to see what I can do, to test the limits and break through. No right, no wrong, no rules for me. I’m free.”), and the list goes on. It is frightening to consider the godless example of the ‘babysitter’ that is teaching our small children. The media is antichristian even in its ‘innocent’ cartoons. Perhaps we need to reexamine what example we leave as parents by allowing our children to follow the example of the world around us. Perhaps we need to look for another ‘babysitter,’ such as a good book, playing in the backyard, crafts, or constructive toys. Certainly, we as parents must be the example our children follow and not that of the media. The very holiness of our children and of the future church is at stake.

If there is anything that plagues the church today, it is a lack of godliness. This stems from the home. This is why we ask: What kind of an atmosphere do we establish as parents in the home? Is it one in which we as husbands and wives converse together about spiritual goals and desires? Do we sing the songs of Zion? Will our children learn to pray by seeing us in prayer? Life in the home is so important because there our little children watch and follow after their parents—whether that be our good habits or bad. Our example is perhaps the most important “method” of nurturing our preschool children in order to mold them for their lives in this world.

We end on this note: parents must by their example reveal to their children what sin is and the need for the cross of Jesus Christ. This is accomplished in part when our children see that we as parents confess our sins and daily look to the cross. Our children will see in us a life of thankfulness in the way we live in the home and church. They will see in us the fear of God, and they by God’s work of grace in their hearts will seek to walk in that same fear.

In our next article we will examine a second important method of nurturing our preschool children, that of discipline.

The RFPA website currently lists ten titles written by Herman Hanko, emeritus professor of Church History and New Testament Studies at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. Publishing this survey of church history will add four more titles to those ten. These four may well be Hanko’s *magnum opus*.

The four volumes correspond to the four main eras of church history—ancient, medieval, reformation, and modern. The RFPA’s goal is to publish one volume per year for the next four years.

Under review is the first volume, covering the first six centuries of church history. Three chapters cover the first period of ancient church history, the apostolic period (30–100). The material in this section is largely based on God’s revelation in Scripture.

Chapters four through ten cover the post-apostolic period (100–313). During this period the church was learning how to live, grow, and develop in her doctrinal understanding without the guidance of the apostles. Society and the Roman government hated the church during this era. She battled against heresies that consisted of mixtures of Christian teachings and pagan philosophy; she had to recognize which books constituted the inspired Scriptures; and she had to develop in her understanding of the Trinity. By God’s grace and under Christ’s direction, grow and develop she did.

Chapters eleven through nineteen cover the Nicene and post-Nicene period (313–590). During this time the state stopped persecuting the church and began to favor her, to her weakening. The seeds of the Romish papacy were sown and began to sprout. The notable doctrinal controversies regarding the Trinity, Christ’s person and natures, and the depravity of man’s nature also characterized this period. The church was working hard to develop in her understanding of the sovereign, irresistible character of God’s grace.

All of which is to say that this book highlights the main events and themes in the history of the church during her first six hundred years—exactly as you...
would expect it to do, and as do many other books. So what makes this book different?

First, the work is intended for a wide public audience, not the narrow field of scholarship. Hanko is a scholar. He is well read in the field of church history, and taught it at seminary level for thirty-six years. But his goal is that the members of the church, whether highly educated or not, know the basic points of church history.

Second, Hanko’s goal is to make the reading of church history an enjoyable undertaking: “I have consciously tried to make the book enjoyable and worth reading” (author’s Preface). Indeed, the book tells a story, and flows like a story. It is a story—a true story, His (God’s) story.

Other surveys of church history are also intended for a wide audience and are entertaining reads. So the third, and fundamental, way in which this book is different is that it evaluates church history from a Reformed and biblical viewpoint. In Hanko’s words, “While the books that I read were all helpful in giving the facts of church history, some in considerable detail, I could not find one book that dealt with the history of Christ’s church from a biblical and, more specifically, a Reformed viewpoint” (Preface).

In this reviewer’s judgment, Hanko accomplishes all three goals, and does so well. His writing style is engaging. His explanation of complex matters (Gnosticism, and the Trinitarian and Christological heresies, for example), is simple enough that the book could be used as a high-school textbook (in fact, the first edition was a limited edition release for that purpose). And Hanko’s evaluation of his material in light of Scripture is refreshing.

The book is full of church history facts, but the analysis of the historical events and themes is this book’s great value. Every historian has a bias, a perspective from which he views history. Some historians, trying to be objective, do not tip their hand as to what their bias is. Hanko tips his hand: history is the unfolding of God’s counsel, directed by the ascended Lord. It is the outworking of principles of history that Scripture tells us to expect—the signs of the times of our Lord’s return. It is the story of men and women who sometimes abided by scriptural principles and requirements, and other times failed to abide by them.

Hanko also leaves the reader with the clear impression that the history of the church long ago is relevant for us today. History’s themes repeat themselves, and the heresies that the church battled then are fundamentally the same, though repackaged, as some of the heresies that the church faces today.

I thank my former professor for taking the time to write the book, and look forward to the release of the next three volumes.

The contributions of the editor and reviser, Dan VanUffelen, are also commendable. Dan lists the ten basic categories in which he revised the first edition. Dan’s work was significant and time-consuming. The addition of introductory essays, biographical sketches, sidebars, charts, and pictures makes the book more enjoyable to read, and more suitable for a textbook. The addition of an index to the book is also welcome.

The subject matter is precious. The matter is presented at a level that many can read. RFPA subscribers will not only enjoy reading the book, but likely recommend it to others interested in the church’s history.

News from our churches
Mr. Perry Van Egdom, member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa

Trivia question
When Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD was organized in 2010 it became the first PR church in South Dakota in how many years? The only previous South Dakota PRC was located where? Answers later in this column and more trivia next time.

Minister activities
Prof. R. Dykstra and his wife Carol returned to the USA in early May after serving the CERC of Singapore for five months. Rev. J. Smidstra and his wife Kelly traveled to Singapore in late April and he intends to fill the pulpit there into late August.

Rev. C. Griess (First PRC in GR) declined the call from Hudsonville PRC to be their pastor. Rev. R. VanOverloop (Grace PRC) declined the call to Kalamazoo PRC. Wingham PRC (Ontario, Canada) had formed a trio, but their congregational meeting was on hold due to increased restrictions in Ontario. The Council of Byron Center PRC formed a new trio: Rev. R. Barnhill (Peace PRC), Prof. R. Dykstra...