

*Just in time for
the holidays!
Beautiful Door Angel
Christmas Ornament*



This beautiful handcrafted ornament will be an elegant and timely reminder of the true holiday spirit.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Carefully cut along dotted line
2. Order product
3. Using markers or crayons, color to suit
4. Insert hook through hole at top of head
5. Hang on tree
6. Order product
7. For a sturdier ornament, glue angel to cardboard
8. Photocopy and make beautiful gifts for the entire family, friends too!
9. Order more product

*Inside: Interviews
with Alan Jones &
Patrick Leonard*

My Friend, The

"It's all this
smell of cooped-up
angels [that]
worries me."

— Christopher Fry



Angel

by Darrel Spenst

Alexander Pope once said that "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Fine. Nice thought; good idea. Way to go, Pope.

But the recent rash of angel fascination that has broken out in the sallow carcass of the American populace tempts one to say instead, "Fools rush in where books about treading angels are sold."

In fact, one *will* say it.

The angel movement has spawned a raftload of "angel" books in Christian and secular stores. There's even a magazine coming, *Angel Times*, devoted to the seraphic realm. It will feature the nation's "foremost angel experts"(?).

First-Person Accounts!!

We were at the tennis club. The weather was California at its best, the sun coppering the surrounding hills as the palm trees glittered greenly. But a shadow fell over our afternoon. We drank our Evians in big, nervous gulps while we discussed the problem. We wanted to play doubles, but where was our fourth man? The court was reserved and everything. Then, suddenly, this guy showed up, and we were able to play. Was it an angel?

Brad C. Cufflink III

It was youth night. We were playing "Pictionary." Sarah was having a heckuva time drawing anything clearly. Everyone was frustrated. Then, suddenly, it seemed a different hand replaced hers and drew a beautiful tree. Could it have been an angel?

Sally Banal

I was driving and I was speeding. I saw a cat on the shoulder of the road up ahead. I was worried it was going to spring out in front of my car. Then, suddenly, it didn't. What do you think? Angels?

Roy Boy

It was a school day. I got out of bed and looked in the mirror. My hair looked fine. Angel?

Polly Plastic



In bookstores now:

Wrestling with the Angel
Angels All Around Me
Only Angels Can Wing It: The Rest of Us Have to Practice
Wrestling with the Angel: Jewish Insights on Death and Mourning
Stories of Angelic Interventions
Angel at My Table
The Angel Book: A Handbook for Aspiring Angels
Angel Child, Dragon Child
Angel in the Parlor: Five Stories and Eight Essays
The Angel of Irrational Numbers
Angel Pavement
An Angel Too Many
Angel Threads: Creating Lovable Clothes for Little Ones
Angel Unaware
Angels and Aliens: UFOs and the Mythic Imagination
Angelic Healing: Working with Your Angels to Heal Your Life
Angels and Insects
Angels Cry Sometimes
Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes
Angels in Boots
Angels in the Kitchen: Divine Desserts for Any Occasion
Angels in Your Beer
Angels on Horseback, and Elsewhere
Angel Power
Ask Your Angels
The Complete Angel
Fallen Angel
Angel of Light



Angels! Angels! Angels!

Coming soon to a bookseller near you:

Wrestling with the Angel II: The Greco-Roman Assault
The Angel I Wrestled With
Those Angelic Wrestlers
Wrestle, Wrestle; Angel, Angel
Angels All Above Me
Angels Near Me
Angels — Are They Around Me?
The Angel Who Came to Dinner, Stayed, Ate, Had Some Coffee, Was Entertained, Then Left — All Unawares
Angel in the Toaster Oven: Three Falsehoods, a Lie, Two Fabrications, and an Aspersion
The Angel of Quadratic Equations
Angel Breath
Angels in the Pub: Leisure Time in the Heavenly Realm
Angel: The Angel of Angelica Angeloni
The Angel of Fruit Flavors: A Scratch 'n' Sniff Book
Rambo and the Angel of Masochism
My Accountant, the Angel

***The Door* presents a handy, yet rudimentary, reference list of the angelic hierarchy:**

- Seraphim**
- Cherubim**
- Thrones**
- Dominions**
- Virtues**
- Powers**
- Principalities**
- Archangels**
- Angels**
- Peretti angels**
- Casper the Friendly Ghost**
- Guardian angels**
- Gordian angels** *(they're very cryptic)*
- Angel of death**
- Angels we have heard on high**
- Angel on my shoulder**
- Angels in the Outfield**
- Angels with Dirty Faces**
- Angels Over Broadway**
- Angels who:**
 - change tires*
 - fix cars*
 - appear as strangers*
 - are strangers*
 - mime*
 - stand at bedsides*
 - perch on rafters*
 - assist in various sporting events*
 - itch hard-to-reach places*
 - help with landscaping*
 - throw rocks*
 - predict weather*
 - just cope*
 - masquerade as other angels* ■





THE GREAT CALVINIST / ARMINIAN BASEBALL FARRAGO

by Darrel Spénst and Ron Carleton

My grandpa said he saw them playing out behind the cornerib once on a summer evening, hatched like a prophecy out of Iowa's simmering noonday heat, swatting theological propositions into the outfield like so many cobs of dried corn.

"Ah Zeb, you shoulda seen it — Calvinists on one side, Arminians on t'other."

I picked up a master's degree in theology with a concentration in baseball from Wheaton, one of the few institutions that offers that combination with full access to the prized and extensive C.S. Lewis collection and free muffins every Monday.

I returned to the farm.

In Iowa (or, "down lowway," as we say), where baseball is a religion, my credentials were impossible to gainsay. They were not, in fact, gainsaid. I was hired by the local paper, *The Spirit Lake Plain Speaker* (Motto: Read; Chew; Expectorate).

Passions run strong in our small town. In 1994, when the baseball strike occurred, it was a disaster on the scale of a widespread crop failure. Tempers flared, and the night sky blazed with gunfire.

My calm-the-mob editorial, "Baseball Strike Predestined," had the soothing effect of running a seven-inch file across the teeth of a rabid wolverine.

A debate going on for nearly 1,700 years gripped Spirit Lake by the throat and shook it. Sovereignty vs. Free Will raged.

Feathers were plucked; tar was boiled; unpleasantness occurred.

So it was, that first summer during the baseball strike, when the sky was the color of Canadian money and the humid air was alive with the soft, flaky sound of ancient farm machinery rusting, I was sitting on the drum of a Maytag washing machine under the sagging veranda roof of my grandpa's ramshackle old farmhouse, when I heard a Voice clearly say, "If you grill it, they will hum."

This didn't seem right, so I tuned my spiritual receiver slightly and listened again.

The Voice clearly said, "If you climb it, they will come."

The Voice was that of God, but it sounded like a ballpark announcer.

I jumped to my feet like a boiled prawn. The vision was upon me, and it had cattle prods. I felt like a character out of a W.P. Kinsella novel.

"Hey!" I said into the glowing Iowa evening, "This is no field of dreams. I am not a prawn ... pawn ... whatever!"

"The corncrib," the Voice said. "Climb it. Of course, you don't have to ... but then, I know you will. And by the way, don't think I'm a Calvinist or an Arminian. I am what I am and that's all that I am."

I freely decided to clamber up the corncrib's slats and jump onto the heap of old cobs. An astonishing sight boiled out in front of me.

Lights! Baseball diamond! Players! Spectators! Peanut vendors! Umpires! Felty grass like felt on a pool table, yet grassier and not quite so felty!

Was I dreaming? Had the forced

THE VOICE WAS THAT OF GOD, BUT IT SOUNDED LIKE A BALLPARK ANNOUNCER.



writing of stories on competition-shucking, hog-slapping, and kernel-spitting finally unhinged my mind?

I pinched myself. It hurt like the dickens. I screamed.

The umpire turned to me.

"Please," he said, "a little courtesy."

A full beard frothed like sea foam out from under his face mask.

I jumped back, startled. The umpire was C.H. Spurgeon!

What kind of a game was this, anyhow?

The old cobs jabbed into my hindquarters. They jogged my memory. This mnemonic aid brought to

mind my grandpa's account of ye olde apocalyptic baseball game.

I looked for the team banners he had spoken of. There they were, the Calvinist Determinists' on one side and the Arminian Libertarians' on the other.

These facts and the pervading controversy embroiling Spirit Lake worked like the right numbers to the combination lock of my mind, releasing the tumblers of understanding.

Individual players came into focus. I scribbled down their names. The roster looked something like this:

CALVINIST DETERMINISTS		ARMINIAN LIBERTARIANS	
Augustine of Hippo	Manager	Heresy Pelagius	Manager
Angelic Ox Aquinas	1B	Middle Knowledge Molina	1B
Monk Anselm of Canterbury	2B	Dutch Miracle Grotius	2B
Confessor Barth	3B	Systematic Julian of Eclanum	3B
Iron John Knox	SS	Keymaster Locke	SS
Doctor Cornelius Jansen	LF	Jan van Oldenbarneveldt	LF
Brainy Zwingli	CF	Peter Peter Bertius	CF
Calvinist Beza	RF	Propaganda Celestius	RF
Reform Luther	C	Bible Moth Wesley	C
Scripture Calvin	P	Jacobus "Jakob Hermandszoon son of Herman Jacobszoon" Arminius	P

It was incredible to watch these superstars of theology battling it out under the floodlights, agilely firing doctrines and theological propositions around the bases.

The fans, Christians of all stripes and colors throughout the ages, roared and cheered — a vast multitude extending beyond the range of vision.

But despite their fierce loyalties to predestination on one side and free will on the other, the distinct impression was that these convictions carried more weight in the rarefied atmosphere of the ballpark than in the reality of their everyday lives.

It doesn't matter whether God knows you're going to milk your cow or you choose to freely. Cows must be milked.

It's only when the fame gets mixed in with politics and the mechanics of power that the road to the ballpark becomes littered with the corpses of martyrs.

W.P. Kinsella suggests baseball is an open system, with the arms of the foul lines, extending perpendicular to each other to infinity, embracing the universe.

The players feel this. I can see it in their eyes as they step up to the plate.

They set their stance and adjust their hips. The bats they wield aren't the traditional Louisville Sluggers, smoothly turned of ash or hickory. Instead, Bibles in hand, they face the opposing pitcher and the forces beyond, eternity staring them square in the face.

C.H. Spurgeon hunkers behind the plate. Erasmus and Norman Geisler ump the baselines.

William of Occam shaves each player, murmuring, "What can be done with fewer assumptions is done in vain with more." Occam's Razor shaves close, clean, and true.

Providing the play-by-play are Werner Heisenberg and Erwin Schrodinger, whose theories of quantum mechanics add flavor and interest to the game.

Heisenberg feels he cannot actually observe the game. By so doing, he may change the game. The uncertainty principle dictates a commentary, based

solely on the numbers displayed by the scoreboard hovering like a giant electron microscope over center field.

The game is in the 1,693rd inning. The score is tied.

The Calvinists have more talent, power, numbers. But strength is sometimes weakness.

Much energy was expended in an internal struggle between the superlap-sarians and the sublapsarians.

Jockstraps were hurled.

Around this time, the underdog Arminians exploded for points, using the now-famous, five-hit "Remonstrance" combination:

1. Salvation open to all
2. Christ died for all



3. Holy Spirit's assistance needed
4. God's saving grace can be rejected
5. Possible for Christians to fall from Grace

This caught the Calvinists by surprise, as they thought their earlier one-two punch of the "Belgic Confession" and the "Heideberg Catechism" would have been enough to win the game.

They pulled themselves together and rallied powerfully, throwing Oldenbarneveldt out at home and, using the "Synod of Dort," mounting a five-part scoring attack of their own:

1. Total depravity of man

2. Unconditional election
3. Limited (particular) atonement
4. Irresistible grace
5. Perseverance of the saints

The fans went wild. They were in a frenzy. Heisenberg was agape, staring at the rapidly changing scoreboard — what was the probability of all this?

The crowd did the wave. Schrodinger rapidly worked out particle wave equations to explain this phenomenon.

The Arminians hung their heads and chewed their nails, thumbing through scripture aimlessly.

Then, steadily, a rising chant began from the Libertarian dugout. "Free will, free will, free will ..."

WILLIAM OF OCCAM SHAVES EACH PLAYER.

Arminius perked up on the mound. He beamed. Two outs would end the inning. Wesley gave him the signal. Arminius fired in the pitch.

Zwingli shanked a grounder into the gap — slap-dab into the famous double-play combination of Episcopus-to-Grotius-to-Molina.

The inning was over and the Arminians were still alive.

They came to bat full of vim. They also had vigor. They were full of vim and vigor.

Bible Moth Wesley lashed out at the first pitch. It rocketed directly skyward above his head.

Everyone looked up.

As Luther began to move under the ball, a wave of raw spiritual power washed over the field.

My hair stood on end. Flames danced on heads. My pen seemed to write by itself.

Out of the distant outfield, a brilliant light shone like the eye of God.

In fact, it was the eye of God.

A body grew around it, taking the form of a man, and dropped to the turf at home plate. Luther forgot about the pop fly. He gaped in awe.

This man was almost too perfect to look at. His uniform was inalienably spotless.

He carried seven flaming bats over his shoulder.

He reached out his right hand. What a hand. Billions of volts of creative power pulsed from it and vaporized the ball.

"This particular game is over," he

said, with that same tone of voice parents use when reprimanding their kids for squabbling over some tiring, pointless, pathetic, imaginary dispute. "What a waste of time."

The players itched themselves sheepishly.

"But it seemed important," Luther said, scuffing at the turf with his cleats, "and it was so much fun to play."

"I know," said the man, swinging his fiery bats dangerously, "I know." Then he slapped Luther on the back. "Ah, well — let's all go home."

He motioned with his arm and the whole vision disappeared.

Then I was by myself, in a corn crib, late at night, with no one around, in Iowa.

And then I heard the Voice one more time, saying, "If you write it, they will calm."

So that's just what I did.

On the front page of the following day's *Plain Speaker*, just after the lead article ("Emma's Cornbread Loaf Sets World Record") and an editorial on trapping and skinning, I set forth the details of my vision under the headline "Corncrib Vision Suggests Creed — Solution to Debate."

As anything truly important in Spirit Lake must be interpreted through the semantics of baseball, my vision had the ring of truth.

All the local churches and citizenry adopted my proposed creed: "God is sovereign *and* man is free. It doesn't make sense but there it is. Leave it alone."

Spirit Lake once again became the sleepy little town of yore.

And out in the fields, the corn still grows. ■