

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

We, who in times past were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel...are now made nigh only by the blood of Christ.... We confess according to The Holy Scriptures as from the depth of our own hearts that it is not of ourselves that we are thus, for we were dead, but of God Who by His Holy Spirit made us alive. Our boast is in God alone....

From "The Resolution of Membership" of
the ERCS — page 274

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MEDITATION

Our Lord's Coronation

Rev. C. Hanko

Ques. 50. Why is it added, "and sitteth at the right hand of God."

Ans. Because Christ is ascended into heaven for this end, that He might appear as head of His church, by Whom the Father governs all things.

Ques. 51. What profit is this glory of Christ, our head, unto us?

Ans. First, that by His Holy Spirit He pours out heavenly graces upon us His members; and then that by His power He defends and preserves us against all enemies.

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 19

"The Lord (Jehovah) said to my Lord (Adonai, the mighty Conqueror), sit Thou at My right hand,

until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Psalm 110:1).

This prophecy was realized on Christ's coronation day. When our Lord arose from the dead and ascended to heaven He was accompanied by ten millions of angels, who accompanied Him to the throne of our eternal God, where He received the crown, with power and authority to rule over all the works of God's hands (Daniel 7:13, 14).

What a glorious moment that was for our Lord! It was the moment He had looked forward to with eager anticipation during all His life and ministry here on earth. Even when He repeatedly referred to Himself as the Son of man He had in mind this glorious exaltation. For the Scripture had foretold that through the deepest humiliation this Son of Adam would be exalted to heavenly glory far above the angels. He must often have sung in His soul, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the *son of man*, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor.... O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth" (Psalm 8:4, 5, 9). Often Jesus spoke of His kingdom, reminding His disciples that His kingdom is not of this earth, but is heavenly, spiritual and eternal. He assured them in His preaching that the Son of man would soon enter into His kingdom. When He stood before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin He boldly testified under oath that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and added, "Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). Also after His resurrection Christ showed His disciples that He had to suffer all these things, even to the death of the cross, in order to enter into His glory (Luke 24:26).

This was another step in Christ's exaltation and the beginning of His work as the Great Servant of God in heaven, our great Prophet, our exalted Highpriest, and our eternal King. Literally *all* power was entrusted to Christ, over the angels and saints in heaven, over the devil and demons of hell, over the nations of the earth, over sun, moon, and stars, and over every creature that is upon the earth and in the sea. This is a *derived* power. God still occupies the throne as sovereign Potentate of potentates, Lord over all, but He exercises His power and carries out His eternal counsel through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is at the same time a *universal*, totalitarian control over all things in heaven, on earth, and in hell. Our Catechism stresses the fact that Christ exercises this power as *Head of His church*, of which we are members. He builds His church, brings His saints to glory through the judgments that are brought upon the wicked, and establishes His kingdom in the new creation, that God may be all in all!

The more we think about this the more staggering it becomes! What a glorious day that was when the angels were sent out to accompany our Lord in His triumphal entry in His kingdom! The breach that had been made in the angel world when the devil and his demons rebelled and were cast out was now finally healed, as our Lord assumes His place of authority over the angels who eagerly obey His bidding. They are far more involved in the work of our salvation than we realize. What a blessed day that was for the saints when they saw their Redeemer and Savior face to face in His glory. How wonderful for them that now they can see God fully revealed to them in all His perfections in Jesus Christ, so that they can live and reign with Christ to the glory of the Father! How blessed for us to know that our dear departed ones now wear a crown with Christ in His kingdom!

But what a terrible day that was for the devils and demons, along with all the wicked in hell! For one of the first duties that Christ carried out in His new position of authority was to proclaim His victory to the inhabitants of hell, whereby their condemnation is sealed forever (I Peter 3:19, 20). Once for all, the Accuser of the brethren, who still entered heaven in the old dispensation, is banished from that heavenly realm (Rev. 12:8). Satan and his host have received their death sentence, so that they know that they have but a little while before they will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 8:29). Also the wicked of all the ages must realize now the utter hopelessness of their situation. What a cry of anguish arises from the lips of the wicked as they gnash their teeth and chew their tongues in a much deeper torment of despair!

What a difference the exaltation of Christ has made upon the nations of the earth! On the day of Christ's coronation the millennium of Revelation 20 was introduced. Scripture informs us that for the past "one thousand years," taken symbolically as a full period of time determined by the Almighty, the devil had been bound in regard to the nations of the earth. This does not mean that he had been unable to tempt individuals or to attack God's church with heresies and other seductions. But it does mean that he was not able to establish a world empire through these nations. This new dispensation in this sense is different from the old, when nations like Assyria, Babylon, the Medo-Persian kingdom, the Macedonian empire, and the Roman empire could temporarily rule the known world. Since Christ's ascension all the attempts that have been made to establish a world empire, even as recently as Napoleon and Hitler, have utterly failed. In the meantime, Christ has carried out the counsel of God as contained in the book with its seven seals (Revelation 5:6, 7). Only the exalted Christ, as the

Lamb for sinners slain, was found worthy to break the seals of that book and carry out all that is written in it. As a result, the white horse has gone forth spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth and to the islands of the sea, conquering over and subduing the hearts of God's elect unto submission to the gospel of peace. In its trail followed the red horse, arousing nations to war against each other as they gave vent to their hatred against God and His Anointed, as well as against one another in selfish greed. Also the black horse was sent forth to bring about economic disorders which resulted in the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming the more oppressed by the rich. Along with these was sent out also the pale green horse bringing sicknesses, plagues, diseases, and death upon the earth (Revelation 6). In the normal course of events one fourth of the population of the earth was affected by these judgments of God. At other times a far larger number suffered, as one third of the earth's population experienced God's visitations. And all of these judgments reach their culmination when antichrist stands at the height of his power and the vials of God's wrath are poured out upon the worshippers of the beast (Revelation 16). Only at the end of these "thousand years," when the gospel will have spread to the ends of the earth and the entire church of Christ is gathered from every nation and tribe and tongue, will Satan once more be unleashed to arouse the nations of the earth to the final battle of Armageddon. In the meantime the wickedness of man will be fully manifested, so that there is no semblance any more of religion or of repentance, but only a bitter cursing of God for all His sovereignty over the earth. That day cannot come until the very last saint has been prepared for his or her place in Father's mansions, even until the Bride has been fully adorned through the sufferings of this present time to meet the Bridegroom. Only then will our Lord appear with the clouds in all the glory that He now possesses, as that majesty is described in Revelation 1, to judge the earth in righteousness and to take His Bride unto Himself in His heavenly perfection at the wedding feast of the Lamb.

"The Lord unto His Christ hath said,
Sit Thou at My right hand,
Until I make Thy enemies
Submit to my command.
A scepter prospered by the Lord
Thy mighty hand shall wield;
From Zion Thou shalt rule the world,
And all Thy foes shall yield."

Psalter number 303

What a glorious day that day of Christ's coronation proves to be for the church of Jesus Christ that is still on earth! Christ rules the world from

Zion's holy hill. Therefore Scripture can assure us that "All things are yours"—the world, the creatures of the earth, tree and plant and flower, life and death, things present and things to come; all are yours—"and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." Nations continue to rage and exalt themselves against God and His Christ to wipe out His cause and His people from the earth, but they only serve the eternal purpose of God's will. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof! He has set His King upon the holy hill of Zion. "Let mount Zion rejoice, let her daughters be glad, because of Thy judgments!" (Psalm 48:11). May our prayer continually arise before the throne, "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly".

Scripture assures us that "Thy people (Christ's) shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Psalm 110:3). That day of Christ's power is now. He prepares the hearts of His people so that they live in devotion to Him. As our Catechism adds, "By His Holy Spirit He pours out heavenly graces upon us His members." With a people that is less than willing God can never be satisfied. Any cold, formal worship, any outward homage, any prayer that arises from our lips out of mere custom or habit is more abominable to Him than the offering of swine's flesh on His altar (Isaiah 66:3). Never can we of ourselves fulfill the strict requirements of His law, in which He requires of us that we love Him while we sleep, when we arise in the morning with our first thoughts directed toward Him, when we eat our meals in thankfulness, when we perform the duties of the day as His friend-servants, and when we are engaged in any form of relaxation. Still more, we must love our neighbor as ourselves, and put forth every effort to shew him that love in all that we do, at home, in our labors, in the church and in the midst of the world. God says, "Whether you eat, or whether you drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." How often have not you and I complained that we just can never do that. We forget that we can do all things through Christ Who strengthens us, and therefore must prayerfully confess, "By Thy grace I will." Always foremost in our hearts and on our lips must be the prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name." The wonder of grace is that Christ makes us a willing people that is enabled by His Word and Spirit. He creates in us the desire to serve and glorify our God, to crucify the flesh and to live a new, holy life before His face. And when we fail—for who of us does not fail miserably while we are in this body of sin—and when we sin—for who of us does not sin every moment?—God does not turn His back to us or cast us away in His anger, but He mercifully draws us back to Him in sorrow and repentance, to assure us of His forgiving mercies that

never fail. Like wandering sheep we are brought back within the fold. In the great Day of days Jesus Christ will sit on the judgment seat to judge us according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil. All our multitude of sins will be forgiven on the basis of His meritorious death, and we will be rewarded according to the works which Christ by His Spirit carried out in us, a reward, not of works, but of grace.

We cannot fail to note that we are still a militant church and soldiers of the cross. Yet our Catechism assures us, that Christ "by His power defends and preserves us against all enemies."

In this battle we are not mere puppets who go through the motions without actually experiencing the horrors of our spiritual warfare. Our enemy is very real and our battle from day to day is also very real. We attain the victory through faith, and through faith alone. Our Lord defends and preserves us by equipping us to fight the battle of faith until our dying breath. He has prepared for us a shining helmet of salvation, which distinguishes us as soldiers of the cross and assures us of victory. He gives us a well-furbished breastplate of the righ-

teousness of Christ, protecting our hearts and lives from defeat and death. He keeps that breastplate in place by supplying us with the girdle of truth. For our feet He has prepared strong, pliable shoes of preparedness of the gospel, so that we can always stand in the face of the foe. For our left hand He has made ready a strong, defensive shield that is guaranteed to ward off all the fiery darts of the enemy. No modern bullet or shrapnel can penetrate that shield. And for our right hand He assigns a sword of the Spirit, which is none other than the Word of God, whereby we can fight offensive warfare, ready at all times to give account of the hope that is within us, even when the enemy seems overwhelmingly strong and the battle waxes intensely fierce. Before the Word of God all the hosts of hell are put to flight.

Stand ye! Put on the whole armour of God!

Our response must always be: "By Thy grace we will."

Through our exalted Lord in heaven we are always more than conquerors. He loved us unto death, and lives to bless us in His love forever! Amen.

The Institution of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore

At the occasion of the institution of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore on January 24, the new congregation published an attractive little booklet commemorating that significant and joyful event. From our visiting seminarian, Lau Chin Kwee, I obtained a copy of this booklet. In it there are especially two documents which I want to share with our readers, so that they may gain some insight into the work of the Lord that has been accomplished in Singapore and so that they may share somewhat in the joy of this wonderful occasion. The first document is "The Resolution Of Membership," which was read in unison at the time of the institution of the church there. The second is a "History Of The Evangelical Reformed Church Of Singapore" under the title "... And They Shall Be Unto Me A People." We here present these documents as published in the booklet, with only a few editorial corrections in these compositions.

—HCH

The Resolution Of Membership

We, who in times past were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world, are now made nigh only by the blood of Christ; such that we who were once not a people are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. We confess according to the Holy Scriptures as from the depth of our own hearts that it is not of ourselves that we are thus, for we were dead, but of God Who by His Holy Spirit made us alive. Our boast is in God alone: for it is by grace that we are saved, not of works; nor of the power of our own will, but of God.

Seeing, therefore, that God Who chose us from before the foundation of the world is pleased to gather us as a Church, built upon the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets contained in the Holy Scriptures, with Christ as the corner stone, we seek to be joined to the same.

Being persuaded that the truth which is commonly called the Reformed Faith, which truth is laid forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession of Faith, and the Canons of Dordrecht, does faithfully express the doctrines taught us in the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments which we believe, we thank God that He has caused us to believe and love the same. We therefore heartily and with praise to our God desire to be formed into the institute church of Jesus Christ, the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, that she may be the pillar and ground of the truth in this region.

We endeavor henceforth, not by our own frail strength but by the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, as members of this church to confess and live according to this doctrine, in daily repentance, not grudgingly, as though under some harsh yoke, but willingly, seeing that this heartwarming and devotional truth is most gracious and comforting to us who once slaved under the ruthless tyranny of sin. We give God our King glory and thanks that He has given to us in His infinite love and unsearchable wisdom His servants, men qualified by the Holy Spirit to minister to us in the office of elders and deacons. We submit cheerfully to their care, readily seeking through them God's provision of the counsel and care of the Great Shepherd of the sheep. We count it joy to sit under the doctrine and rule of the elders by the Word, receiving in godly obedience the Word preached, and subjecting ourselves to their admonition and discipline when we err from the Word, that we may be restored.

We drink heartily with thanksgiving at the wells of mercy which God has provided in the deacons as they administer the ministry of mercy and encouragement.

Finally, we seek by grace in our offices and as members of the body of Christ to serve our Lord in the church according as He gives us opportunity and power; in mutual encouragements, in searching the Word, in prayer, in tithes and offerings, and in what place soever we are, that the church may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. From Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. AMEN.

Composed by: Brother Francis Quek

Approved by the Commission

* * * * *

“. . . And They Shall Be Unto Me A People”

This is the story of a company of believers who are now being formed into a church, the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore; a brief account

of this people and their many struggles, hardships, and joys. This story is, however, not like the many others where the sole determiner of events is the random choice of the human actors. We embark on a story of the sovereign leading of God of a people who were once not a people, but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

We invite you, in the course of this account, to walk with this band through their pathway, one with many narrow corridors of strife and purging, and strewn with dangers and hope to the present, and experience with them the grace of God to His Church. Many there are who had been numbered with them but have left; many with misunderstandings, but it is God Who leads.

The ERCS had its beginnings as a Bible class in a public school, the Monk's Hill Secondary School. In the year 1962, a teacher in that school, Mr. Goh Seng Fong, began to witness among the students. As the Lord blessed his labours, he met with the young converts every day during recess, before and after school. This teacher, then in his twenties, had a tremendous zeal for God; and with his intense concern and friendliness, it is not surprising that many students flocked to such Bible class gatherings. Of the many in the group in those early years, our brother Lau Chin Kwee, who joined in 1965, remains with us.

As the group grew, she was brought under the wing of the 'Youth for Christ' and became formally known as the "Monk's Hill YFC." The group had by then picked up momentum, and the short daily meetings in the school soon proved insufficient; so, under the umbrella of the YFC, she began meeting on Saturdays at Newton Life Church, a Presbyterian Church near the school. Under the diligent labours of Mr. Goh, who spared nothing in time or wealth to help the young people (he conducted extra tuition classes for the weaker students on his own time and often brought the group for meals on his meagre salary) the group flourished.

In 1967, some of the older students were exhorted by their mentor to attend Sunday Worship Services at Gilstead Life Bible Presbyterian Church, which he was attending. The group continued her progress, and then, between 1967 and 1968, she encountered her first split. At the time when the older members attended Gilstead Life, there were close ties between Rev. Timothy Tow of Gilstead Life and the minister of a fundamentalistic Baptist Church. Many of these students, then leaders in the Monk's Hill YFC, became very close with the Baptist minister, visiting his home often and frequently inviting him to preach at the Saturday meetings at Newton Life Church. The Baptist mini-

ster gradually influenced these young leaders with his differences with Gilstead Life concerning baptism. As a result of this, many of these young leaders left to join the Baptist minister. By the grace of God, brother Lau Chin Kwee, sister Shi Soi Fah (the now Mrs. Tan Boon Kwang) and one or two others remained.

All this while, Mr. Goh had been teaching the group the proper honour for the Word of God and godly separation from the present wicked world. Between 1968 and 1969, these young Christians began to see the errors of the YFC, which were worldliness and their support for neo-Evangelicals such as Billy Graham. Thus led by the Lord, the group broke away from the YFC and the use of Newton Life Church. By grace again, the young group found favour in the eyes of Rev. Timothy Tow and were given a room in the premises of Gilstead Life Church; and the group now called Monk's Hill Bible Club shifted to Gilstead Road.

At this time, Mr. Goh developed a close relation with the JSM (Jesus Saves Mission) and later became their domestic missionary. The work of the Monk's Hill Bible Club was therefore left very much in the hands of her young leaders. As this work slowly evolved, there has been a "Gospel Letters and Tracts Department" in the Monk's Hill Bible Club, and the group adopted the name of the department, with the Monk's Hill Bible Club becoming an outreach of the GLTD. The original design of this change of name was for the group to merge with and become part of the Gilstead Life Church Sunday School, a plan which never materialized. The GLTD was thus left to fend for herself, with no ties with any church save the use of the place and the friendly counsel of Rev. Timothy Tow.

September 1972 saw the departure of Mr. Goh to the United States of America for ministerial training. With none to finance him, a young GLTD pooled all her resources to come up with \$800 (a sum collected through the humble five to ten cents daily pledges of the members). With this, his entire savings and love gift from JSM, he set out. In the States, he found a Baptist College willing to take and finance him.

Meanwhile, the GLTD attendance dwindled to eleven persons. It was at this time that the Lord raised one of the present leaders, brother Johnson See, who led the group with a few brothers and sisters. The work had to be supported by some of the older members, then in their late teens, giving tuition. Brother Johnson See laboured undaunted, and slowly but surely the numbers grew. The turning point took place when the first annual Bible Camp was held in December 1972. After the camp, students from schools other than Monk's Hill

Secondary School were added, and the attendance at the Saturday Club meeting where brother Johnson See spoke every week grew to thirty.

From 1973, the GLTD continued to grow until in 1975 she numbered seventy. During this time an Executive Committee of GLTD was formed to ensure the smooth running of the work. In 1975, some of the leaders realized that the GLTD could not remain perpetually a Christian Organization. The idea of moving toward church formation led to sharp dissension in the group: for there were those who felt that the GLTD should become an independent church with Mr. Goh's return as her pastor, while others felt that she should merge with and become part of the BP (Bible Presbyterian) movement. A conflict within the leadership led to the leaving of some of the leaders as the rest sought church formation.

In that same year, the Lord saw fit to introduce the GLTD to the Reformed Faith they hold today. The Reformed Truth, or the eternal truth of the Word of God as it was formed again at the Great Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century A.D. after many years of spiritual famine under the corrupt teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, had been all but forgotten in many churches. In Singapore, the Reformed faith was scarcely if ever heard of even in churches which are supposedly Reformed, like the Presbyterians, Anglicans, etc., which have Reformed Creeds.

Two ministers, Prof. H. Hoeksema and Rev. C. Hanko of the Protestant Reformed churches of America, were passing by Singapore; and brother Ong Keng Ho (then not acquainted with the GLTD) who had received the truth through the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Christ-church, New Zealand, was trying to arrange for Gilstead Life Church to organize a series of lectures by the visiting ministers. It was suggested to him to ask the GLTD to host the lectures. The three lectures were held (There were only two lectures at the time. HCH) and in the process, brother Lau Chin Kwee came to know brother Ong and was introduced to the Reformed Faith.

In March, 1976, the GLTD rented a unit of its present premises in a zinc-roofed kampong house at 356J, River Valley Outreach (R.V.O. a name used even unto today). At first, only the Sunday Fellowship, which was set up earlier to cater for the many who had left school and could no longer attend the Saturday morning meetings, used the place. For a time, a number of the members of the group attended the Gilstead Life Church Worship Services on Sunday mornings (for though GLTD never became a part of Life Church, many of her members attended and became individually members of the church whose premises we used) and went to

the Fellowship at R.V.O. in the afternoon. At that time they were so weak of means that the 120 dollars-rent for the place was a sum they had to call a general meeting to approve and to stretch our funds to accommodate. It was at this small place, twenty feet square inclusive of a hall and two rooms, that the seed of the ERCS Sunday Worship was sown. It was decided that in line with their desire to set up an autonomous church, the GLTD should have her own services at the completely unfurnished R.V.O. The wall separating one of the rooms from the hall was torn down (by the members themselves wielding crowbars and hammers) to make way for the increase in numbers. Since then, the group has broken down the wall of the other room, acquired two more adjacent units of the kampong house, and graduated from floor-sitting to chairs.

The spark of truth kindled in the heart of brother Lau Chin Kwee in 1975 was soon a raging fire within his breast as he studied the Reformed Truth on his own, and he could not help but pour it forth to the rest of the group. About the middle of 1976, brother Lau Chin Kwee began to teach the Heidelberg Catechism (a Reformed Confession now a creed of the ERCS) at the Saturday meeting, incurring the opposition of some leaders; but like a living shoot striving incessantly against the huge rocks in its quest to rise above the ground, the truth then firmly rooted in our brother's heart was not shaken. At times he felt that none stood with him, and it was not until the end of that year that some of the brethren began to hold the same truth of Sovereign Grace which he loved.

In the twelfth month of that same year, Mr. Goh, the Christian teacher who started the group in 1962 having then completed his theological training, returned and began immediately to work in the GLTD. He became the group's 'missionary pastor,' sent from his church in the United States, and being anabaptistic by persuasion, he tried to bring his teachings to the group. The respect of the group being very much with him, he taught them the Congregational form of church government, with a one-pastor (elder) rule, opposed the doctrine of the universal catholic church, and tried to propagate his teachings on the mode of baptism. He advocated baptism by immersion and considered all persons baptized in other modes (i.e., sprinkling or pouring) unbaptized and therefore proper candidates for re-baptism. The members of the GLTD, having learnt the honour for the Word of God, searched the Scriptures; and many were thrown into perplexity. Forums were held on the mode of baptism, where brother Lau Chin Kwee did battle with Rev. Goh before the entire congregation. It was surely by grace that brother Lau Chin

Kwee, being untrained, managed to hold his ground. As the conflict mounted, Rev. Goh left GLTD, and a few members left with him. Still others, confused and discouraged about the intense conflict and instability of the group, also departed. This took place in mid-1977, and it was a time of grief.

All this while, the Reformed Truth was brewing in the hearts of some members of the GLTD; but even after the departure of Rev. Goh, they faced much opposition from the rest of the leaders. Among the dissenters against particularly the doctrine of limited atonement, the strongest was brother Johnson See; but by God's all-wise grace, he was led away for further studies. In Scotland, brother Johnson, away from his heavy responsibility to lead the brethren in what he was then convicted of, came also to embrace and cherish the Reformed Truth. In Singapore, brother Lau Chin Kwee, knowing the allegiance of the group for the Word of God, continued with those who loved the same truth to show the rest that the Reformed Faith and Scriptural Christianity were one and the same. It was a time of trial for these brethren, but they laboured on amidst much opposition and discouragement from other factions of the group.

In January 1978, brother Lau Chin Kwee, having this view to propagate the Reformed Truth in this part of the world, left his job as a school teacher for the full-time ministry. This made him the second person to do so, joining brother Tan Boon Kwang, who felt the call in 1976 and was already studying in the Far Eastern Bible College of the Bible Presbyterians.

Already in 1977, brother Johnson See had made contact with Professor Hoeksema of the Protestant Reformed Church(es) of America for advice and help in the issues confronting the GLTD. This dialogue went on until in 1978, when the GLTD asked the PRC for help, they sent the group two emissaries, Rev. J. Slopsema and Elder Dewey Engelsma, to investigate how they can best help. (Note: My correspondence with Brother Johnson See began in mid-1977. Already in his first or second letter to me, which was primarily concerned with questions concerning baptism, Brother Johnson See began to inquire about the possibility of our churches sending a missionary to help the GLTD. I purposely ignored this inquiry for a time, because I thought it was premature. When, however, the inquiry persisted, I forwarded all the correspondence to the Foreign Mission Committee, along with my suggestion to them that they investigate this matter, if necessary by sending emissaries to investigate on the spot. This resulted eventually in the sending of Rev. Slopsema and Elder Engelsma. HCH) Being the first Reformed delegation

here, they bore the brunt of the attack on the faith. Those holding the Arminian position then assailed them at the public meetings. Neither did those believing the Reformed faith support them at these meetings: for they saw in the emissaries an invaluable avenue to answer the many questions heaped on them. There was also the majority who desired to know the truth of the Word, who sat silently considering what was said. It must have appeared at those meetings that the GLTD was entirely rank Arminian.

After the departure of the emissaries, a tape programme was set up in which the PRC sent tapes to Singapore explaining the truth held. A commission of ten GLTD members was set up to study the doctrines the PRC brought to them. The Lord worked in the hearts of the members of the GLTD, and soon there was a clear dividing line between the Reformed Truth and the error of Arminianism. Those who believed in the truth were strengthened; many who were seeking the truth came to love the Reformed Faith. It was also a period of extreme contradiction, and many members left the group as the Lord prepared the GLTS to be a vessel of His truth. The pain of seeing many bosom friends leave was somewhat alleviated as God added others to the group, but it was a period fraught with discouragements.

While this was going on, the GLTD had prepared a Constitution which was submitted to the authorities: for hitherto they were not officially recognized as a Society by the government. With registration with the civil authorities, the name of the Gospel Letters and Tracts Department was changed to the Gospel Literature and Tract Society in January 1979.

That same year, a second PRC delegation of emissaries was sent to Singapore. The work of the first delegation, who came a year before, was not without fruit; and by the time Rev. M. Kamps and Elder Dewey Engelsma came, much of the wrangling concerning Limited or Particular Atonement and Irresistible Grace was dispelled. It was through the hands of the second delegation that the PRC received the unanimous request of all the members of the GLTS, at the unanimous recommendation of the study commission, to send them a missionary.

After the departure of the emissaries, the leaders of the group discussed at length the advice of the PRC men to stop the administration of the Lord's Supper until the church was organized. After much study of the Word, the sacrament which had been administered by the BP minister on the invitation of the GLTS was discontinued on the ground that the Word of God gives the observing of the sacrament only as it is supervised by elders of the

church, of which the group had none.

In February 1980, a missionary from the PRC, Rev. Arie den Hartog, arrived in Singapore with his family. A man of great zeal and compassion, the group grew quickly to love and respect him; and in a matter of months the American of Dutch origin became accepted in a very real sense as the missionary pastor of the predominantly Chinese congregation. From him the leaders learned to a considerable extent what a meek and warm pastoral heart is.

In June of that year, the GLTS, then united firmly under the Reformed Faith, requested that the PRC grant Rev. Arie den Hartog permission to organize her into a church. This request was granted on condition that the leaders of the GLTS first subscribe to the Three Forms Of Unity. The leaders were unable at that time to subscribe to the three Reformed Creeds, being unfamiliar with them. They found it impossible, furthermore, to have the entire congregation choose the creeds under which the church will be organized. The church will always contain new members and young Christians; and if the GLTS had to wait until all members had studied the creeds to a degree sufficient for adoption, it would mean that the ERCS would never be. How could a people be taught to decide what it is they want to be taught, not knowing it? It was at this time that "Congregational Church Government" was exposed clearly for what it is: a church's self-rule instead of the rule of Christ through His office bearers. It was again by grace that even before Rev. Arie den Hartog arrived, the GLTS was exposed to the Biblical concept of Presbyterian or Reformed Church Polity, where Christ rules His Church through His Elders and Deacons. After the departure of Rev. Goh the GLTD received a series of taped sermons on the subject from the OPC New Zealand and some notes on it from the United States. Wonder of wonders, when the GLTD studied the material, they found the notes from America were in fact the sermon notes of the tapes from New Zealand. It was not, however, until the time when the matter of adopting creeds was faced that the GLTD saw the full picture of the practicality of this truth under the teaching of their missionary Pastor.

Although the GLTS felt that they ought already be organized at that time, so that they could study and adopt the creeds as a church, they had to wait a considerable period again for institution. A Commission of four would-be Elders, brothers Ong Keng Ho, Tan Boon Kwang, Tang Kok Leong, and Francis Quek, and two Deacons-elect, brothers Johnson See and Teo Hwee Meng, were elected. They were to study the Creeds and decide whether the GLTS could be organized upon them and hold

office in the church upon institution.

In September of 1980, Brother Lau Chin Kwee, on whose shoulders had fallen the awesome responsibility of leading the saints in the GLTS through many difficult years, bade a tearful farewell to the church and went, with his wife, to further his ministerial training in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the United States of America.

The Commission set out immediately to work on the Constitution of the ERCS, upon completion of which they proceeded to study the Creeds. It proved to be a very busy time for the office bearers, on whose shoulders rested not only the work of the Constitution and the Creeds but also the work of oversight of all the work of the GLTS, which was considerable, and the pastoral care of all the members. For this reason, elections were held again and God provided three men, brothers James Tay, Siew Chee Seng, and Leong Fai Chong, to be Deacons-elect; and brothers Johnson See and Teo Hwee Meng were elected Elders to fill the need. Even after the increase in number in the Commission, there was still a lot of work to be done, especially when the frequency of the Commission meetings for the study of the Creeds was increased from weekly to thrice weekly. The study of the Creeds was completed in November 1981, and with that the ERCS was ready for the final push toward institution. All the members and regular worshippers were visited by the leaders to prepare them to be in a real sense spiritually involved in the spiritual work of building the church of Christ, as well as physically. Of the office bearers elect, only brother Francis Quek will not presently be ordained, as he had to leave Singapore for the further studies his

parents want him to have.

At this time of institution, too, the ERCS is finalizing the purchase of a building at 291 River Valley, not far from her present premises. The work of resettling the Church had been on the mind of the GLTS members all along; and a Building Fund was initiated as early as 1976, when the Lord began leading them toward institution. The group is not one of much wealth, and the majority of the members are not beyond their twenties, but God had taught them to give. The place after renovation would cost close to \$300,000, but they trust the Lord to teach them to give sacrificially and supply them all their needs. God will surely bless.

When one views the history of the ERCS until her institution, one cannot but confess that it is all of Sovereign Grace. From the beginning, God planted the seed which initially appeared as an ugly shoot. Trials and toil, hope and joy were the portion of this young band as they trod the pilgrim way together. As the tree began to take shape, God introduced the Reformed Faith at first in a trickle and then in its soul-overwhelming torrents. God had prepared a vessel of unworthy clay to bear the treasures of His truth.

On the day of institution, 24th January, 1982, the members of the ERCS will read the Resolution of Membership together from their hearts, a unified confession of their calling to be formed into the Church of Jesus Christ. All that they declare they shall endeavor to do, not by their own frail strength, but by the grace of God. God has led them thus far. Who can doubt that God will lead them on until the day of the Lord Jesus Christ? Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.

The Organization of the ERCS

Rev. Arie den Hartog

The most blessed and wonderful event of the history of our labors in Singapore has taken place. On January 24, 1982 the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore was organized. For this goal we have all labored long and hard and have long been in earnest prayer to God. We thank the Lord and praise His name for His wonderful goodness and faithfulness. From several points of view the organization of the church here was a momentous event. First of all, of course, it is a most blessed and significant event for the youthful saints of God here. Now

they are organized as a church and can enjoy the full blessings of the church of Jesus Christ including among other things the celebration of the Lord's Supper in their midst and the benefits of the spiritual care of the special offices in the church. It would be hard to describe in words the joy and excitement among the saints here on account of this. Secondly, this event marks the establishment of the first Reformed Church in Singapore that stands as a testimony to the wonderful sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus. There is a real vision and zeal in the

midst of the church to publish the Reformed Faith in this area to the glory of the name of God and the further gathering of His church in this part of the world. Thirdly this is certainly a great event for our Protestant Reformed Churches. We can give thanks and praise unto our God that He has been pleased to use us in the work of the establishment of His church. The Lord has certainly blessed the labors of our churches. He has answered many prayers and rewarded all those who have faithfully given to the cause of missions in Singapore. Finally, and certainly not the least of all of these, this event was an occasion of great joy and gladness and thanksgiving for your missionary and his family.



A view of a large part of the new and happy congregation. Behind them is the kampong where they currently meet.

Let me tell you first of all a little about the organization itself. The church was organized with 102 founder members under the name Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore—Evangelical because of the earnest desire of the church to continue the great and wonderful work of evangelism, the preaching of the glorious and blessed gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus; Reformed because this church is founded on the historic Reformed Faith expressed in the Reformed creeds and known especially for its emphasis on the glory of God and salvation by grace alone. The Evangelical Reformed Church has learned to know and love this faith as the truth of the Word of God and desires to proclaim and defend this faith by the grace of God here in Singapore. The membership of the new church includes six married couples. All the rest are individuals, most of whom are between twenty and thirty years old. This is therefore a very young church, both because it is made up predominantly of young people and also because almost all of these young people have been recently called by God out of heathendom. We rejoice to see that there are many dating couples in our midst and we look forward to many marriages in the very near future. The first infant child of one of the married couples will be baptized this coming Lord's Day. Three more

babies are expected during the coming year, the Lord willing. At the organization service eight office bearers were ordained, five elders and three deacons. Perhaps by comparison with our churches in the U.S.A. of similar size this may seem to be a large number of office bearers. However, in view of the situation here, the great amount of work that needs to be done in the midst of this young congregation, and also the great potential for the work outside of the congregation itself, this is by no means too many office bearers.



The Session (Consistory)

Front, l to r: (Rev. A. den Hartog), Deacons Chan Chee Seng, James Tay Thuan Liat, Leong Fai Chong.
Back, l to r: Elders Johnson See Choon Hock, Joshua Teo Hwee Meng, Ong Keng Ho, Nelson Tan Boon Kwang, Tang Kok Leong.

The worship service at which the organization of the church took place was certainly a very moving experience. Let me just relate a few of the parts of this worship service. During the service the names of all those joining the organization of the church were read. (This was not done by your American missionary, for that would have been quite a difficult task, but rather by the native born chairman of the meeting. Imagine reading more than 100 long Chinese names.) When all the members of the church were standing they read together in unison a beautiful resolution of membership which had been prepared for the occasion by one of the members of the G.L.T.S. I would like to quote the entire resolution for you but space does not permit this. Two things were particularly moving about this resolution. First, there was the rich meaning of the portions of Scripture quoted from Ephesians 2, especially in the context of a church that for the most part has been very recently called out of heathendom by the wonderful sovereign grace of God. In this situation such passages of Scripture certainly take on new and richer meaning. Secondly, we were greatly moved by the expression of agreement with our Reformed Creeds that the resolution included. To appreciate fully why this meant so much to us you would have had to have

been with us in the last months as we labored together to study carefully the creeds.

It was certainly a great joy and blessing to have present at the organization representatives from our Protestant Reformed Churches in America. Rev. James Slopsema and Elder Edwin Van Ginkel were present as official representatives of the Foreign Mission Committee and of our calling church, the Doon Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa. Rev. Slopsema read the form for the ordination of elders and deacons that we use in our Protestant Reformed Churches. This was followed by a ceremony of laying on of hands. It is the conviction of the brethren here that this ceremony according to Scripture belongs to the ordination of all the offices. Your missionary, Rev. Slopsema, and Elder Van Ginkel took part in this ceremony. After this I had the privilege of preaching a sermon based on I Corinthians 3 under the theme; "The Church Founded and Built upon Christ Jesus."



The ordination of the new elders and deacons.

Two more things about the organization services which I must tell you. It was a great joy to have in our midst not only the two emissaries from our churches in the U.S.A. but also Mr. and Mrs. Dewey Engelsma and Mr. John Kalsbeek, who had come to Singapore especially in order to witness and experience the organization of the church. To appreciate thoroughly the significance of this you must remember that the Engelsmas have been here to labor in the midst of the G.L.T.S. on several previous occasions, and it would be hard to tell in words of the great love that the members of the G.L.T.S. have towards them. At the conclusion of the worship service more than half an hour was spent publicly reading greetings received from many of our churches in the U.S.A., from the O.P.C. of Christ-church New Zealand, from our seminary in the U.S.A., and from a number of individuals. What a wonderful evidence of the communion of the saints and the catholicity of the church of Jesus Christ was sensed in this.



Elder Van Ginkel reading the greetings from Doon Church. There were many greetings from individuals, churches, and our Seminary.

Since the organization of the church we continue to experience more exciting events. On Friday evening, January 29, we had our first session meeting (or consistory meeting as we call it in the U.S.). On the Lord's Day of January 31 we had our first celebration of the Lord's Supper. What an unspeakable joy this was. One of the greatest longings for the organization of the church was fulfilled in this. For many in the congregation this was the very first time ever in their lives they had come to the Lord's Supper. Next Lord's Day there will be yet one more special event. We shall, the Lord willing, experience the first infant baptism of a member of the E.R.C.S. With this and with the other babies expected in the church we have wonderful evidence of God's faithfulness and His promise to continue His church in the line of generations.

After all of this has taken place the church stands before the great calling it has for the future. Well does the church know that organization is not an end in itself. There is great need to carry on the work of the church. The organization of the church will by the grace of God help the church to carry on that work more effectively and in a more orderly way according to the Word of God and for His glory. There are many areas of work that stand before this young church. There is of course a very great need to grow in the faith and become strong. There is great need for the church to learn more perfectly the doctrines of the Reformed Faith and to study her creeds more carefully. The E.R.C.S. is alone as a Reformed Church in this part of the world. It is young and small in comparison to the world around. She has the calling to defend the Reformed Faith. As far as the church situation here is concerned it is not much different from that in the U.S.A. There is great apostasy in the churches; errors abound, such as the errors of liberalism, Arminianism, and Pentecostalism. The E.R.C.S. will surely be called upon to defend the faith on which,

by God's grace, she has chosen to stand. Furthermore, different from the U.S.A., this church stands in what is predominantly a heathen nation. Christians are by far in the minority in Singapore. The truth of the Christian Faith must be preached against the rising tide of heathendom. There is Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, and Islam. All of these are predominant in Singapore, and these heathen religions are by no means passing away. As in every large city in the world, so also in Singapore, there is the presence of the wickedness and immorality of the world. As we look at the situation we see the tremendous need for the preaching of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There appears great potential for the growth of the church in Singapore. Presently we have a pre-baptism class that has twelve people in regular attendance. Six of these have not yet been baptized and are desiring to be baptized. As a result of the many pastoral visits made before the organization of the church we found that a large number of our regular worshippers who are not presently members of the church desire to join our next pre-baptism and membership class. We regularly have from 25 to 30 people worshipping with us on the Lord's Day who are not members of the church, most of whom have not yet been baptized. There are always at least a few new visitors at our worship services on the Lord's Day. Plans are to try to start a second center of worship in another location in Singapore with the goal of another congregation some day, the Lord willing. There is also great need in our midst for a Chinese ministry. We have contact with a number of Chinese-speaking people with whom we could work if only we had a minister who could preach and teach in the Chinese language.

We are looking forward to the return of Mr. and Mrs. Lau Chin Kwee from the U.S.A. It will be another great event in the history of the E.R.C.S. when Mr. Lau is ordained as their Pastor.

As far as the future for the work of our Protestant Reformed Churches is concerned, we see that there is much work to do. We rejoice and give thanks unto the Lord that the E.R.C.S. desires that we continue our labors here. We as your missionary and family continue to enjoy greatly the work of the church of Christ Jesus and to count it a great honor and privilege of the Lord to be able to labor in His Church for His glorious name. There seems to be no end to the work to do, and the work remains tremendously exciting. Even when Mr. Lau becomes the Pastor of the E.R.C.S. there will be plenty of work for two full-time pastors. There is great need for the training of young men from here for the ministry of the Word. We in Singapore will continue to be involved in this work. Our Seminary in the U.S.A. in the years to come will continue to serve a very important role for the development of the church in Singapore. Presently we have plans to send another brother from here to our Seminary in 1983.

We could tell you much more about all the above matters but we must end in order not to make this article too long. We continue to covet your prayers and support for the wonderful work of the church of Jesus Christ in Singapore. We want to thank all of you who have in the past months sent us greetings. We are deeply conscious of our need for the support of our churches in all our labors and thank you all for your prayers, letters, and monetary support.



The congregation in their crowded meetingplace. Their present meetingplace is so constructed that it is impos-

sible to get a single shot of the whole congregation.

A Reformed Church in Singapore

Mr. Dewey Engelsma

It was an event of significant importance to my wife and me. Having lived and worked among the GLTS on three previous visits, we wanted to share with them their joy in being instituted as a church. This church was not to be like the other churches in Singapore. But, by the mercy of God, this church would be Reformed, having its foundation on the Three Forms of Unity, namely, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordrecht. Therefore we, with elder John Kalsbeek, decided to travel once more to the island to witness and participate in their organization. And it must be emphasized, we were looking forward to a joyous reunion of Christian fellowship with our adopted Chinese, Malay, and Indian children.

As was expected, we were met in the Changi air terminal by Rev. den Hartog with a goodly number of young people. Here, too, we first became acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Ed Van Ginkel from Doon, Iowa. Mr. Van Ginkel and Rev. Slopsema, who had preceded us to Singapore the week prior, were the official delegates from our Doon church and the Foreign Mission Committee. There were happy greetings all around and we experienced a joyful home-coming. Our previous relationship had established ties which united us in Christ's love. When we had left these dearly beloved children in July of 1980 we thought we were saying our final farewells. We were, happily, wrong, and are grateful to God that He, in providential care, gave us the privilege to see them face to face once again.

After Scripture reading and prayer, our baggage was carried by willing hands (since I'm an old man, they say, and must not do such heavy work) to the transportation provided. We visited first at the Rev. den Hartog's apartment. And later, after getting our flying feet on the ground, we rode to the home of a fellow member where for the duration of our stay (10 days) we were the guests of the Evangelical Reformed Church and our congenial host, dear Seet Chaun Hoo.

Sunday, January 24, was the day for which all of the GLTS had been waiting. During the past few years they had several times been disappointed in their efforts for organization. We too, knowing personally of their longing to be established as a Reformed Church, shared their sadness in this respect. The time, the day, has finally come for their institution as a Church of Jesus Christ. All of the delay is past and forgotten now. God knows what is best for His Church.

It was a beautiful Sabbath morning (still Saturday evening in Grand Rapids). As we rode to the meeting place we considered that the Lord had also provided a pleasant day weatherwise. In this beautiful, always-summer land, we could hardly bring to mind the snow and ice we had left just a few days ago. When we arrived at the church a little after 8:00 A.M. many of the members were already present. And as the building rapidly filled to overflowing, the joy and eager anticipation of this very special occasion could be seen on every face. Oh, how glad and thankful we were to be here with them!

Reverend (missionary) den Hartog preached a fitting sermon based on Ephesians 2:20. The congregation was instructed that the only sound foundation of the Church is that of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. At the conclusion of the sermon Rev. James Slopsema, one of the official delegates, read the form for the ordination of elders and deacons. These elders and deacons, with the exception of the two who were chosen later, were elected about a year and a half ago in order to study the confessions. Under the leadership of Rev. den Hartog they also instructed and prepared the GLTS for their membership. These young men, if I am not mistaken, are all between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-eight, and they have been spiritual leaders in the GLTS for several years. They have truly given their youth for the work of ministering to the continually-growing group. Brother Chin Kwee, who is presently studying in our Protestant Reformed Seminary, is not to be excluded. For seventeen arduous, yet profitable years he stood at the forefront of all their endeavors. Surely God has worked through him in the gathering of His Church.

In the ordination, the ritual of the laying on of hands was performed. These five elders and three deacons knelt before us to receive the laying on of hands, which symbolizes receiving the Spirit of Jesus Christ. We looked at these young men with a measure of concern. On these youthful servants God has laid the great calling to serve the congregation, to rule over her, to protect from the onslaughts of Satan, to lead her in the truth of His Word. This was a unique setting, considering the extreme youth of the office bearers and congregation. The 102 charter members of this flock include only six married couples. Through our previous

stays in their midst we had gotten to know them very well. So we never doubted that Christ is accomplishing His mighty work of gathering His Church in Singapore. When once the Reformed Truth was disseminated by means of Reformed literature and preaching, God caused His Truth to take root and flourish. So our concern for them is not such that we fear for their being able to endure. We surely believe that God will protect and preserve them as He promises. But we and they can expect, as all of God's true Church experiences, that they will be the object of Satan's attention. The office bearers especially, and congregation too, will suffer affliction. We have knowledge of persecutions they have already endured, and our hearts go out to them. Let us remember them in our prayers even as they pray for our churches.

Rev. den Hartog has labored joyfully in the midst of what is now the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, and the members speak of him with loving respect. Sherry (so she is most frequently addressed), as a faithful helpmeet and a gracious hostess, befriends many young people who are able to find in this family the Christian love and care which they need and cherish. To say that Rev. den Hartog labors joyfully is not enough. He is deeply committed to the work of a missionary, and we have often observed that for him and Sherry too, it is a life of self denial. They have given themselves wholly and completely to the cause of the gospel. Beside the weekly routine meetings which include "Session" now, consistory meeting, catechism class, pre-baptism, Sunday School, Reformed doctrine, prayer meeting, Bible study, student Greek class, and preaching, the pastor also counsels many of the young saints on a personal basis. Then, too, there are those numerous extra activities, such as speeches for the vacation camp-meetings and the Evangelical Outreach. And we don't want to forget the many written articles which somehow must be produced. Truly a "workman who needeth not to be ashamed" (II Tim. 2:15).

The Chinese New Year, which is celebrated as a national holiday, was observed the week of January 26. This gave us the opportunity, with several of the young folks, to visit in the homes of about a dozen or more families. In addition, at every place we were treated to Chinese snacks and sweets, and, of course, we had the customary photos taken with the family. And even though at times our conversation was somewhat restricted because of the language barrier, yet we did manage to convey our greetings, and we certainly enjoyed these "visitations." Somewhat later we did learn that one young man's parents berated him severely for bringing the members of the church into their home. He even

had to leave for a while to escape their anger.

On quite a few occasions in the past, these young people have shared with us their heartfelt desire and prayer to establish Christian homes patterned after that of Rev. and Mrs. den Hartog or Ong Keng Ho and Cecelia. At present, there are also four more recently married couples in whose homes they are always welcome. Do you Protestant Reformed young people remember to thank your heavenly Father for the homes Christian parents have provided you?

The Sabbath following the organization of the E.R.C.S., the Lord's Supper was commemorated. We requested of the consistory (session) permission to partake of this sacrament, and our request was granted. It was for them and us a blessed communion, as together we realized again, that whether Jew or Greek, Chinese or Dutch, we are made one in Christ.

Normally on Sunday evenings there are five separate tape services which meet in different locations in Singapore. These five services were combined on Communion Sunday and we united in the spacious home of Johnson See and his wife Ta Chu for fellowship. We had taken along the taped sermon based on I Peter 2:9 that Mr. Lau Chin Kwee preached in our own Hope Church. The group evinced great pleasure and emotions in hearing the message and voice of their beloved brother expound the Word.



The Session, with Missionary den Hartog and the American visitors.

Afterward we celebrated the birthday of three fellow-members. Along with the delicious birthday cakes, there was another cake, decorated especially to bid us farewell. Our flight home was scheduled for the next day, so now we had to bring to a close our visit and begin the heartache of goodbyes.

These dearly beloved may not be our flesh-born sons and daughters, but they have become our Christ-loved kindred.

What now is the future concerning the work of our churches in Singapore? It is my own personal opinion that the vast volume of labor with its far-reaching potentials projected on and beyond this

island are indications that we have a calling, a duty, to work in this white field. The Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore would welcome our presence in propagating the truth of Scripture.

Truly, it was for the three of us an inspiring and heartwarming trip.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Missionary Methods (10)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

The reader will recall that we are involved in an analysis of the significant little book, *The Planting And Development of Missionary Churches*, written by the seasoned Presbyterian missionary of nearly a century ago, Dr. John L. Nevius. Nevius contended that the new converts should not be employed and paid by the mission for the work of preaching and evangelism. They should rather be left in their stations in life and encouraged to leave a witness to the Gospel by word and deed. This, Nevius argued, is much more conducive to the spread of the Gospel than using paid helpers from among the native Christians. It cannot be denied that in places where his methods have been followed, China and Korea especially, there has been amazing growth in the mission churches.

The question naturally arises, how shall the missionaries deal with the new converts? This question becomes especially acute with the passage of time and the growth of the mission churches. After all, there comes a time when the missionaries must leave, in order that the mission churches may stand on their own. There comes a time when those "young" churches must have their own native pastors and teachers. How must all this be accomplished? In response to this question Nevius had this to say: "We may get help in learning how to deal with new converts and stations (he means mission preaching stations, potential but as yet unorganized churches, R.D.D.) by considering the nature of the Church and the law of its development. Christianity, whether embodied in the individual or in a Church, is the outgrowth of a vital principle. In the spiritual as well as vegetable kingdom every vital germ has its own law of life and development, and it is only in following that law that the highest development can be secured. Christianity has been introduced into the world as a plant which will thrive best confronting and contending

with all the forces of its environment; not as a feeble exotic which can only live when nursed and sheltered. All unnecessary nursing will do it harm. A pine may be trained into a beautiful and fantastic shape so as to be an object of interest and curiosity, and it may flourish in a way; but it will not tower heavenward as the king of the forest, unless from first to last it is subjected to the various and seemingly adverse influences of scorching sun, biting frost and raging tempest. A certain amount of care, and especially the right kind, is necessary; too much or injudicious care is injurious and may be fatal to the life which it is intended to promote" (p. 26). That which we know from Scripture concerning the preaching and teaching of the Apostles and their co-laborers and the churches which were organized as a fruit of that preaching certainly supports Nevius' position. The Apostles as a rule did not stay very long in one place. After preaching awhile they moved on. As soon as possible, in some instances within only a few months after the initial contact with the Gospel, elders were ordained. The Apostles were not able to give, and as a matter of historical record did not give, to the newly organized churches much personal attention. Even those churches which experienced severe problems and troubles (notably Corinth!) were allowed to develop. To be sure, the Apostles did write letters which were often addressed to the problems and weaknesses, but they themselves either refrained from visiting the churches or were restrained from doing so. The point of all this is that the new church, the mission church, must grow and develop naturally, indigenously in its own country. The new church must develop, using its own spiritual and material resources. That new church must fight the battle of faith, evangelize, preach, and teach the Gospel in its own land. That Church must have its own officebearers. It must express its unity and faith

creedally overagainst the enemies of the cause of God and the heresies and false religions peculiar to its own land. To be specific, the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, organized as a fruit of Protestant Reformed mission work must be a Reformed Church in Singapore. It must have its own pastor and elders and deacons. Pastor den Hartog must not stay there indefinitely. Mission churches ought not to be dependent upon the sending church indefinitely.

This means, obviously, that the new church needs its own officebearers. It is of utmost importance that these "first be proved" before being ordained as pastors, elders, and deacons (cf. I Timothy 3:10). In the zeal and enthusiasm of new converts they can often, unwittingly, deceive not only the missionaries but also themselves. Scripture after all lays down certain basic qualifications a man must have before he can be called to office in God's church. The bishop must be blameless, a good husband, one who rules well his own house, one who has ability to teach; he must not be a drunkard, he must not be covetous, he must be given to hospitality (cf. I Timothy 3:1-5). What is particularly applicable to the mission field is taught in verses six and seven of I Timothy 3 "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." A "novice" is one only very recently converted. He lacks experience in the Christian life. He is just beginning to fight the battle of faith. Often it can happen that the joy of salvation which floods his soul leads him to believe mistakenly that God calls him to the ministry. Later, in the heat of the battle, he stumbles and falls. Such candidates for church office must be tested before they are rushed off to the Seminary or hurried into the office of elder or deacon. They must encounter the trials and difficulties which must be faced in the ministry. Above all it must be evident to the church that these men display those qualifications the minister must possess according to the Word of God. Still more, they must have a good reputation on the part of those "that are without," i.e. outside of the church. This is necessary for obvious reasons. A man who is known as a liar or cheater or a scoundrel in some other way is certain to be of little or no effect either in the church or in the work of evangelism and missions.

Those converts who, in the course of time, manifest the qualifications for church office according to the Scriptures must be instructed and trained for that office before they are ordained. Nevius strongly believed that this training "includes not only study, but work, trial, and perhaps suffering. It

should be such as will fit a man to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (p. 27). What he meant by this Nevius explained: "A man may be carried through a course of theological training, freed from the struggle of ordinary life by having all his wants provided for, and yet get very little of this disciplinary training which is so important. We may think we are helping a man by relieving him of burdens when in fact we are injuring him by interfering with this training" (pp. 27, 28).

In this connection Nevius notes that taking the proper time to do this is a necessity. Missionaries and their sending churches are often far too hasty in selecting suitable candidates for the ministry and giving them a two or three year "crash course" in doctrine, sermon making, exegesis, etc. It is feared that the cause of Christ will suffer unless these native pastors are quickly prepared for the work. This certainly is not the Biblical pattern. Nevius correctly points to the example of the Apostle Paul. From the time the Apostle was struck down by Christ on the Damascus road until the hands of ordination were laid on his head at Antioch was nearly ten years! We know from the history of Paul's ministry that the Apostle needed that lengthy preparation for a life of arduous work and persecution. The Apostle Paul's spiritual son, Timothy, obtained a good report among the Christians at Lystra and Derbe only after several years of work there. Only after this did he accompany the Apostle Paul as one of his companions and helpers. And only after several years of this which no doubt included instruction from the Apostle did Timothy become a co-laborer with the Apostle in the Church. The taking of proper time to train men for the office is necessary from the point of view of their being proved. In the normal course of events, that a man is qualified for the ministry is confirmed by his training. It can also happen that the training indicates that a man lacks the qualifications for the ministry and that he can better serve the Lord in some other capacity.

Even during the training period Nevius advocates that the converts be left in their place in life. "Nothing can supply the place of God's providential training in the school of ordinary life and practical experience....Meanwhile we should give these young converts all the instruction, advice, and help which Christian sympathy and prudence suggest" (p. 28).

Whether one agrees with this methodology in all its particulars or not, one thing is clear, viz., the main theses are correct. They are Scriptural and for that very reason they are effective on the mission fields. In the main, they ought to be followed, though not slavishly in every detail. Time and circumstances of the various fields in which the

church is preaching may very well dictate some modification of these methods. However that may be, two things must be done: the young church must be allowed to develop naturally and without an unhealthy dependence on the sending church; and there comes a time when the sending church and its missionaries must commit the converts "to

the Lord on Whom they believed." The missionaries ought not to stay indefinitely. They must leave the young church to grow and develop. They must seek other fields of labor in order that the work of the gathering of the church out of the nations may continue until Jesus returns.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

A Necessary Move

Rev. John A. Heys

Once again our attention is focused more emphatically upon Jacob. His son Joseph had been on the foreground in Scripture for many chapters. In these chapters Jacob did appear on the scene briefly. He ordered his sons to go down into Egypt to get food. He objected strenuously when his sons insisted that his youngest son, Benjamin, go along the second time to insure getting another supply of much needed food for the family. He had also rebuked his sons for telling this ruler in Egypt so much about the family; and then, because of the need, he consented to have Benjamin go along. But now he appears more fully on the scene; and even that which we read of Joseph is on the behalf of Jacob his father. He sent wagons for his father to ride in and move from Canaan to Egypt.

He was after all the spiritual leader of the Old Testament Church. Joseph was not. As aged as he was, Jacob was still the patriarch, the church father of the day. And the covenant line ran from Adam and Seth through Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and then not through Joseph but through Judah to David and Christ.

The picture given us of Jacob in Genesis 45 is that of an aged and confused man. For more than ten years he had carried in his soul the grief of believing that his most beloved son, Joseph, was dead. Very recently he had lost another son, Simeon, as a prisoner in Egypt. And what now is his most beloved son, Benjamin, had been taken from his side to go down into Egypt, to face not only the dangers of the way, but this stern ruler in Egypt who had imprisoned Simeon and had spoken so roughly to his sons. Troubles had come thick and fast in his life, especially of late. And he, whose life had slowed down considerably by reason of his age, finds it hard to cope with the fast moving events.

This is his darkest moment. One son is "dead."

One is in prison. The youngest, on whom his heart was so firmly fixed, has gone down to Egypt; and he sat alone at home with not one son—though God had given him twelve of them—there at home with him. Could he be sure that any of them would be able to come back? There was that money in their sacks. Would this stern ruler in Egypt accuse them now of theft as well as of being spies? Would he make slaves of all of them? Years before this, he had said to his brother Esau, "these are the children which God hath graciously given thy servant" (Genesis 33:5). Now he feared that they were all taken away from him. And he was trying to adjust himself to such an eventuality. There were days when for Jacob it seemed as though the bottom had fallen out of his life, days when the sun seemed to be going down very fast. Of late only fears, threatenings of loss and the destruction of all his hopes for his children crowded in upon him.

In the midst of all this, during that dark period of his life, he is greatly confused by the turn of events which, though they brought him some joy, still contained that which upset and disturbed his mind. It is true that the eleven sons returned home safely—and how his spirits must have soared when he counted them as they appeared in the distance and learned that Benjamin was with them!—from their quest for food in Egypt. He counted eleven men riding towards him; and that meant that Simeon was out of prison and Benjamin was allowed to come back with the ten brothers. But what disturbed him was the report which these sons gave that Joseph was yet alive and exalted over all Egypt.

It is interesting to note that these sons said nothing about their deceit years before. They gladly relate that Joseph is alive; but they are not ready to tell Jacob what they did to Joseph and to his princely coat to make him believe that a wild beast

had slain him. And the lack of this important element in their message caused Jacob's heart to faint, as we read. And it explains the statement that his heart fainted because he did not believe them. We read that after they told Jacob that Joseph is yet alive and is governor of all the land of Egypt, "Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not" (Genesis 45:26).

Plainly Jacob did not trust these sons. That is what it means that he believed them not. And note that we do not read that he did not believe *it*, when they told him that Joseph was alive and such an exalted ruler. No, we read that he believed *them* not. No doubt he had good reason for not believing them. There is first of all the fact that he had been active in so much deception himself; and the apple does not fall far from the tree. Then too we must remember that these are the same sons who had deceived their father with that blood-stained coat. At that time, it is true, he believed them—that is, believed what they wanted him to believe about Joseph. And yet it cannot be denied that he had some misgivings about the whole thing, and misgivings about the part these sons might have had in that death. He believed Joseph to be dead. But the behaviour of these brothers was strange when they brought that coat that was stained with blood. They might have shown some mock sorrow. But Jacob knew how they despised Joseph. And what was missing in their report was that they offered no suggestion as to what else could have happened to their brother. Quite plainly they wanted their father to believe the worst. That already made Jacob uneasy. And it explains his outburst under the strain of being asked to let Benjamin go with them to Egypt: "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and will ye take Benjamin away?" (Genesis 42:36). He reveals what he had kept secret in his heart all these years, namely, that somehow these brothers were involved in Joseph's death. He had no proof and could not press the matter any further. But why was that coat torn? If Joseph was in it when the wild beast struck, there would be signs. If he was not in it, how did that blood get on it?

What must he now think when these same sons come with such a contradictory claim? Joseph yet alive? Joseph governor of the whole land of Egypt? O, he wanted those words to be true. But his heart fainted because of past experiences which made him wonder not only what all this would lead to, but to fear that more trouble was ahead. These sons seemed very happy to report that Joseph is yet alive, but even that did not seem to ring true. Jacob knows nothing of the conversion of these sons through the ordeal before Joseph. He knows not how strong their love for him is and that it was

shown to Joseph.

Note too that his spirit revived when he had the wagons which Joseph had sent explained to him as being sent by Joseph. When he saw them as wagons which Joseph sent his spirit revived. Then he believed the words of his sons that Joseph was yet alive. Those wagons were Egyptian wagons; and the sons had taken money along for food but not to buy such regal wagons. For they were no ordinary wagons. Joseph, with all the resources of the king's house in Egypt at his command, sent special wagons that spoke of his lofty position in Egypt. We find it difficult to believe that Jacob's thoughts did not go back to those dreams of Joseph which Jacob at first rejected, and for which he rebuked Joseph but later on "observed the saying." It all—these words of his sons that Joseph was governor over all the land of Egypt, and those wagons that plainly came from the king's house—convinced him that the sons were speaking the truth. All would bow down before Joseph was the tenor of those dreams. Well, it fitted in with these words of the sons. He is highly exalted. It is therefore God's word that convinces Jacob that his sons are to be trusted this time.

One can only wonder, because Jacob was a child of God, whether at once his conscience did not smite him for having uttered those words of unbelief and fatalism just a few months before: "All these things are against me" and "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." But we can be sure that he confessed his sin and offered up praise and thanksgiving to God because of the truth that Joseph was yet alive, and that the other eleven had all returned home safely from Egypt. It is not recorded of him that he did so, but so a child of God behaves.

Being convinced that Joseph was alive Jacob made plans to go and see him before he died. The wagons revealed Joseph's desire to see his aged father; and the desire was mutual. After all that grieving for a son whom he thought to be dead, Jacob is more than eager to see this son who has been proven to be alive. And so he gathers all that he has to go to Egypt in order to survive the five years of famine which are still ahead of them.

This was Joseph's idea and suggestion. And Jacob seizes it, moved by an awareness that the situation in the land of Canaan was critical, especially since they were strangers in it, owned no land in it, and were not in favour with the Canaanites on whose land they had been feeding their cattle all these years. From the Canaanites, who were struggling for their own existence, they could not expect any help and charity. But Jacob and Joseph were also moved by a natural, fleshly love that compelled them to seek to see each other face to face.

Without consulting God as to His will in the matter, Jacob gathered all that he had and went as far as Beer-sheba which was about 20 miles to the southwest. After that one-day journey Jacob's faith asserted itself, and belatedly he sought God and sacrificed unto Him. And in covenant mercy God answered Jacob in a dream that night. In that dream He promised Jacob a safe journey, protection in Egypt, and a sure return to the promised land.

This return was not to be, we know, until four hundred years later, so that it does seem as though He is slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness. That promise was first given to Abraham. Now his grandson is assured that this promise will be fulfilled. yet it was not fulfilled in his life, nor in the lives of his sons who now moved down into Egypt with him.

He is not slack concerning His promises, however, but fulfills them on time, and, as Peter writes, being "longsuffering to usward, not willing that any (of us) should perish, but that all (of us) should be brought to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). The parentheses are ours because that word *usward* demands it, and denies us the right to add what is not in the text, namely, that any *man* should perish and

that all *men* should come to repentance. In a text as particular as this one, speaking of God being longsuffering to *us*, we may not deny this truth by making the rest of the text say that He is longsuffering to all men.

Here, too, God is longsuffering so that the large family consisting of 66 souls, and which in Egypt becomes a nation of some three millions of people—600,000 men, each with a wife and two or three children to a family—must have room to grow. This God provides in Egypt. And for that reason He sent Joseph ahead.

The promise stands, and, rather than being forgotten or delayed in its fulfillment, it is being fulfilled by this sojourn in Egypt. The Almighty makes no mistakes but is arranging it so that the abundant seed He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob might come into being as a great nation, and as such might in due time enter the land and possess it. And Judah must live and get seed so that the Lion of Judah's Tribe might come and by His cross make it possible that we perish not but come to repentance. Although we may not be able to explain it fully and show it in detail, that sojourn in Egypt was necessary and served the coming of Christ and the salvation we have through His cross.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Christ's Return

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Are there ever times in your life when you have imagined what that very day of Christ's return would bring? How often a child of God finds himself contemplating the events which will surround Christ's second appearance! And is not that but natural? We are those who confess with Abraham and the cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 11 that we are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." We have no abiding place on this earth for we desire a "better country, that is, an heavenly." It is only natural, then, that if our affections are upon our heavenly home we find ourselves thinking of that day when our Lord and Savior will usher in that glorious heavenly kingdom in all its perfection. In fact we not only think of that day, we *long* for that day. We are those who are sober and who watch and prepare for that day. We are those who persistently pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly." We are those who struggle to remain free from evil pleasures which would tear our eyes and

desires from our homeland. I say again, it is only natural that many times in our life we find our thoughts drifting to that day when all our hopes will be fulfilled—the wonderful day of the Lord! The glory and the joy God's children will experience in that day cannot be expressed with words! Paul writes to the Corinthian church in his first epistle to them, chapter 2:9, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the thing which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

Have you ever imagined what will transpire on that very day of Christ's return? Although Jesus does not offer us all the details of this event, surely He describes that day for us. He spoke these words to His disciples in Matthew 24:29-31, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers

of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Just reading these few words of Jesus should leave us standing in awe before God! That day of our Lord will be one filled with the greatest of all wonders! Who could imagine that this vast universe will collapse: the sun will give up its rays after having shone steadily for thousands of years; the moon and the stars, so set in their courses, shall fall from the sky! Who could imagine that Christ will appear in such a way that not one eye will avoid seeing Him! Who could imagine the gathering together of all the elect from the four corners of this world! All indescribably wonders of grace! But such will be the day of Christ's return.

Yet there are many who explain the prediction of all these wonders as merely a picturesque description of man's Utopia on earth. They claim that the Scriptures refer to all this as Christ's coming merely because at that time man will have established peace and prosperity on earth and Christ's teachings will then become reality. Still others, who think along the same lines, would posit that all these wonders speak merely of the glorious triumph of the gospel. There is, therefore, no literal return of Christ; and all these glorious wonders will never be witnessed. Surely this view of the post-millennialist shatters completely the hopes and longings of God's children. There is nothing they want more than to see their Lord return to and gather them together into their heavenly home wherein they will dwell in the very bosom of their heavenly Father. To live in an earthly world, even if it be perfect, is not enough for the child of God, for even a perfect world of peace and prosperity could never equal the glory of heaven. The child of God understands the purpose of God in creation and the fall. He knows that God loves His people so much that an earthly Paradise is not good enough for them. That is why Adam had to sin. Christ must come and give to us something far more beautiful and glorious than that earthly Paradise. He must give to us heaven. And that heavenly glory is given us when Christ returns—literally returns. To say that we receive anything less shatters our hopes and prayers. Christ will return. And His appearance will be surrounded with all these wonders of grace.

We are told that just prior to this return of Christ there will be signs which reveal to God's children that His return is imminent. The passage in Mat-

thew 24 which we quoted speaks of the last of these signs taking place "immediately after the tribulation of those days." Although the sequence of events will take place so rapidly that each sign will fall one on top of the other, we are able to discern just exactly how things will transpire. After the great persecution of Christ's Church by the Antichrist there will be a falling out of the nations. Gog and Magag will arise in opposition to the Antichrist to do battle with him. Then, while the attention of all the world is focused upon this battle, will begin what to the world is the greatest of calamities—the overturning of the universe. Isaiah describes this sign with these words in Isaiah 34:4: "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree." The vast and wide expanse of this universe—a universe whose limits puny man can never plumb—by God's power, shall be rolled together as a scroll. The sun, moon, and stars shall fall from the sky, the earth will sail from its orbit, and the galaxies shall be shaken.

It is exactly at this time that the final sign of Christ's coming shall take place. We are told in Matthew 24:30, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." We are not told by Jesus what that sign is. All we are told is that it too is a sign in the heavens. Perhaps it will be the brilliancy of God's glory now shining forth through that veil of the universe. Certainly Scripture seems to support this. Jesus says in Matthew 24:27, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Immediately after the fulfillment of this sign Christ shall appear. We notice once again just how rapidly all of this must take place. The rending of the universe, the sign of the Son of man, and the final coming of Christ certainly do not extend over a period of months or even weeks. It is even a question of whether it takes longer than a day for all this to take place. But Christ now appears—not, mind you, in weakness and humiliation as He did the first time, but on the contrary, He appears with power and great glory! And what a great wonder! Every eye shall behold that power and glory, no matter on which side of the globe they may stand! Then shall be fulfilled what Jesus testified to the Sanhedrin just prior to His death, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." How the wicked had fought and disputed with Jesus in His first coming! How they had denied Him, mocked Him, and crucified Him! But now on Christ's return *every* knee shall bow and *every*

tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father! Every eye shall see Him descending in the clouds of heaven, adorned with the authority of God! He shall be accompanied by His angels who shall shout of His coming and blow the trumpets of His praise! No one will dare stand in opposition to Him, much less speak against Him! He comes as the exalted Lord of all glory!

Oh yes, we look forward to that day. It is this very coming of our Lord that brings about the end of the world and which ushers in for us eternal glory. God's people rejoice when they hear that the day of our Lord approaches. The reason they rejoice is rooted in what takes place in that day. Jesus tells us that God's angels shall gather together the elect from the four winds. That too is why Luke records for us in his gospel these words of Jesus in Luke 21:28, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." When Christ returns in power and all glory He returns to give us final redemption. We will be removed from this world of sin and given a life wherein it will be impossible to sin. We will be removed from this world of pain and sorrow and given a life where there will be no more shedding of tears. All that when Christ

comes! We rejoice in that!

The wicked, on the other hand, will mourn; their hearts shall fail for fear. Revelation 6:15-17 describes their actions when Christ returns, "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Loam: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Great reason is there for them to speak this way too, for in that day Christ will consume them with the breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming. The ungodly will perish in that day.

We will never find the ungodly pondering the second coming of Christ. Only we who wait for our salvation love to hear of the events of that day. We stand in awe at the works of God's hands, and in all confidence we rejoice that in that day we will be numbered among the assembly of the elect in life eternal. So we wait patiently for the coming of the Captain of our salvation.

QUESTION BOX

Women Smoking

Rev. C. Hanko

We received the following question: "May women smoke?"

What immediately comes to mind when we read this question is that this kind of question would never have been raised fifty years ago. In those days only men smoked. They smoked their cigars and pipes and no questions were asked. In fact, it was considered manly to smoke. Consistory rooms were hazy with smoke and the stench of the smoke hung in the air for a long time afterward. Part of the enjoyment of a social evening together was the smoking of a good cigar or the aroma of a good pipe tobacco. One wonders at the endurance of the women of those days who spent their evenings in a smoke-filled atmosphere, "enjoying" the stench of second-hand smoke of the male persons present. One even marvels that the housewife did not complain about the brown film on her windows, her new drapes, and on her furniture.

But times have changed. Today many men have given up smoking, while many women have taken over. The pipe and the cigar have been replaced in many instances by the far more convenient cigarette. This was the case in the Netherlands and among the church people there long before it became a practice here. The argument is raised that if men have the right to smoke, the women do also. That can hardly be denied. Some will remind us that smoking has been a common practice in the church, particularly among men, for many years, and these men often reached a ripe old age. Others will argue that smoking belongs to our Christian liberty, or to the adiaphora in our lives, that is, to the things of which Paul speaks that must be left to one's own conscience.

The ultimate question is, as our reader suggests, Is it right, ethically right, for the Christian to smoke?

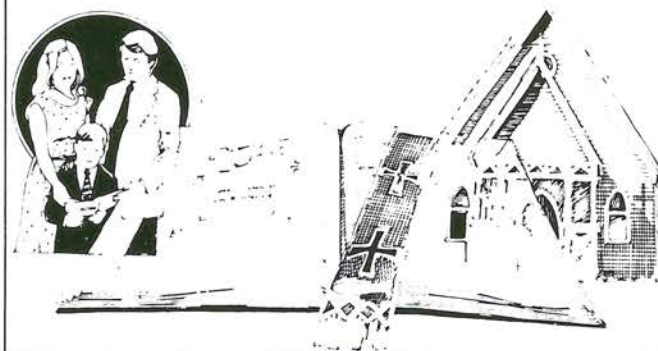
In this connection, one thing must be borne in mind, and that is that smoking, particularly cigarette smoking, because the smoke is readily inhaled, has been declared detrimental to the health by the medical profession. Therefore we face the question, Is it right for a Christian to blacken his lungs, to endanger his health, and to expose himself to the threat of emphysema, by smoking? When we bear in mind that smoking is a habit from which one is not readily freed, and that excessive smoking is considered to be detrimental to the health, is it right for the Christian to indulge in smoking and to subject others to the pollution of the atmosphere that he creates? In any case, we may never ignore the admonition of Scripture, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (Philippians 4:5).

In this connection we should also be reminded of our Christian stewardship. Smoking cigarettes is an expensive habit. One hears repeated complaints about high church budgets, the high cost of mission work, the high tuition bills. I do not doubt that this is a real problem for couples with children. But then we must also confront ourselves with the question that has a much broader scope than the

mere question of smoking, whether we are actually putting first things first in our lives. Do we seek first the kingdom of heaven, so that we are more than willing to give up our luxuries for the kingdom? This will obviously become a most serious question for all of us as we approach the end of the ages. "The Lord is at hand."

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*Take time to read
The Standard Bearer*



LEAGUE MEETING NOTICE

The Spring League Meeting of the Eastern League of Men's and Ladies' Societies will be held, the Lord willing, at First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan on Tuesday, April 13, 1982, at 8:00 p.m.

Rev. Carl Haak will speak on "Faith Healing." Don't miss it.

Elsie Kuiper, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The relatives of Agnes Van Drunen, member of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, express their sincere sympathy in the passing of her husband, MR. JOE B. VAN DRUNEN, whom the Lord took unto Himself on February 4, 1982.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 25:14).

Her nieces and nephews.

IN MEMORIAM

The Junior Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church (Walker, MI) wishes to express their sincere sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Kooienga and family in the death of their infant son, DAVID JAMES.

"But Jesus called unto Him, and said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.'" (Luke 18:16).

Rev. R. Flikkema, Pres.

Mrs. Dan Huizinga, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

The undersigned hereby reminds individuals and synodical committees, that all material destined for the agenda of the 1983 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, is due in his hands on or before April 15, 1982.

Rev. M. Joostens
Stated Clerk of Synod

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies for the 1982-83 academic year in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches should make application at the March 18, 1982 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

Pre-Seminary Students:

A transcript of grades from high school and college (if any), a letter of testimony from the student's pastor or consistory, and a certificate of health from a reputable physician must accompany the application.

Seminary Students:

A testimonial from the student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith and upright in walk, a certificate of health from a reputable physician, and high school and college transcripts must accompany the application. All applicants to the seminary department must have completed the equivalent of a four-year college education (125 semester hours) and must meet the course requirements for entrance to the seminary department. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school.

All seminary department applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student can not appear at the March 18th meeting, notification of this fact along with a suggested interview date must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee, 4949 Ivanrest Ave. S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418.

Jon Huisken, Secretary

News From Our Churches

Now that Rev. Moore has accepted the call to Isabel, South Dakota, our Edmonton, Alberta, Canada congregation joins Redlands as a calling church. Edmonton has formed a trio consisting of Reverends Bruinsma, Bekkering, and Koole.

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The church extension work in Bradenton, Florida continues, as is evident from this February 28 bulletin announcement of First Church (Grand Rapids): "Rev. Hanko will be returning from Bradenton this week. Rev. Joostens will be leaving early Wednesday morning. Our prayers go with him as he labors there for the next four Sundays."

In a November communication to their congregation the Church Extension Committee of Loveland, Colorado reported a number of activities in which the committee had been involved in the past year. These activities included: the sponsoring of the lecture "On the Glory of Jerusalem in the Light of Prophecy" given by Rev. Lubbers, the printing of 10,000 pamphlets, the mailing of about 4,000 pamphlets, their advertising in an area paper "with an explanation of our church and beliefs," and the committee's "looking into the possibility of a radio station with a large broadcasting area in Denver."

The Reformed Witness Committee of Redlands, California tells of "a number of very concerned individuals on our permanent mailing list living in the Ripon, California area...." Those of our readership who are interested in geography might like to know that Ripon is about 50 miles east of Oakland.

Rev. B. Woudenberg, pastor of our Kalamazoo, Michigan congregation, has long been active in a Bible study program called "Studies in Bible Doctrine." In a letter to recipients of this correspondence course Rev. Woudenberg wrote: "These studies are designed to develop Christian doctrine by going directly to the Scriptures in which they are taught. It is our conviction that this is necessary if we are to have true conviction of faith and live out of the word of God as the Scriptures say we should."

Skipping down a few paragraphs he continues: "...if you are not acquainted with our tape studies, we would like to have you try them. These tapes

knit together a study class of Christians scattered literally through all parts of the world. Each tape has a short but interesting introduction in which communications are read from various members of the class. After this a more detailed exposition is given of the doctrine treated in the current study sheet, again with emphasis upon the source of this doctrine in Scripture. All told it provides an interesting and profitable means for us to study the word of God together with Christians in all parts of the world; and we would like to have you join us.

"And finally, if you know of any others who might like to receive these studies; we certainly would appreciate receiving their names and addresses from you. It is our desire to use our efforts in this way to spread the word of God as broadly as we can."

If you, dear reader, would like to respond to that last paragraph, send your correspondence to: Studies in Bible Doctrine, 427 North Fletcher, Kalamazoo, MI 49007.

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A folding mailer I received from our Birmingham, Alabama mission station was one of many that were sent out to advertise the February 22 and 23 "expositions of God's Word concerning the Final and Great Judgment Day" that were held at the Baptist Deaf Church in the Birmingham area. Our missionary pastor, Rev. R. Van Overloop, spoke on both occasions.

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Back in our December 15, 1981 news column I wrote concerning the school, The Christian Tutor, in Houston, Texas: "According to Mr. Sugg one feature of their new school is a built-in — or should we say, live-in — school entrance test: all students must be able to get past the cow to attend school." Since that time Rev. Bekkering, pastor of our church in Houston, has sent this correction — or should we say, expansion: "There are 2 cows *and* 2 heifers *and* 1 horse to get by in the pasture, not counting the chickens and roosters." Could we propose a new name for the school? How about Animal Farm?