

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

***A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine***

Shall we pray for the economy? Shall we pray for the crops that will soon be planted? Or, since over-production seems to be a problem, shall we pray that *our* crops do well but not our neighbor's...?

See "Our Day of Prayer" — p. 281

Vol. 69, No. 12
March 15, 1993

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In This Issue...

In this issue are a number of reminders to our readers to observe the rule that appears in the masthead: "Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words."

The purpose of the "Letters" column is not to afford readers the opportunity to publish lengthy refutations of articles with which they disagree. We welcome response, whether favorable or critical. This is why we introduced the column. But the response must be brief and pointed.

We may reject "letters" that are too long. We are not obligated to publish refutations of the articles that appear in the *Standard Bearer*.

This having been said, the long letters printed in this issue of the *SB* raise issues that are worthy of the attention of all our readers. We think that many will be interested in, and will profit from, the discussion of these issues.

Besides, we are determined that the *SB* be open as much as possible.

Therefore, you will find much of the space in this issue taken up with four, long letters critical of what has been written.

Accompanied by our response.

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DJE

What Will You Do With Jesus?

Again the highpriest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am.

Mark 14:61, 62.

The Sanhedrin has been called together in the dead of night. This highest ecclesiastical-judicial body in Israel is convened for the weightiest case ever brought before them. The judiciary of Jerusalem, which normally had the right to pass a death sentence and even to ban a person from the kingdom of heaven, will deal with a man named Jesus.

We can picture in our minds 72 seats in a semi-circle, partially filled with the most prominent leaders among the people — scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. Before them on the dais sits the functioning highpriest, Caiaphas, having been appointed to that office in the stead of Annas by none other than Pilate, the power of Rome.

Because of the press of the matter before them, this special meeting has been called by the highpriest on the eve of the Passover feast. True, under ordinary circumstances this meeting would be considered illegal. For all meetings were to be held during the day; and no new case might be introduced in the afternoon. Besides, the regular meeting place was in the temple; but, since the temple was closed at night, they had to find another place. Added to all that, they

would not ordinarily meet on the great Jewish feast of the Passover.

Another illegality of no little weight is the fact that they have a prisoner before them, but they still have no accusation charged against Him on which He should be tried.

Yet the case before them can not be postponed, not even until the morning, much less until after the Passover. The matter must be settled right now.

* * * * *

A certain Jesus, who came from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, has gone about preaching and teaching among the people. He is not one of us, say the leaders of the Jews, nor has He been mandated by us. In fact, He has deliberately ignored and has defiantly opposed us, teaching a kingdom of heaven, not as a restoration of David's kingdom here on earth, but a heavenly kingdom in which He will be King. In one word, He claims to be the promised Messiah, Israel's Hope of salvation.

What makes the matter so troublesome is that no man has ever come with greater authority than He. In fact, like Elijah and Elisha, He performs many miracles, whereby He draws many people to Him. The people say of Him, "No man ever spoke like this man," and, "No man ever did greater miracles than He." To that we have no answer.

We have tried to ignore the fact that He meets all the qualifications of the promised Messiah; He is all that the prophets have said of Him. Just recently, not far from Jerusalem, He raised a certain Lazarus from the dead. The people all stand amazed, and we have no way of denying that He has actually done this. They say,

Who but One sent of God can raise the dead?

Adding insult to injury, last Sunday He came riding into Jerusalem on a colt of an ass, causing large multitudes to hail Him as the promised Messiah, Israel's king.

We are determined to kill Him to prevent people from following Him. It is better that He die than that we be forced to abandon our hope of an earthly kingdom, and lose our own positions of authority among the people.

We had arranged to kill Him in secret immediately after the Passover feast. We even knew a man who would help us to eliminate Him. But all of our plans were foiled. Illegal or not, therefore, we must meet. Extraordinary circumstances demand extraordinary measures.

Regardless of who He is, He must die. For He opposes us.

* * * * *

The Sanhedrin is now in session.

All are well agreed that this "Deceiver" must die. Since their plan to kill Him in secret has failed, they must now destroy Him without arousing a tumult among the people who think so highly of Him. A public trial and condemnation is the only way out.

If at all possible, there must be no reference, in the trial, to His being the promised Messiah. That would surely complicate matters, since they plan to declare Him worthy of death.

(What they fail to realize is that they are not in charge of this session. The sovereign Lord of heaven and earth still sits upon the throne, and He controls also the affairs of this nightly session of the Sanhedrin. In fact, what they refuse to recognize is that this

Rev. Hanko is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

sovereign Lord stands in their midst. He, not they, has control over all that transpires.)

The Sanhedrin, at any rate, presses on now with the trial. Since no charges have been filed against Him, accusations must be sought from among the assembly. Anyone who has a charge against Him may present it, as long as another witness can be called in separately to confirm the charge.

Many charges are made, but none can be substantiated.

A few of the assembly bring the charge that at the very beginning of His public appearance, "We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." But when this charge is investigated, the accusers again fail to agree on what He had said.

* * * * *

The Lord is thus driving them into utter confusion, even to the extent that they trump up false charges of all sorts, in order to prevent Him from escaping out of their hands.

Little do they realize that He has no intention whatever of escaping. Nor do they realize that He is forcing the issue, confronting them with the question: Am I, or am I not, the promised Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God? You know I am.

The ultimate question is: What do you do with Jesus, who is indeed the Christ?

* * * * *

So the assembly is forced into a dilemma.

Here is one man in whom can be found no fault. By His very silence He challenges them: "Who of you accuses Me of sin?"

The Lord leaves them with no choice. In consternation the high priest is at last forced to ask the question: "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

An awesome silence falls on the entire assembly. The voice of Jesus rings loud and clear: "I am" (Mark 14:62).

In the Hebrew it is but one word: *Yaweh*. It is the one word that was far

too sacred to be taken upon the lips of an Israelite.

It was the *name* of their God, the *I AM THAT I AM*.

* * * * *

Not long before this, Jesus had stood with His disciples in the garden of Gethsemane confronted by a band of soldiers who could not distinguish Him from the disciples in the darkness of the night.

Jesus asked them, "Whom seek ye?" They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said unto them, "I am" (John 18:5).

Thereupon He struck them down, that they lay helpless before Him. Instead of walking away He raised them up again.

"Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that *I am*; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way" (John 18:6-8).

Judas and the chief priests and their band of soldiers then stood before the question: Shall we take Jesus, the Son of the living God, prisoner? And they did. They bound Jesus, the Son of the living God, and led Him as a prisoner back to Jerusalem.

The very horror of it! God allows Himself to be bound and led away as a prisoner by wicked men!

Now the highest judicial body of Israel stands confronted with the same question.

How can they help but be reminded of the fact that this is actually nothing new. There was that occasion in the temple when He boldly stated, "Before Abraham was am I" (John 8:58). In their rage they had taken up stones to kill Him. Besides, repeatedly He had made statements like: *I am* the Bread of life. *I am* the water of life. *I am* the resurrection and the life.

Even now as He stands before these earthly judges He confirms His *I am* by adding, "And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62). Your day to appear before Me as your Judge is coming!

The issue must be perfectly clear. There must be no doubt in any of their minds. There must be no pretense of piety. The mask of hypocrisy must be torn from their faces. God stands before them in His Son Jesus Christ. And God demands of them, What do you do with Me when I stand before you in the person of My Son, helpless, defenseless?

No one here in this august assembly can plead ignorance. Every one is very much aware of the question that confronts them: Shall we confess Him as the Christ, as God Himself, the rightful King of the Jews? Or shall we take the only other possible alternative, accuse and condemn Him as the greatest blasphemer that ever lived?

They chose the latter. This Man, and therefore God, did not meet their qualifications of a desired Messiah!

No wonder that Caiaphas tore his highpriestly robe. It could serve no good purpose anymore. What a sad end to Aaron's highpriestly office! No wonder that the entire assembly arose and gave vent to their rage and hatred by spitting on Him, buffeting Him, and slapping Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee? (Mark. 26:65-68).

All the sin of Israel as a nation, as well as all the sin of each individual in this assembly, reaches its culmination here. The measure of their iniquity is full. Here sin reveals itself at its worst, in all its bold opposition to the living God. The outcome is death, everlasting death in hell, under the righteous judgment of the living God.

* * * * *

We, too, stand before the judgment seat of God every minute of every day.

We, too, are confronted with the question: What will you do with Jesus, the Son of the living God, the only Name under heaven whereby you can be saved.

Again in our day God and His Christ are cast out by that which calls itself church.

You who profess Him as your Savior, is He also Lord over your life?

Do you seek the guidance and approval of His Spirit in whatever you do?

What a wonder of grace that we

may know Him, love Him, and serve Him! What a blessedness of peace and joy to be able to confess: This God is my God, the God of my eternal

salvation, forever and ever!

In Him alone is all our hope of eternal life! □

Editorial

1994? — “Maybe Wrong”?

In the “letters” column of this issue of the *Standard Bearer* appears a letter under the heading, “1994? Maybe Wrong?” This long letter takes sharp issue with my editorial of January 1, 1993 examining Mr. Harold Camping’s recent prediction in a book entitled *1994?* that Christ will come in 1994. The writer of the letter is willing to admit merely that Camping “may be wrong in his interpretation.” Hence, the heading of his letter, and the title of this editorial.

This editorial is my response to the letter, which the reader should consult as he reads the editorial.

Because others are interested in Camping’s prophecy and because issues are involved that are of importance to all our readers, I respond to the above letter editorially.

Predicting an Exact Date

1994? is a prophecy of the exact date of Christ’s return and of the end of the world: September 15, 1994 - September 27, 1994.

This prophecy is not a Word of God in Scripture. It is not a biblical prophecy. The reason why it is not a biblical prophecy is not that Mr. Harold Camping has miscalculated the date. But the reason is that the Bible does not contain this prophecy. All data necessary to make the prophecy of an exact date of the end of the world are lacking in the Bible.

The Chief Prophet and Teacher of the church has told us that He Himself does not know the exact time of His coming. It has not been re-

vealed. He has forbidden His disciples to predict the time of His coming.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is (Mark 13: 32, 33).

The phrase, “that day and that hour,” in verse 32, refers to any and every date-setting, whether hour, day, week, month, year, or decade. When Christ said, “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man,” He did not merely forbid predicting a certain, literal day or a certain, literal hour. He was forbidding *all* prediction of the precise time of the end. This is plain from the explanation that follows in verse 33: “for ye know not *when the time is*.” Christ did not say, “For ye know not when the day and the hour are.”

This is how the commentators mentioned in the letter interpret the phrase, “that day and that hour.” J. A. Alexander says that the reference is to the “exact time” of the end. H. Ridderbos explains that “the exact date and the precise moment (‘hour’) are a mystery” (commentary on Matthew 24:36). In his commentary on Mark 13:32, 33, J. A. C. Van Leeuwen remarks, “And as certain as the ‘that’ is, so uncertain is the ‘when’” (*Markus*, in *Korte Verklaring*, my translation of the Dutch).

To explain Mark 13:32, 33 as

prohibiting one from speculating about the day and hour but permitting one to set the week and month is fooling with the Scriptures.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Camping has no hesitation to fix the likely *day* of Christ’s return:

If this is so, then His second coming on the Day of Atonement, September 15, 1994, is entirely reasonable. This will then have been precisely, to the very day, forty Jubilee periods after His birth. For all these reasons we wonder if September 15 is the date of His return. However, a day during the Feast of Tabernacles is also a distinct possibility (p. 521).

Since the exact time of the coming of Christ is not revealed, the prophecy of the date as September, 1994 is Mr. Camping’s prophecy, not the prophecy of the Word of God. It is Mr. Camping’s prophecy in disobedience to the prohibition of Christ in Mark 13:32, 33.

“Maybe wrong”?

The prophecy of *1994?* is definitely wrong. It is false prophecy. It is sin.

Prophecy When He Will Not Come

I responded to Mr. Camping’s prophecy by declaring, in the name of Christ, that Christ would not come in 1994. I made this strange prophecy deliberately, in order to impress upon gullible Christians that Camping’s prediction is certainly false.

It should be noticed that I did

not predict when Christ *would* come, but prophesied when He would *not* come. There is a difference. Paul did the same thing in II Thessalonians 2:1ff. Against those who were troubling the church by predicting that the "day of Christ" was at hand, Paul confidently affirmed that that day "shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (v. 3). He made perfectly plain to the Thessalonians that they were not to expect the coming of Christ the next day, the next week, the next month, the next year, or the next decade. For the great falling away and the revelation of Antichrist could not be accomplished in so short a time. In no way did this conflict with Christ's instruction in Mark 13:32, 33 that we do not know, and must not predict, the exact time of the end of the world.

If Antichrist must yet be revealed before Christ comes, as the apostle says he must, Christ cannot come in 1994. This is God's own Word and revelation. My bold prophecy, therefore, was not mine, but God's. I stand by it.

Is Antichrist Satan?

I criticized Mr. Camping's teaching concerning the last things for its identification of Antichrist as Satan. This is inexcusable error for anyone who reads the Bible, much more for one who claims the position of teacher of the Bible. II Thessalonians 2 sharply distinguishes Antichrist from Satan. Antichrist is one whose coming is "after the working of Satan" (v. 9). He is, therefore, distinct from Satan. Also, verse 3 calls him "the man of sin" (v. 3). Satan is not a "man." In Revelation 13:1-10, the beast from the sea, which is Antichrist both as a world-power and as the personal head of this empire, receives his power from the dragon, which is the devil. Antichrist, therefore, is not the devil, but the devil's creature.

Calvin never identified Antichrist as Satan himself. For Calvin, Antichrist is distinct from Satan. Antichrist is human. He is the human papacy. According to Calvin, the

"man of sin" of II Thessalonians 2:3ff. is Antichrist. This Antichrist is "Popery ... the vicar of Satan."

Now, everyone that has learned from Scripture what are the things that more especially belong to God, and will, on the other hand, observe what the Pope claims for himself—though he were but a boy of ten years of age—will have no great difficulty in recognizing Antichrist (commentary on II Thessalonians 2:4).

The importance of the identification of Antichrist as Satan for Mr. Camping's prediction of September, 1994 as the date of the end of the world is that this enables him to establish the period, May 21, 1988-September 6, 1994, as the final tribulation. If Antichrist is a human kingdom of evil headed by an ungodly ruler that must still appear in the future, 1994 cannot possibly be the date of the end. Mark well, the implication of this identification of Antichrist as Satan is that the church does not face persecution at the very end, as Scripture clearly warns is the case. "Maybe wrong"?

The prophecy of 1994? is certainly wrong.

The Latter-Day Feast of Tabernacles

As the letter points out, 1994? makes the Old Testament Feast of Tabernacles important for its dating of the exact time of the end of the world (cf. Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:39-43; Deut. 16:16). The author supposes that the Old Testament Feast of Tabernacles is continued in the New Testament in a literal manner so that he can figure out the exact time of that Old Testament Feast in the present age and determine that "the days of the Feast of Tabernacles for the year 1994 ... will be the period from September 20 to September 27." The time of this Old Testament Feast, continued literally into the age of the new covenant, will be the exact time of Christ's return (cf. 1994, pp. 521-525).

Regardless what the Feast of Tabernacles signifies or does not signify, the grievous error of Mr. Camping is that he has an Old Testament

ceremony continuing in the age of the new covenant *in a literal fashion*.

The truth is that the ceremonies of the old covenant have been so fulfilled in Christ as to have ceased "so that the use of them must be abolished among Christians" (Belgic Confession, Art. 25). There is no literal continuation of the Feast of Tabernacles in the New Testament. September 20-27, 1994 is not the period of "the Days of the Feast of Tabernacles." No period of history after Christ's death, resurrection, and gift of the Spirit is "the Days of the Feast of Tabernacles."

To teach that this Feast, or any Old Testament Feast, continues under the new covenant in a literal manner, involving periods of time and dates, is grossest reversion to "the weak and beggarly elements" of type and shadow (Gal. 4:9ff.) and extreme violation of the principle that "the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did" (Heb. 7:19).

This having been said, the fact is that the Feast did not typify "the harvesting of the elect at the end of time." Mr. Camping saw "harvest" in connection with the Old Testament Feast. He found the word "harvest" in connection with Christ's return in Matthew 13:38-42. From this, he drew the conclusion not only that the Old Testament Feast typified Christ's harvest of the elect but also that the harvest of the elect at Christ's return would take place during the Old Testament Feast of Tabernacles perpetuated in the New Testament.

The Feast of Tabernacles typified the thankful remembrance of God's covenant care of them during their earthly pilgrimage on the part of the covenant people. This was the meaning of the dwelling in tabernacles or booths. It also typified the saints' joy in the covenant goodness of God in giving them the blessings of salvation, particularly the forgiveness of sins and fellowship with God. This was the meaning of the rejoicing over the completed harvest.

The reality of the Feast is the thankfulness and joy of the people of

God throughout the present age over the covenant care, blessing, and fellowship of God in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. Christ fulfilled this Feast at His first coming. It is a reality for the church in a spiritual manner. We enjoy and keep the Feast by faith in Jesus Christ. Every day is a day of the Feast of Tabernacles, especially the Sabbath day. The perfection of the Feast will be the saints' everlasting remembrance in heaven of God's redemption of them from sin and death and of God's care of them during their earthly pilgrimage, as well as their exuberant rejoicing in the full salvation.

This is the interpretation of the Feast by John Calvin:

Hence we gather that, though the ceremony is now abolished, yet its use still exists in spirit and in truth, in order that the incomparable power and mercy of God should be constantly kept before our eyes, when He has delivered us from darkness and from the deep abyss of death, and has translated us into the heavenly life (*Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses*, Vol. II, Eerdmans, p. 463).

"Maybe wrong"?

The prophecy of 1994? is emphatically wrong.

Allegory

As to the project itself, speculating on the exact date of Christ's coming, 1994? is disobedience to the Lord. As to the assumption upon which the dating depends, the literal continuation of Old Testament days and feasts into the new covenant, the book is Judaizing. As to the method of interpreting Holy Scripture by which the project of fixing the date of Christ's return is carried out, 1994? is allegory.

I described this method in my editorial of January 1, 1993. I also pointed out several, glaring instances in 1994? of this illicit interpretation of Scripture.

Well-trained preachers, grounded in the grammatical-historical-spiritual method of interpreting the Bible, sometimes struggle over the question whether a passage is literal or figurative. But only an allegorist could suggest that the "eleven days journey from Horeb ... unto Kadesh-barnea" of Deuteronomy 1:2 really means

... 11,000 years? Was God teaching in this verse that there were 11,000 years from creation to the coming of the Messiah? Was God saying that there were 11,000 years (eleven days) from creation (Horeb, where the law was given) to the Messiah (Kadesh-barnea, where Israel was to enter the promised land), by way of the world (Mount Seir)? (1994?, pp. 360, 361)

It is by way of such interpretation of the Word of God that Mr. Camping leads his reader a merry chase through Scripture to set the date of the coming of Christ.

Do not, I beseech you, minimize the deadly seriousness of allegorical exegesis. It is destructive of the very possibility of knowing the truth as revealed in Scripture. It is a practical attack on Scripture rivaling modernism's outright denial of inspiration. It does grievous injury to the saints, as the publication of 1994? abundantly proves.

"Maybe wrong"?

The prophecy of 1994? is assuredly wrong.

This raises questions about the right and ability of Mr. Harold Camping to teach the Bible to the people of God. These questions are of crucial

importance to every Reformed and Presbyterian believer. What church called him to be teacher of the Word? What training has he received for this difficult work? What body of elders supervises his teaching, subject to the judgment of what classis (presbytery) and what synod (general assembly)? In the Church Order of Dordt, the Reformed churches have guarded themselves once and for all against unordained, unsupervised, and untrained teachers of the Word.

With great, good reason!

Untrained laymen and laywomen who have made themselves teachers of the church, answerable to no ecclesiastical authority, have been among the greatest threats that the church has known.

"New Light" on Eschatology

It may well be that the "pastors and teachers" whom the ascended Christ gives to the church for the perfecting of the saints lead the church into a richer understanding of the last things as the end approaches. The church should pray for it. We who are called to labor in the Word and doctrine should strive for it.

But this richer understanding will not come by allegorical interpretation.

It will never involve bringing the Old Testament ceremonies literally into the age of the new covenant.

Nor will it consist of the prediction of the exact time of our Lord's return and of the end of the world.

The Father has not revealed the exact time.

The Son has forbidden prediction of it.

And the Spirit declines to illumine in opposition to the Father and the Son. □

— DJE

Letters

◆ 1994? Maybe Wrong?

This letter is written in response to your editorial of January 1, 1993,

concerning Mr. Harold Camping's book, 1994?. I am a Reformed believer, belonging to the Orthodox

Presbyterian Church, who was brought to the Reformed Faith through the teaching ministry of Mr. Camping

and Family Radio. I am also one who has a high regard for the history, government, and confessions of the church, as well as the singular importance of the preaching of the Word. I highly respect you and your work for the Lord and His kingdom. In light of what I have just said, I do hope you will not misunderstand what follows.

You identify the book 1994? as "the prophecy of Mr. Harold Camping," though what Mr. Camping is attempting to do is interpret the prophecy as it is found in the Bible. He may be wrong in his interpretation, but he is not prophesying in the sense that many readers may understand the term. Admittedly, if prophecy is rightly understood as a declaration and exegesis of God's written Word, then Mr. Camping is in fact prophesying. I trust your readers will understand the distinction. Would one not be justified in identifying the last two columns of your editorial as "the prophecy of David Engelsma"? Would you please explain what seems to be a contradiction when you say that "Expectancy of the Lord's coming must dominate all the life and labor of His church in 1993," and yet state, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I declare with absolute certainty that Jesus will not come and the world will not end in 1994." Apparently you have calculated a minimum of time, at least, before Christ could come, and this is also prediction (prophecy?). Yet, why did men such as Martin Luther, and at least two of the eminent Westminster Divines, namely, Thomas Goodwin, and Jeremiah Burroughs, believe that the return of Christ was very likely to be in their day? And why did they even consider the very years that He might return?

One of your criticisms of Mr. Camping is his denial of Antichrist as a human. But, John Calvin also rejected the suggestion that an individual man is meant. In his commentary, he thinks that Antichrist implies a kingdom, the rule of Satan's representative in the church, who will usurp the authority of God. Antichrist in the true sense of the word is for Cal-

vin enmity to Christ within the sphere of the church itself. Applying the term, "apostasy," to the church universal, he says, "The church must be reduced to an unsightly and dreadful state of ruin." Would you judge Calvin to be involved in "serious doctrinal error" here?

Through numerous expressions, you may have described accurately the characteristics of one who truly practices allegorical exegesis. However, this allegorizing which is allegedly "dishonoring of Holy Scripture" is overstated and misstated. Mr. Camping is not claiming that Scripture is solely allegorical (i.e., that it is not historical). In fact, statements such as, "If everything can mean anything, everything means nothing," make me wonder if in your sincere zeal to confront head on what you believe to be error, you have overstepped the bounds of Christian charity.

Professor, you severely criticize Mr. Camping's hermeneutics. When I read the writing of many Puritan and Reformed men of the days of Reformation, I see that their exegesis often embraced a theory of interpretation that on the one hand was not arbitrary or extremist, but on the other hand did not strangle the text with a hermeneutically sealed austerity. There was a degree of latitude for speculative exegesis, which recognizes levels of confidence and degrees of certainty (even question marks). I, as a layman, struggle with knowing when a verse is to be taken figuratively, and when literally. Why is it not legitimate for the believer to read a verse and consider first the literal interpretation? This seems to be following sound hermeneutical principles. When is a day 24 hours? When is an hour 60 minutes? It seems that those who would generally raise objection to the claim of specificity in Mark 13:32, are the same ones who regularly and strenuously resist figurative interpretation. Yet why do they seem to have no difficulty in taking such liberty here despite the first, literal, and "clear" meaning of the words used? Commentators such

as J.A. Alexander on Mark 13:32 and Herman Ridderbos on Matthew 24:36 hardly needed to act of "desperation," when they spoke of these verses as conveying precisely the idea of exact time. Mr. Camping speaks of a range of time. Isn't it a contradiction in terms to say, "The exact time will be the period between" such and such dates?

I realize that the format you chose to use was not a book review, but there are three foundational premises on which the book is based, and these premises need treatment and answer. The first concerns the Feast of Tabernacles. You say that the three major feast days were fulfilled in Christ. But if the Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering does not typify the harvesting of the elect at the end of time, then what aspect of the work of Christ on earth did it specifically typify, and when in time was it fulfilled?

Regarding your comment that "the book is as dull as a volume of mathematics," I wonder what the mathematics major in college would say about a Greek textbook used for theological training? Likewise, because one finds the use of arithmetic boring, does not relegate arithmetic to a level of unimportance or incorrectness. God did not utilize numbers in the Bible to bore us. Simple arithmetic lies behind Mr. Camping's chronological evaluation and determination of the calendar of the earth's existence. This is the second foundational point, and it is a critical area upon which the whole of the book rests. What answer should one give to this argument of Mr. Camping?

The third point is that there must be a convincing exegesis of Daniel 12:4, 8-10, along the lines of what certain Reformers referred to as "new light" to be expected at "the evening of the world." Were all the truths of Scripture revealed at the culmination of the Reformation, especially in matters eschatological, or can we expect further illumination?

Your editorial left me with the impression that there is nothing good in or about the book 1994?, but in fact, that is not the case at all. Mr. Camp-

ing has made a strong and rather pointed defense for the literal and historical account of creation. He upholds the authority and supremacy of the Holy Scriptures. Additionally, through a collation of various passages, he has carefully refuted the dispensationalist. He has also answered the charismatic error. Camping's arguments ultimately result in a defense of the truth. You did not see fit to mention any of this, maybe because the format you used was an editorial and not a book review.

Ernie Springer
Audubon, NJ

Response:

I respond to this letter in the editorial in this issue.

— Ed.

◆ Tarring Dr. Dobson

I have recently written a letter to the Editor, and he was kind enough to allow my comments to be printed. Lest I overdo my welcome, I hesitate to write so soon again. But an article by Rev. Steven Key has stirred up my righteous indignation. Lest you get the impression I have a lot against the PRC, let me assure you that much of what I read in the *Standard Bearer* is appreciated.

Steve Key in his article on "Proper Christian Self-Esteem" (1) (2) and (3) (*SB*, Dec. 1, 1992; Dec. 15, 1992; Jan. 1, 1993) tars Dr. Dobson with the Rev. Schuller brush, but the accusations were not substantiated. Dr. Dobson, a man who enjoys popularity with a large segment of the Christian community, while being at the same time hated and ridiculed by the vast secular community, is an articulate spokesman, a pillar of faith in a hostile world, a friend, and a brother. He has been "caricatured" or, better stated, slandered. Unless the author backs up his accusation with facts and even offers Dr. Dobson an opportunity to respond, he owes Dr. Dobson and his readers an apology.

An excellent article by Jon Huiskens, "History of the PRC—Cari-

cature," ends by saying, "The solution to caricature is commitment to truth." I believe my anger would have been avoided had the advice of Jon Huiskens been heeded: "The books and pamphlets (articles) we write...if capable editors would take their red and blue pens to the text before it was published"; "The positive development of the concept of the catholicity of the church has been slow in coming but it is coming!" (emphasis mine). Dr. Dobson is your brother, whether you like it or not, treat him as such!

While many people perceive evil in the CRC, of which I am a member, one thing to be said in its defense is that CRC readers are free to praise or criticize and an article such as this appearing in the *Banner* would have received a ton of letters, which is good. I often wonder why the *Standard Bearer* receives so little response from its PRC readers. Is it because they fully agree with every article? I highly doubt it, at least I hope not. Maybe they don't read it, which is worse, or don't care, which is lukewarmness. Or are they afraid of their leaders' responses? In any respect, as with any organization, members are responsible for what is said and done.

Finally, "guarding each man's dignity and saving each man's pride," the phrase in a song under Rev. Key's criticism is basically the same as loving our neighbors as ourselves. Do we like ridicule and condemnation? Neither do our neighbors. Jesus gave us an excellent example in John 8:3-11, and they'll know we are Christians if we do the same.

Carl Smits
Lansing, IL

Response:

I stand rebuked. Perhaps not without reason. But I appreciate the letter and the opportunity to respond and expand on that which I have written. I must admit that after I saw my article in print, I expected to get a negative response for exactly the point that has "stirred up the righteous indignation" of the correspondent.

I am sorry — not for having taken on Dr. Dobson for his errone-

ous view of self-esteem, but for having "tarred Dr. Dobson with the Rev. Schuller brush." It is obvious to anyone well-versed in the Christian community that these two men are cut out of a different cloth. Dr. Dobson is recognized as an evangelical Christian. I do not judge him otherwise. Robert Schuller, on the other hand, cannot be acknowledged as such by anyone who examines his teachings and confession in the light of Scripture.

It was not my intention to place James Dobson and Robert Schuller in the same category from the viewpoint of their broader Christian perspective. And I readily apologize to all those who may have perceived such from the article. I was merely calling attention to the fact that both these men have had a major influence in the thinking of modern-day Christianity concerning the idea of self-esteem. They come from different theological perspectives and, I would guess, with different motivations. But both have had an influence in this area of self-esteem which has not been biblical. And such is not caricature, but fact.

Although Dr. Dobson has made worthwhile contributions in his field and offers much common-sense advice, even the teaching of such a "pillar" must be examined and evaluated biblically, and rejected where they are in error. Some of what Dr. Dobson has to say, perhaps much of what he has to say, is in harmony with biblical teachings. He is to be commended for his willingness to speak out against many of the evils that permeate our ungodly society today. I have never questioned Dr. Dobson's ability as an articulate spokesman, nor do I have reason to judge him other than a brother in Christ. But I must also point out that in the issue at hand he is an erring brother.

I may also have erred in not expanding on his error — although, as I expressed in the article of December 1, 1992, I would hope that the reader, being led to a clearer understanding of what is involved in a proper Christian self-esteem and ex-

amining the issues biblically rather than taking a popular man's word for it, would also be able to see quite readily the error of Dr. Dobson in this matter.

Dr. Dobson is a Pelagian. That is, although he may readily confess that a man is a "sinner," he denies the biblical truth of original sin and total depravity.

That error is not a problem for most people in the broader church world. The fact is, the Christian church for the most part has also rejected the truth of total depravity. Rather than calling sin "sin" they like to speak of a "low self-esteem" or "the consequences of a low self-esteem."

But this denial of total depravity and the exceeding sinfulness of sin is most certainly not biblical, and must be rejected even for practical purposes. As I pointed out in the articles, the failure to deal concretely and biblically with *sin* and total depravity has had devastating consequences from a practical point of view.

For example, in the book, *Dr. Dobson Answers Your Questions* (the quote of which I recently took from a newspaper), he says, "Boys and girls should know they are accepted simply because they are created that way." That answer, for its incompleteness, is devastating to a proper nurturing of biblical *Christ-esteem* and hence a biblical self-esteem in a child.

He states it this way in his book, *Hide or Seek* (Revised Edition, Old Tapan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1979, p. 147): "The sooner you can accept the transcending worth of your humanness, the sooner you can come to terms with yourself" (emphasis mine).

Dr. Dobson's view of self-esteem, therefore, is established upon the fact that man is a creature of God. I find little comfort in that. My struggles and sins are too great, and the wrath of God too evident, for me to have a joyful self-concept in being a wonderfully formed creature, like all other human beings.

Our view, the Bible's view, is that self-esteem may only be established on being a friend of God in

Christ Jesus. In that view I find tremendous comfort and confidence, even in the face of my own weaknesses, struggles, and God's evident wrath throughout the creation.

There is a vast difference between the two positions. The former establishes men upon a false foundation of human pride; the latter upon a firm and unchangeable foundation of Christ's righteousness. I'll take the latter, and reject the former.

Dr. Dobson is in a position to be a powerful witness. How much more powerful would his witness be, if the foundations of his thinking and teaching in this issue were built upon the truth of Scripture!

Finally, "guarding each man's dignity and saving each man's pride," is *not* the same as "loving our neighbors as ourselves." Scripture says (Prov. 15:25): "The LORD will destroy the house of the proud." Add to that the words of Proverbs 16:5: "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished." For a Christian to allow his neighbor to walk in pride while he views himself as dignified apart from Christ is to allow that neighbor to walk speedily on the way to hell. God spare us from such "love"! Love for the neighbor is to get him (or her) to face his sinfulness and to point him to the salvation which is in Christ alone, and that not of self, lest any man should boast. That is the example Jesus gave in John 8:3-11.

(Those interested in a thorough critique of Dr. Dobson's views are referred to the book, *Prophets of Psychoheresy II*, by Martin and Deidre Bobgen, Santa Barbara, CA: Eastgate Publishers, 1990.)

— (Rev.) Steven R. Key

◆ Caging the Wild Dog

Recently my pen pal from Wales brought to my attention the articles in the *Standard Bearer* titled "The Death of Confessional Calvinism in Scottish Presbyterianism" by Rev. David Engelsma (August 1-December 15, 1992).

My pen pal said in his letter, "a friend of mine has sent me photo copies from the *Standard Bearer* which I believe comes from your neck of the woods. The editor is taking issue with the Scottish theologian Donald Macleod. They hold that he is unsound on Providence and Sin, and is said to deny Total Depravity."

I decided I would read the chapters in *Behold Your God* that the editor said contained non-Reformed theology and then make a sound judgment. Maybe Macleod has forsaken the Reformed Faith.

I got a copy of the book *Behold Your God* and looked up all the places cited by the editor where Macleod had denied the doctrine of total depravity. I notice for example that the editor quoted page 127 of *Behold Your God* to prove Macleod taught "partial depravity." I quote from Article (4), page 55 (November 1, 1992 / *Standard Bearer*). Here is what the editor quoted from the book: "the third objection is that the notion of common grace is inconsistent with the doctrine of man's total depravity. According to both Scripture and confessional theology every function of human personality is affected by sin (BYG, p. 127)." Then the editor asks, "What percentage of every function of human personality is affected by sin? Macleod does not tell us. 90%? 50%? 10%? Is the unregenerated man then 90% good? or only 10%?" What bothered me about this quotation and comments by the editor is that it seeks to say Macleod denies total depravity. If the editor had quoted more of Macleod the readers of the article would have seen Macleod holds to the doctrine of total depravity. I will quote Macleod: "According to both Scripture and confessional theology every function of human personality is affected by sin. We are incapable of attaining to the biblical standard of love. Our perception of facts is distorted. Our wills are enslaved to selfishness, worldliness, and godlessness. The light of conscience is often darkness. Even our bodies are affected—we have enlisted them in the service of unrighteousness (Romans

6:13). The result of this *pervasive depravity* is that we are dead in sin (Ephesians 2:11), in enmity against God, and quite unable to keep His law (Romans 8:7). We see no beauty in Christ (Isaiah 53:2) and cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God (I Corinthians 2:14). Collating these biblical passages we arrive at the conclusion that man 'has lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation' (Westminster Confession IX.III). The Shorter Catechism expresses the same doctrine less technically: 'No mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word and deed' (Answer 82)" (pp. 127, 128).

I wonder why the editor did not quote all of what Macleod said on the doctrine of total depravity? From the above one can see Macleod holds to the Reformed doctrine of total depravity, not "partial depravity." I say it was unjust to misrepresent Macleod's theology on man's sinfulness/total depravity so repeatedly in those articles.

I do not want to get into a deep theological discussion on Common Grace, but I want to say that I read Macleod's chapters on Common Grace and then read through my books and found his view to be the view of theologians like Charles Hodge, W.G.T. Shedd, Rev. G.H. Kersten, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Goodwin, and many others. One might not accept the doctrine of Common Grace as set forth by Macleod, but his view is found to be the view of Confessional Presbyterianism/Reformed theology.

I like to make another point. The editor writes in Article (1) (August 1, 1992/*Standard Bearer*, pp. 437, 438): "The common grace defended by Macleod restrains sin as an internal operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the unregenerate that keeps him from being totally depraved and that makes him somewhat pure. It is this to which the Protestant Reformed Churches are opposed as the plainest denial of the Reformed doctrine of total depravity." All I want to say is

that nowhere does Macleod say common grace makes a sinner "somewhat pure." It is like a man putting a wild dog who would attack people into a cage. The dog is restrained by the cage, but its nature is not changed. The Holy Spirit restrains sin in corrupt sinful men, but does not make them pure. Only the work of the Holy Spirit in particular or special grace brings about a radical change in a sinner (*gratia communis* is different from *gratia particularis sive specialis*). Common grace is a chain on the corrupt nature of man/fallen man.

Macleod's views on the Well-meant Offer or Free Offer of the Gospel is, from all I have read, in line with Confessional Presbyterianism/Reformed Presbyterian Theology.

In the articles, "The Death of Confessional Calvinism in Scottish Presbyterianism," the editor said that the *Westminster Standards* never taught the universal offer of mercy. I found that odd since I have been reading the Westminster divines for 17 years and find that they teach the same view of the Free Offer of the Gospel as Donald Macleod.

In the book, *Calvinism: Pure and Mixed*, by W.G.T. Shedd, he has a chapter titled, "The Westminster Standards and the Universal Offer of Mercy." Shedd writes:

Confession vii.3, declares that "man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that (legal) covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace: wherein he freely offered to sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe." Two distinct and different things are mentioned here: (a) an offer of salvation; (b) a promise of the Holy Spirit to make the unwilling sinner willing to accept it. The number of those to whom the offer of salvation is made is unlimited; of those to whom the promise of the Spirit to "make them willing" is made, is limited by "ordination to life" or election. It is clear that God

may desire that to be done by man under the influence of his common grace in the common call, which he may not decide and purpose to make him do by the operation of his special grace in the effectual call. His desire that sinners would hear his universal call to repentance may be, and is unlimited; but his purpose to overcome their unwillingness and incline them to repentance may be, and is limited. God offers Christ's sacrifice to every man, without exception, and gives him common grace to help and encourage him to believe. This is a proof that God loves his soul and desires its salvation. But God does not, in addition to this universal offer of mercy, promise to overcome every man's aversion to believe and repent and his resistance of common grace. Election and preterition have no reference to the offer of salvation or to common grace. They relate only to special grace and the effectual application of Christ's sacrifice. The universal offer of mercy taught in this section evinces the universality of God's compassion towards sinners.

In closing, in Article #7, the editor makes this statement: "This doctrine of an ineffective universalism is directly related to the glaring absence in the whole of Macleod's book about God of the truth of reprobation. Macleod has no place for an eternal, sovereign decree ordaining some persons to damnation" (p. 126). In this statement I see the editor objecting to Macleod's decretal theology/his infralapsarianism. Macleod does write on pages 106-109 a chapter titled, "Will Christians Rejoice in the Wrath?" his views concerning the damnation of the wicked. I think Macleod's theology-theological tradition is mainly focused on the Lord Jesus Christ the Savior of sinners, not Supralapsarianism or the Decree of God. That is because Macleod is from the Free Church of Christ where the Lord Jesus is preached in all His glory. In the Protestant Reformed Churches that is not the main focus. The Decree of God is the focus — the "eternal sovereign decree ordaining some persons to damnation."

The editor might find great dis-

agreement with Donald Macleod's views found in his book *Behold Your God*, but I personally have found him to be writing what a large majority of Reformed theologians have set forth in their books.

J. Keen
Holland, MI

Response:

I appreciate your writing to state your disagreement.

I remind you that the book, *Behold Your God (BYG)*, attacked the theology of the Protestant Reformed Churches as virtual blasphemy and, therefore, I would surmise, as unreformed.

My reply can be very brief, since you do not disprove my charge. Indeed, overall, you do not attempt to disprove my charge.

I did not allege that Prof. Macleod could not find supporters of his theology in various theologians. I charged his theology in *BYG* with being plain, significant departure from *confessional* Presbyterianism, i.e., departure from the Westminster Standards.

BYG clearly and explicitly teaches that the unregenerate, so far from being totally depraved, possess the good qualities spoken of in Philippians 4:8. They do good in many areas of life. Find this for me in the Westminster Confession.

Macleod teaches "pervasive depravity," i.e., that every part of a man is affected by depravity. He rejects the doctrine that every part of the unregenerate is *completely depraved*, so that there is nothing good in any part. This latter is the doctrine of the Reformed creeds (cf. WCF, Chap. VI; Heid. Cat., Q. 8; Canons of Dordt, III, IV/1-4). It is also the teaching of the Bible (John 15:5b; Rom. 8:5-8; Eph. 2:1ff.).

Macleod teaches far, far more than that common grace "cages" the unregenerate sinner. The Reformed faith teaches that God controls the ungodly (and the devil) by His providence. But Macleod has common grace producing the lovely qualities of Philippians 4:8 in the unregenerate, and enabling them to perform good works in the arts, sciences, and theol-

ogy. Lo, common grace changes the wild dog into a fine, helpful pet.

Prof. Macleod plainly and unhesitatingly teaches, in the last chapter of *BYG*, that God loves all men with the love of John 3:16, desires to save them all, has Christ die for them all, and essays the salvation of them all by the gospel in its vaunted (but impotent) offer.

You believe the same, you say, with Shedd. Like Macleod and Shedd, you draw this from the well of common grace.

This is universalism, not Reformed particularism.

This is a resisted love and grace — a love and grace that fail, not Presbyterianism's irresistible grace.

Find this for me in the Westminster Standards.

Confessing reprobation has nothing to do with supralapsarianism versus infralapsarianism.

It has to do with being faithful to the Westminster Confession of Faith, 3.3, 4, 6, 7.

It has to do with believing and confessing the doctrine of the Bible (John 10:26; Rom. 9).

It has to do with maintaining and confessing a doctrine of election that is genuine, i.e., biblical. An election that is not accompanied by reprobation is not the biblical doctrine of election.

It has to do with preaching the Lord Jesus in His glory, for a "Jesus for all," i.e., the Jesus sincerely intended by God for all and offered well-meaningly by God to all with the desire that all be saved, is not the glorious Jesus of the Bible (cf. John 10 and John 17).

— DJE

editorial(s) that you do not believe with the Westminster Confession of Faith that:

There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God (ch. 25, section 6).

In denying that the Pope of Rome is the Antichrist, you do a great disservice to those saints who have laid down their lives for the cause of the Gospel in past ages of the church. You in America and we in Britain are privileged to live in democratic societies where religious persecution is virtually unknown. It has not always been the case and is not the case today in some parts of the world where the Roman Catholic Church holds sway, for instance in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

A reading of church history reminds us of the terrible suffering inflicted upon our forefathers in Europe by the Inquisition of the Middle Ages. It is estimated that upwards of a hundred thousand Albigenses were massacred in the 13th century and perhaps as many as a million Waldenses have perished during the long history of that illustrious people. The Huguenots in France suffered to the tune of between forty and sixty thousand and some ten thousand perished in Paris alone following St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1572. A century later things were no better and, following the repeal of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, for upwards of another hundred years it was a crime punishable by death — not, to practice the Protestant faith, or to attend Protestant services, or to evangelize or to teach children — but it was a crime *just to be a Protestant!* This is not to mention the carnage of the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands, the burnings of the Protestant martyrs in England during the reign of "Bloody Mary," and similar events in Ireland, Scotland, and elsewhere. In the massacre

◆ Is the Pope Antichrist?

I refer to your editorial, "A.D. 1993: The Lord is Coming," in the *Standard Bearer* of January 15, 1993 and in particular the statement, "Antichrist has not yet been revealed in his time" (p. 174). It is plain from this remark and the whole thrust of your

in Ulster in 1641 the priests told their people that "the Protestants were worse than dogs, they were devils, and served the devil, and the killing of them was a meritorious act." Indeed, such attitudes still linger on and account, in no small measure, for the continuation of the "troubles" in that sad land today.

To forget these facts, to forget the suffering of our Reformed forefathers, to pour scorn upon a view of history long held and cherished by, I believe, the majority of the Reformed church is, I would suggest, to do a great injustice to the memory of these saints of God, the like of which we in this day and age are not worthy to be compared.

May I be permitted to make one or two further observations? Firstly, to bolster your case you fall back on the Second Helvetic Confession, but where, may I ask, is there any evidence in the standards of your churches, the Three Forms of Unity, to support your contention about a future Antichrist? Like the Westminster Standards, they do not speculate on such matters, believing them to be not of the *essence* of the faith and therefore not binding upon the consciences of the people of God.

Secondly, you seem to believe that certain great events must take place before the second coming of Christ and you reject the notion that His appearing could occur at any time. This is in spite of such warnings as "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Peter 3:10) and "for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44), and indeed the whole thrust of Matthew 24:42-51.

Thirdly, regarding your understanding of Antichrist himself, you appear to view him as a "charismatic, supernaturally endowed president." I beg to suggest, however, that Scripture portrays him differently. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10 he is described as a *deceiver*, and this is exactly what the Pope has been throughout history. Antichrist is not presented as some great Goliath against which David (the church) is arraigned on

the other side, for all to see clearly the difference between the two opposing forces. Rather he is presented as *Anti-Christ*, i.e., "in the place of" Christ or the vicegerent or vicar (dictionary: one who holds authority as the delegate or substitute of another) of Christ. He "sits in the temple [or church] of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:4), and no more fitting picture of the papacy can be imagined. Charles Hodge in his *Systematic Theology*, commenting on this passage, says: "This portrait suits the Papacy so exactly that Protestants have rarely doubted that it is the Antichrist which the apostle intended to describe."

Fourthly, you say, "There are, however, plain signs that the world is becoming more ungodly. These are the signs that Scripture itself presents to the church to show the nearness of the day of Christ." Throughout history there have been those who have fallen into the trap of applying all of Scripture, particularly the prophetic portions, to the age in which they were then living. Nevertheless, Peter reminds us that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). In consequence, as far as God is concerned, Christ died just two days ago, and who would be so bold as to try to predict how many further "days" our world has yet to run! Moreover, I hasten to point out that your view of Antichrist is in fact shared by the Roman Catholic Church. Professor F.S. Leahy of Belfast has written:

alarmed by the fact that the Reformers were pointing to the Pope as the Man of Sin, the Jesuit Ribera at the end of the sixteenth century invented, or at least propagated futuristic views of the Anti-christ, and pointed to a solitary Infidel Anti-christ who would appear in the dim future. This is largely the Romanist view today.... Ribera's view soon infected the High Church party. J.N. Darby caught the contagion and finally Dr. C.I. Scofield swallowed the Jesuit's pill. Thus Ribera succeeded beyond his wildest dreams, for the attention of thousands of Protestants became deflected

from the Papacy, a future Infidel Anti-christ was looked for, and the historic Protestant view handed down by the Reformers was despised by many. These are the hard facts of history. A Protestantism saturated with Ribera's Futurism is not the Protestantism of the Reformers, nor is it feared by the Papacy (*The Roman Anti-christ*).

Fifthly and finally, you make the rather astonishing claim that, "With the true church everywhere, the PRC will stand fast in and for the truth. They will confess it. They will defend it to the death. They will compromise nothing." I sincerely trust this will be so — but which of us has had experience of facing persecution, torture, and death? The Scripture cautions us: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Like many others on this side of the Atlantic, I owe a tremendous debt to the Protestant Reformed Churches and have come to love the historic Reformed Faith as outlined in the major Reformed Confessions. There are other matters and interpretations, however, which cannot but be described as *speculative* and, I have to say, that recent editorials of your esteemed paper fall within this category.

Tony Horne
Bristol, England

Response

Scripture teaches that, prior to the coming of Christ, Antichrist will be revealed (II Thess. 2; Rev. 13).

The full reality of Antichrist is political. Antichrist is a world-power, a kingdom (Dan. 7; 11; Rev. 13:1-10).

There is solid evidence that Antichrist will also be an individual human person — the powerful head of the worldwide kingdom of Satan. The precursors of Antichrist in history were great kingdoms with their personal ruler, e.g., Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2; 7). Also, II Thessalonians 2 speaks of "that man of sin"; "the son of perdition"; and "that Wicked (One)."

As the name, "Antichrist," indicates, this coming world-ruler with his universal kingdom will both take Christ's place and oppose the Christ

of Scripture. He will deceive all those nominal Christians who "received not the love of the truth" (II Thess. 2:10). He will persecute the saints with the great tribulation (Dan. 11:33; Rev. 13:7).

Antichrist must be revealed in his time before the Day of Christ can come (II Thess. 2).

This understanding of the biblical doctrine of Antichrist is the Reformed tradition. Herman Hoeksema expresses this tradition in his *Reformed Dogmatics* (pp. 804-815), as well as in his commentary on Revelation, *Behold, He Cometh!* (pp. 451-464).

Before the coming of the Lord on the clouds of heaven, there will be a culmination of the development of the Man of Sin in the power of Antichrist (RD, p. 804).

The ultimate manifestation of Antichrist will assume the form of a political world-power, a kingdom and its ruler, or government (RD, p. 807). In the future there will be the full realization of a great world-power, combining in itself all powers of the earth, with a government which has all the authority of the dragon, the old serpent, the devil (*Behold*, p. 458). Antichrist ... represents both the world-power and its government.... We come to the conclusion that this beast is the symbol of a political government as we know it ... as it naturally culminates in and is represented by its head (*Behold*, p. 454).

And it is not at all inconceivable that this worship shall be offered to one person, the personal Antichrist, at the head of the Antichristian kingdom. Why should it be impossible that an individual should arise, endowed with the power of a universal genius, who is able to create a condition of world prosperity, so that men will be glad to forget that they believe in democracy, and hail this world-savior as their lord and worship him as their god? (RD, p. 811) Let me also warn you not to make the mistake of finding him (Antichrist-DJE) already in his full manifestation and power. Never yet has there been a power such as is pictured here.... Let no one beguile you. This antichristian power is not yet in its full reality (*Behold*, p. 463; cf. A.

Kuyper, *Dictaten Dogmatiek*, Vol. V, J. H. Kok, 1910, pp. 207-236; H. Bavinck, *Geref. Dog.*, Vol. IV, J. H. Kok, 1911, pp. 751ff.; L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, Eerdmans, 1965, pp. 701-703).

The certain truth in the Westminster Confession of Faith's identification of Antichrist with the pope of Rome is that the reality of Antichrist includes false prophecy (I John 2:18,22; Rev. 19:20). Romans 13:11ff. associates with the political Antichrist a second beast that looks like a lamb but speaks as a dragon. This beast exercises all the power of the first beast in order that all the world will worship the first beast. In the future coming of Antichrist the false church, no doubt headed by the Roman Catholic Church, that is, the pope, will play an important role.

Besides, Antichrist has a history. The mystery of iniquity has always been working in various ways. Antiochus Epiphanes, enemy of the covenant people in the inter-testamentary period, was Antichrist-in-type. The Roman Empire that persecuted the church from about A.D. 65 until about the beginning of the 4th century was the typical Antichrist. So also was the persecuting Roman Church of the 16th and 17th centuries developing Antichrist. The Reformers, therefore, were not in error when they regarded the blaspheming, persecuting Roman Catholic Church as Antichrist.

But a doctrine of Antichrist that does not look for a future culmination of the history-long coming of Satan's imitation of God's Christ in a literal world-power uniting all nations under one man is a mistake. Although Charles Hodge took the position that Antichrist is the papacy, even he was forced to acknowledge that "the predictions concerning Antichrist may have had a partial fulfilment in Antiochus Epiphanes, in Nero and Pagan Rome, and in the papacy, and, it may still have a fulfilment in some great antichristian power which is yet to come." That which forced him to this admission was the description of

Antichrist in the book of Revelation (cf. his *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1873, p. 830).

Why a denial that the papacy exhausts the biblical reality of Antichrist should be thought a "disser-vice" to the hundreds of thousands of saints killed by the Roman Catholic Church is not clear. Is the only true martyrdom a martyrdom at the hands of the pope viewed as Antichrist? Were not the Old Testament saints killed by Jezebel, Athaliah, Manasseh, and Nebuchadnezzar genuine martyrs? Were not the Christians tortured and killed by the Jews and by the Roman empire in apostolic and post-apostolic times genuine martyrs? Were not the missionaries killed by the pagans genuine martyrs?

Although I deny that the papacy is exclusively, exhaustively, or even primarily the Antichrist of the Bible, holding that Antichrist is a future kingdom with a personal, political head, I believe, with Article 29 of the Belgic Confession, that the Roman Catholic Church is a false church. As such, she "persecutes those who live holily according to the Word of God, and rebuke her for her errors, covetousness, and idolatry" (cf. my editorial, "God's Continuing Controversy with Unchanged Rome," in the Oct. 15, 1990 issue of the *Standard Bearer*).

The suggestion, in this regard, that my editorial of January 15, 1993, or any of my writings, "pour(s) scorn upon a view of history long held and cherished by ... the majority of the Reformed Church" is false.

The notion that the biblical warning of Christ's coming as a thief means that Christ can come at any moment is a popular misconception. That this is not the meaning of the warning is proved conclusively by Paul's teaching in II Thessalonians 2:1ff. The apostle had taught in the first epistle that Christ comes as a thief in the night (5:2). Nevertheless, in the second epistle he told the Thessalonians that they must not suppose that the Day of Christ was at hand, that is, that it could come at any moment. Two great events had to take place before

Christ's coming: apostasy and Antichrist.

For the Thessalonian Christians Christ's coming as a thief did not imply the possibility of His coming at any moment. Nor does it imply this for us.

I do indeed reject the notion that Christ can come at any moment. This is premillennial, rapture doctrine.

Before Christ comes, Antichrist must be revealed in his time (II Thess. 2).

This is not far off. The saints ought to be seeing this sign and arming themselves with spiritual armament for this last and greatest of the battles of Christ's church.

Let me also warn you that the time (of Antichrist — DJE) is at hand. We know not how soon, but soon it will

be. All the signs of the times point to such a tremendous power, such a league of the nations that has control over all things, to such a unity of all religion, in which man is exalted and the Christ of the Scriptures is blasphemed and His blood trampled under foot. And therefore I would say: the time is at hand! Watch therefore! Let no one beguile you; but watch! (Herman Hoeksema, *Behold*, p. 464).

The exhortation and encouragement that I ventured to give the Protestant Reformed Churches with the true church everywhere, to "stand fast in and for the truth," was qualified by the words, "If the Protestant Reformed Churches see the signs." It is Christ's own promise that those who see the signs with the spiritual sight of faith will endure (cf. Matt. 24:42-46; Luke 22:36).

Did Paul make an "astonishing claim" when he assured the Thessalonian church, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.... For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:4,9)?

Is this how humility addresses the church at the end of the ages: "Beloved saints, Antichrist and the great tribulation are upon you, and it is doubtful whether you will stand fast in and for the truth"?

Two important elements of Reformed eschatology are not speculation, but biblical revelation: Antichrist is a sign of the coming of Christ, and in her war with him the true church will do valiantly. □

— DJE

A Cloud Of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

William Farel: Fiery Evangelist of the Reformation

Introduction

We who are of the Calvin Reformation rightly honor John Calvin as the great Reformer of Geneva and the spiritual father of Calvinistic churches throughout the world. But it is not an exaggeration to say that Calvin's work would not have been possible without the intrepid labors of another Reformer, William Farel, who hacked away the undergrowth of Roman Catholic superstition and plowed the soil of Switzerland so that the seeds of Calvin could be sown and bear their fruit.

Schaff writes of him:

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Farel's work was destructive rather than constructive. He could pull down, but not build up. He was a conqueror, but not an organizer of his conquests; a man of action, not a man of letters; an intrepid preacher, not a theologian. He felt his defects, and handed his work over to the mighty genius of his young friend Calvin. In the spirit of genuine humility and self-denial, he was willing to decrease that Calvin might increase. This is the finest trait in his character.¹

The character which God gave him, forceful and belligerent, admirably suited him for the work of the Reformation and the unique place in the Reformation which he occupied. The work was important, for without it

other Reformers could not have accomplished what they did.

Early Life

William Farel was born near Gap in Dauphiny, in the mountainous regions of the Alps, in the southeastern

¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950) VIII, 238, 239. Schaff has an interesting and helpful, though brief, biography of Farel, which we recommend to our readers.

part of France.² This part of France had at one time been under the influence of the Waldensians, but they had been all but destroyed in France through the horrors of the inquisition.³ He was the oldest of seven children, born from a family which belonged to the nobility, but which had fallen on bad times and was very poor. He was baptized with the name Guillaume, the approximate French equivalent of William. He was born five years after Luther and Zwingli and twenty years before John Calvin. He belongs, therefore, to the first generation of Reformers.

Paris, the center of Roman Catholic studies, beckoned him and, in his studies there, he concentrated on philosophy, theology, and the ancient languages, including Hebrew. He had, at this time, very little religious conviction, although he was zealous for Rome and was, in his own words, "more popish than popery."

But God used these very studies to bring him to faith in the truths of Scripture as set forth in the Reformation. Even in Paris Luther's thoughts were being circulated and discussed, and Farel was brought under the influence of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples. Lefèvre was one of those shadowy figures in the Reformation who himself was convinced of the great truth of justification by faith, but who never could summon the courage to break with Rome and join the Protestant cause. It was Lefèvre who said to the young Farel: "My son, God will renew the world, and you will witness it."

From that point on Farel immersed himself in the Scriptures and was soon (1521) sent to Meaux in France, where he received authority to preach.

And it was in his preaching that his character began to become apparent.

We are told by his contemporaries that he was rather short, always carrying about a gaunt look, and possessing a red and somewhat unkempt beard. He reminded those who saw him of the rough appearance of an Elijah. He was fiery and forceful, not

given to the use of tact, impulsive in his actions and preaching, and one who roared against papal abuses. As zealous as he had once been for Romish practices, so zealous and fierce did he become as a promoter of Reformation causes. He was a man who prepared the way for others, for he could break down, but lacked the gifts to build up. He was no theologian, and he left no significant works which contributed to Reformation thought; he was rather the man who with mighty blows tore down the imposing structure of Roman Catholicism.

He was a man of unsurpassed energy who traveled incessantly until old and worn he died; always on the move, full of fire and courage, as fearless as Luther, but even more radical. His close friend and fellow Reformer, Oecolampadius wrote him: "Your mission is to evangelize, not to curse. Prove yourself to be an evangelist, not a tyrannical legislator." And Zwingli, shortly before his death, admonished him not to labor rashly, but to keep himself for God's work.

Farel hated the pope with a passion and despised all papal ceremonies. His mission in life, as he conceived it, was to destroy every remnant of popery in images, ceremonies, and rituals, which were the standard diet of those held in Rome's chains.

His strength was in his preaching. That is, it was not so much in his careful preparation of sermons, for he mostly preached without preparation, and none of his sermons have come down to us. His strength was in his powerful delivery. Schaff writes:

He turned every stump and stone into a pulpit, every house, street, and market-place into a church; provoked the wrath of monks, priests, and bigoted women; was abused, called 'heretic' and 'devil,' insulted, spit upon, and more than once threatened with death.... Wherever he went he stirred up all the forces of the people, and made them take sides for or against the new gospel.⁴

But Schaff also writes: "No one could

hear his thunder without trembling, or listen to his most fervent prayers without being almost carried up to heaven."⁵

Evangelist

To understand this part of his labors we must try to put Farel in the setting of his times.

Although the views of Luther, and to a lesser extent those of the Swiss theologians, were being circulated, read, and studied in many places, the common people had not as yet heard them. Darkness still covered the land where Farel worked. The Reformation was just beginning in France, Southern Germany, and Switzerland. The people were hypnotized as yet by the priests, bishops, and monks who promoted with zeal the superstitions of Rome. The darkness of corrupt Roman Catholic domination held the people in slavery.

Influenced by Lefèvre, Farel had come to love the truths of the Reformation and had devoted his life to promote them through his fiery preaching.

William Farel was never officially ordained to the ministry, although he had been licensed to preach when he first came to Meaux. He believed that his call came from God,

² I have in my possession two excellent and interesting biographies of William Farel, although both are old and probably out of print. They are: Rev. Wm. M. Blackburn, *William Farel and The Story of the Swiss Reformation* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1865); and: Francis Bevan, *The Life of William Farel* (Edinburgh: Pickering & Inglis). The latter has the interesting and altogether appropriate sub-title: "A Spiritual force in the Great Reformation who nobly endured 'the reproach of Christ.'"

³ See my article on the Waldensians in Volume 68 of *The Standard Bearer*, pp. 380-382.

⁴ Philip Schaff, p. 242.

⁵ Schaff, p. 446.

as that call had come to the prophets in the old dispensation. Nor did he ever stay long in one place, but traveled about in Switzerland, Eastern France, and Southern Germany, bringing his powerful word. No one has been able to compute the miles he traveled. But in all kinds of weather, through the dangers of robbers, brigands, and Romish clerics who hated him, he rode his horse or traveled on foot to areas where the true gospel had not yet been heard.

He aroused the hatred of Romish prelates wherever he went, but drew huge crowds by the fire of his oratory.

To trace his frequent travels would involve us in lengthy lessons in geography. But everywhere he went, his preaching did not permit that town or village or city to remain the same. We can only tell of some of his work and recall with amazement the troubles from which, by God's providential hand, he escaped.

Already in Meaux, France, where Farel began his preaching, he was soon in trouble for his zealous proclamation of biblical doctrine. It was a time in France when persecution of Protestants was beginning and those who had given him permission to preach were nonplussed by his sudden proclamation of biblical truth. He was soon forced to flee for his life, narrowly escaping those who hated him.

In Basel in Switzerland he was instrumental in the conversion of the

great Pelican, who later was professor of Greek and Hebrew in the University of Zurich and became a brilliant Reformation scholar. It was in this city that he visited the great Swiss Reformers: Oecolampadius, Myconius, Haller, and Zwingli.

But it was also in Basel that he ran afoul of the humanist Erasmus, who still had sufficient influence to run Farel out of the city. It seems that Farel called Erasmus "a Balaam," something the learned Erasmus could not forgive. Erasmus wrote the council: "You have in your neighborhood the new evangelist Farel, than whom I never saw a man more false, more virulent, more seditious."

After a short sojourn in Strassburg, where he made the acquaintance of Martin Bucer, Farel was found in 1525 back in France in Montéliard, where he preached in his usual violent manner. On a procession day he pulled the image of St. Anthony out of a priest's hand and threw it from a bridge into a river. He barely escaped being pulled in pieces by a mob.

Not only was Farel fearless, but he refused to be swayed by the approval of men. In Neuchâtel of Switzerland he publicly rebuked a noble woman who had left her husband. When she refused to return to him, Farel roared against her and her supporters from the pulpit and created such a riot that he was saved only by a vote of the council, which was moved by his vast energy.

He once interrupted a priest who was urging the people to worship Mary more zealously, and became the victim of a mob of women who were bent on tearing him to shreds.

In Metz he preached in a Dominican cemetery, booming out his message over the ringing of the convent bells, which were rung furiously in an attempt to drown his voice.

While celebrating the Lord's Supper on Easter, he and those with him were attacked by an armed band. Many were killed or wounded. Farel himself, though wounded, found refuge in a castle and escaped the city by leaving in disguise.

At 72 years old, still preaching, he was thrown into prison, rescued by friends, and, as Paul, saved in a basket let down from the walls.

His life was one of constant peril, but nothing could deter him. Not all the power of Rome itself could move him to abandon his work.

While we can, if we choose, criticize Farel for his vehemence and tactlessness (as his contemporaries often did), one wonders sometimes whether the times in which we live do not require preachers of equal courage. His trust was in His God, and the labor of the Lord He was intent on doing, come what would.

His greatest labors were the work he performed as a co-worker of Calvin. But the story of this work must be left to another time. □

Special Article

Rev. Audred Spriensma

Our Day of Prayer

Rev. Spriensma is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Grandville, Michigan.

Again March comes and it is time for the annual National Day of Prayer. God's people sometimes wonder why they have another worship service in their busy schedules. And the Pastor knows that it means

one more sermon to prepare. The question is—why? Why a Prayer Day service?

Do we come together to pray because our President calls the citizens of our nation to go to some

higher being, however one may conceive it to exist, and ask for his benevolent help and blessing?

Many evangelicals are asking, "How can we pray?" "For what are we to pray?" "Do we pray for a president that we perhaps wish were not in the White House, to undo any good that former presidents seemed to have accomplished ... allowing gays into the military, doing an about-face on many of the issues relating to abortion, raising taxes that he promised not to do?"

Shall we pray "God bless America," as if America was God's own people, God's chosen nation? Shall we overlook our national sins—including, yes, sodomy, that is permitted and legalized?

Shall we pray for the economy? Shall we pray for the crops that will soon be planted? Or, since overproduction seems to be a problem, shall we pray that *our* crops do well but not our neighbor's, or that our crops in America do well but not the crops elsewhere, so that there will be a good market for our crops?

For industry, how shall we pray? Do we pray that the manufacturing plants that are going overseas to reduce costs will prosper? Do we pray for the unions that call their members to strike to demand higher wages or to ensure better benefits? Do we pray that somewhere in this dog-eat-dog world we will have a place to earn our daily bread?

As legitimate as some of our complaints, our unhappiness, and shaking of our head might be, our calling is not to grumble but to pray!

* * * * *

It is time for another Prayer Day Service. Why pray? Who are called to pray? To whom do we pray?

We come to our Prayer Day service, not because our president encourages his citizens to look to some higher being. We have a Prayer Day service, not because it is the popular thing to do, but because our Church Order demands it (Articles 66, 67).

In time of war, pestilence, national calamities, and other great af-

flictions, the pressure of which is felt throughout the Churches, it is fitting that the Classes proclaim a Day of Prayer.

The Churches shall observe, in addition to the Sunday, also Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, the Day of Prayer, the National Thanksgiving Day, and Old and New Year's Day.

Moreover, as God's people we come together to worship on the Day of Prayer because our elders call us to worship, and in them Christ calls us to the divine worship service.

But, I propose that we observe the Day of Prayer also because corporate prayer is important in the life of God's people. As God's children we live in this world, with all our needs, affected by that world. So it is our privilege, it is our duty, and it is our need to pray! We heed the injunction of the Psalmist: "trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us" (Ps. 62:8).

Because there is a new politician in town are we less eager to pray for him? Maybe the best thing that can come out of the recent change of President in the United States is that evangelicals quit looking at their president, or lawmakers, or policies made as bringing about the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Our hopes do not rest upon presidents (godly or ungodly, Republican or Democrat) or lawmakers in Washington. Our trust is in God at all times. God is our refuge!

We pray. We pray for our leaders, godly leaders and ungodly leaders. That is our calling. The Belgic Confession, Art. 36, says:

It is the bounden duty of everyone, of what state, quality, or condition soever he may be, to subject himself to the magistrates; to pay tribute, to show due honor and respect to them, and to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the Word of God; to supplicate for them in their prayers, that God may rule and guide them in all their ways and that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

This article is based on I Timothy 2: 1-4: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty...."

Do you ask, "Must we pray for ungodly leaders too?" My answer is, "Most certainly we do." Romans 13: 1 tells us that God has given magistrates their authority and rule. "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." God controls and governs leaders so that His eternal plan is carried out by them. They are but instruments in His hand. This is what we read in Proverbs 21:1: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." That is true whether it be a President Reagan, President Bush, or President Clinton, or any other elected government official. So we pray for our government officials because they are "the ministers of God to do thee good" (Rom. 13:4).

This does not mean that we ask God to cause our leaders to prosper in all their efforts if they are sinful. For as we approach the last evil days, those efforts will be directed more and more against the church and God's people. Make no mistake about it. We see it increasingly today. But we pray for our leaders and our nation so that, as we read in II Timothy 2:2, "we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," so that the gospel might go forth unhindered and we might continue to lead godly lives unmolested.

We must pray for the economy. While the rich get richer and the poor poorer; while in North America we bathe in luxury at the same time that in many third world countries people die of starvation and malnutrition; and while the economy causes resentment, greed, misery, and hatred—what shall we pray? Shall we, dare we, tell God how He should govern the affairs of the world? Or shall we advise the Most Mighty how everyone should share equally in the wealth

of His creation? Shall we adopt any of the policies of the world and present it to the Lord as the best economic policy? God forbid! God forbid that we come in our prayers with that arrogance. How are we then to come? Humbly we ask for our daily bread, not because we are worthy but only for Christ's sake. Humbly we ask for our daily bread so that we may care for our families and have to give to the poor. Humbly we acknowledge that all that we have is of the Lord. Since He is the giver of all good gifts, we pray that we may be thankful in prosperity, patient in adversity, and full of confident trust as to the future. He will supply all our needs.

We pray because God is in control. We do not seek to change God's plan, but by prayer we come into submission of God's plan and purposes.

We pray not only for ourselves but for all of Christ's church. We pray that His church will prosper, that it will grow numerically and spiritually. We pray that she will live anti-thetically in the world as a light in darkness, setting forth the only true hope. Not in government! Not in human leaders! Not in economic policies! Not in legal decisions! We trust only in the Lord.

And in our prayer services we pray that in all these things God will receive the glory; that His will will be fulfilled; and that His Name will be praised.

The Day of Prayer is for the church. Only true Christians can pray. They have been given the new hearts that know and love the true God. Only they have an entrance made for them to address "the High and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." They

pray to show their thankfulness. They pray because they know that by means of their cries God is pleased to give them His grace and Spirit.

Let us pray, beloved. Let us pray earnestly. We pray not for the world, but for the church living in a sinful, ugly world. Corporately let us bring our prayers for all our needs to the throne of grace. In our churches may the Day of Prayer not just be held once a year when the President calls for it, but many times, called by our churches (C.O., Art. 66), especially as we see the evil days approaching. The pressure of afflictions is felt among the churches. Pray, not for the worldly interests and agendas of men and leaders, but for God's plan and glory. Pray that God will give us grace to stand. And pray that God's kingdom will be fully revealed. □

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers

The Reformed Family: MUSIC

"Is any merry? let him sing psalms."
James 5:13

Is your family happy? Do you talk together, work together, play together? Do you sing together, in your home, as a family? Is singing together an expression of your happiness? Is singing Psalms together one of your merriest occasions?

There are, in the Scriptures, lit-

erally hundreds of references to making music unto the Lord. "Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings" (Ps. 9:11). Like prayer and studying God's Word, music belongs to our holy duty. It is not optional. The birds of the air sing (Ps. 104:12); the mountains and forests burst into song (Is. 44:23); the trees of the field clap their hands (Is. 55:12). Man praises God with the voice of singing and upon the instruments. Music is our gracious privilege. And it is a privilege. When the disciples began to rejoice and praise God during the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the Pharisees were critical of this wild exuberance. But Jesus reprimanded these detractors sharply with the words: "I tell you that, if these

should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19:40). He will be praised! If not by His people, then stones will serve this purpose.

For music the adage holds true: "One man's meat is another man's poison." You like Bach; I prefer Beethoven. You like sixteenth century plain songs; I prefer anthems. You like uplifting tunes; I prefer plaintive ones. You like music with a pronounced beat; I prefer smooth, flowing music. Both of us must agree, however, that music is an integral part of the believer's life. It has enhanced the joyous events in his life, and intensified his feelings of remorse and sadness. Martin Luther wrote: "If any man despises music, as all fanatics do, for him I have no liking;

Mrs. Lubbers is a teacher in South Holland Protestant Reformed School. Interpersed in her article are the expressions of some of her students regarding their favorite Psalter numbers.

for music is a gift and grace of God, not an invention of men. Thus it drives out the devil and makes people cheerful. Then one forgets all wrath, impurity, and other devices."

Is it true, then, that there is no standard by which a Christian can measure music? Is music merely a matter of taste and preference?

As Reformed believers and families and churches, we sing the Psalms. In our worship services we sing the Psalms exclusively. This is, and must be, an uncompromising position. But do we also sing the Psalms in our homes and classrooms for devotions, and pleasure, and recreation? The 150 Psalms of David were meant to be sung. As John Calvin wrote in the *Preface to the Genevan Psalter*: "Wherefore, although we look far and wide and search on every hand, we shall not find better songs nor songs better suited to that end than the Psalms of David which the Holy Spirit made and uttered through him. And for this reason, when we sing them we may be certain that God puts the words in our mouths as if Himself sang in us to exalt His glory."

The Psalter Number I Like Best

I like *Psalter* #40. I like it because it is about God's law, telling how pure it is. This *Psalter* number asks that the Lord will hear my prayer. *Psalter* #40 says that it is better to have the law than to be rich! It is far better than gold.

This song says that God's law and commandments are pure with no mistakes. If we follow His commandments and laws we will have a great reward — heaven.

David VanderMeulen
Grade 5

Enemies of the Psalms would tell us that Psalm singing is unsuitable for twentieth century believers. Since the Psalms are Old Testament, they do not adequately span the full Christian experience. The Psalms do not include any Christmas carols. So

often the writers of the Psalms, especially David and Asaph, speak of wrath and judgment and lots of other unpleasant topics. Should we sing of such?

History has shown that Psalms were the only songs sung by the New Testament church, and, therefore, by Christ Himself. Subsequent history illustrates, moreover, that heretics, such as the Gnostics and the Arians, first introduced songs other than Psalms into the worship service. The Council of Laodicea which met in AD 360 forbade the use of hymns in the churches. Psalm singing was preserved in the monasteries during the Dark Ages. It was one of the benefits of the Reformation that Psalm singing was reinstated in the churches.

The singing of Psalms is as appropriate for us today as for the Old Testament believers and New Testament Christians. "How blest is he whose trespass/Hath freely been forgiven" (*Psalter* number 83) is as timely for the 1993 Christian as for the 993 BC saint. Has our awareness of sin been diminished throughout the years? Has our need for grace and forgiveness become obsolete? Have the sovereignty and majesty of God grown tarnished? If we discard the Psalms, it will not be that the message of the Psalms has changed; it can only be that we have changed. The one thing the Psalms do not lack is content. This is primarily the reason why they are so eminently singable. The Psalms are rich and full and deep. No songbook runs the full gamut of human need, dependency upon God for salvation, and paeans of thankfulness for all His greatness as does the *Psalter*. Most importantly, the *Psalter* versifications are God-centered. Many hymns are Christocentric, whereas Christ Himself was very careful to give all glory and honor to God: "And I seek not mine own glory..." (John 8:50).

I am somewhat alarmed with the influx of new songs which are steadily thrumming their way into our homes (by radio stations such as Moody in the Chicagoland area), our classrooms, and church choir music.

Songs which are admittedly crafted by "tunesmiths" (those who cleverly weld an enchanting melody, catchy chorus, and easily memorized words), but are notably lacking in substance. Many of these are patterned after the love ballads of country music, and are sung to the rhythm and beat of society's demand for amplified sound. Those who sing them voice their own shallow personal experiences and longings. They sing of such things as "placing one's heart on the altar of Jesus" and of "sweet surrender." These are no modern day Asaphs or Miriams.

I like *Psalter* #306 because it comes from Psalm 113, and I like that Psalm. Number 306 is also very bouncy and fast, so it's fun to sing. In this *Psalter* number there are all black notes.

Psalter #306 is mostly about praise; it also says God reigns over us and is very mighty. In stanza 3 we find that we can rely on God for any problem. This song comforts me sometimes when I am feeling down or something is wrong — I can still rely on God.

I've liked this song for about two years now, and I love to sing it.

Valerie Worries
Grade 6

In our homes and classrooms, may we sing hymns? May we sing spiritual songs, gospel songs, anthems, choruses?

We certainly may. Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" stands as a testimony to a soundly Reformed hymn. But for every hymn one opts to sing, be prepared to critique as well as to enjoy. For example, the Wesleys (Samuel, Charles, and John) wrote many hymns. One of the Wesleyan beliefs of sanctification maintains that it is possible for a truly devout believer to attain heavenly perfection on earth and thus live without consciously sinning. When a man posits such a belief, his hymns become suspect, too. In fact, "Rock of Ages," by Augustus

Toplady, was written specifically to refute this Wesleyan belief. Then, too, many hymns speak of personal feelings and emotional responses to the facts and doctrines of the Bible. It is interesting to note that the familiar hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," written by Isaac Watts in 1707, was controversial already in its day for this very reason. One must also remember that the primary purpose for singing is not to make me feel good, but to bring glory and honor to God. John Calvin, a Reformer who had very little use for hymns, wrote in the Foreword to his 1543 *Psalter*: "There must be a great difference between the music used to entertain...and the psalms which are sung in the church in the presence of God and His angels."

There can be no criticism of the Psalms. To criticize the Psalms would be to criticize God. To set the Psalms to versification must be careful work, the work of godly men who esteem the words and intent of the Psalms. I personally have no criticism of the *Psalter* versifications and tunes, although I am not deaf to the arguments of those who do. Some, for instance, take exception to the tunes of William Bradbury, a pioneer in writing music for the American Sun-

My Favorite *Psalter* Number and Why I Love to Sing It

My favorite *Psalter* number is 418 and is called "Praise the Lord, Ye Lands."

I like this *Psalter* number because it is a joyful and fast-moving song, not sad and slow. I also like this song because it is a song of praise toward the Lord. It shows that He is Lord of the earth.

This song is telling us to Praise the Lord, and spread His fame all over the earth so others may hear and believe in the Lord. Also, we are to lift our voice and sing glory to our Lord.

I like many joyful songs. I just think this one is my favorite song.

Pamela Zandstra
Grade 5

My Favorite *Psalter* Number

My favorite *Psalter* number is #55; it has been my favorite ever since I got my *Psalter* in 2nd grade. I like this song because it always assures me that God will take care of me and supply my needs. I love all the verses and I think that the tune is very pretty. *Psalter* #55 has a pretty low tune except on line 3 where it reaches a high F.

This *Psalter* number is taken from Psalm 23 and the tune is written by Alexander Ewing. This song is titled "The Good Shepherd." *Psalter* #55 also tells me that God is a good, true God and will be there when I have sinned. If I truly am sorry for my sins, He will be willing and ready to have mercy on me, a sinner.

Stefanie Bruinsma
Grade 6

day schools, as tunes which are syrupy and sentimental. Maybe our present *Psalter* needs improvement. Possibly there are tunes which do not fit the words. Perhaps it is true that some of the tunes are "bar-room" songs and need to be deleted from the *Psalter*. I'm not up on all that, although none of them sound all that ribald to me. Usually, the criticism of *Psalter* tunes is that the melodies are too mournful, reflecting Old Testament gloom not at all like a happy, born again, Hallelujah-Praise Jesus-believers should sing. The 1912 *Psalter*, as our churches presently sing it, has served my rather unsophisticated musical needs for over 50 years. And to delete *Psalter* number 182, as I have heard some would like to do, would not go unchallenged.

Amazing liberties are taken with the Psalms in today's culture. No one in reciting a well-known poem omits a stanza. No one in a faithful Shakespearean rendition skips over a few lines. Why are we then so careless with Psalm versifications? The Presbyterians almost always sing all the stanzas of any given song. If any *Psalter* improvements are forthcoming let this be included: to render faithfully each Psalm, or segment of it, in a singable number of stanzas.

And then we should sing all of them — the complete Psalm. (See *Psalter* #289 for a versification of too many stanzas.)

The *Psalter* — we heard those sweet words first from the lips of our mothers. We heard them sung long before we understood their meaning. They reassured us during the thunder and lightning:

The voice of Jehovah,
The God of all glory,
Rolls over the waters,
The thunders awake;
The voice of Jehovah,
Majestic and mighty,
Is heard, and the cedars
Of Lebanon break.

(*Psalter* number 76)

And their words will comfort us on our deathbeds when we have last contact with most of the things of this world.

A rich musical heritage is ours through the inspiration of the Psalms. In a day when many are lamenting the musical dearth in their churches, let us dig in, and hang on with both hands to our *Psalter*. □

Why I Love to Sing *Psalter* Number 227

My favorite *Psalter* number is 227 and I love to sing it because it talks about the Lord God. Most of all I like it because it is not too low. The song talks about our heart and flesh crying out to God. I like this little saying because we should cry for God, and I am that way sometimes.

The second verse tells of the swallow finding a nest where it is peaceful for her young. And I like that because it sings of nature and animals.

A little later in the song it talks about God's love sheltering me. By that stanza you can tell that God is caring for us by using the example of a bird and her young. I like to hear that God is caring for me. It makes me feel that I am in safety.

Michelle VanBaren
Grade 5

Book Reviews

The Christian Faith, by Theodore Beza. Tr. James Clark. Lewes, East Sussex, England: Focus Christian Ministries Trust, 1992. Pp. i-122, plus index of subjects, \$8.20 (paper). [Reviewed by the Editor.]

There is really only one thing that needs to be said about this book to recommend it to all our readers: It is the English translation of Theodore Beza's personal confession of the Christian faith. This confession, written at the request of Beza's father, was first published in 1558 at Geneva, as *Confession De Foi Du Chretien*. In it, Beza tells us in the "Preface," he has written "in the best order that I can, that which I have learned in the Christian Religion through the reading of the Old and New Testament, with reference to the most faithful commentators" (p. iv).

I have been given to understand that this is the first translation of the work into English.

The Christian Faith is Beza's concise explanation of the entire body of Christian doctrine. Following the order of the Apostles' Creed, he treats of the Trinity and eternal providence; God the Father and creation; Jesus Christ the Son and redemption; the Holy Spirit and salvation; and the church. A concluding chapter gives the Reformer's view of the "Last

Judgement." This includes the declaration:

As for the rest, the mad fantasies of those who think they can determine when this day shall come, the speculations of old women regarding the Antichrist, the joys of paradise and the pains of hell, these are debates which we not only despise but detest with all our heart (p. 120).

To choose among the sections would border on the foolish. This compressed work is the Reformed orthodoxy of Geneva at its most flourishing period. Calvin was still living, and his successor was in his prime. But a couple of selections will serve as examples of the whole.

Beza establishes God's sovereignty with regard to man's fall in these words:

But God, being not only very righteous, but also very merciful, had according to His infinite wisdom, eternally established a way to turn all the evils to His great glory: to the greater manifestation of His infinite goodness (Rom. 3:21-25), towards those whom He has chosen eternally so as to be glorified in their salvation (Rom. 8:29; 9:23). And, on the other side, He has turned the sin of man to the manifestation of His sovereign power and His wrath, by the just condemnation of the vessels of wrath

prepared for destruction (Rom. 9:22; Ex. 9:16) (p. 9).

This was Beza's faith concerning the spiritual condition of fallen men and women:

This corruption makes us truly incapable and even enemies of all good, and enslaves us totally to sin.... The will is not constrained, yet cannot but continually desire only evil.... The nature of unregenerate man (that is to say, of a man who is not restored and as recreated by grace) is not only damaged, it is also totally corrupted and voluntarily enslaved to sin (p. 8).

The lengthy chapter on the church is outstanding. The treatment of the sacraments is superb.

The conviction that was basic to the book was also basic to the entire Reformation: "The Kingdom of God is not a Kingdom of ignorance, but of faith, and, consequently, of knowledge; for it is beyond the ability of anyone to believe that which he is ignorant of" (Beza's "Preface," p. iv). In this conviction, Beza and the Reformation were right. Where knowledge is — the knowledge taught in this book — there, and there only, is the Kingdom of God.

The book can be ordered from Evangelical Press, 12 Wooler Street, Darlington, Co. Durham, DL1 1RQ, England. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

We start this installment of the "News" with a few Young People's Activities.

If over the years you have acquired a taste for really hot chili as I

have, then you will be interested to note that the Young People's Society of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX recently sponsored a chili supper for their congregation. I can only assume that a congregation located in the heart of Texas, home of some of the world's hottest chili peppers, would enjoy a really good and hot chili. Only two things were required for Trinity's

membership to attend. First, a good hearty appetite and second a willingness to donate to this year's Y.P. Convention.

The young people of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada invited their entire congregation out for an evening of fun and fellowship. Planned activities included basketball and volleyball fol-

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

lowed by an ice cream social. Proceeds again went for this year's convention.

For several weeks leading up to Sunday, February 7, members of the Young People's Society of the Loveland, CO PRC were busy encouraging the congregation there to submit requests of favorite *Psalter* numbers to them. Then, after the evening worship service on February 7, they sponsored an All Request Singing for everyone's enjoyment.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Peace PRC, Lansing, IL recently reported, by way of a newsletter to their congregation, on their activities for the past year. Included in their report was information that, after many months of dealing with the U.S. Postal Service, they finally received a bulk mailing permit. Their intentions are to put this permit to immediate use by mailing five successive letters over a five-month period to five hundred people in the Lansing area. These letters will deal with some basic truths of the Reformed faith, and will also invite the reader to a Peace worship service.

In another venture, Peace's Evangelism Committee placed an ad entitled "Is the King James Version Still the Best?" in *Christianity Today*. Even though this small ad appeared only once, Peace received about eighty requests for their pastor's pamphlet on the KJV.

The Evangelism Committee of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, with the approval of its consistory, is planning a series of three meetings to focus on one's calling to do personal evangelism. Plans called for a short presentation by their pastor, followed by discussion. Session One will focus on one's responsibility to be a personal witness. Session Two will focus on knowing the distinctive truths of the gospel of which we are to give testimony. And Session Three will focus on practical questions of our approach to people when we are

speaking to them about the truth of God.

Mission Activities

In a letter dated January 22, Rev. Ron Hanko, missionary-elect of our churches to Northern Ireland, writes to his calling congregation, the Hudsonville, MI PRC, that he and his family are "both excited and apprehensive as more and more of the necessary preparations are made for our move to Northern Ireland. As each step in the preparations takes us closer, it all begins to seem more real." And later, at the conclusion of the letter, he writes that "at this point, we are planning to be in Michigan around March 4 or 5. If the Lord continues to open the way for us we will see you then."

Congregational Activities

Miss Agatha Lubbers, long-time faculty member and administrator of Covenant Christian High School in Walker, MI, was the featured speaker at a combined society meeting of the Adult Bible Societies of our Peace and South Holland, IL congregations on January 26. Miss Lubbers spoke on the topic, "The New Age Movement," a subject she is very familiar with, having taught (and is presently teaching) a course on cults at Covenant.

Along with a month's worth of bulletins from Trinity PRC in Houston, TX came a note which read in part that "In the providence of God, four families who live at quite a distance from our church home have been attending services and in order to facilitate their attendance, beginning January 31, the second service will be at 3:00 p.m." So bear that in mind if you find yourself headed for Texas and our Trinity congregation anytime soon.

Ministerial Calls

On January 28th the congregation of our Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI met and extended a call to Rev. C. Haak to serve them as their undershepherd.

From a trio including Revs.

Mahtani, T. Miersma, and Moore, Houston called Rev. Jaikishin Mahtani. Rev. Mahtani has accepted the call.

Food For Thought

He values not Christ at all who does not value Christ above all.

Augustine



ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 5, 1993, our parents,

**MINARD and CORA
VANDEN TOP,**

celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary.

We rejoice with them and are thankful to our covenant God for the godly upbringing, love, and care they have given us these many years.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."

- * Jerry and Karen VandenTop and family
- * John and Judy Bouma and family
- * Duane and Bev Nette and family
- * Henry and Marlene VandenTop and family
- * Terry and Lisa VanDenTop and family
- * Brent and Shari Dommissee

Doon, Iowa

TEACHER NEEDED

The Board of Adams St. Christian School is accepting applications for a teaching position in the elementary grades for the 1993-1994 school year. Qualified applicants are encouraged to submit a resume to the school, attn.:

Education Committee
1150 Adams St. S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49507.

THE STANDARD BEARER

P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI 49468-0603

SECOND CLASS
Postage Paid at
Grandville, Michigan

Spring Lecture/Conference on Personal Witnessing

Friday, April 2, 1993
Saturday, April 3, 1993

Speakers:

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop
Pastor of Bethel
Protestant Reformed Church
on
"Winning Souls"
Friday 7:30 P.M.

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg
Pastor of Kalamazoo
Protestant Reformed Church
on
"Witnessing Under Persecution"
with slide presentation on Romania
Friday 8:30 P.M.

Rev. Steven Key
Pastor of Randolph
Protestant Reformed Church
on
"Preparing Yourself to Give an
Answer"
Saturday 9:30 A.M.

Question/answer session
and open discussion
Saturday 10:30 A.M.

at
Hope Protestant
Reformed Church
1580 Ferndale S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

If overnight accommodations are
necessary
call (616) 532-8737 or 667-3389.

Tapes available from
Ken Elzinga
3277 Lombard
Grandville, MI 49418
Phone (616) 532-8737

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 12, 1993, our beloved
parents,

**MR. and MRS. ALLEN R.
BRUMMEL,**

celebrated their 25th wedding anni-
versary.

We are grateful to our covenant
God for our God-fearing parents who
taught us the ways of the Lord. May
the Lord continue to bless and keep
them in the coming years as they
continue to teach us through their love
and godly example.

"We will show forth thy praise to
all generation" (Psalm 79:136).

- * Allan and Crysta Brummel
- * Nathan Brummel
- * Jeff and Jodi Baker
- * Shari Brummel
- * Tiffany Brummel

Edgerton, Minnesota

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 15 our parents,
**JONATHAN and MARY
SCHWARZ,**

will celebrate their 40th wedding anni-
versary.

We thank the Lord for both of
them, for the good example of a Chris-
tian walk together, and for the love
they have always shown to us all.

May God continue to bless them.
"But the mercy of the Lord is from
everlasting to everlasting upon them
that fear him, and his righteousness
unto children's children" (Psalm
103:17).

- * Joanna Straayer
Brenda
- * Marvin and Esther Schwarz
Jennifer, Kayla, Jonathan
- * Ray and Joy Schwarz

Loveland, Colorado

PUBLIC LECTURE

Subject:
"Satanism"

Speaker:
Rev. Charles Terpstra
(pastor of South Holland [IL] PRC)

Place:
Loveland Protestant
Reformed Church
Loveland, CO 80537
telephone: (303) 667-1347

Time:
7:30 P.M.
Friday, March 26, 1993

* * * * *

Everyone is cordially invited.

NOTICE!!

All standing and special commit-
tees of Synod, as well as individuals
who wish to address Synod 1993, are
hereby reminded that all material for
the 1993 Synod of the Protestant Re-
formed Churches should be in the
hands of the Stated Clerk no later than
April 1. Please send material to the
Stated Clerk:

Rev. M. Joostens
2016 Tekonsha S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506.