



The Standard Bearer

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

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A Thousand Years As One Day

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

II Peter 3:8, 9

The year of our Lord 2000!
The beginning of the third millennium!

Are you surprised that the world is still here?

Doesn't the Bible talk about the day of the Lord's return and the destruction of this present creation? "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10).

And doesn't the New Testament, written shortly after Jesus' departure into heaven, emphasize

that this catastrophic end of the present creation was at hand? "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer" (I Pet. 4:7).

And here we are at the beginning of the third millennium. It has been 2,000 years since the birth of Christ (although Jesus was probably born 4 years earlier than the date commonly understood by the church for so long a time). It is well over 1900 years since the promise of His return was given. What do we make of this? Has the Lord forgotten?

The saints of the early church had the same questions. It was a time of persecution for them. They were eagerly awaiting the return of the Lord to judge their enemies and exalt them into glory. But the Lord didn't come. Some wondered if the Lord had become slack con-

cerning His promise, that is, whether He was slow to keep His promise because He was either reluctant or unconcerned. There were even those outside the church who began to scoff, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

In response Peter reminds the church that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Sadly, some have missed the point Peter makes here. Some have taken this to mean that the six creation days of Genesis 1 are not necessarily literal 24-hour days. These days, they say, can be understood as long periods of time. For one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. So we are told that you can have it both ways: you can embrace the idea of an old earth as taught by evolution and still hold

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to the Bible. In a different vein, some in the early church used this passage to predict the duration of history. God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. Since one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, there will be 6,000 years and then a thousand-year sabbatical millennium in which Christ shall reign.

The truth expressed here is rather that what for the Lord is a short time may for us be a long time; and what may be a long time for the Lord may appear to be only a short time for us. This is because the Lord is eternal and has the perspective of eternity, whereas we are creatures of time, who appear briefly on the stage of history and then are swept away in death. In keeping with this, God has perfect knowledge and understanding of all things. Did He not predetermine the course of history in His eternal counsel? In comparison, our knowledge of things is very limited. So it is that what appears to be a long time to us, a thousand years, may to the Lord appear to be only a short time, a mere day. And what to the Lord may be a long time may to us and our limited perspective be only a short time. We experience this even among ourselves. A young person may consider the time required to find a suitable marriage partner or to get a college degree to be a long time. But an older and wiser parent may see this as a relatively short time. In turn, a time of sin for a younger person may seem only a little while; whereas to a grieving parent the same time seems to be an eternity.

This principle is to be applied to the return of Christ and the final salvation of the church.

From our perspective it appears as though the Lord is in no hurry to return. He promised to return. He indicated that He was coming quickly (Rev. 22:12). But He has not returned yet. And now we begin the third millennium since His first coming. What a long

time this is. Especially to the church in persecution this appears to be a long time.

But to the Lord this is not a long time at all.

For the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. What is a couple thousand years compared to God's eternity? What to us is a long time is hardly any time at all to the Lord.

The Lord knows the beginning from the end. For He has predetermined all things that shall ever exist and take place. He has so ordered them that they will accomplish the salvation of the church and her final glory in the best possible way. From God's all knowing perspective, the day of His coming is not far away. But we do not have such knowledge and insight. From our limited perspective, what is really near at hand seems far away.

But there is more. When we begin to wonder why the Lord hasn't returned by this time, there is also God's long-suffering to consider. God is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Long-suffering.

Long-suffering is to endure something for a long time, to exercise long patience with a difficult situation or person.

This is also God's long-suffering.

God is long-suffering to us-ward. This us-ward is not the human race generally but the elect of God that form the heart of the human race. Peter's two epistles were addressed to essentially the same churches, to the "strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..." (I Pet. 1:1). Peter is speaking of God's long-suffering to that group of churches and the elect church that would follow them in history.

The elect church of God is under persecution and hardship. So

she looks eagerly for the coming of the Lord, in order that she might be delivered from all woe and receive the fullness of salvation. And the divine heart of God goes out to His people. How He is filled with compassion with them in their suffering. How He longs to deliver them by destroying the world in judgment and receiving His church into glory. But it is not time for that yet. It is premature. Certain things must still be accomplished. So the Lord tarries. He is not standing idly by, waiting. No, as Lord of heaven and earth He is busy working to accomplish what must be done so that He can come in judgment to make all things new. In the meantime the people of God suffer here below. And the Lord bears with their suffering. He is long-suffering to us-ward.

That explains why the Lord has not yet come.

What is the Lord doing that must be completed before He returns? He is bringing His elect to repentance and salvation.

God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Many understand this desire and work of God to apply to everyone, without exception. This interpretation not only contradicts the clear testimony of Scripture that God does not intend the salvation of all; it is also in conflict with the main idea of God's Word here. Peter is speaking of God's long-suffering to "us-ward," that is, to the elect. Consequently, when he then speaks of God's not being willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, Peter obviously refers to the same group, to the elect of God. God is not willing that any of them should perish but that all of them should come to repentance.

So the situation is that God longs to come and deliver His saints from all their woes and burdens. However, He has elect that must be brought to repentance. Some are born but have not yet

been saved. Others must still be born. God is not willing that any of them should perish. He will have them all in due time come to repentance and salvation. And so in His long-suffering He tarries, to give room for the repentance and

salvation of all His elect church.

This makes clear our calling as we now enter this third millennium.

We must walk in true repentance before God.

We must be faithful as saints and church to proclaim the gospel

of repentance and salvation in Christ Jesus. For this is what the Lord uses to bring others to Christ.

And we must be patient until the Lord returns, knowing that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation (II Pet. 3:15). □

Editorial

How Then Will We Live?

Knowing the truth of Scripture about the second coming of Jesus Christ, how then will we live?

Believing that His coming is near, how then will we live?

The end of an old year, century, and millennium and the beginning of the new markers of time speak to the heart of the true church of the coming of Jesus Christ. The passing of time has such a voice by virtue of Christ's Word, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20). This Word presses time into the service of the second, bodily coming of Him who is now Lord of time as He is Lord of all.

The foolish world gapes at the dramatic, relentless, speedy march of time as a cow stares stupidly at a gate. The most that the world can make of a new millennium is that their computers might fail. Ignoring time's loud warning to seek righteousness (for the Lamb comes for judgment), the world anxiously stockpiles foodstuffs, empties the stores of generators, and makes a run on the banks.

The world is hopeless.

Not so the church.

On the first day of the new millennium, the year of our Lord 2000,

the church eagerly looks forward to the coming of Jesus Christ.

As the editorial of December 1, 1999 explained, His coming is near. Belief of this nearness makes a difference in the life of the church. The biblical, Reformed, amillennial doctrine of the last things, embraced by a true faith, has powerful, practical effect on the church and her members. The gracious gospel of the coming of Christ for our public justification and perfect salvation calls us to live in a manner that befits this coming.

Christ is coming! Christ's coming is near!

How then will we live?

Scripture's instruction in the doctrine of the last things is always accompanied by a calling. The calling is that one who believes the truth about the last things live and behave in a way appropriate to the truth believed. If one does not live any differently from those who do not know the doctrine of the last things, he shows that he has no genuine knowledge of the doctrine at all.

Everyone who has the hope that he will see God and be like Him, when He appears in the coming of Christ, purifies himself (I John 3:2,3).

Those who look for the new

heavens and earth that will be formed out of the dissolving of the present heavens and the burning up of the present earth in the day of God are exhorted to be the kind of persons who may be found of God "in peace, without spot, and blameless," in that day (II Pet. 3:10-18).

That Christian workingman who expects the coming of the Lord, which draws nigh, is called to endure patiently the unjust treatment he receives from his employer (James 5:7,8).

Live in Hope!

Fundamentally, the biblical truth of the end calls us to have the coming of Jesus Christ as our constant, lively hope. By constant, lively hope is meant that the coming of Jesus is always in our mind, as precious to us, and that it is always the desire of our heart. The coming of Jesus must be the *one and only* hope in our life. The coming of Christ is not merely one among many hopes. Nor is it even the greatest hope. But it is the hope that determines all other hopes and the hope to which all other hopes are subservient.

Scripture teaches that the coming of Christ is the one, great hope of the church.

Jesus' parable of the persistent widow teaches that the elect cry night and day for the coming of the Son of man, to avenge them upon their enemies (Luke 18:1-8).

Romans 8:23 teaches that everyone who has the firstfruits of the Spirit longs for the redemption, or resurrection, of the body, which is the outstanding blessing of salvation that Jesus will bring at His coming. Such is the intensity of the desire of every child of God for the resurrection of the body, and thus for the coming of Christ, that he *groans* for it. The importance of this powerful desire for the coming of Christ is nothing less than this, that we are saved by it (v. 24).

The preceding context informs us that the whole creation shares our hope: it is groaning for deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (vv. 19-22). This, of course, it will enjoy when Christ returns.

The Bible ends in Revelation 22:20 with the church responding to Jesus' assurance that He comes quickly by praying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Obviously, this is not *a* petition expressing *a* hope, but the *central* petition expressing the one, *central* hope of the church.

It is noteworthy that virtually every prayer of John Calvin at the end of his lectures on the prophets concludes with some expression of longing for the second coming of Christ and heaven. Calvin's own hope was fixed squarely on the coming of Christ. So he taught his students and the Reformed churches. Typical is this prayer at the end of Calvin's lecture on Zechariah 9:9-12, from which it also appears that Calvin knew absolutely nothing of an earthly kingdom of political power to be reared up by Messiah in history.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we do not at this day look for a Redeemer to deliver us from temporal miseries, but only carry on a warfare under the banner of the

cross, until He appear to us from heaven to gather us into His blessed kingdom,—O grant, that we may patiently bear all evils and all troubles: and ... may we ... never doubt but that He will be always propitious to us, and render manifest to us the fruit of His reconciliation, when after having supported us for a season under the burden of those miseries by which we are now oppressed, Thou gatherest us into that blessed and perfect glory, which has been procured for us by the blood of Christ our Lord, and which is daily set before us in the gospel, and laid up for us in heaven, until we at length shall come to enjoy it through the same, our Lord Jesus Christ.—Amen. (*Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 5, Eerdmans, 1950, p. 263)

Titus 2:13 sums up the testimony of Scripture everywhere when it explicitly identifies the glorious appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who is the great God, as "the blessed hope": "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." The church has *one* hope: "the blessed hope." There is only one hope, because that event is uniquely blessed, and uniquely a blessing. The one hope is the appearing of Jesus Christ at His coming. This—the second coming of Jesus Christ—we are always looking for, or expecting, with ardent desire.

What is outstandingly blessed about the event, and the reason more than any other why it is our hope, is that in the coming of Jesus Christ our great God Himself will appear to us. By omitting the article "the" before the words "our Savior," the Holy Spirit of inspiration instructs us that Jesus Himself is the great God and that, when Jesus comes, the great God will appear in Him. The coming of Jesus will give us *the sight of God*, the blessed face-to-face vision of God, and that will be the greatest good.

How then, in view of the truth that Christ is coming, must we

live?

By hoping for that coming!

If this hope is missing, or weak, in the life of a church or of a professing Christian, the condition of that church or individual is grave. In this case, there is no use of speaking any further of other practical implications of the doctrine of the last things.

In his commentary on Titus 2:13, Calvin correctly described the relation between the living hope of Christ's coming and a godly life:

Believers ought always to have their eyes fixed on it [the coming of Christ—DJE], that they may not grow weary in the right course; for, if we do not wholly depend upon it, we shall continually be carried away to the vanities of the world (*Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Eerdmans, 1959, pp. 321, 322).

Threats to Hope

There is, according to Scripture, a real danger in the last days that churches and professing Christians lose, and even disdain, this hope, with disastrous consequences. In Matthew 24:37-41, Jesus warned that mankind in general will completely forget and ignore the end. They will be eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage right up to the time of Jesus' coming, just as in the days of Noah. They will be earthliminded, totally wrapped up in earthly life. This will be fatal. Just as the flood took them all away at the end of the old world, so the fiery coming of Christ at the end of this world will destroy all the naturalists and secularists.

But Jesus continued, in Matthew 24:42-51, to warn of evil servants *in His own house*. These are professing Christians who secretly think that "my lord delayeth his coming" (v. 48). They, therefore, begin to live wickedly in self-seeking strife and debauchery. At His coming, Christ will cut them asunder and consign them to the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Loss of the hope of Christ's coming, indeed, loss of the hope that that coming is near, results in godlessness and damnation.

Adding to the danger of the loss of hope in the last days is a direct and forceful attack upon Jesus' promise that He comes quickly. The apostle forewarned that scoffers will boldly challenge Jesus' promise and the church's hope: "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Pet. 3:4). These scoffers appear within the churches. They are ministers, theologians, professors in the seminaries, and religious authors. Some are Reformed scoffers. Among them are Lever and Kuitert.

They bring the attack of evolution against the Christian hope right into the churches, into the seminaries, into the Christian schools, into the thinking of professing Christians and their children. The practical effect of this baptized ("theistic") evolution-

theory is licentious living in the churches and schools. Fact is, the real motivation of Darwin, Huxley, and the others in the nineteenth century who promoted evolution was not scientific, but ethical. They wanted to free themselves from the authority and demands of a sovereign Creator-God, especially the demands for a life of sexual purity.

Even though millennialism usually acknowledges a second coming of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of the body, both of the main forms of this error direct the hope of the church elsewhere than to the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the body. Premillennialism fixes the hope of the church on the secret rapture and then, oddly (for the millennial kingdom of this view is the glory of the *Jews*, not of the church), upon the 1,000-year reign of Jesus from Jerusalem.

Postmillennialism, especially of the Christian Reconstruction brand, has its heart set on an earthly king-

dom of Christ in the world before the end, on a "golden age" for the church in history.

In both cases, the result is that our hope is removed from the coming of Christ to something else, from the resurrection of the body to an earthly kingdom, from heaven to earth.

The loss of her hope—the biblical hope for the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the body—would be fatal for the church. The weakening of this hope is grave spiritual sickness.

The church lives by her hope.

Her hoping is her life.

She must "hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto (her) at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:13). And she does, despite temptations, heresies, and doubts.

For her hoping is founded on the biblical doctrine of the last things, stretches toward Him who loved her and whom she loves, and is nourished by the promise of the gospel, "Surely I come quickly." □

— DJE

Letters

Creedal Amillennialism

In a recent edition of the *Standard Bearer*, Rev. Ron Cammenga tried to argue that because of his belief that the Three Forms of Unity are explicitly a-millennial, it follows from this that all other millennial positions are heretical (Vol. 76, No. 2, p. 32). I was wondering if Rev. Cammenga is prepared to be consistent with his own logic here. For instance, since the creeds are explicitly infralapsarian, does it follow that supralapsarianism is heretical? Or even better, since the creeds openly and plainly teach the establishment principle, does it follow that any denial of the establishment principle is heretical, opt-out clauses notwithstanding?

Allen Baird

Ballymena, Northern Ireland

RESPONSE:

In the article to which you refer ("Creedal Amillennialism," *SB*, Vol. 76, No. 2, p. 32), I did indeed contend that the Three Forms of Unity are explicitly amillennial. The Three Forms of Unity not only set forth positively the amillennial position, but also repudiate the main tenets of the other major millennial views. The brother makes no appeal to these confessions to demonstrate that, contrary to my contention, they do make allowances for postmillennialism or premillennial-dispensationalism. With regard to the infralapsarian and supralapsarian debate, while it is true that the Canons of Dordrecht are written from the infra position, nowhere do the Canons explicitly condemn supra. Anyone knowledgeable of the his-

tory is aware that the Canons were the product of and endorsed by infras and supras alike. It has always been the position of the Reformed churches, and of the Protestant Reformed Churches as well, that consistent infra and consistent supra are both confessionally Reformed. As to the matter of the establishment principle, nowhere, in my judgment, do the Three Forms of Unity endorse the establishment principle. If the brother has Article 36 of the Belgic Confession in mind, I do not believe that the article sets forth the establishment principle, but merely calls upon the magistrate to enforce both tables of God's law. That is not to be equated with the establishment principle.

— Rev. Ron Cammenga

Signs

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a *sign*; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Is. 7:14). "And this shall be a *sign* unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). A sign not merely of identification, but a sign of all Jesus' work "that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:9).

What are signs according to Scripture? They are unusual, startling events which call our attention to the work of God in salvation in an amazing way. They are visible, earthly events which point us to invisible, spiritual realities. They are often mentioned in the same sentence as wonders and miracles (Acts 2:22), and are sometimes called tokens (Gen. 17:11). Most often signs are given in the sphere of grace and of the covenant. The purpose of God in giving signs is to establish the truth of prophecy (Ex. 3:12), prove the divinity of Jesus Christ (John 20:30), and confirm the preaching of the Word by the apostles (Mark 16:20).

We may notice that sometimes God is pleased to give signs for the instruction and comfort of His people; at other times people ask for signs, in unbelief, when no sign is required. The scribes and Pharisees were always asking Jesus for a sign of His divinity, a totally unnecessary request. And Jesus' response was that "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matt. 12:38-41). The sign of Jonah was really a double one: his repose in the belly of the fish pointed to the death and burial of Christ; and the repentance of the Ninevites was the condemnation of the Jews for their refusal to repent at the preaching of the One who is greater than Jonah. For us this means that we are to believe all that Scripture holds before us; Scripture is *sufficient*!

Circumcision was a sign or token of the covenant of friendship that God established with Abraham and his seed (Gen. 17:7, 11), a beautiful sign in that it spoke of the blood of Christ and the generational aspect of God's salvation. In establishing the truth that righteousness is not by works of the law, the apostle Paul argues in Romans 4:11 that Abraham was righteous before God by faith, which he had being uncircumcised! And the apostle gives us the Reformed definition of the sacraments when he states that circumcision was a sign and a seal of the righteousness of faith.

The rainbow was a sign or a token of the covenant between God and the earth, that is, a sign of the *cosmic* aspect of salvation; the covenant is with Noah, his seed, and with every living creature (Gen. 9:9-17). The bow in the clouds signifies that God loves the world and saves the world, and will not again destroy that world with a flood. God hardened Pharaoh's heart, that He might multiply His signs and wonders in the land of Egypt (Ex. 7:3). In connection with the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians, the Lord instituted the Passover, the great sign of redemption through the Lamb of God (Ex. 12). The keeping of the Sabbath was a sign between God and His people, "that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify thee" (Ex. 31:12-17).

In answer to the disciples' question, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3), Jesus responds with a lengthy, full list of the signs of His one, final, second coming which shall be the end of the world. These signs are being fulfilled before our eyes in these last days. "Whoso readeth, let him understand" (Matt. 24:15). All these signs shall culminate with the unmistakable sign of the Son of man in heaven (Matt. 24:30).

The Scriptures present us with the simultaneous, parallel development of two kingdoms throughout history: the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom established in His Son with many signs, miracles, and wonders; and the kingdom of the devil, established by his man the Antichrist, "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (II Thess. 2:9). God sends those who have not received the love of the truth strong delusion that they should believe Antichrist's lie. Even as Pharaoh's wisemen were able to imitate the first three plagues, doing lying wonders (Ex. 7 and 8), so the Antichrist shall do great wonders, "so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men" (Rev. 13:13). But he lies, he deceives, because the number of the beast is the number of man. And the beast and the false prophets are cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20).

So we have our signs. These signs are in the Scriptures. "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (John 20:30). □

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The Standard of the New Millennium (2)

A Sure Standard.

Now we face a new millennium. What must our calling be as we step over the threshold of the old and into the new? Are we called to join hands with the apostatizing church world and lighten up a bit? Should we quit warring and simply learn to get along? Soldiers of Christ, we are fighting a warfare and we *may not* give in to unbelief and the lie! Our calling at this point in the history of the world is to bear up the standard! That we must do as we enter the year 2000. We must bear the standard! What standard? Why, the Word of God! That is the only standard of truth. God has entrusted into the care of His church His Word, and we must hold that Word before us as the one sure standard of life.

The Scriptures are the standard of what is right and wrong. They are the objective rule according to which we judge all things — whether doctrine or walk. The Bible contains the truth in its entirety, and that exactly because it is the Word of our almighty God. God is truth. He is that in Himself. Since He is the highest and only good, He Himself is the standard of righteousness. All that is in harmony with Him and His perfect will is right, and that which stands opposed to Him is wrong. God as the Creator sets that stan-

dard. No creature may or can. God determines for us what we must believe about Him, His Son, man, and the creation about us. God sets the rule according to which we must govern our life and walk. And the rule that God has set is the Scriptures. So it is the Scriptures that are the standard we carry into the new millennium.

To do this we as churches are called by God to instruct our members in that Word. We may not let it be said of us what was said of Israel, “my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). We must teach the Word. The Word must be preached and it must be taught in the catechism class. Our churches must hold before its members in highest esteem the Scriptures. From the pulpit, in the catechism and society rooms, in the homes of our saints the virtues of God’s Word must be extolled. Our children and youth must learn Bible history and doctrine. A knowledge of these must be insisted on when they make confession of their faith.

The preaching must teach God’s people systematically the great and marvelous truths of God’s Word. The truth must be taught and that sharply and distinctly over against the lie. Never must we be afraid to apply the standard of God’s Word over against the teachings of men. Especially, we must make a bold stand against Arminianism — even though that stand may some day cost us our lives.

That means, too, that we must

apply the objective standard of God’s Word to our walk of life in this world. We must not be afraid to call sin sin. We must not be afraid to say something is wrong in a person’s life (including our own) when it stands opposed to God’s Word. That is the calling of the church in this new millennium.

This has everything to do with the Reformed Free Publishing Association. This association was originally organized “to witness to the truth contained in the Word of God and expressed in the creeds of the Reformed faith.” That tells me that the basis of the books published by this association and the basis for its periodical, the *Standard Bearer*, is the Word of God. The RFPA has held high the standard of God’s Word from this association’s commencement to the present. The *Standard Bearer* has been a faithful witness through the years to the testimony God has set before us in His Word. The writers of the *Standard Bearer* have been staunch defenders of the truth who have stood unashamed against those who would oppose that truth.

For 75 years the RFPA has stood for the powerful truths of particular grace, the sovereignty of God, double predestination, and God’s unconditional covenant. It has fought valiantly the errors of Arminianism, common grace, and a covenant conditioned on the will of man. Even now it stands boldly against the errors of millennialism and maintains the truth of amillennialism. All this is reflected in its publications — especially that

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of the *Standard Bearer*. The editors of the past were and our editor today is yet committed to the Reformed faith. The writers continue to develop that truth and apply it to areas of the Christian life. We have much to be thankful for as we enter the new millennium! What a blessing the publications of this association have been in the lives of many! What a blessing they have been to the Protestant Reformed Churches!

But what about the future? What is the calling of this association in the new millennium? The same as it has always been. We are not looking for something new and innovative from the RFPA. I know that many of the periodicals and books of today have catered to the whims and wishes of popular opinion. Like the worship of the modern church, these publications wish to be more entertaining and flashy. We are not asking that of you. We are not looking for change. This is what we want of this association: maintain the standard of God's Word! Continue to hold high the banner of the Reformed truth of Scripture! Make people to see both in the Protestant Reformed Churches and outside of them that the Scriptures are held in high esteem.

God's people need a solid mooring in the new millennium. We need that as God's people who live in a church world that simply does not care anymore. Give the Word of God to us in your books and in your periodical. Only God's Word will give us purpose and direction as God's people in years to come. We need the objective rule of God in our lives! May the infallible, unchangeable, simple, authoritative, trustworthy standard of God's Word remain the ground and foundation of all the work the RFPA does in this new millennium.

A Real Urgency.

It is urgent that you maintain this standard. The end of the millennium is upon us. When I say

this now, I do not refer to the end of these past 1000 years. I am referring to the fact that the end of the ages is upon us. The end of the 1000 years of Revelation 20 is upon us. Christ comes and He comes quickly. We have obeyed His command to watch and be sober. We have been watching the signs around us. Those signs reveal to us that we live in the last times.

Christ is coming soon. The sign of ignorance in the church tells us that. The sign of apostasy in the church tells us that. The sign of the love of many waxing cold in the church indicates that. These, among the other signs taking place in the nations and in the creation,

loudly cry out: the King is coming!

The true church of Christ must be solidly anchored as she does battle in these last times! The RFPA must stand against evil men and seducers. The *Standard Bearer* must sound the trumpet to God's saints. Prepare God's people for the fray. That is the urgency that must motivate the men and the women of the RFPA.

We pray that God might use our feeble efforts powerfully in the gathering of His church with a view to Christ's return, and that when Christ returns He will find us faithful. God keep us in this new millennium! God keep us faithful in our generations! □

Apples of Gold

Musing the Millennium

Time, as the swinging pendulum,
Brings the new millennium.

Man fears what is to transpire,
Hearing the predictions dire.

Some are worried, many fret
Over things unseen as yet.

People prepare in rapid paces,
For preservation of the races.

While others plan to celebrate
This much anticipated date,

With merriment and revelry
They'll celebrate the century.

Millennium markers are on the rise
As Y2K is commercialized.

How will you approach this day,
God's child, on your pilgrim's way?

God gives the grace to understand,
My life, my times, are in His hand.

God holds the swinging pendulum,
He ordered the millennium.

A thousand years have passed away,
All to Him as but a day.

Time, His tool, will ever be
Subject to His sovereignty.

All that was and what will be
Was ordered by His firm decree.

A church He gathers one by one,
Preserves until all time is done.

Christ prayed for us — we are His sheep —
That Father guard and safely keep,

That Father keep them all as one,
Preserved until all time is done.

His blessings, ours, will never cease,
In His will is all our peace.

*Mrs. Char VanEgdom,
Doon, Iowa*

■ *Newsweek*—and Prophecy

Last time I pointed out a feature article in *U.S. News and World Report*: "Is the Bible True?" *Newsweek*, November 1, 1999, weighed in with another article related to the Bible and the millennium. It examined especially the book of Revelation and its prophecy of the end of the world. It is striking that the national magazines pay such close attention to Scripture and its prophecy as the new millennium approaches. Striking, it is, because obviously the writers and editors do not believe the testimony of an infallible Scripture. They do, however, recognize that there are many people who do believe the Bible and are interested in its prophecies. So the writers present their opinions and evaluate the prophecies of Scripture—though they do not believe what Scripture has to say. Allow me to quote a bit from the article:

Millennial dreams and apocalyptic nightmares are never far below the surface of the American psyche—especially now, as the third millennium approaches. Of course, few people seriously think the apocalypse will come at 12:01 on New Year's Eve; some of those who do will descend on Jerusalem at the year-end with millennial expectations, putting Israeli police on high alert.... The deeper and more interesting phenomenon is the enormous role prophecy has played in Western religious and popular culture. A *Newsweek* Poll found that 40 percent of American adults do believe that the world will one day end, as Revelation describes, in the Battle of Armageddon. Every choir that sings "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" or the Salvation Army's "Onward, Christian Sol-

diers" resurrects martial images and themes from Christian prophecy. In the 1970s, the best-selling book of the decade was Hal Lindsey's apocalyptic "The Late Great Planet Earth," with 28 million copies sold by 1990. More recently, a series of "Left Behind" novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins based on Christian prophecies, including two published this year, have sold more than 9 million copies. Among academics, studies of the apocalyptic tradition have produced dozens of new books. "Over the past 30 years," says Bernard McGinn, a medieval specialist at the University of Chicago Divinity School, "more scholarship has been devoted to apocalypticism than in the last 300."

The article continues and presents the author's summary of the book of Revelation and a sort of evaluation of the book:

Whether John's Apocalypse (the word means "unveiling") is a foretelling of the future or a symbolic interpretation of the then current situation of Christians has long vexed church theologians. Early Christianity had revived the long-dormant spirit of Hebrew prophecy, and in doing so relied on Jewish precedents. Much of John's arcane imagery is borrowed from Ezekiel, Zechariah and especially the dreams of Daniel. He also uses numbers as a code for letters. Thus the beast whose number is 666 translates to Nero, the mad emperor who had persecuted Christians; his seven heads refer to the first seven Roman emperors. Similarly, the number 1,000 does not denote a period of 10 centuries but symbolizes an indefinite period of long duration.

In short, most contemporary Biblical scholars now believe that John was not predicting a distant future. Rather, he was locating the trials of the first-century churches within a wider cosmic battle between Christ and Satan. Like the earlier prophets, he

wanted Christians to know that the faithful would be rewarded and their oppressors punished.

The writer gives other interesting but far-fetched interpretations of the book of Revelation. He goes through some of the history of the past 2000 years, showing the various views which were held during that period. Then he comments on present-day ideas presumably based on the book of Revelation:

Christian fundamentalism owes much of its continuing power and appeal to the belief that the prophecies of John, Daniel and other Biblical writers forecast a sequence of specific historical events. But fundamentalists have also shown a remarkable capacity to add to the stock of apocalyptic portents. Since the Antichrist must have the means for controlling the world, many new technological advances are now seen as ominous signs: Social Security numbers, bar codes, ATMs, international organizations like the United Nations and the European Common Market, and—most recently—the World Wide Web. As a newly elected president, George Bush set off alarms among many Biblical literalists when he announced in 1990 his ambition to create a "new world order." Could he be, some fundamentalists wondered, the cat's-paw for the Antichrist?

The article concludes with some interesting comments:

Though widely read for the wrong reasons, John's Apocalypse nonetheless insists on hard truths that no serious believer can discount. One is that sinners have reason to fear a God who, having chosen to create the world, can also choose to destroy it. The second is that the just have reason to hope in a God who stands by those who trust their lives to him. Thinking of the end of the world—like contemplating one's own end—is a painful process. But

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studying the Apocalypse presumes that even the end of the world is within the providence of God. And who's to say that John's mythic battle between Christ and Antichrist is not a valid insight into what the history of humankind is ultimately all about?

If the new millennium does nothing else, surely humankind is forced to consider the possibility of the return of the ascended Christ and the judgment to follow. The child of God, especially, ought to consider the impending return of his Lord. The signs are all there. There is already virtually a "one world order." Only there must be the coming of the Antichrist. Will Christ return on January 1, 2000, 12:01 A.M.? The answer of course must be "no." The Antichrist has not yet manifested himself. So, we are reminded of the passing of time; of the rapid fulfillment of all things of which Christ speaks in His Word; and we look up—knowing that the time of redemption is at hand.

■ Where Are the "Traditional" Families?

The Grand Rapids Press, November 24, 1999, presents an Associated Press article titled: "Study finds fewer traditional families than in '70s." What it states has become increasingly obvious even to those who live in the secluded circles of conservative and somewhat religious communities. The figures, however, are ominous.

The percentage of American households made up of married couples with children dropped from 45 percent in the early 1970s to just 26 percent in 1998, a survey found.

Researchers at the University of Chicago said their findings, which were being released today, are yet another sign that the face of the American family has changed. Researchers also said their findings show Americans are becoming more accepting of those changes.

"The single-earner families with young children still present in the household have become the exception rather than the rule," said Tom W. Smith, director of the General Social Survey, conducted annually by the university National Opinion Research Center.

The figures paint an even starker picture of marriage in the 1990s than the U.S. Census has. Census takers found that married couples with children younger than 18 fell from 50 percent of all households in 1970 to an estimated 36 percent in 1997.

The figures reflect the increasing number of people waiting to have children and the growing number of baby boomers becoming "empty nesters."

The survey found that in 1998:

- Fifty-six percent of adults were married, compared with nearly 75 percent in 1972, when the survey was first taken.

- Fifty-one percent of children lived in a household with their two parents, vs. 73 percent in 1972.

- The percentage of households made up of unmarried people with no children was 33 percent, more than double the rate in 1972.

- And the percentage of children living with single parents rose to 18.2 percent, vs. 4.7 percent in 1972.

...Stephen Kraus, a Connecticut-based market researcher for Yankelovich Partners, agreed that Americans are becoming more tolerant of divorce—partly because many people who are starting families may be products of divorce themselves.

Bahira Sherif, a professor of individual and family studies at the University of Delaware, said Americans continue to see marriage as an ideal—even if they don't think it's always best to get married or stay married.

We are fast becoming a society that accepts as normal what God's Word clearly condemns. Families are "nice" but not essential. It's "nice" if mothers with young children can stay home to care for them, but it's neither practical nor profitable for most. Divorce and

remarriage are considered normal—even expected. Articles are written about "blended" families. Sadly, what is happening generally within this country is also happening within the churches. Surely the sin of divorce and the evils of remarriage must be emphasized in the churches.

It is interesting to note that there are those, perhaps many, outside of our own Protestant Reformed Churches who recognize the wrongness of divorce and remarriage. *Christianity Today* in a recent issue wrote about the subject of remarriage and divorce. In response to that article some interesting (and accurate) "letters to the editor" were printed. I quote a few. The first letter points out the inconsistency of the condemnation of homosexual relationships while approving divorce and remarriage. Though the point of the writers is, obviously, to support homosexual relationships, their point re the inconsistency of the evangelicals who allow and even perhaps encourage remarriage after divorce is correct.

May our sympathetic and intelligent panelists who participated in your CT forum on homosexuality and public policy please explain why homosexual Christians are absolutely bound to God's creational intent, whereas we discover just a few pages further ["You're Divorced—Can You Remarry?"] that heterosexuals are not so bound?

Gay and lesbian people are being turned away from salvation in Jesus Christ by the hypocrisy of evangelicals.

Or one can agree with two other writers:

Burge ignored the force of vow-taking in the wedding ceremony. How does God view vow-breaking? Marriage is profoundly theological in that it should foreshadow the marriage of Rev. 19:7, rather than merely provide convenient fulfillment of desires here and now.

[And this:] Is God able to provide renewal and new hope? Of course he is! But let us not think that he does so by violating his own laws. That we can point to situations where Christians have remarried in obvious violation of the Scripture, and observed that the new marriage “worked” or was “a blessing,” is to only fall further into the ends-justifies-the-means rationalization of our secular activities.

It is profoundly disappointing that, when called to take an unpopular stand, both Burge and *Christianity Today* chose to provide the soothing answer that many living in sin wanted to hear. It is not I who called such relationships adultery, it was Jesus. In 2,000 years, I see nothing to make me believe that his standard has changed.

So there are others who recognize the inconsistencies within the evangelical camp—and the error of reasoning when Scripture is contradicted. Sinful life-style is condoned and sometimes encouraged within the churches. What Jesus said (“From the beginning it was not so”) applies to homosexuality and also to divorce and remarriage. □

Come, Lord Jesus

Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Signs of the Times

10. The Abomination of Desolation

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him that is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

Matthew 24:15-18

Jesus spoke of various signs of His second coming, such as false Christs and false prophets; wars and rumors of war, with nation arising against nation; wickedness, hatred, and betrayals, even abounding lawlessness; and along with all that, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. Actually, according to Revelation 4, all these judgments are the result of the preaching of the gospel among all nations. The white horse goes forth conquering and to conquer.

From that, Jesus concludes that the final and the most outstanding sign of His coming will be the ap-

pearance of the abomination of desolation, that is, the abomination (that which is evil, abhorrent) which brings desolation, or complete devastation, upon the earth.

Before we say more about this abomination we should notice that Jesus associates its appearance with the prophecy of Daniel concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. The temple was defiled particularly when Antiochus Epiphanes set up an image in the temple, where it had no right to be, and offered a pig on the altar of burnt offering, demanding that the people eat that flesh and worship the image, thereby making the daily sacrifice impossible. Soon the Roman troops would surround the city to destroy it (Luke 21:20). This would serve as the ultimate sign to the disciples that the dispensation of shadows had come to an end, including the temple worship. No attempt should be made to defend the city, but rather they should flee to the mountains as fast as possible in order to seek their refuge wherever they could. For the judgment of God had come upon Israel as a na-

tion for their heinous sin of rejecting and crucifying the Christ, the Lord of glory. They of all men had made themselves the most guilty, for they had God’s testimonies and the prophets. Israel as a nation would cease to exist, wiped out by the judgment of God. The true seed of Abraham among the Jews would be included with the Gentiles in the church of the new dispensation. This serves as a prefiguration of the final judgment.

You will recall, as was mentioned before, that the prophets of the old dispensation saw the entire coming of Christ as one great event taking place in these last days. Therefore Jesus also associates the desecration of the temple and the coming of that great Roman world power with the appearance of the man of sin, the Antichrist, who will reign for a short time before the end of the ages.

Scripture uses other names to refer to this abomination of desolation. It is also referred to as the man of sin (literally, the man of lawlessness), the son of perdition (II Thess. 2:3), the Antichrist (I John

2:18), and the two beasts of Revelation 13, whose number is the number of man, the number 666.

Paul says of this man of lawlessness that he "sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (II Thess. 2:4).

We recall that the temptation and sin of Paradise was that Adam and Eve desired to be as God, independently deciding for themselves what is good and what is evil. Ever since the fall of our first parents mankind has had but one sinful ambition. As the Dutch poet expressed it: "I am God in my deepest thoughts."

This became evident already in wicked Lamech before the flood, and in Nimrod after the flood in the building of the tower of Babel. And again in Nebuchadnezzar, who made an image that bore the measurements of 60 by 6 cubits, and demanded that all his princes and rulers should bow down before it. Also king Darius demanded that for one month none of his subjects should pray to anyone but to the king. There were more kings, like Herod and the Caesars, who claimed to be god. This sin of our depraved nature manifests itself in wicked pride, greed, and a striving for independence.

In the meantime, everything is preparing for the full appearance of this Beast. Scripture informs us that there have been antichrists until now, but the man of sin will outdo them all. While sin develops to its full capacity of wickedness, the world is striving toward unification. The orient, which at one time was referred to as "the sleeping nations," is now wide awake, active, and involving itself in the affairs of other nations.

The man of sin will boast that he possesses all the attributes of God. Thus he will declare that he is omnipotent. He will show that he has replenished and subdued the earth and has dominion over every creature upon the earth. Everything is dependent upon him;

everything proves the power and ingenuity of man. He builds beautiful mansions, towering buildings, costly sports arenas, and the like.

He claims to be omniscient, that he knows all there is to know. He has made great strides in the field of mathematics and the various sciences. He has brought about miracles in the realm of medicine by mastery over many sicknesses and diseases, and he hopes to conquer death. Already he fights such horrible diseases as AIDS and cancer. He performs delicate surgeries on any part of the human anatomy. He staggers our imagination with his modern means of travel, his computers, and his technology. The age of automation reaches its ultimate in the man of sin. He maintains that anything he can imagine he can also do.

The man of sin claims to be omnipresent. He soon will span the earth with his combination of the computer, the telephone, and the television. Then he can transmit messages in seconds, talk to anyone anywhere, and at the same time see the person to whom he is talking. His airplanes carry hundreds of passengers and tons of freight to any part of the world. He sends his satellites into space and he builds space stations in the sky. He sends men to the moon, and even reaches out to planets in outer space. With his telescopes he can penetrate deep into the heavens, searching out the secrets of the universe.

He claims to be the source, the fountain, of every good and perfect gift. In his realm men, women, and children live in extreme luxury. He is ready to relieve the poor, to help the aged, to care for infants. Kindness and generosity abound under his supervision. Affluence, good will, peace, and harmony characterize his domain.

Antichrist succeeds in bringing the whole world under his authority. We see this unification already in what was at one time referred to as a League of Nations, but now

as the UN. The affairs of any one country have become the affairs of the whole world. A common market is sought, a common currency, a common language. There is even a united space program.

This striving for unification is also evident in the church world. Denominational walls are breaking down. Efforts are made to make the church a community center for all to share. Their strength is in numbers. They have so much in common that their differences should be ignored. Brotherly love that includes all mankind is strongly advocated. Efforts are already put forth by the Protestant churches to confer and unite with the Roman Catholic Church. When that goal is attained, the church will include all humanity, except the true people of God. The pope may be the supreme ruler.

Excluded and hated are those who maintain the infallibility of the Scriptures, the truth of the Word of God, the antithesis between the church and the world, the sanctity of the Sabbath, of the Lord's Supper, and the need of Christian discipline. Those individuals are considered to be bigoted, narrow-minded, out of date, and out of step with the modern trend. They must be wiped out, persecuted unto death. Since he can no longer openly worship nor assemble together, and he can be robbed of all his possessions, each believer must seek survival as best he can.

The Antichrist will be anti-God and His Christ. That is, he will be opposed to God and the Christ. As the psalmist declared: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Ps. 2:2, 3). He will ban all preaching of the gospel. The white horse and its rider (Rev. 6) will have finished their course. Revelation 11:7, 8 tells us concerning the two witnesses: "And when they shall have finished their testi-

mony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them and overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord was crucified."

But the name Antichrist also means that he will set himself up in the stead of God and His Christ. Paradoxical as it may seem, the man of sin will be extremely religious. He will demand that all men bow down to him and worship him alone, for he boasts that he is God, the Savior, Sustainer, the Benefactor of all mankind. The churches will be dedicated to him and to his worship; none other will be allowed. And the whole world will eagerly bow down to him and his image in worship, saying, "Who is like unto the beast? Who can make war against him?" He is sovereign. He is invincible! The dragon will seem to have captured all under his power and will do his utmost to hold his dominion.

But all this luxury, prosperity, peace, and harmony is purely superficial. The man of sin is busily engaged in "spending his way to prosperity." He claims all God's earthly creation as his own and wantonly wastes and ruins it as if the supply is boundless. He is polluting the air, the soil, the rivers, the lakes, and the oceans with his refuse. He destroys the earth. He shows that he is very really the man of lawlessness. He eats, laughs, sings, dances, revels in sin to drown his inner misery. He finds delight in deliberately trampling God's law underfoot. He hates God and His Christ and seeks to banish from the earth the very name of God, His cause, and His people. Mankind will deliberately fill the cup of iniquity. "Knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, [they] not only do the same, but have pleasure in those who do them" (Rom. 1:32).

This man of lawlessness is the

abomination that brings desolation. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps. 2:4). Divine judgment rests upon him. The world that lives in an artificial happiness and a sham prosperity ultimately ends up on a dead-end road. Already today various nations are in a financial crisis. Many nations are bankrupt, leaning one upon another for survival.

Even our own country has a national debt that runs into the trillions of dollars. But who cares? There was a time not that long ago when a warning was raised that if our national debt would exceed a million dollars we would be in deep trouble. But the Roosevelt administration taught us one of the principles of the Antichrist, namely, "spend your way to prosperity."

Someone once compared the end of time to a tavern at five o'clock in the morning. The stench of smoke, liquor, and drugs hangs heavy in the air, tables and chairs are strewn around in abandon, the guests lie in a drunken stupor. The idea is that the world will have steeped itself in iniquity to the degree that she lives in a stupor of lawlessness, perishing in her corruption. There is no escape from the righteous judgment of the living God, no escape from the bondage of sin and death.

Jesus describes those last days before the coming of the Son of man saying: "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37-39).

It may even be that the final battle of Armageddon will have no end as far as man is concerned, for if the modern weapons of war equipment were unleashed, the hu-

man race could be wiped off the earth.

The cup of iniquity will then be full. The sin of Paradise will have reached its ultimate. It is then that the church will have been gathered, the white horse and its rider will have completed their course, and the sign of the Son of man will appear on the clouds of heaven. Well may we shout with the psalmist: Why do the nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? God has set His Son upon the holy hill of Zion! Therefore we can pray with ever increasing fervor: "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come as the righteous Judge, the Victor, and the Savior of Thy church. Come quickly!" The Judge stands at the door! □

My God Shall Supply

O, the grace our Savior giveth,
When the trials sore distress,
And the path our feet must travel
Leads through lonely wilderness.
Grace, full, free, unmeasured!
Token of His love and care,
Proving His own promise,
"All thy burdens I will bear."

O, the peace our Savior giveth,
As we journey here below,
In grim disappointments often,
'Mid life's sorrow, toil, or woe.
Peace past understanding!
When our mind on Him is stayed,
And His Spirit whispers,
"All thy debt the Lord hath paid."

O, the hope our Savior giveth,
Sure and steadfast in the soul,
As with patient perseverance,
We press onward to the goal.
Hope that fadeth never!
That some day His face we'll see.
And this sinful mortal,
Put on immortality.

Standard Bearer, 1929

Cassianus, Faustus, and Semi-Pelagianism (2)

Introduction

In the last article (September 1, 1999) I introduced our readers to John Cassianus and Faustus of Riez. These were the two men who, while Augustine was still living, made serious objections to Augustine's views. They did not like Augustine's sharp and unequivocal defense of sovereign grace rooted in eternal predestination.

Three remarks are necessary before I spell out the specific views of these two men.

In the first place, these men did not write personally to Augustine and express disagreement with his position. They attacked him in the churches in France where they worked. They not only taught views directly opposite those of Augustine, but they repudiated what Augustine taught and condemned his doctrine by name. This was not honest on their part, even though no official stand had been taken on these issues by the church.

In the second place, although they disagreed with Augustine on many points, they centered their attacks on the doctrine of sovereign predestination, and particularly on the doctrine of reprobation. In a way, this is not surprising. The enemies of sovereign grace have always attacked the doctrine of rep-

robation more than any other. They seem to consider reprobation the Achilles' heel of sovereign grace. Election, yes. They claim to want election. But reprobation? That is another matter. That takes the brunt of the attack.

In the third place, one must not conclude from what I have written about John Cassianus and Faustus of Riez that these men were Pelagians. They were not. They attacked Pelagianism with just as much vehemence as they attacked Augustine's views. They condemned Pelagius as strongly as they condemned Augustine. They proposed a "middle way." They had the solution to what seemed to be a knotty problem, reconciling Augustine's radical position with Pelagius' equally radical views. They rejected a bit of both and came up with a bit of both. That middle way they recommended to the church.

This urging to adopt a middle way has led to a strange controversy over names that has attracted the attention of some historians. Some people want to call the views of Cassianus and Faustus "Semi-Augustinianism." They do this to underscore that some parts of Augustine's position were accepted by these men. But others insist that these men ought to be called "Semi-Pelagians." The idea is that they tipped towards Pelagianism more than towards Augustinianism.

We call these men Semi-Pelagians. But let it be understood, this is for purposes of identifica-

tion only. In the doctrine of sovereign grace there is no half-way position. One is either for or against — for or against Augustine; for or against Christ. There are no Semi-Christians, Semi-Reformed, Semi-Calvinists, Semi-Arminians, Semi-Protestant Reformed. Our fathers at Dordt called the Arminians (teachers of a modified Semi-Pelagianism) Pelagians who were resurrecting the errors of Pelagius from hell. That kind of language is not a "semi"-condemnation.

The Views of the Semi-Pelagians

Cassianus and Faustus attacked predestination, and particularly reprobation. They had several objections. (The reader ought to note the similarity between these objections and ones brought today against the same truth.)

In the first place, they argued that predestination did not do justice to human responsibility. These two gentlemen, who hated predestination, claimed that there was contradiction in Scripture between man's responsibility, which was rooted in the freedom of the will, and God's sovereignty. Faustus wrote:

If you pay careful attention, you will recognize clearly and abundantly how through the pages of the Scriptures sometimes it is the power of grace and at other times it is the assent of the human will that is asserted.

It is interesting that, in connection with this question of human responsibility, one of the main ob-

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jections to Augustine's teachings was that Augustine's view denied the invitation of Christ in the gospel, which invitation necessarily implies the desire of God to save all men.

In the second place, Augustine's views were branded as fatalism in the heathen sense. His view was interpreted to mean that "by God's predestination men are compelled to sin and are driven to death by a sort of fatal necessity." Thus the doctrine of predestination was characterized as nothing short of heathen worship of Fate. One is struck by the fact that the Arminians accused the fathers at Dordt of the same sin (cf. *Conclusion* to the Canons).

In the third place, especially Cassianus brought up some other objections, which included a charge that Augustine made the baptism of the reprobate of none effect, since the reprobate were predestined to destruction. He argued that evangelism became a useless endeavor if predestination was true. ("The PRC cannot do mission work.") He claimed that the call to repentance became meaningless in Augustine's view, because a true call implied both divine grace and human freedom. (If Cassianus had known the term hyper-Calvinist, he would have used it against Augustine.) Even prayer becomes useless if predestination is true, because man then becomes "unfeeling and inept material that has to be moved from one place to another." And predestination destroys all morality because it instills in man a spirit of disregard for God's law; that is, it makes men careless and profane.

How wearily familiar it all sounds.

Even the texts, the so-called universalistic texts, appealed to today were already quoted against Augustine back in the fifth century. I mention only two here because it is important to quote Augustine's answer to these men who appealed to such texts in support of their po-

sition. I refer to I Timothy 2:4 and Matthew 23:37. The readers can look them up. They are familiar.

In short, these men believed that, though man was born depraved, some remnants of good remained in him. These remnants were strengthened by baptism, which restored a free will in man. The result was that man was not dead but very sick. The healing of his sickness lay in calling the great physician. Christ could heal. But Christ would not heal except the sinner call for Him, for Christ would heal no man against his will. In the healing process, the sick sinner cooperated with the physician, sometimes Christ taking the initiative, sometimes the sinner. But Christ would save only those who called upon Him to come to their aid, because Christ died for all men and desired that all men be saved. Yes, already then the doctrine of particular atonement was at stake.

The whole thing was a modification of the crass views of Pelagius, but it was only an attempt to dress up a terribly ugly heresy in a more attractive suit of clothes.

Augustine's Response

I said earlier that Augustine sharpened his views on sovereign grace and predestination in his battle with Semi-Pelagianism. He wrote two extremely important books at this time — books which anyone interested in the truth of sovereign grace ought to read. One was "A Treatise on the Predestination of the Saints," and the other, "A Treatise on the Gift of Perseverance."

This is not the time or the place to go into detail on Augustine's views. I want to make two quotes from Augustine, one on I Timothy 2:4, and the other on Matthew 23:37. They are both taken from Augustine's book *Enchiridion*, and both are enlightening.

The first one is Augustine's comments on Matthew 23:37.

But even though she (Jerusalem) was unwilling, He gathered together as many of her children as He wished: for He does not will some things and do them, and will others and do them not, but "He hath done all that He pleased in heaven and on earth."

On I Timothy 2:4 Augustine writes:

... But that we are to understand by 'all men' the human race in all its varieties of rank and circumstances, — kings, subjects; noble, plebeian, high, low, learned, and unlearned; the sound in body, the feeble, the clever, the dull, the foolish, the rich, the poor, and those of middling circumstances; males, females, infants, boys, youths; young, middle-aged, and old men; of every tongue, of every fashion, of all arts, of all professions, with all the innumerable differences of will and conscience, and whatever else there is that makes a distinction among men.

We are not compelled to believe that the omnipotent God has willed anything to be done which was not done: for setting aside all ambiguities, if "He hath done all that He pleased in heaven and in earth," as the Psalmist sings of Him, He certainly did not will to do anything that He hath not done.

No one can be in any doubt but that Augustine would have repudiated any notion of the well-meant offer of the gospel. It was being taught in his time by Cassianus and Faustus. Augustine wanted no part of it.

The Synod of Orange (529)

After Augustine's death the controversy continued, although Augustine had few supporters. Most of the debate concerned various modifications of the views of Cassianus and Faustus. The differences of opinion in Gaul were sufficiently great to warrant the calling of a synod. This synod became known as the synod of Orange.

The synod, in itself, was a meeting of very minor importance. It was attended by only thirteen or fourteen bishops. It was a local gathering. It could by no means speak for even all of Gaul, much less the whole Western church. What makes it important is the fact that Pope Boniface II endorsed its decisions and made them binding on the Western church. By doing this, Pope Boniface II officially committed the Roman Catholic Church, at least in the West, to Semi-Pelagianism. And that remained official Roman Catholic doctrine.

Even before the synod met, a certain consensus emerged among Gaul's theologians. The consensus acknowledged, generally speaking, that election was indeed true and that grace was necessary to salvation because of the sinful condition with which man was born. But having tipped the hat, so to speak, towards Augustine, the consensus

also thought reprobation reprehensible. It insisted that the idea that men are predestined to evil and that damnation belongs to the will of God is so wrong that anyone who teaches it must be anathematized. The theologians pretty much agreed that, even though predestination is true, nevertheless God wills the salvation of all men, and that baptism enables a person to do what is necessary to the salvation of his soul.

The synod of Orange went in the direction of this consensus. As if to prove its orthodox character, the synod insisted on original sin, total depravity, and the inability of the natural man to do any good. It felt perfectly free to anathematize anyone who denied these truths. But then, in the same decision, with a complete about face, the synod also spoke of the ability of any baptized person to work out his own salvation. And, so synod said, God

gives the beginning of faith and charity — with an emphasis on the word "beginning," which made it clear that synod meant to teach that, from that point on, salvation was up to man.

More crucially, the synod refused to adopt the doctrine of reprobation and would only pour its anathemas upon the heads of all who taught that God predestinated to damnation. With this thundering anathema, the synod anathematized its own Augustine, whom the church had declared a saint.

Herman Hoeksema makes this comment on the synod of Orange:

It appears very clearly that they were afraid to maintain the strict doctrine of Augustine. The synod assumed an apologetic attitude. And although it opposed the doctrine of the Semi-Pelagians, it nevertheless was far from maintaining the positive doctrine of predestination and sovereign grace. □

Special Article

Dedication of Georgetown PRC

(November 6, 1999)

Opening Remarks

We thank and praise God tonight for making it possible for us to have this beautiful building. When we held our first worship service (and it was my privilege to conduct that service) on September 5, 1993 in the gym of Bauer Elementary School, none of us dared to think that

within the next five years we would number over one hundred families and be able to build this building. Even when we were organized on March 2, 1994, none of us charter families ever thought this would be possible. But the Lord made this possible. The Lord gave us elders, deacons, and a minister. He gave us growth both spiritually and in number. The Lord gave us the means, the will, and the ability to construct this church.

Prof. Robert D. Decker

Some people, and they mean well, are critical of those who build beautiful church buildings. I'm not one of those. God's temple in Jerusalem was a very costly and beautiful building. That a congregation cares about her worship and desires to worship in a beautiful and appropriate building is commendable.

Nevertheless, we all know, and we must not forget this, the building does not make the church what she must be as a manifesta-

Prof. Decker is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary and a member of Georgetown PRC.

tion of Christ's body. A congregation may have a marvelous building, a state-of-the-art sound system, a good organ and piano, and all the rest, but if that congregation is not doing what God calls her to do, and if she's not being what God wants her to be as a manifestation of Christ's body, the building and its furnishings mean nothing! By the same token, if the congregation is faithful to the Lord's will for her and is doing what God calls her to do as a manifestation of Christ's body, she can worship in a barn (as did our mother congregation, Hudsonville PRC, in her early history), a field, or a house, and she is still the church of Jesus Christ!

What happens in the building is what makes the church the

church. And what must happen in this building by God's grace is the worship of the Lord God as regulated by the Word of God. Involved in that worship is a vatum, or salutation, at the beginning and a benediction at the end. In between, the congregation sings the Psalms, brings her needs to God's throne of grace in prayer, contributes to the offerings, hears the law read as both the teacher of her misery and the guide for her life of gratitude to God, confesses her faith. There is as well the administration of the two sacraments instituted by Christ: Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

But lying at the very heart of that worship must be the faithful preaching of the Word of God! This is the means God has pro-

vided by which His voice in Christ is heard. It is the chief means by which God blesses us with His grace so that we know Him in Christ and by His Spirit as the God of our salvation. And knowing Him we thankfully worship and adore Him and live the new and godly life.

Preaching, therefore, is the chief mark distinguishing the true from the false church! To that great end we dedicate this building tonight as the place where God is pleased to fellowship with us by means of His Word! This is the place where on the Lord's Day and on other special services we come to meet the Lord! May we by His grace be faithful to this great purpose and worship our God in spirit and in truth. ■

Dedication Address

To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

I Peter 2:4, 5

That which brings us together tonight is the dedication of a building, a church building. First we moved sand, then we watched the cement foundations being laid in the trenches dug for them. Then we saw the block walls being erected. The wall behind the pulpit was in fact built twice, because the first one fell in a strong windstorm last fall. Next the huge steel beams were set up. And then

the wood trusses were set on the beams. The roof boards and shingles followed. We filled the sanctuary with scaffolding to assist the builders, electricians, and dry wallers in their work in what is now the ceiling of the sanctuary. Then there was the furnace, the air conditioning, and the plumbing. There was more carpentry work, followed by paint, carpet and tiles, and the pews.

Men designed. First the building committee met repeatedly to develop a concept drawing. Then the architect used his professional skills to draw up the prints and plans. It all was the work of men, mere men. Everything was the product of the efforts of men who die. And this building will end too. It will not endure forever. As quickly as the windstorm blew down a portion of this wall, so quickly this building will burn in the day of the great fire which will destroy the whole earth. God teaches us that this building will not last. No matter how much time, money, and effort has been

put into it, this building belongs to this earth.

Yet this building has a beauty. It has a beauty which it ought to have. As Prof. Decker pointed out in his opening remarks, a place of worship should have as much beauty as can be put into it. It ought to have beauty because it is to be used for the worship of God, the God of all grace, who is the perfect beauty. And so we strive to reflect that beauty not only in our worship, but also in the building we have built for the purpose of worship.

Additionally, this building has a beauty which is not seen with the physical eye. This invisible beauty is, first, the fact that this facility gives a place of separate identity in this community to Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church. For almost six years we have had to use rented facilities, facilities which carried on them the name of another organization. Now we have our own building. Second, there is a beauty in the fact that we can now worship in a room which is

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

not a gymnasium, with backboards, hoops, and nets all around us. And the shorter preachers, like me, no longer need to "balance" on a small raised platform set behind a pulpit which was then too short. Now we have a facility which has been designed and constructed for the purpose of worship. And, third, the beauty of this facility is that it represents the concrete expression of our gratitude to God for *the Gift* of the Lord Jesus Himself. The money which was given to purchase the land, to obtain the downpayment, and to buy furnishings was and is an expression of our thankfulness to God for all the blessings He has given and is giving to us. These monies came first from a sizable gift from our mother congregation, Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. These monies also came from all of you. Some gave much and some gave a little. Even the children contributed with their dimes, nickels, and pennies to the drive. We may not have kept in mind the lofty, spiritual goal at all times of thanking our God, but the wonder of God's grace (beauty) is that these failures became opportunities for us to experience forgiveness again. And then we had even more reason to thank our covenant God.

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This physical building is a pic-

ture of a spiritual reality. That reality is the spiritual house of the church, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. The spiritual house of Christ consists of all of God's elect. Out of all generations and nations of the earth God calls and gathers the church into one spiritual dwelling. Our congregation is a microcosm of the whole, that is, a small picture of the whole. You, the members of this instituted congregation, are the church. Not this building, but you, the people, are the real church.

God builds the elect believers together into a spiritual house. God's first work is to take dead stones and make them alive. They are dead because of their relationship to Adam, that is, dead in sin. God takes those stones which He elected and He makes them alive. He regenerates, justifies, and sanctifies "living stones." He gives us the spiritual life of Christ. He makes us willing to do His will. By the wonder of His unending grace God keeps these stones alive unto all eternity.

The beauty of the building of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not found in the individuals, but in the whole, in the building of which they together are the parts. By themselves and apart from the whole, individual believers have no significance and beauty. That is

true for the physical building too. When the steel beams, the individual blocks, the buckets of paint, the coils of electrical wire, the two-by-fours, and the plywood were sitting in the parking lot, they had no beauty. Separated from the rest, one stone or a single fiber of the carpet or a drop of paint is not beautiful and has little or no significance. It is only as they have been put together by craftsmen that they have significance — in the whole.

So a living stone, a child of God, is not of significance or beauty by himself. That is because, in His eternal plan, God wanted the living stones to fit together into a beautiful whole. Each of the living stones is purposefully different from every other, just as all the various parts of this physical building are different from each other. And yet, each believer, having his own place in the whole, serves to make the whole beautiful, reflecting the grace and beauty of God. According to God's plan His people are not gathered erratically and without unity of purpose. But God's purpose in election is the formation of a unity in which every part has its own place, significance, and function. Each piece, in its own divinely ordered place, contributes importantly and necessarily to the beauty of the whole. Al-



Georgetown PRC — Hudsonville, Michigan

together they best serve the purpose of giving praise to the Artificer, Jehovah, and His tender mercy. The elect are built up a spiritual house, that is, the covenantal dwelling place of Jehovah God in Christ — each one in fellowship with God through faith in Christ, and each one in relationship to each other as covenant friends together of the living God.

*** **

The elect experience this beautiful fellowship in the way of their coming, by faith, unto Jesus, the Cornerstone. It has been my prayer, ever since the cornerstone was set on the right side of the main entrance into this building, that everyone when entering this building would see the text on the cornerstone: I Peter 2:4, 5, and that, seeing the text, everyone would pause to think, "I am a living stone and I am here to serve a purpose with all the rest. That purpose is not that I shine for myself, but that I will so fit as to help make the whole in fellowship with *the* Stone."

Each living stone is alive by virtue of its relationship to Christ. This enables each stone to be active. The activity of the living stones is that they come to Christ, who is *the* Cornerstone. The Cornerstone was and is not appreciated by all. By nature, believers join unbelievers in rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. But God set Him to be the Cornerstone on which the

church is built. The regenerated, justified, and sanctified children of God love that Cornerstone. We love to be in fellowship with Him. Therefore we also love to be in fellowship with each other, for His life lives in our fellow-saints.

The activity of living stones is first that they come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Coming to Christ is the activity of faith according to which we constantly go to Him to appropriate Him and His blessings. We may never forget that apart from Him we are nothing. While earthly stones are dead and must be cemented together, we are made alive and we come continually to Christ. Practically we go to Christ for forgiveness, for grace to obey His commandments. As living stones we say, "I need Christ. My fellow-saints need Christ. We together need Christ. Together we go to Christ."

The second function of living stones is that, while we come to Him together, we serve. Our attitude towards Him and each other is one of serving. We "offer up spiritual sacrifices to God by Jesus Christ." We live to serve. We live in order to give ourselves as spiritual sacrifices to God through Christ. This building and we, members of the church, are living to serve.

Tonight we dedicate this building to God's service. The purpose of this building is to serve and glorify Him. It is not for the praise of the architect, or the bricklayers, the

carpenters, or the building committee. But it is here to glorify God. It is here to serve Him. So we give this building as our spiritual sacrifice to God.

On August 5, 1998, when I stood in approximately this same spot (only a few feet lower in the sand) at ground-breaking, I made this same point. I strive to press it home again tonight. I would rather this whole beautiful building would burn to the ground, if in any way there is disunity in the body of Jesus Christ because of this building. This building is not worth it. We serve. We wake up each morning in order to serve. We dig in our pocketbooks to serve.

Our sacrifices are spiritual, not bloody, that is, consecrations of ourselves and the work of our hands and purses. Our service is to glorify God, not ourselves. This is how we express our constant gratitude for our union to Christ. Even then our sacrifices must be sanctified, that is, by Jesus Christ, the High Priest. They need His cleansing power. Knowing that He is there always to cleanse, we keep serving, giving ourselves to Him.

May this building be in existence, not for the praise of men, but as an expression of our constant gratitude that Christ and we are, together, one spiritual building. May this earthly building be dedicated to the service of the God who was pleased to save wretches like us. □

Book Reviews

From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition, by John Witte, Jr. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997. x + 315 pages. \$24 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

Scholarly as this book on marriage is and objective as it tries to be, it is obviously occasioned by deep concern for the family in America today. The book is part of the series, "The Family, Religion, and Culture," which is devoted to a thorough study of the family in

all ages and from many points of view.

Concern for the family in America and in Western civilization generally is well-founded. Witte makes every effort to be hopeful, but his conclusion is pessimistic:

It is hard to see the promise of

these future benefits (for marriage in the West—DJE), however, in the current phase of the legal revolution of marriage in America. The rudimentary disquisitions on equality, privacy, and freedom offered by courts and commentators today seem altogether too lean to nourish sufficiently the legal revolution of marriage and the family that is now taking place. The elementary deconstructions and dismissals of a millennium-long tradition of marriage and family law and life seem altogether too glib to be taken so seriously. Yet the legal revolution marches on. And the massive social, psychological, and spiritual costs continue to mount up. The wild oats sown in the course of the American sexual revolution have brought forth such a great forest of tangled structural, moral, and intellectual thorns that we seem almost powerless to cut it down. We seem to be living out the grim prophecy that Friedrich Nietzsche offered a century ago: that in the course of the twentieth century, "the family will be slowly ground into a random collection of individuals," haphazardly bound together "in the common pursuit of selfish ends"—and in the common rejection of the structures and strictures of family, church, state, and civil society (p. 215).

The cause of the dissolution of the family today is the view of marriage as merely a contract. This view took hold in America early in the nineteenth century and became dominant in the late twentieth century. Marriage is now regarded "as a 'terminal sexual contract' designed for the gratification of the individual parties" (p. 209). The result of this individualistic, man-centered view of marriage is that married life has become "'brutish, nasty, and short,' with women and children bearing the primary costs" (p. 214).

This has not always been the view of marriage in the West. Witte examines, in addition to the contractual model that prevails today, four other distinct models of marriage. They are the sacramen-

tal doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church; Lutheranism's conception of marriage as mainly a social estate; the covenantal view of Calvinism; and Anglicanism's view of marriage and family as a small commonwealth.

The book is Witte's thorough, well-researched analysis of each of these five views of marriage in history. The analysis is theological, although Witte points out the civil, social, and legal implications of each of the models.

Of great interest and value are the solid historical research and the apt historical references: Calvin's "tepid endorsement of divorce and firmer prohibition against separation" (p. 105); Milton's advocacy of easy divorce and remarriage because, as his biographer put it, he himself "could ill bear the disappointment hee mett with by her (his recalcitrant wife—DJE) obstinate absenting: And therefore thought upon a Divorce, that hee might be free to marry another" (p. 179); the Anglican William Heale's paean to marriage:

Marriage of al humane actions is the one & only weightiest. It is the present disposall of the whole life of man: it is a Gordian knot that may not bee loosed but by the sworde of death: it is the ring of union whose poesie is Pure and endlesse. In a word it is that state which either imparadizeth a man in the Eden of felicitie, or els exposeth him vnto a world of miserie (pp. 174, 175).

Witte demonstrates that the history of marriage and the family in the West is degeneration: from binding sacrament to fickle contract.

But Witte's analysis must be challenged at exactly the crucial point of the *original* view of marriage in the Christian church. Witte's title begins with the Romanizing church of the twelfth century and its construal of marriage as a sacrament. This was *not* the original "model" of marriage

in the church and in the West that was influenced by the church. There was an earlier view of marriage, a view that prevailed for almost 1000 years after the apostles. This view saw marriage as a life-long, unbreakable bond symbolizing the relationship between Christ and the church, although marriage was not regarded as a sacrament.

The title, therefore, should have been, *From Bond to Contract*. Rome's twelfth century view of marriage as a sacrament would then be a distinct stage in the decline of marriage.

Witte recognizes the historical fact, but does nothing with it. In a very brief section of only four pages, which constitute an introduction to the chapter "Marriage as Sacrament in the Roman Catholic Tradition," he sets forth the doctrine of the early church culminating in Augustine.

Augustine's theory of the marital goods of procreation, fidelity, and sacrament was the most integrated Christian theory of marriage offered by the Church Fathers. But this theory was only a foretaste of the robust sacramental model of the High Middle Ages.... Augustine did not use the term "sacrament of marriage" in its later sense as an instrument or cause of grace instituted by Christ for the purpose of sanctification. For Augustine, the term *sacrament* meant only "symbolic stability." Later Catholic theologians would call marriage permanent because it was a Christian sacrament. Augustine called marriage a Christian sacrament because it was permanent (p. 22).

Useful as Witte's five models are, there is a more fundamental analysis of the doctrine of marriage in the history of the church and in the history of Western civilization. Marriage is either a bond established by God that is dissolved only by death or a contract arranged by the man and the woman that is voidable at the pleasure of either.

It is noteworthy that, despite his avowed objectivity, Witte's last word is a powerful, almost impassioned, appeal to the biblical symbolism of marriage and family that pictures marriage as covenant-bond:

The family has specific "spiritual uses" for believers—ways of sustaining and strengthening them in their faith. The love of wife and husband can be among the strongest symbols we can experience of Yahweh's love for His elect, of

Christ's love for His Church. The sacrifices we make for our spouses and children can be among the best reflections we can offer of the perfect sacrifice of Golgotha. The procreation of children can be among the most important Words we have to utter (p. 219). □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Sister-Church Activities

One of our sister churches in Singapore, the First Evangelical Reformed Church, sponsored a two-day Reformation Day Conference on November 25 and 26. Prof. H. Hanko, professor of church history and New Testament in our seminary, spoke both nights on the theme, "Passion for the Old Truths."

Congregation Activities

This fall the young adults of our four Chicago-area churches decided to depart from their Bible study of last year and study various figures of church history using *Portraits of Faithful Saints*, by Prof. H. Hanko, as their text. Plans called for the four area pastors to take turns leading these classes. It was hoped that these classes would explain the controversy and struggle of the early church and show how God used different saints to bring the truth to a greater development for us today.

A recent bulletin from the First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada indicated that, due to the large size of their Young People's Society and at the request of some of the older young people, their consistory approved the organization of a Young Adults Bible Study. We rejoice with them that the Lord has given them increasing numbers of covenant young people, which makes this possible.

In early November, the Young People's Society of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA sponsored an "Appreciation Breakfast" for their congregation. In this way the young people hoped to show their appreciation for all the help and support given towards the Young People's Convention this past year.

All the societies of the First PRC in Holland, MI were invited to a combined meeting on November 30. Plans called for a presentation on the history of their congregation, since on July 3, 1999 they celebrated their 70th anniversary as an organized church in our denomination.

Mr. Herm Ophoff, a member of the Byron Center, MI PRC, spoke on November 28 at a meeting of the Young People's Society of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. He spoke on the interesting subject, "Recollections and Reflections of 1953-54." All interested members of Southwest, not just the young people, were invited to attend.

Members of the West Michigan churches were invited to an Organ Concert of beautiful music to glorify and praise our God at the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI on November 18. Georgetown was privileged to have Jonathan Tuuk, one of the country's most highly regarded organists, conduct a concert on their new organ, the Renaissance 270. This is the newest digital organ made by Allen, with the most realistic pipe organ sound available from a pipeless organ. The concert was an opportunity for those in attendance to witness firsthand the many features of Georgetown's new organ.

The choir of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL presented their combined concert and singspiration after their evening worship service on November 7.

School Activities

The Board for Secondary Education in South Holland, IL sponsored a promotional supper on November 5 at Trinity Christian College. Prof. R. Dykstra spoke on "God's Covenant, Faith, and Our Own High School."

The Ladies' Aid of the Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA invited families in their school to a Library Fun Night on December 3. There was story time for younger children, games for older children and parents, and refreshments for all. There was also a bake-sale/donation-box to help support the library.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC, in conjunction with the Reformed Witness Hour Committee, is now airing the Reformed Witness Hour on WYCA 92.5 FM at 1:00 P.M. on Sundays. Their first broadcast aired way back on August 22.

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI sponsored a public lecture on November 18 at their church. Prof. D. Engelsma spoke on the subject, "A Reformed Response to Pope John Paul's Declaration of the Year 2000 as the Year of Jubilee."

Rev. M. DeVries, pastor of the First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta, CN, spoke at a Reformation Day lecture sponsored by his congre-

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

gation's Evangelism Committee. Rev. DeVries spoke on the theme, "The Bondage of the Will."

Denomination Activities

The PRC Web Page now has audio, the sermon of the week, from the Hudsonville, MI PRC, and the weekly message by Rev. C.

Haak on the Reformed Witness Hour. Encourage friends, neighbors, and relatives with access to the Internet to check this out. www.prca.org

Minister Activities

Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC, has de-

clined the call he was considering from the Hull, IA PRC.

Food For Thought

"We have to live but one day at a time, but we are living for eternity in that one day."

—Anonymous □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Dennis and Sharon Gleason and family in the passing away of Dennis' father,

IAN GLEASON.

May the family be comforted in the words of Jesus: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:20, 21).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, President
Ed Hekstra, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On November 16, 1999

MR. KEN BYLSMA'S

mansion in heaven was ready. The Lord called him to his eternal home after a relatively short illness.

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville PRC, where Ken was a faithful member for many years, express their Christian sympathy to his children and grandchildren. May they also find their comfort in the words of Christ as He spoke in John 14:1-4, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

Erv Kortering, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of First PRC of Holland express their sincere Christian sympathy to Al Elzinga and his family in the sudden death of their wife, mother, and grandmother, and to Terry and Sandy Elzinga and family in the loss of their sister-in-law and aunt,

VERNA ELZINGA,

on November 24, 1999. May the Lord comfort them in the knowledge of Christ's victory over sin, death, and the grave: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:55-57).

Rev. Charles Terpstra, Pres.
John VanUffelen, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of First PRC of Holland express their sincere Christian sympathy to Rich and Nancy Bosman and family in the death of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. KATHERINE HUYSER.

May our God comfort them according to the truth of His Word in Romans 8:38, 39, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Rev. Charles Terpstra, Pres.
John VanUffelen, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Frank and Esther Block and family in the death of Esther's brother,

MR. KEN BYLSMA.

May the family take comfort in the words of Revelation 7:9, 10: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

Rev. Dale Kuiper, President
Ed Hekstra, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Bob and Kaye Moelker and family in the death of Bob's brother,

DON MOELKER.

May the family find comfort in the words of Isaiah: "Esaiahs also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth" (Romans 9:27, 28).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, President
Ed Hekstra, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of First PRC of Holland express their sincere Christian sympathy to Ed and Barb Cammenga and family in the passing away of their brother and uncle,

KEN BYLSMA.

May our heavenly Father speak peace to their hearts through His promises in Revelation 14:13: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Rev. Charles Terpstra, Pres.
John VanUffelen, Clerk

TEACHERS NEEDED

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a Protestant Reformed music/band instructor for the 2000/2001 school year. Interested individuals, including those who are pursuing an education in this area, should contact Mike Lotterman, 1382 Su-Lew, Walker, MI 49544 (616) 453-4106, or the administrator, Ron Koole (616) 453-9717.

Eastside Christian School is accepting immediately applications from persons who are confessing members of the Protestant Reformed Churches for the teaching position in the primary grades 1-3 for the year 2000-2001. Send a letter of application and a résumé to Eastside Christian School, attention: Agatha Lubbers or James Holstege, 2800 Michigan St. N.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506. If you have any questions, call Agatha Lubbers, (616) 942-2939 or (616) 458-2057 or James Holstege, (616) 285-9096.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of the Hope PRC (Walker) extend their sympathy to Elder John Buiter and his family in the death of Mrs. Buiter's brother,

MR. KENNETH BYLSMA.

It is our prayer that they find comfort in the words of Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Rev. J. Laning, President
Cal Kalsbeek, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of the Hudsonville PRC express their Christian sympathy to fellow officebearer Richard Feenstra and family in the death of his father-in-law,

MR. KENNETH BYLSMA.

May they find comfort in the words of Psalm 145:17-19, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. The Lord is high unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them."

Rev. B. Gritters, President
Robert Drnek, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Brent and Alisa Snippe in the death of Brent's grandfather,

RALPH SNIPPE.

May the family be comforted in the truth, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, President
Ed Hekstra, Clerk

Radio Stations on which the
Reformed Witness Hour
is aired:

KCCF

1550AM; Sundays at 8:30 A.M.
(Ferndale, WA)

KDCR

88.5FM; Sundays at 6:05 P.M.
(Sioux Center, IA)

KLOH

1050AM; Sundays at 8:00 A.M.
(Pipestone, MN)

WFNC

640AM; Sundays at 9:30 A.M.
(Fayetteville, NC)

WFUR

102.9FM; Sundays at 8:00 A.M.
1570AM; Sundays at 4:00 P.M.
(Grand Rapids, MI)

WMRH

1170AM; Sundays at 8:30 A.M.
(Waupun, WI)

WORD

101.5FM; Sundays at 10:00 A.M.
(Pittsburgh, PA)

WYCA

92.3FM; Sundays at 1:00 P.M.
(Hammond, Indiana)