to the land. Maybe a parent is struggling because a child is in legal trouble or causing problems in the family business. Often the cases with problems can be the most rewarding, because the attorney can help people through these difficult times and provide encouragement and counsel that is in accord with the word of God.

The difficult situations are those in which godly attorneys are needed most, because often temptation arises when people are in a difficult spot. Even believers can be tempted to be vengeful to someone who has wronged them, or hide the truth about a problem to protect a loved one or to save money. A corporate CEO may want backdated documentation of corporate action that should have taken place months ago, but actually recently took place, with dire tax consequences. Usually a gentle reminder of our duties under God's law will serve to put things in perspective. Even those who don't claim to be believers will usually try to "do what's right" in an outward sense. But if a client insists on pursuing a course of action that is not right, an attorney has the right to withdraw. In fact, an attorney cannot allow a client to lie to the court, and must tell the judge if a client does so.

As mentioned before, a good lawyer will counsel his clients when the costs of pursuing a matter outweigh the benefits to be gained. Sometimes those costs are not monetary, but emotional or spiritual costs. A family may be divided in an estate battle because one sibling thinks another has received more than his fair share. Each side may be tempted to fight "for the principle of the matter." A prolonged court battle may cost more for each side than either stood to gain financially, but the non-economic costs may be even higher. By the time each side has publicly questioned the honesty of the other in the course of a court proceeding, the members of the family may be so bitter they do not speak to each other again. Working with a family to reach an agreement before that point can be very satisfying.

Sometimes one is pleasantly surprised by the honesty of parties in a dispute. For example, I recall a case a number of years ago when I represented a trucker who was injured when the driver of a pickup pulled out from a stop sign. The trucker swerved to miss him and the truck rolled several times. The other driver's insurance company hired an attorney and denied any responsibility for the accident, claiming the accident was my client's fault for swerving. I scheduled the other driver for a deposition, which is the taking of testimony under oath, to get his version of the story. I asked the man what happened, and he explained that he was thinking about the deacon's meeting he had that evening, and forgot to look before he pulled out. As the insurance company representatives looked on in dismay, the man proceeded to explain that if my client had not swerved, "the truck

would have hit my driver's door, and I would have been killed. He saved my life by swerving." Needless to say, the claim was paid shortly thereafter.

I had considered becoming a lawyer since the time I was quite young. I always enjoyed writing and debating with others, and I always had a keen interest in the political process and the way laws were made and administered. The law is an area that influences all our lives, sometimes at the most difficult times in our lives. I decided while in high school that I was interested in pursuing a career as an attorney. In college, I pursued a double major in history and political science in the pre-law program. A pre-law program is not a rigid set of classes to be taken as prerequisites to law school. Instead, nearly any class can be taken, depending upon what area of law one eventually intends to practice. For instance, patent lawyers generally have undergraduate engineering degrees so that they can understand and describe the mechanical processes that they seek to patent. Some attorneys have business degrees, while some may have psychology degrees.

Certain types of classes, while not necessarily required, are very beneficial to the practice of law. Communication skills are one of the skills needed the most in the practice of law. English classes help to improve written communication. Serving clients well requires being able to draft contracts, deeds, laws, wills, and other documents that are clear and concise and that make the client's intentions clear or that clearly communicate the client's position to the court. By the same token, public speaking skills and verbal communication are also important to advocate on behalf of a client. Psychology classes can help one understand how the human mind sees and processes information, which is useful to an attorney. For instance, jurors can only retain a limited amount of information, so key evidence must be presented in a manner that makes it easy to understand and easy to retain in memory. Different fonts, formats, and organization can aid people in understanding warnings or written documents. Law is based on logically applying rules to a given set of facts, so mathematics and other subjects that teach logical thinking are also helpful. The various classes that teach all these skills can aid a future lawyer.

A student must obtain a four year degree in order to be admitted to law school, and is usually also required to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). Law school is typically an additional three year course of study beyond college. A law student may focus his studies on certain areas of the law, but there are no particular "majors" in law school. The classes in law school tend to focus on substantive law, rather than practical application of the law. For instance, most law schools require courses on the rules of evidence, detailing what types of evidence are admissible in court and what testimony is required to authenticate the evidence. However, it may surprise some people to learn that classes in law school do not generally teach a student how to try a case, or even how to draft a contract. The main focus in law school is to teach the student to think logically and analytically, to identify issues and potential problems.

Upon graduation from law school the student is awarded a Doctorate of Jurisprudence (JD). Each state has its own licensing requirements for attorneys. Generally they include a requirement that the individual has obtained a JD from an accredited law school and has passed the state bar exam.

A Christian practicing in the field of law has many opportunities to live out his faith. As mentioned before, some of the work is positive, with the attorney assisting clients as they carry out their callings in business and other professions. Sometimes the work deals with problems, when clients are going through trials due to family difficulties or loss of property or business. The Christian attorney has a calling to provide Godly counsel and is called to do all his work in a way that gives glory to God. The Christian attorney must take actions and give advice that is in agreement not only with the law of the land, but also with God's law.

A Christian attorney must also be careful to acknowledge God as the great and powerful judge of the heavens and the earth. If a case is won, it is because it is God's will. If the case is lost, that is God's will too, even if it may seem unfair and unjust from an earthly perspective. Sometimes it is difficult to know what the real truth of a matter is, and what a just outcome is. The Christian attorney prays before a trial, not necessarily that his side wins, but that the truth of a matter will come out and that God's will is done.

The skills and knowledge used by lawyers in their daily work can also be used in the service of the kingdom. We are all called to be active parts of the body of Christ, and to use the gifts and talents we have been given (1 Cor. 12). Lawyers are

trained in written and verbal communication and can use those skills in the work of the church or kingdom causes in general. The legal system is one that proceeds very methodically and systematically to try to ensure that all parties are heard and their viewpoints represented, and lawyers are trained to see that things carry forward in good order. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:40 admonishes that all things be done decently and in order. The same methods of insuring good order are embodied in our church order and the rules governing procedure in ecclesiastical bodies. Lawyers can assist in applying these same principles to all kingdom organizations, including school boards, Sunday school, and even society meetings.

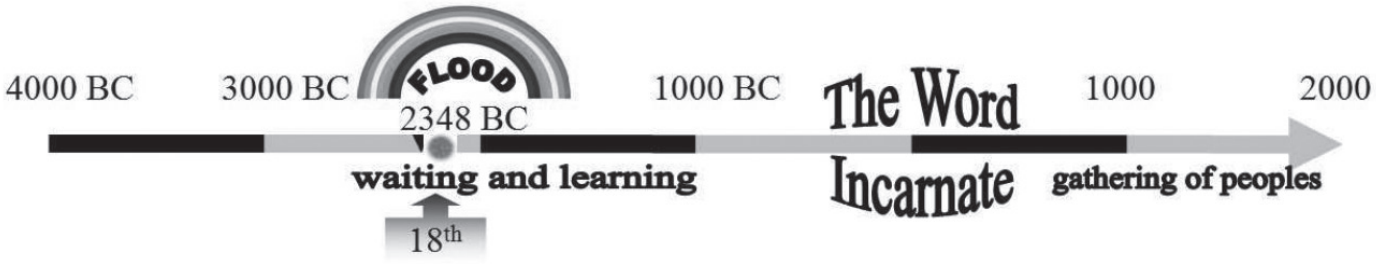
Lawyers can also use their knowledge of the law to assist churches, schools and other kingdom organizations. All of our organizations operate under the laws of the state, and the laws of the state affect the operation of those organizations. Lawyers can assist kingdom causes in complying with the laws of the state, such as requirements for incorporation or tax exemption. Sometimes the state imposes requirements that could potentially conflict with teaching our beliefs. For instance, states have begun requiring schools to implement policies prohibiting harassment or bullying of homosexuals. Teaching against homosexuality could be considered harassment, so such policies must be carefully crafted to prohibit ungodly bullying without restricting our defense of the truth. The law continues to develop and progress to allow "Every man to do what is right in his own eyes." As this progression continues, it will be important that there are those with the training to use the legal system God has given us for the protection of his church.

Brian is a practicing attorney and a member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

Church History

John Huizenga

The Eighteenth Century of His-Story:
A World Divided in Preparation for Jehovah's Salvation



Noah and his family, along with the creatures in the ark, walked out of the ark into a brand new world. It was not the lush, watery world teeming with life that they left over a year earlier. It was no longer a world ready to swallow up the church in bitter hatred. Now they were alone. The world was now a barren wasteland divided into a variety of land masses. It was a world of seasons, storms, and fire. It was a world that constantly spoke of the judgment of God upon sin, but in the rainbow it reminded the church of God's covenant promise to preserve the world until every member of the body

of Christ has been gathered into the church. It was new, but it was still a world of sin. The head of the serpent had not been crushed. God had much more to reveal about his glorious plan of salvation, and he would employ sin and Satan for that purpose. The next one hundred year period of His-story is marked by division and scattering. This division was brought about by God's judgment upon Nimrod's rebellious attempt at unity on man's terms, and this division sowed the seeds of the diversity of man and the beauty of the church united in Christ. This beautiful harvest is now taking place as we live in the last day of His-story.

The new world in which the church now lived was like a new piece of canvas upon which God begins to reveal a new aspect of his glorious plan of salvation. In chapters 9–11 of Genesis, God paints in broad strokes the background of his masterpiece, which he calls "Jehovah's Salvation." The church watches. What will "Jehovah's Salvation" look like? She knows that God will save her from the power and bondage of sin. She knows that this salvation will come in the way of the seed of the woman. She knows that Satan has been given great power in this earth to build majestic kingdoms and lure man with the siren call of pleasure into his own destruction. She knows from the flood that God sovereignly saves his church in terrible judgment of sin, yet with wonderful power and grace. She knows that God will not destroy his work of creation, because he saved it with the flood, and he even established a covenant bond with Noah and the creation. How exactly will this great salvation from sin be accomplished? How can the power of sin be broken? Sin in itself was not touched by the water of the flood, as became obvious in Noah's drunkenness and Ham's wicked reaction to that sin. God calls his church to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (Ex. 14:13). From this time forth more than ever before, the saints of God, the prophets, and even the angels "have enquired and searched diligently" and "desired to look into" that salvation.

The background God begins to paint is darkened with two rebellious events. The first event is the rise of Nimrod, the mighty hunter. The second event is the building of Babel. Though Satan is behind these events, striving to confound the plan of God, God sovereignly uses them as part of his plan. With the flood God demonstrated his omnipotence to crush the magnificent power of Satan as it bore fruit in the cities and developments of man. Now God will show his church how he uses Satan's defiance for the accomplishments of his own sovereign purpose.

God had given the command to Noah and his sons, "be fruitful and replenish the earth" (Gen. 9:1). The new world was formed and established so that man would enter into its many new places and fill it. Gradually Noah and his sons began to establish a home for their families. New plants and trees began to dot the barren landscape, and we read that "Noah began to be an husbandman." He began to organize his new life, care for domestic animals, and coax new growth from the plants that were left. He learned to cultivate the plants for food, and the time came when he had a thriving vineyard with grapes in abundance. Genesis 10 describes the families that had developed during this period of time. The animals also would multiply and begin to fight over space and resources, bringing new fear and uncertainty to man.

During this time of new growth, one man in particular began to attract fame for his skills as a hunter. Whether he excelled in his ability to provide fresh meat, or whether he had invented ingenious means to destroy the great beasts that multiplied and now terrified man is not clear from Scripture. Either way, Nimrod saw wisdom in uniting as one people instead of going out to replenish the earth as God had commanded. In his fame, he envisioned power, glory, and freedom to pursue happiness and pleasure, and he had the genius and power to accomplish his vision. Instead of scattering into the earth and facing all sorts of dangers and hardship, he understood the power of cooperation among men and the value of satisfying the basic desires of man for security and pleasure. Nimrod was a mighty hunter. He called the people back together. "It makes no sense to explore to the uttermost regions of the earth to replenish and fill it," he proclaimed. "I can provide all that you need for a decent life. We can work together and find solutions to every problem we face."

To anyone who protested, "but God said…," he replied, "But look what I can do. Do you want a secure and safe place to live and enjoy life? Follow me. I produce results. If you want to be stalked by wild beasts, that is your choice." Nimrod made no attempt to hide from God. He was a hunter "before Jehovah." The church was once again faced with the challenge: walk by faith or walk by sight. Nimrod

worked boldly in defiance of God, but God sovereignly turned all he did to conform with his plan.

One integral component to Nimrod's master plan was the construction of a tower. He convinced everyone of the value of a tower and with a united heart "…they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4). This was the plan of man. It made good sense from an earthly perspective. This was the wisdom of man, but it was not the wisdom of God. This was walking by sight, not by faith in God's word. In man's puny mind, the glorious ways of God seem to be foolishness. God did not want unity in man; he would have unity in Christ. Unity in the church would be a unity of diverse peoples who have scattered to the far regions of the earth, and who have developed unique and diverse traits and characteristics that could be united only in the church, the body of Christ.

Nimrod saw a unity of people to serve their own needs and desires for their own glory. God saw a church made up of diverse peoples for his own glory. The church by this time already in history likely had become the minority again. The pressures to forsake the church and join hands with the world were growing. Persecution, if it had not yet become physical, was quickly moving in that direction. The salvation of the church and judgment upon the cause of Nimrod would serve the purposes of God to gather a diverse people of God into one united body. Jehovah God, this time not by a mighty flood, but rather by something more like a still small voice brought a diversity of language to man who up to this point, was united with one language. Without any external display of power in great storms, earthquakes, lightning or thunder, God confounded their language, so that they could not understand one another's speech.

Language is an amazing wonder that is deeply rooted in the whole way of thinking of a people. In that wonder God worked new and diverse languages to fit the diversities already developing in the new generations of man. Now each family or group of families had language to match their character. Confusion reigned as they tried to work together under Nimrod's plan, but the chaos drove each group of common language into the far regions of the world to establish the life God prepared for them there. It was not until the day of Pentecost when God poured out the Holy Spirit that this wonder was worked in reverse. When the whole plan of salvation, Jehovah's Salvation, Jesus Christ, was complete, these diverse peoples were again called together, and they all heard the gospel in their own language.

Genesis 10 gives a general description of these divisions and how the different regions of the earth were populated by different families. One man, Peleg, who became a descendent in the line of Abraham, was so named because of the great divisions that took place at this time. From the plains of Shinar, some families began to move out into the regions we now call Africa. Others moved north into what is now Europe, the Netherlands, and other northern countries until they could go no further on account of the oceans. Those who traveled east would fill what is now India and China. Those on the frontier who were best suited for exploration and survival may even have walked across a land bridge to what is now Alaska and populated the Americas. Given the great quantities of ice in the glaciers that covered much of the north lands, the sea levels may have been low enough to allow for foot travel to the Americas. The early historian Josephus states in book 1 chapter 5 of his *Antiquities of the Jews* that "there were some also who passed over the sea in ships."

So the peoples and nations of the world scattered to their places, taking with them the knowledge of the flood and all that God had revealed to man up to this point of salvation. Apart from the grace of God, however, this knowledge would deteriorate and conform more to the desires and imaginations of future generations. The true knowledge of God would be lost, and they changed "the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1:23). The reality of God became vain stories and myths that mixed the glory of man with that of God. Even so, the power of God's grace has become manifest as he again calls his people from every tribe, tongue and nation into the one glorious body of Christ.

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Watch for Schuyler!

Watching Daily At My Gates

November 8 ***Read Nehemiah 5***

How do we treat fellow believers? That is the subject of this chapter. As the people of Jerusalem were building the wall, a grievous problem arose within the city. The rich were financially oppressing the poor. This wrong was compounded by their situation. They were trying to rebuild the city out of the rubble left from its destruction, and there were enemies on the outside causing trouble for the church. How do we treat our fellow believers and even family members? God's words in Deuteronomy and repeated by Christ to "love our neighbor as ourselves" come into play here. Are we obedient to the second great commandment? Sing Psalter 24.

November 9 ***Read Nehemiah 6***

In fifty-two days the wall surrounding Jerusalem was finished. This was a work of giving. The inhabitants of Israel gave of their time, abilities, material goods, and of themselves to get this work finished. Nehemiah gave of himself in the same way as well. He also had to endure the attacks from enemies within and without the city. As we see in this chapter, Nehemiah did what was right in God's eyes. He did not fall into Shemaiah's trap and go into the temple. He knew that he could not go there, because he was not a priest. He led the people in a right way as the walls were rebuilt. People of God's church and especially the leaders of the church must be doing things in a way that is proper and pleasing to God. Is this our goal? Sing Psalter 368.

November 10 ***Read Nehemiah 7***

There is work for the people of God in his church. This was true in Nehemiah's time, and it is true in this day as well. In verse 2 we read of the two men placed in charge of the gate. This was an important task in those days. The men who were chosen had good qualifications. There are important tasks in the church of God today. Faithful men and those who "fear God above many" must be chosen for those tasks. Each of us must work to have those qualifications placed by our name. Do we? Sing Psalter 419.

November 11 ***Read Nehemiah 8***

As Judah was working to restore the life of the church with Nehemiah's help, they asked Ezra to read from the book of the law. This was a big step. It was violation of the law that had caused their forefathers to be taken into captivity. As they heard the law read and as it was explained to them, they mourned until Nehemiah assured them that those sins had been paid for. He encouraged them to keep an important feast as thanksgiving for the return God had ordained for them. We too must desire to read the law and have it read to us, for it is the way of thankfulness for the salvation wrought by Christ on the cross. Sing Psalter 42.

November 12 ***Read Nehemiah 9***

After reading the law and realizing their sins, both personal and corporate, a fast was declared. Fasting was a way for the people to concentrate on that which was spiritual. They also were led in prayer by some of the Levites. Like other prayers in the Bible, we do well to read this one and receive instruction in how we must pray. Prayer and fasting go together. We too must exercise ourselves in things spiritual in order to draw closer to our God, who has given to us the way of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Sing Psalter 242.

November 13 ***Read Nehemiah 10***

After fasting and prayer, many of the people signed a promise that they would do several things in order to show their thankfulness to God. Basically they said that they would keep God's law. We hear God's law read every sabbath day. It shows us our sins and the need for a Savior, but it also shows to us how we can be thankful for our salvation. The people pointed out specifically three laws that they believed were important. They were keeping the church pure by not allowing their sons and daughters to marry ungodly spouses, keeping the sabbath day holy, and caring for the ministers of God with their offerings. Do we do these things? Sing Psalter 191.

November 14 ***Read Nehemiah 11***

There was a problem in Jerusalem. There were not enough people to inhabit the city. A solution was found.

Some might find it a strange solution. It is a solution that we should consider. The people of the land drew lots with one-tenth of them going to live in Jerusalem. We read in verse 2 that the people willingly gave themselves to live in the city. Do we willingly give ourselves, our time, or our money in service to God and his church? Notice that word willingly. Paul says we must not give of ourselves grudgingly. Here is the opposite. How do we give of ourselves? Sing Psalter 354.

November 15 *Read Nehemiah 12*

As the walls were to be dedicated, once again we read a list of names. This is a list of those who were priests and Levites, who led the worship of Jehovah. These men had an important calling in Jerusalem, whose wall was a picture of God's protection around his people. Judah was not dedicating just a building project; they were looking towards God's protection that surrounded them at all times just as the wall did. We must worship him who protects us day and night. We must be thankful for those men whom God has appointed to lead us in that worship just as Judah did. Sing Psalter 256.

November 16 *Read Nehemiah 13*

The book closes in a way that men of this world may think strange. Instead of ending "and the people lived happily ever after" the book ends with Nehemiah's dealing with some of the problems that had crept into the church. We will never find a happy ending in this world. That ending will not come until we reach the heavenly city. Until then we must fight against the evils that Satan will set before us. Like Nehemiah, church leaders must be active against those evils in order to protect the church of God. Only in this way will the good of Zion shine forth. This is the way that his church will be prepared for the happy life in heaven. Sing Psalter 225.

November 17 *Read Esther 1*

The book of Esther can be a hard book for the child of God to figure out. Does what seems to be a nice story with an interesting plot and a happy ending have a place in the Bible? Unless the reader believes in the providence of God, that is all this book has. But as you trace God's care for his people throughout the Old Testament and know that care will end in the birth of the Savior, then you will find the importance of this book. Even the wickedness of the people written about in this first chapter has a place in our salvation. Sing Psalter 213.

November 18 *Read Esther 2*

Sometimes there are members of God's church who fail to obey him and seek themselves in life. Such, I believe, are Mordecai and Esther. While Ezra and Nehemiah and the rest of the returned captives were struggling to establish Jerusalem, these two were enjoying the ease of life in Babylon. Mordecai seems to have procured for himself a life around the palace, and when he commands Esther to enter the king's beauty pageant, she is willing to do so. In all of this, they hide their true identity as members of the Jewish nation. Do the people around us know who we are? Young people, do you hide the fact that you are Bible-believing Christians? Let us be careful that we live all of our lives to God's glory and honor. Sing Psalter 204.

November 19 *Read Esther 3*

Satan hates God's church. This is very evident from this chapter of the Bible. We see that Haman not only desired to kill Mordecai and the Jews that he saw every day, but he also desired to kill every Jew in the world. This was Satan's plan to eradicate those people out of whom the seed of the woman would be born with the purpose of crushing his head. Even though Satan is bound today, he seeks to wreak havoc in Christ's church. He does not often use the extreme measure of Haman's day, but he quite often uses more insidious ways. Are we fighting the fight of faith against Satan and his minions daily? Sing Psalter 71.

November 20 *Read Esther 4*

There are two evidences of a lack of faith on Esther and Mordecai's part in this chapter. There is also more evidence of the providence of God. First, look at verse 14. There is no expression of dependence upon the mercies of God in this horrible time. God had proved himself faithful many times in Israel's past history. Mordecai does not call upon God for help, but he makes the wishy-washy statement of this verse. Second, we see the traditional signs of mourning because of a calamity: torn clothes, sackcloth and ashes, wailing, and a proclamation of a fast. But where is prayer? When we read of true spiritual fasting in the Bible, it is accompanied by prayer. Do we give ourselves over to daily prayers so that we can pray in times of distress? Sing Psalter 87.

November 21 *Read Esther 5*

God's providence shines forth in this dark story of lack of faith. Esther's words in the last chapter ("I perish, I perish") show that lack of faith. As the story unfolds—after all, it is "His story"—we see God's care for his people borne out. We must not focus on Esther and Mordecai, but must focus rather on God's plan for salvation for his people. Satan and evil kings may rage, but it is God who sits in heaven who holds all things in his hand. Sing Psalter 95.

November 22 *Read Esther 6*

In Proverbs we read that "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord." Here is visible proof of that truth. Ahasuerus' sleeplessness was not from anything he had done; rather, it was God's doing. We must see that God sovereignly controls every act of every man with the purpose that his name is glorified and that his church is preserved. Let us note Zeresh's comment to her husband. She must have known of the Jews' history, and she sees that the Jews' God causes all things to work out for their advantage and their enemies' ruin. This is the purpose of this book: to show forth God in all his majesty and power. Sing Psalter 4.

November 23 *Read Esther 7*

During the second banquet of wine, Esther reveals Haman's devilish plot. The king becomes incensed and orders Haman's death. We might be quick to say that he got what he deserved. We would be missing the point if that is all that we gain from this portion of Holy Scripture. We miss the sovereignty of God and the work of his providence in caring for his people. As we have seen before, this care was not just the immediate care of those Jews at that time. That care extends to all of the church as the line of Christ was preserved, as well as the way of salvation. We also must not wonder if that way is in doubt throughout history. Christ will prevail and has opened the seven seals, preparing the way for his return. Sing Psalter 184.

November 24 *Read Esther 8*

Read verse 16 again. Does this sound like the attitude of those thankful to God for delivering them from death? Does this sound like the attitude of those thankful to God for preserving the way of the salvation of their souls? Yes, they had won a victory. But just as they had not prayed while fasting, we do not read that they prayed prayers of thanksgiving. How do we react when events, by God's providence, turn out for our good? Do we lift our voices and hearts up to him who sits on the throne in heaven? We should and we must. Prayer is the chief means of thankfulness. Let us always use it for all that God has given to us, but especially for the salvation given to us through Christ's death. Sing Psalter 181.

November 25 *Read Esther 9*

Through the instrumentality of the king's new decree, the Jews were able to preserve their lives. However, it appears that they did not just defend themselves, but took the offensive and killed many of the subjects of the kings. It also appears that they killed defenseless people. After the two days of carnage were over, they decided to initiate a feast to remember the two-day slaughter. This was not a feast commanded by God in the Mosaic law; this was a feast added to the church calendar. This God's people must not do. The regulative principle of worship, given by God in his word, is all we must use in our worship of him. Sing Psalter 152.

November 26 *Read Esther 10*

This curious book ends with a record of a tax laid upon the people of Ahasurerus's kingdom, as well as an advancement given to Mordecai. What can we learn from this? First, this again shows the character of the book. We have two men who do not bow to God's sovereignty. As prophesied by Daniel, the Greeks would overthrow the Persians and take away their power. Mordecai, too, would lose his position as decreed by God. Second, we once again are reminded that in his providence, God uses wicked men to fulfill his purposes. His people would remain until Christ would be born of Mary. We can be assured that the church will remain by God's sovereignty and providence until Christ returns on the clouds of heaven. Sing Psalter 96.

November 27 *Read Job 1*

Job was a real, historical person, as evidenced by mention of him in other Bible passages. While some of the book of Job is historical in nature, the book of Job is found in the poetical section of the Old Testament. Much of it contains long discourses by Job in answer to his friends as well as to God. The last verses of this first chapter have important instruction for us and our lives. In any and all calamities that God brings upon us, we must say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Do we do this daily, or must we be driven to such a confession? Sing Psalter 88.

November 28 *Read Job 2*

In the first two chapters of Job, we get a peek into how things went in heaven in the days of the Old Testament. Satan had not been bound and had entrance before God. God permits Satan to afflict Job to bring forth his faith and patience for the instruction of the church of all ages. This was a trying of Job's faith. Initially that faith remained strong. We have evidence of that in his answer to his wife. Was Job without sin? The answer to that is no, but yet he was a redeemed child of God. May we daily pray for such patience and faith to endure all the trials and temptations brought upon us. Sing Psalter 202.

November 29 *Read Job 3*

We see in the beginning of this chapter that Job was not sinless. He curses his conception and birth. We might sympathize with him because of the extreme plight in which he finds himself. He has lost goods, all his children, and now his health. Where he once said,

"Blessed be the name of the Lord," we now find him cursing God's work in him. There is no excuse for Job in this, just as there is no excuse for us when we fall into similar sins. Job had to be brought to the cross just as we must. Sing Psalter 83.

November 30 *Read Job 4*

Job's friends have come to comfort him in his affliction. In all there are four, but only three speak at first. From now until chapter 31 we have a cycle of speeches. The friends speak, and then Job answers them. Eliphaz begins by acknowledging Job's goodness and good works throughout his life. But then he charges Job with some unknown serious sin that has caused God to afflict him in this way. As we read through the discourses we will find many truths that will give us cause to think. Let us look at them for our profit as we walk in this life. Sing Psalter 350.

December 1 *Read Job 5*

Eliphaz continues his discourse about the greatness of God, and reiterates the fact that Job must have sinned. Notice how in verse 10 he speaks of God's controlling even the rain. In verse 17 we have a statement that we would all do well to heed. God does chastise his people. He does that because he loves them. We need to listen to the chastening of Jehovah and know that it is for our good. Sing Psalter 386.

December 2 *Read Job 6*

Now it is Job's turn to speak. The pattern through these chapters is that the friends speak and try to show Job what his wrong is, and then Job answers them. Job is not moved by Eliphaz's speech. He does not think that he has done anything that should cause such drastic ills to come upon him. We find that he still would choose death over life at this point. We need to consider our own ways. Do we, like Job, justify ourselves over the good way of Jehovah? Sing Psalter 362.

December 3 *Read Job 7*

In this chapter Job recounts the sleepless nights that he has endured because of his afflictions. He goes to bed to try to escape the pain and suffering that he is enduring. He finds no comfort there. In this section of his discourse, Job turns his attention from Eliphaz's speech to asking God, "Why is all this coming upon me?" In the end of the chapter, he seems to be asking for forgiveness of sin, but as we will discover, he continues to justify himself over against God. Sing Psalter 363.

December 4 *Read Job 8*

Now Bildad takes up the discourse against Job. He reproves him for his speech, which Bildad says is a strong wind. He asks the question, "Does God pervert judgment?" Then throughout the rest of the chapter he seeks to convince Job that he, like his children, has done a wicked thing. He also points back to days of old where such iniquity has been punished in like manner. He ends up by saying that God will forgive the repentant sinner. As we read through these speeches, we see truth, but misapplied truth. Sing Psalter 291.

December 5 *Read Job 9*

Once more Job takes a turn in speaking. He does not attempt to answer Bildad directly, but speaks rather about God's judgment and justice. He speaks honorably about God. He also says that God brings judgement upon the wicked and the righteous alike. Notice his allusions to the greatness of God in nature. Job believed in "God the Father, maker of heaven and earth." Of that there is no doubt. In this chapter he finishes by wishing that he could more directly speak with God. Sing Psalter 364.

December 6 *Read Job 10*

As Job continues his rambling, confused discourse, he states several truths that we should consider. First, he still knows that his trials are at God's hands, just as he confessed to his wife very early in his afflictions. He also states that he knows not only that God has made him, but that he can also deliver him out of his troubles. Because Job has no answers on this earth, he sees death as the only way of deliverance. We must consider Job and his talk, but we must consider the whole of the book to know how to lead our lives. May we have grace to go to God each day for help in our times of trouble. Sing Psalter 365.

December 7 *Read Job 11*

Now it is Job's third friend, Zophar, who speaks. He too says many true things about God and his workings. He too charges Job with gross sin and brings no comfort to him. He calls Job wicked and even a hypocrite. As we read these speeches, let us use the truths found in them as good means of instruction. Let us also learn from them how not to approach our friends in their distress. Sing Psalter 25.

December 8 *Read Job 12*

Once again Job answers. We find two parts to this answer. First, Job tells his friends that they do not have all the answers about God. He looks at God's providence in the world of the created beasts, and tells his friends to learn from them. Then from verse 12 to the end of the chapter he makes a wonderful discourse about God and his sovereignty. Sometimes we forget that God is sovereign and rules all things in our lives. Let us bow before that power every day, trusting in God to lead us in all our way. Sing Psalter 72.

God in His Mighty Power Created No Possibility for Evolutionism

(1) An Introduction and Call to Arms

Some describe it as "the greatest show on earth."[1] Others deem it "the greatest hoax on earth."[2] I reside in the camp of the second and call it the most loathsome lie mankind has ever fallen for. It is a deception of the greatest kind. Rooted in atheism, it has infested Christianity. Evolutionism directly attacks the fundamental truth of scripture that God is sovereign over all things. Evolutionism attempts to explain the origin and existence of this universe by way of science alone, not God.

Evolutionism is an infection of the worst sort. This is an infection on such a massive scale that it has all but destroyed every field of science and is spreading like the plague throughout churches, even of Reformed background. Professor David Engelsma addresses the issue well: "It is shameful that the topic is necessary in the sphere of the Reformed churches. Has it really come to this in the Reformed churches, that the historicity of Genesis 1-11 must be defended?"[3]

Defend it we will! This is a war threatening our principle belief in the authority of scripture. This is a war that we must be well aware of and constantly fighting. Part of this heightened awareness is having a clear understanding regarding the tactics of our enemy. How are secular scientists and Scripture-denying theologians attacking our faith? How can we defend ourselves against their assaults? How do we counter their attacks?

This article serves as an introduction to a sequence of polemical articles dismantling evolutionism thread by thread. I wrote an article in a previous issue of Beacon Lights addressing the importance of defending Scripture against the lies of evolutionism. I then realized I had not scratched the surface of what needs to be said regarding this issue. This series of articles will examine the theory of evolution, beginning with its roots, to show that it is not just a theory. Also addressed will be some of the scientific discoveries that "support" evolutionism. These amazing discoveries actually point toward the creative work of our God. I truly am fascinated by this subject. However, I make no claims to be an expert in any of these fields. I do not have a degree in geology. I never studied astrophysics. I don't have a doctorate in biology. I am merely a child of God captivated by the beauty and complexities of his creation. We do not need scientific knowledge to see the beauty of creation.

When learning of the intricate workings of the human body we might find ourselves thinking, "How amazing!" Yet there are still those who think the human body evolved over millions of years. When we have the opportunity to witness a thunderstorm, we say to ourselves, "How awesome is our God!" Yet people see this display of his power repeatedly and still deny his existence. When we see the bright moon in the night sky as but a dim reflection of what awaits us in glory, we must be bothered by the fact that there are those who insist it was formed from the debris of the collision of earth and another large planetary body somewhere around 4.45 billion years

1 Richard Dawkins, *The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 2009). Dawkins sets forth the "proof" of evolution and promotes the theory of evolution as "incontrovertible a fact as any in science."

2 Jonathan Sarfati, *The Greatest Hoax on Earth? Refuting Dawkins on Evolution* (Atlanta: Creation Book Publishers, 2010).

3 Engelsma, David J. "Genesis 1-11 Myth or History?" *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 34, no. 1 (November 2000): 13.

ago.[4] If you did not already despise evolutionism, do you see now why we must?

One of the many reasons this subject is of such great importance is the perspective it gives us on how great our God is. Think of the small specks of dust we are in comparison to the vastness of this enormous universe in which we reside. Keep going with this thought, but now realize that God is even greater than this seemingly infinite universe! Yet this still does not come close to showing us the extent of our God's power. God is infinite. Our simple minds struggle to wrap themselves around this concept. All we can do is stand in awe of the mighty power of our God. This is the reason this subject is of utter importance.

When we sit down and really think about the mighty power and holiness of God, it humbles us to the point of silence. We can liken this to the vision of Isaiah in Isaiah 6. He "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" (v. 1). The angels are crying (v. 3), "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah in his vision is so utterly terrified by this experience—as a sinful man seeing the face of God—that he expects to be destroyed immediately. He says in verse 5, "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." Now put this passage in the light of the subject we are focusing on. We see God's glory and power in creation every day and are often left speechless. However, the creation is but a dim reflection of the full glory of his power. Imagine that day when we enter through the pearly gates and see God in all his glory. Now that will be beautiful. This is what creation does. It points to God and shows us our calling on this earth, which is glorification of him alone. Our view of God shapes how we think in this debate. If you do not have an all-consuming awe for his holiness and complete trust of his sovereignty in all things, you will be prone to having false ideas when it comes to origins. Our view of God shapes how we think concerning all matters in life and death. This is how important our view of God is!

Some may think that since God did not give us all the details in Scripture on how plants grow, the diversity of life on earth, how the planets move throughout space and so on, that these things are better left alone. Scripture is not a science textbook. Yes indeed, God has left out many details of the intricacies of creation, but he has also given man the ability to make scientific discoveries. He has done this in order that man may praise him for his wonderful work of creation and his providential hand upholding all things and steering the events of man's existence. But those of secular science do not praise God in their findings. Instead, they attempt in any way possible to invalidate creation and the flood as they are clearly set forth in Scripture and so unmistakably evidenced throughout the universe.

A danger for the child of God in the use of science is the abuse of it. There are times when creation science, whether accidentally or on purpose, is rendered in a way that trumps God's revelation in Scripture of the two events, creation and the flood. Creation science is a way we can see God's glory, but we must always remember that however technologically advanced and interesting these discoveries are, God's word is the final word and nothing will ever change that.

Another danger for the child of God is that he tries to prove his faith using science. Science is a wonderful tool we can use to see God's glory, but it is not something we may use to rationalize our faith. His Holy Spirit working in us when we read Scripture and gaze at creation is the only thing we need in order to see his creative hand and in turn to glorify and trust him alone.

Fortunately there are still those who hold to a literal interpretation of Genesis 1–9. Several organizations and institutions are in existence for one reason: to defend the truths of creation and the flood. These institutions promote creation science, science confirming the truths found in Holy Writ. A few of these anti-evolution organizations are Answers in Genesis in Kentucky, which runs the Creation Museum (answersingenesis.org), Creation Ministries International in Australia (creation.com), and the Institute for Creation Research in Texas (icr.org). These apologetic organizations publish books and periodicals and have websites filled with the latest in creation science research and tools for defending the truth of Genesis. Most of these resources are free. I encourage you to visit these sites often to keep yourselves informed of the ongoing battle for preservation of the truth.

This is a war, and we need to understand it as

4 Where Did the Moon Come From? http://starchild.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/StarChild/questions/question38.html.

such. The battlefield is at work, on campus, and in the pew. We cannot sit back and say to ourselves, "This is not affecting my life directly, so I don't need to worry about it," or, "My church will never fall for a lie like this." We are weakest when we are not wary. You as young people are especially targeted today, as most colleges and universities are teaching full-blown evolution or at least some form of it. People are going to ask you what you believe, and why you hold to your belief regarding the origin of all things. Your answer to them must be bold. You must be polemical in doing this. We are called to fight this lie, using God's word as our sword. An additional tool with which God has equipped us for this fight and the glorification of his name is science—science through the spectacles of Scripture. This is a valuable tool that we must not waste. But in the end, let us remember that God's word shall stand. God's word stands the test of time, and may all those take heed who deny the truth that it clearly sets forth.

Do you hear it now? A great battle cry is sounding. Rise up and arm yourselves, young Christian soldiers! The gates of hell (Matt. 16:18) war against us, but will never prevail. The word of God is clear and simple when it comes to origins; do not allow anyone to muddle your faith. Stand up and fight!

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From the Pastor's Study — Rev. Brian Huizinga

You Are Being Watched

You are being watched. Remember that.

With surveillance cameras nearly omnipresent, including those coursing through the heavens, you are being watched by the government and others. However, to such watching I do not refer.

By the ungodly world you are being watched. For, "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt. 5:14b). Therefore, "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). To such watching I do not refer.

By your father and mother and all in authority over you, you are being watched. That includes the oversight of the God-appointed overseers in the church (elders) who "watch for your souls" (Heb. 13:17), and thus are called "diligently to look whether every one properly deports himself in his confession and conversation" (Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons). To such watching I do not refer.

Whether you ascend up into heaven or make your bed in hell, behold, the all-watching eye of Jehovah is upon you. "Dost thou not watch over my sin?" (Job 14:16b). God watches. To such watching I do not refer.

In addition to the aforementioned eyes, you, young people, are being watched by those who look up to you: your younger brother or sister, your younger relative, a kindergartener, a freshman, the one who was pulled up from the junior varsity team, the latest employee at your work, the newest student at your school, the newest member of the committee, your boyfriend or girlfriend's younger siblings. You are being watched.

Being watched by those younger than you makes you what we commonly call a "role model." A role model is one to whom others (usually younger ones) look as a pattern to copy for their own speech, behavior, dress, attitude, etc.

Do you ever consider who might be watching you? Consciously take that perspective. Everywhere you go and in everything you do and say, think, "who is watching me and what do they see?" You are being watched. This is true not only for young people but for all of us as adults, parents, teachers, coaches, baby sitters, and office bearers. You and I are being watched.

We do not get to choose to be a role model or when we would like to be one. We *are* role models always. Whether we think about it or not—and often

we do not—others who look up to us are watching us. They watch (listen to) what we say. They watch what we do. They watch where we go. They watch what we do *not* say. They watch what we do *not* do. When you walk by at church or the beach or back to the dugout or past their locker they are watching. When the boss or teacher leaves and is no longer watching, they are.

What you do leaves an impression with them. Seeing Christ in you is especially powerful, sometimes more powerful than many words. The godly impression you give can last decades and shape a person. A bad impression can be destructive. Those who look up to you as a role model will mimic. They might be disappointed, or shocked, or amused, or hurt. Their carnal flesh will be surprised and excited, "We can do *this*? Sons of God may have *this*? An adult can yell like *that* at someone? *He* goes *there*? *She* says *that*? My big brother listens to *this* in his car? And the devil says, "See, it's not so bad." All our instructors said, "No!" but one bad deed by a role model has the power to replace the "No!" with "Yes! And you can do it again tomorrow!" You are being watched. What do those watching see?

The Bible recognizes the reality that we are role models. Paul exhorts young Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an *example* of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). 2 Thessalonians 3:7, 9 and similar passages indicate that the apostle Paul knew he was a role model and that he called people to watch and follow him: "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us, for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you…Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us."

The Bible also gives instruction on how to be a good role model. Three truths stand out.

First, fear God. If as Proverbs 1:7 states, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge," then the fear of the Lord is certainly the beginning of the knowledge of being a good role model. Fear God. Know above all else that *God* is watching you. Live your life in such a way that the worst thing you could ever imagine doing is disrupting your good relationship with Jehovah. If you love God, and adore God, and walk close to God in prayer, and reverence him, and seek his approval, then you cannot but be an outstanding role model. Everything begins with our relationship to and before God. Think about a time when you were a bad example to others. We could all say that it was because we were not seeking the approval of God, but man. You are being watched. Fear God.

Second, look to serve. Jesus was the supreme role model. To say he was *merely* a role model is gospel-destroying heresy that grounds salvation in our willing and running. Nevertheless, he was a role model. After washing his disciples' feet, Jesus said "For I have given you an *example*, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). Jesus washed dirty feet. Jesus served. 1 Peter 2:21 instructs, "For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Jesus suffered even unto death for us. Jesus served. He looked to serve others. Look to serve, help, assist, encourage, and give. Think about a time when you were not a good role model; inevitably you were looking to *get*—some praise, some attention, some laughter, some thing, some self-satisfaction). You are being watched. Look to serve.

Third, be sober. In Titus 2 the inspired apostle gives instruction for godly living to those of all ages. The first thing he says to the aged men is "be sober" (v. 2). He calls the aged women to teach (as role models) the younger women, among other things, "to be sober," (v. 4). It is as if Paul is teaching Titus how to teach the young men to be role models when he states, "Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things *shewing thyself a pattern* of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you," (vv. 6–8). Before anything else he says, "be sober minded." Be sober. Few things can ruin one's reputation faster than a bottle of alcohol. However, "be sober" means much more than watch what you drink. It means "control yourself." Think of a time in your life when you were a bad example to the others. Likely you lost control of yourself. We do that. We lose control of our bodies, our tongues, our emotions, and our desires. You are being watched. Be sober.

The power to be a good role model is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Jesus was always watched. Never could a fault be found. The Pharisees had eyes like modern surveillance cameras and tracked his every move so that Luke 14:1 says, "They watched him." Blameless he was. In speech, behavior, dress, and attitude he was the model of righteousness. He is our

Savior who died and rose again that by his Spirit we might live the life he did and we cannot.

He also died to cover your sins and mine. Jesus died for role model failures, even regrettable mistakes with deep and long-lasting consequences, mistakes that make you feel as if no one will ever look up to you again. Go to the cross. Jesus died for those sins. He died to remove the guilt, shame, and sting.

God is watching us. That can be unsettling. It ought to be if we do wrong. But it is also comforting. You are being watched by God. Young people, receive his approval and be encouraged as good role models. Receive his grace of forgiveness and sanctification when you fall. He is watching. We need to know he is watching in his grace, because others are watching as well. You and I are being watched.

Rev. Huizinga is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.

Gem of the Month

Julie Bergman

Pathways

Taken from Proverbs 3:6

Walking down life's pathways
you will come across many
bumps and divots along your journey.
Do not get discouraged my
dear child for the Lord
is with you as you walk life's pathway.
When things get rough always
remember In all your ways
acknowledge Him and
He shall direct your paths.
So when it comes to the straight
and narrow He will see you through.
When the storms of life are raging
He will protect you and pull you out.
And when life comes to a crossroad
remember God is also with you
no matter what path you choose.
Pathways, are just God's way of
preparing us for the highway
which leads to heaven.

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Book Review: Federal Vision

Federal Vision: Heresy at the Root, by David J. Engelsma. Jenison, MI; RFPA, 2012. Hardback, 252 pp.

The Federal Vision: Heresy at the Root by David J. Engelsma is a book written to inform and prepare its audience against "the chief threat to the Reformed faith." This book is concise and most definitely to the point.

Engelsma makes no mistake when introducing the Federal Vision. Without any hint of man-pleasing or delivering a flattering message, Engelsma lets the reader know that "I [Engelsma] expose the root of the Federal Vision. I intend to destroy it." It is good and comforting for Reformed believers to know that they are represented by a man who is by no means afraid of the opposition. Very soon the reader will want to know why Engelsma makes such bold statements against the Federal Vision (FV) and the reader will want to read on (making this a good book to give to someone who does not necessarily agree with Reformed doctrine, for it also contains comprehensive information on what Scripture and the Reformed creeds have to say about FV doctrine).

The first part of the book is an extended version of a speech against the FV commemorating the sixteenth century Reformation of the church. Part one, consisting of six in-depth chapters, educates the reader about the origin of the FV. At the end of these six chapters, a newcomer to the FV like myself has a solid knowledge of the subject, including Norman Shepherd's heretical *The Call of Grace*, published in 2000. Engelsma explains how that book "attacks all the doctrines of sovereign grace confessed by the Reformed churches in the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards."

Engelsma frequently refers to the FV as a weed, dividing it into two parts: the root and the bad fruit. Engelsma, as always, explains his reasoning. He identifies the root as the conditional covenant and gives five in-depth reasons why the conditional covenant is heretical. He explains the fruit as justification by faith and works. A Protestant believer can immediately recognise this as a putrid heresy of Roman Catholicism and will be alarmed that such a thing is found in the FV. Engelsma's explanation for his views is impeccable, as he leaves no stone unturned and no grey areas where we are left in doubt as to what he thinks. He nails the FV on the head and does so strongly and repeatedly.

Another alarming point that Engelsma draws out is that the FV could easily be accepted by many conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches because "they are teaching it in its root form," for a conditional covenant will produce bad fruit.

The second part of *Federal Vision: Heresy at the Root* deals with almost fifty questions asked of Engelsma after the speech he delivered on various occasions in different venues. This is most beneficial to the reader as it clears up doubts and questions the reader may already have and also expands on what Engelsma previously said. These questions range from "What is the Federal Vision?" to "What are the implications of dealing with the root of the error that others refuse to recognize?" Each one of these questions is responded to with very helpful answers for those who asked the questions and those who read the book. Engelsma describes part two as a "further opportunity to root out the Federal Vision on behalf of the covenant of grace."

Again, Reformed believers see how their representative does not back down and does not even water down what he had previously said when he responds to questions and criticisms. Instead, he welcomes them.

By the end of reading this book, the reader knows that the FV is a "fancy of men's minds" that is "invented regardless of the Scriptures." On top of this, it is a mongrel doctrine made up of many different heresies: justification by faith and works; baptismal regeneration; Arminianism; common grace; the denial of unconditional election, which therefore removes Christ as the head of the covenant, etc. The whole thing stinks, and because of Engelsma, I know this, for he repeatedly shows the reader why

the FV stinks. It should make true believers' blood boil that such a monstrosity should be advocated or tolerated in any Protestant church, but the tragedy is that it is accepted by many in our day "and the elders are permitting it."

This book is a fine, well written, informative and engaging piece of literature that leaves the FV without a leg to stand on. I give this book 5 out of 5 stars.

Timothy (age 15) is a schoolboy in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, and attends Covenant Protestant Reformed Church. This book review originally appeared in the Spring/Summer edition 2012 of British Reformed Journal, *and is reprinted here by permission.*

The Standard Bearer

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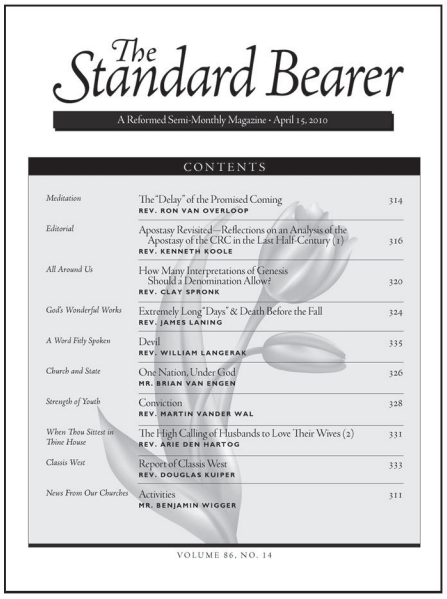
The Standard Bearer
A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • April 15, 2010

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BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you and to your children…." Acts 2:39

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Mason Curtis, son of Mr. & Mrs. Lance DeVries—Byron Center, MI
Jenessa Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Trent VanBemmel—Calvary, IA
Lucas Jan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Benjamin Noordermeer—Faith, MI
Danton Bradley, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad VanderVeen—Grace, MI
Brianna Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Craig Feenstra—Grace, MI
Ellie Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Kooienga—Grandville, MI
Alexa Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Schipper—Hope, MI
Mallory Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Drew Duthler—Hudsonville, MI
Audrey Kathleen, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Keith Feenstra—Hudsvonville, MI
Own David, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Rozeboom—Hull, IA
Alexis Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Micah David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Span—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Ian Fitzgerald, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Fennel—Pittsburgh, PA/Southwest, MI
Landon Montgomery, son of Mr. & Mrs. Philip Hopkins—Redlands, CA
Claire Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nate Lanning—Trinity, MI
Wyatt Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Pat Lenting—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." I Timothy 6:13

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

Alex Overbeek—Byron Center, MI
Joseph Mantel, Lanae Regnerus, Joni VanDenTop and Carissa Vink—Doon, IA
Paige Decker, Justin Dykstra, Jordan Kuiper, Collin Mulder, and Taylor Noorman—Faith, MI
Gayle Lotterman—Hope, MI
Katelyn Jessup—Hope, MI
Micah Bruinsma—Peace, IL
Andy Kooy—Peace, IL
Lisa VanderWoude—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

"For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Psalm 48:14

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

Mr. Matthew Fisher and Miss Brianna VanDyke—Faith, MI
Mr. Jared Dekker and Miss Sue Dykstra—Faith, MI
Mr. Ross Kooienga and Miss Brittany Holstege—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Mitchell VanOverloop and Miss Kelli Elzinga—Grace, MI
Mr. Nate Holstege and Miss Courtney Vander Stel—Hudsonville, MI
Mr. Jon Kuiper and Miss Laurel Steigenga—Hudsonville, MI

NOTICE

Nearly one thousand people have already ordered a copy of the *2012 Denominational Directory*. There are still some left. If you would like a copy, call Laura Huizinga at (616) 453-6858, or send a $12.00 check, made out to Hope Young People's Society, to the following address:

Laura Huizinga
4668 Fenwood SW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49534

Tell us your name and your church and we will get the directory to you as soon as possible.

Impossible
(a quiz)

This is a quiz
that truly is
impossible to miss.

Though most refuse
to see and use
the truth that teaches this.

But knowledge grows
and often shows
in children and in youth.

So come and hear
what is so clear
to those who love the truth.

Come see a vine,
a thriving line
with branches set to fruit.

Each branch full grows
with life that flows
from out the vine and root.

Now can life bring
no fruit to cling?
No, that's impossible!

Just look once more
how this vine bore:
the branch is laden full!

It's plain to see
how fruit can be
impossible to lack.

The life within
the branch's skin
comes from the vine in back.

The vine's life flows
so that fruit grows.
On every branch it's stored.

But—do you see
that's you and me
implanted in the Lord?

Good works we bear
—they're surely there—
because His life He gives

to us to grow
by faith, and so
in thanks each branch so lives.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"
... let it shine!

So tell me now,
if you know how
impossible this is:

We cannot stop
a thankful crop
because our life is His.

C. L. Meyer

But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane?
By no means: for it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.
Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 64

Find all the words from Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 64 in the puzzle at the right.

S	S	B	C	H	R	I	S	T	D	D	M
H	U	K	R	S	L	F	G	O	K	O	P
T	P	S	F	G	I	N	T	B	A	C	R
R	A	S	N	Y	I	H	E	I	N	T	O
O	R	E	U	R	T	C	T	M	D	R	F
F	E	L	B	I	S	S	O	P	M	I	A
A	S	E	D	Y	H	T	N	L	A	N	N
I	O	R	O	F	D	I	K	A	K	E	E
T	H	A	N	K	F	U	L	N	E	S	S
H	T	C	O	N	Y	R	P	T	S	M	F
T	H	A	T	S	N	F	N	E	O	H	W
P	Y	B	S	H	O	U	L	D	M	R	A

Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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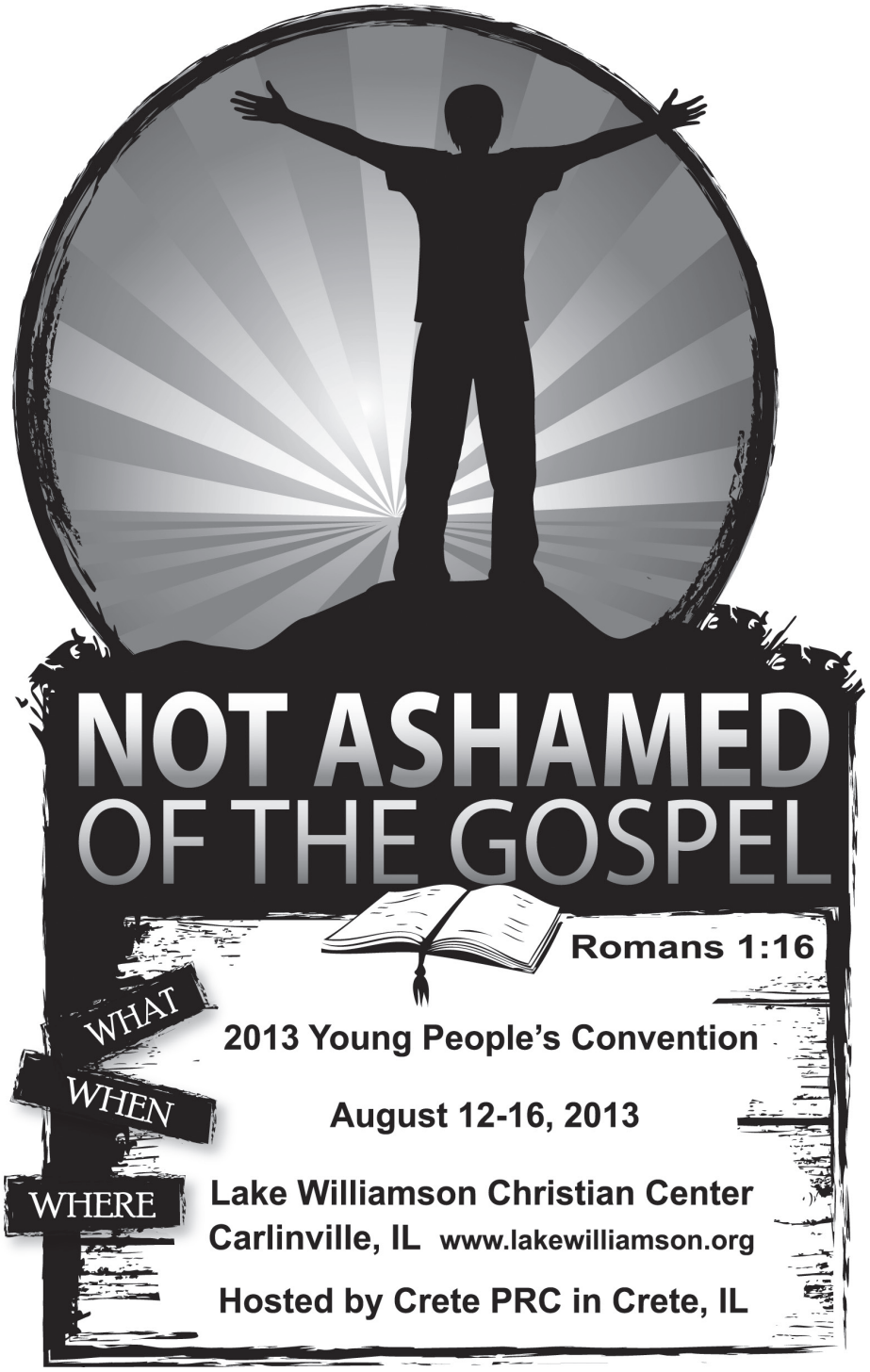
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