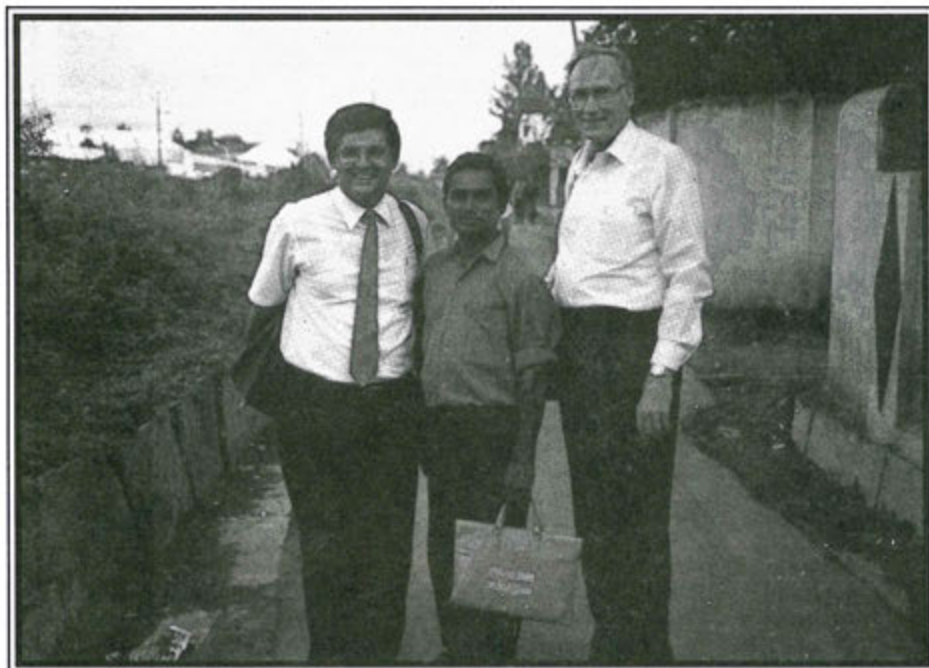


THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**



**Rev. Mahtani and Rev. Kortering,
with Indian friend**

See "Return to India" — page 178

*Vol. 69, No. 8
January 15, 1993*

CONTENTS:

January 15, 1993

Meditation — Rev. Cornelius Hanko	
An Orthodox Paradox	171
Editorial — Prof. David J. Engelsma	
A.D. 1993: The Lord is Coming (2)	173
Letters	175
Contribution — Mrs. Vivian Hunter	
The Joy of Membership in a Small Congregation	175
All Around Us — Prof. Robert D. Decker	176
Guest Article — Rev. Jaikishin Mahtani	
A Return to India	178
Search the Scriptures — Rev. George C. Lubbers	
The Beautiful Transition Between Chapters 1 and 2	181
Go Ye Into All the World — Rev. Ronald J. VanOverloop	
2. Unconditional Election	183
Seminary letter — Prof. Robert D. Decker	186
Strength of Youth — Rev. Steven R. Key	
Proper Christian Self-Esteem (4)	187
Guest Article — Rev. Richard G. Moore	
Not Willing That Any Should Perish	188
Book Reviews	190
News From Our Churches — Mr. Benjamin Wigger	191

In This Issue ...



A picture is worth a thousand words!

One has only to stare at the picture above for a moment or so to realize the truth of that old saying. (How many words would it take to convey, as effectively as that simple photo does, the spirit of Rev. Kortering's contact with the saints of God [little lambs too] in India?)

Such, at any rate, was the thinking of Rev. Mahtani, when he was asked to share with our readers something of his and Rev. Kortering's experiences in their memorable trip to the sub-continent India. He did provide some text, in order to give background information and post-trip evaluation which require words to communicate. But he relied otherwise quite heavily on pictures. Most of the captions are his too. We are delighted to have a contribution of this sort for the pages of the *SB*, and trust that you will enjoy it too.

You will find in this issue that Rev. Mahtani calls the Sindhi Christian Conference at which he spoke "historic." In other correspondence he explains that it was the "first-time-ever" meeting of all Sindhi believers in India. Invited to speak at the conference were five men, from five different locations — England, South America, Hong Kong, Singapore, and India. Quite an honor to be one of those five, said Rev. Mahtani. And, he added, "quite a responsibility." For he was asked to come as representative of a denomination of churches committed to the Reformed faith. A spokesman he would be, therefore, for the truth of the Word of God over against the lie of Arminianism and the attraction of the charismatics, the latter of which, he says, is "all over India."

Perhaps we could add just this, that, when Rev. Mahtani renewed acquaintance with those whom he had met on his previous visit to India some three years ago, he found to his great delight that some of them "could recount the sermons preached last time!" What a testimony to the work of the Spirit through the Word preached in that far-off land.

D.D.

THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.
Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.,
4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418. Second Class
Postage Paid at Grandville, Michigan.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Standard Bearer,
P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma
Secretary: Prof. Robert D. Decker
Managing Editor: Mr. Don Doezeema

DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Prof. Robert Decker, Rev. Arie
den Hartog, Rev. Barry Gritters, Mr. Fred Hanko, Prof. Herman
Hanko, Rev. John Heys, Rev. Steven Key, Rev. Kenneth
Kooze, Rev. Jason Kortering, Rev. Dale Kulper, Mr. James
Lanting, Rev. George Lubbers, Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers, Rev.
James Slopeema, Rev. Charles Terpstra, Rev. Gisa VanBaren,
Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Mr. Benjamin Wigger, Rev. Bernard
Woudenberg.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
BUSINESS OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603
PH: (616) 538-1778
(616) 531-1490
FAX: (616) 531-3033

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
NEW ZEALAND OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
c/o Protestant Reformed
Church
B. VanHerik
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY

Subscription price: \$12.00 per year in the U.S., \$15.00 elsewhere. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of interrupted delivery. Include your Zip or Postal Code.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is at least one month prior to publication date.

BOUND VOLUMES

The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume. Such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume year.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

An Orthodox Paradox

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:8-10

We are saved by grace, without works.

That is the plain teaching, not only of the passage cited above, but also of the entire Scripture.

There is probably no truth that is more strongly emphasized in the Word of God than that one, for on practically every page we are told that we are saved solely by grace.

We need that emphasis. The church most often errs exactly on that central truth. As proud sinners we like to take some credit for our salvation, if not for the entire work of salvation, then surely for our faithfulness, our acts of faith, our acceptance of the gift of salvation, or even as little as a sigh of consent to be saved. Though ever so little, we try to fit in our good works somewhere.

Therefore the fathers often emphasized that we cannot add as much as a straw to our salvation.

This is confirmed in Romans 11:6,

where Paul is speaking of a "remnant" that is saved "according to the election of grace." He adds: "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work."

We are saved by grace, all works excluded.

Yet, in that same passage from Ephesians 2 quoted above, Paul speaks in verse 10 of "good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Here good works do play a part in our salvation.

This, too, can be confirmed by many other passages from God's holy Word.

Are we saved by our works?

No.

Do our works play a part in our salvation?

Yes.

In Revelation 14:13 we read: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works shall follow them."

Also in Matthew 25:34-36 we are told, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I

was a stranger and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

Are we saved by our works? No. Do our works play a part in our salvation? Yes.

A paradox indeed.

Yet this is an orthodox paradox, for it is entirely Scriptural.

In Ephesians 2:10 the apostle tells us that we are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto those good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Every word here is important. Foremost among them stands the fact that we are God's workmanship. Every single believer is a masterpiece from the hand of the sovereign Craftsman, the living God.

No two believers are alike. Just as no two snowflakes, no two leaves of a tree, no two sprouts of grass are alike, so also no two individual children of God are alike. God made you unique, exactly as He intended you to be.

This is true according to your first birth from your parents. Your forefathers and parents were divinely appointed for you. The time and place of your birth, and your place in your family among your brothers and sisters, or as an only child, was predetermined. Your own outward appearance, your own distinctive character, your own peculiar gifts and talents God gave to you, and to no one else.

You are also a distinct individual with definite characteristics as a child of God by regeneration. Yet you have

those unique characteristics according to your place in the church, the body of Christ. Just as all the members of a family have similarities common to that family, so also you have earmarks that distinguish you as belonging to the family of God.

In fact, we are all "created in Christ Jesus" as members of the body of Christ. We are chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world, redeemed by His cross, renewed into children of God by His Spirit, washed in His blood, and given our own place in His body. Yet each one has his own place in that body. Paul speaks of the fact that there are many different members in the human body; so also in the body of Christ each member has its own place.

There are never too many, never too few. As in the human body one eye would be a deformity, and three eyes would make a monstrosity, so there are exactly as many members of the body of Christ as are necessary to function properly—not one too many, not one too few, each functioning in its own divinely appointed place. Also the mentally handicapped, the "special child," has a place in the family, but also in the church, sometimes filling a far more important position than a "normal" person.

How readily we forget. We are dissatisfied with our looks, complain about our lack of talents, are possibly even envious of others who appear to be far more talented than we are. If it were possible, we would probably like to remake ourselves according to our own pattern.

Fools we are, to lose sight of the fact that we are God's workmanship, members of that marvelous body of Christ, ordained from all eternity unto everlasting life!

Saved by grace.

The wonder of our salvation is even greater than that.

We are created in Christ Jesus "unto those good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

This reveals to us still more of God's eternal thoughts concerning our salvation.

Noah had his own purpose in God's church and covenant, his own task and calling, according to God's eternal plan. So did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, Peter, Paul, Luther, Calvin, and millions of others throughout the history of God's church. No one else could fill that place and serve the purpose they served.

That is true of you also. You serve your very own divinely appointed purpose in your family, in the church, and in the midst of this world. You have a task and calling that only you can fill. *And God sees to it that you do!*

Does this not make one careless and profane? Can you take the lackadaisical attitude, I need do nothing, God will do it all? Impossible!

Our God is so incomprehensibly great that He is able to rule our lives by His providence, and yet hold us fully responsible!

As Scripture admonishes us: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12b, 13).

***Our God
is so incomprehensibly great
that He is able
to rule our lives
by His providence,
and yet hold us
fully responsible!***

Do you complain about your duty or your one talent? Do you think that you would do great things for the kingdom if only you had more talents? Do you shirk your duty by saying, "I cannot do that"? Or have you learned to say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"? If the latter is true, you will only be surprised what Christ can and will do through you.

After all, it is God's work that

must be accomplished (Ps. 90:16). It is God's battle that must be fought (Ex. 17:16; Eph. 6:11). It is God's goal that shall be attained (Rom. 11:36).

Christ uses such lowly means as you and me to gather His church and to bring about the coming of His kingdom.

You are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to serve your purpose toward the coming of that kingdom and the glory of God's Name! Your works are works of grace!

But that is not the end of the wonder of grace.

God even rewards His own work of grace in and through us with a reward of grace already in this life. With all the other blessings of salvation He gives us the assurance that we are His children, heirs of salvation. He bestows a contentment that only He can give, grants us a peace that passes all understanding, and creates in us a foretaste of the eternal joy.

And, as if that were a small thing, when our earthly task is finished God calls us home to reward His work in and through us with the blessed assurance: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

He even gives us our own unique place and our own personal task in the assembly of the elect.

We are like precious stones that eternally adorn the temple of our God, to the glory of Him who dwells within. When each one of us is ready for his place, that place is also ready. Then Christ reaches down to take us to Himself and to fit us into that one place specifically appointed for us. Or, if you will, we receive our own place in the heavenly choir to harmonize perfectly with and in that innumerable host that sings the praises of Him who sits upon the throne forever and ever.

Saved solely by grace! Sola gratia! Soli Deo Gloria! □

A.D. 1993: The Lord is Coming (2)

The Lord Jesus is coming in 1993. No, His personal, bodily, visible coming on the clouds will not take place in 1993. Too much must still happen before history can reach its end in the "day of Christ."

But He comes in 1993. He comes as He has been coming from the day that He ascended into heaven. As Lord over all things to His Church, He governs all things in heaven and on earth, in nature and among the nations, in the church and in the world, with a view to His coming again. Everything serves this goal of His coming. Nothing is allowed that would interfere with this coming.

Our world and its history are hurtling toward the "day of Christ" at breakneck speed. In this sense, the coming of the Lord was "near," "at hand," and "at the doors" already in the time of the apostles.

Almost the last words of Christ to His church in the Bible are the promise, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20).

From the time of the apostles to today, therefore, the church could live and work in the hope of the speedy coming of Christ. Her lively expectation of the quick coming was not mistaken.

In A.D. 1993, the coming of the Lord Jesus is near also in the sense that it is not far distant in time. This is the clear, powerful testimony of the signs of this coming and of the end of the world. Although Scripture warns believers against attempting to figure out the exact time of the Lord's com-

ing, it also makes known to us several events that must precede His coming. It instructs us to notice these events and to assure ourselves from them that the coming of Christ is near. "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 22:28).

The Reformed faith rejects the bizarre notion that supposes that Christ will return at any moment to take the church into the air in the "rapture." This is an aspect of the teaching about the end known as "chiliasm" or "premillennialism." On this view, Christ's return for the church is not preceded by any sign. The apostle exposed this notion as false in II Thessalonians 2:1-3. His subject is the "day of Christ." This is the day of "the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" for "our gathering together unto him." The church must not think that this day is "at hand" as though that actual day was already dawning or as though it could come at any moment. "For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (v. 3).

Two great events must precede and lead up to the coming of Christ. They are a great apostasy in the church and the appearance of Antichrist. These are signs to the church of the nearness of the coming of Christ.

If it is a foolish and disobedient notion to suppose that Christ's coming can be immediate, it is also an error today to put off the coming of

Christ into the distant future. This is done by all who embrace the doctrine about the last things known as "postmillennialism." On this view the Lord's return is at least 1000 years in the future. Some who hold this doctrine boldly advise their disciples that the day of Christ is even more remote. David Chilton writes that "this world has tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years of increasing godliness ahead of it, before the Second Coming of Christ" (*Paradise Restored*, pp. 221, 222).

Putting the Lord's return off hundreds of thousands of years arises from the belief that, prior to His coming, this world will become the glorious kingdom of Christ. The faith of the Reformation rejects this dream as a form of the Jewish delusion of a carnal kingdom. The Lutheran Augsburg Confession rejects "certain Jewish opinions which are even now making an appearance and which teach that, before the resurrection of the dead, saints and godly men will possess a worldly kingdom and annihilate all the godless" (Art. 17).

The Second Helvetic Confession, a Reformed creed, agrees:

We further condemn Jewish dreams that there will be a golden age on earth before the Day of Judgment, and that the pious, having subdued all their godless enemies, will possess all the kingdoms of the earth (Chapter 11).

As this Reformed confession adds, the reason why the Reformed

church rejects the prospect of a "golden age on earth" before Christ's coming is that "evangelical truth in Matthew 24, 25 and Luke 18 and apostolic teaching in II Thessalonians 2 and II Timothy 3,4 present something quite different."

Like its opposite error that looks for Christ to return any moment, the teaching that Christ will not come for a long time runs afoul of the signs of Christ's coming. There is no sign that the world is becoming more godly. There are, however, plain signs that the world is becoming more ungodly. These are the signs that Scripture itself presents to the church to show the nearness of the day of Christ.

Lawlessness increases (Matt. 24:12; II Tim. 3:1ff.). There is contempt for the law of God. Such is the development of lawlessness that men and women despise the very idea of divine authority over their lives. The world's determined rebellion against its Creator has reached the point that it exerts itself to violate the laws of God built into creation itself. The world legalizes the murder of the unborn and of the old. It destroys the family by assaulting the headship of the husband, by promoting the work of the wife outside the home, and by encouraging sexual promiscuity. Especially, it rages against the very distinction between male and female by its shameless advocacy of homosexuality.

Daniel prophesied that the Antichrist of the end will "think to change times and laws" (Dan. 7:25). This is a sign that Christ's coming is near.

Professing Christians and entire denominations of churches fall away from the truth (II Thess. 2:3). This began already in apostolic times and culminated in the Roman Catholic Church's becoming the false church. Hardly had the Reformation restored the true church by the gospel of grace founded upon Holy Scripture than the apostasy began to work in Protestantism. By the present time, apostasy in the Protestant churches is deep and wide. Not only are all the essential truths of the gospel corrupted and denied, but also the authority of Scrip-

ture as the inspired Word of God, upon which everything depends, is deliberately rejected. Indeed, the very idea of doctrinal truth is repudiated.

Paul foretold that at the time of the Antichrist at the end the nominal church would be filled with people who "received not the love of the truth" (II Thess. 2:10). This is a sign that Christ's coming is near.

Both the increase of lawlessness in the world and the apostasy in the church usher in the Antichrist and his worldwide kingdom of unrighteousness (II Thess. 2:3ff.; Dan. 11:21ff.; Rev. 13). There will be a personal, human Antichrist. Coming in history is a united, universal kingdom of man that will defy the God of Jesus Christ and persecute the saints. As the Second Helvetic Confession teaches, Christ will come when Antichrist holds sway:

And from heaven the same Christ will return in judgment, when wickedness will then be at its greatest in the world and when the Antichrist, having corrupted true religion, will fill up all things with superstition and impiety and will cruelly lay waste the Church with bloodshed and flames (Chapter 11).

Antichrist has not yet been revealed in his time. For this reason, we do not expect Christ in 1993 or in 1994. But we observe that the world is ready for him. The nations are prepared for union. With the collapse of Communism, the economic interdependency of the nations, the fear of the devastation that war would cause, and the agreement of all peoples that man be god, all that remains is the arising of a powerful nation with a charismatic, supernaturally endowed president.

The false church must do her part to establish the kingdom of the beast (Rev. 13:12). For this, the churches that participate in the great falling away must unite. This is being accomplished in the modern ecumenical movement. The apostate churches are finding each other in their mutual indifference to the truth. Protestant

churches are attracted to Rome. The Christian churches are open to the other religions. Already they are preaching the man of sin into power by their gospel of man and of a this-worldly kingdom.

The signs show clearly that the day of Christ is near.

Do we see them?

If the Protestant Reformed Churches see the signs, they will vigorously preach the gospel within the congregations. They will also zealously engage in evangelism and missions. G. C. Berkouwer is right when he asserts that "the tie between eschatological expectation and mission call is essential and indissoluble" (*The Return of Christ*, p. 132). The coming of Christ waits on the gospel's bringing the last elect to repentance (II Pet. 3:9). With the true church everywhere, the PRC will stand fast in and for the truth. They will confess it. They will defend it to the death. They will compromise nothing.

Seeing the signs, the believer personally will carry out his calling faithfully in church and society, performing his task, enduring hardship, serving the coming Lord. He will be on his guard against false prophets, false doctrine, and false Christs. He will daily examine his life whether he is infected with the dread plague of the last days, which is not AIDS but earthmindedness. He will prepare for the great tribulation by the study of Scripture, constant prayer, and a closer walk with God.

The signs cause church and Christian to long for the day of Christ. Our redemption draws nigh. Even better, our Beloved approaches.

Do we see the signs?

We will be more fervent and constant in prayer. For He comes in answer to our prayers. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

And we groan.

"Quousque, Domine?" How long, Lord?

For the signs painfully remind us that our Friend has not yet come.

— DJE

□

Letters

Appreciation

Many thanks for the editorials on Macleod's *Behold Your God*. I am photocopying them and sending them to a number of "common grace Reformed" ministers of my acquaintance. May our great covenant God continue to bless your faithful wit-

ness to His Holy Name and destroy Antichrist.

Steven Watters
Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland

Thank you for this publication. Each and every copy is a joy and comfort. I believe that the last para-

graph of Pastor Bruinsma's article in the November 15, 1992 issue of the *Standard Bearer* best summarizes the value of the *SB*. To paraphrase, the articles ... direct our attention to our Savior, and this is the *SB's* strength.

Maurice W. Bartlett
Rio Linda, CA

Contribution

Vivian Hunter

The Joy of Membership in a Small Congregation*

*Placement of this unsolicited article does not necessarily indicate agreement with the author's view of the "small congregation." Others may think differently. The *Standard Bearer* is open to their views as well. — Ed.

For who hath despised the day of small things?

Zechariah 4:10a

The above verse was the theme for family visitation.

A very serious and concerned pastor and elder asked, "Does it bother you that we are so small?" Almost taken aback, we responded, "Should it?" Upon further consideration certain conclusions were reached.

In larger congregations, needs are met in every respect. There is the consistent, pure preaching of God's Word — preaching that edifies, admonishes, comforts, and exhorts. In

time of need, trial, and affliction, the communion of the saints and the care and concern of the consistory are experienced. Fellowship with other members of the congregation is enjoyed. Provision is made for covenant education of covenant children. These same covenant children are properly catechized until, to the thankful joy of parents, these children make confession of their faith.

All of these things are also true in the smaller congregation. However, in the smaller congregation every member knows that in a very real way and in many practical ways he is needed. Being *really* needed in the service of Christ's church is a blessing that defies description.

Every member's physical presence is needed. Every talent every member possesses is put to use, and talents some couldn't believe they had are brought into use also.

Precious is the unity and cohesiveness of the small body of saints!

Every member enjoys the after-sermon handshake of the pastor. The opportunity to discuss the sermon immediately is right there.

Every member greets every other member before and after the service by name and with obvious joy.

Except for illness or out-of-town absence, every member is present at every service or activity, weekday or Sabbath. The absence of any member from any function never goes unnoticed by pastor, consistory, or other members of the congregation. Surely the small congregation understands being one's brother's keeper, and knows that there are friends who are closer than brothers. The need of every member, whatever it may be, becomes the need and concern of all members.

Church visitation is usually con-

Mrs. Hunter is a member of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church, Houston, Texas.

sidered the business of the consistory. In the small congregation it becomes an opportunity for all the members to greet and have fellowship with the church visitors — a meal with guests from the congregation in one home, a bed and breakfast in another, coffee after or before the meeting in a third, a trip from the airport with another family, and to the airport with yet another. So all meet with the visitors.

Visitors in a small congregation for one Sabbath or a stay in the area for a longer time (a week or two or maybe a month or more) find a very special welcome. Hospitality to the saints who are strangers in the midst takes on a special meaning. A small

congregation can accommodate for Sunday dinner as many families as there are member families (or more), and as quickly organize an after-service supper Sunday evening for special fellowship.

Should all of these special blessings and joys cause a congregation to strive to be small and stay small? Absolutely not! It is ever the mandate of every congregation to seek to shed the light of the Gospel through the preaching, through the life and witnessing of its members, and through the exercising of whatever opportunities for evangelism present themselves. The command is always there to be active in gathering Christ's church according to His counsel.

However, if in the Providence of God a congregation finds itself small, and also in His Providence remains so, despise it not! God maintains His church in some locations small, in other locations larger. In all these situations our God is Sovereign, and He controls.

"Fear not little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

If for any reason (vacation, business, or emergency) you find yourself traveling, locate the smaller churches. If at all possible plan your route to include a visit to the small congregations and share the blessings afforded there. □

All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

HIRING OF LESBIAN PASTOR NULLIFIED

Several months ago we reported that a large United Presbyterian church in downtown Rochester, New York hired Jane Adams Spahr, a lesbian, to serve as the congregation's co-pastor. Two decisions were taken by the Presbytery (a presbytery is a regional body of churches like our classis) approving the congregation's hiring of Spahr. In November the highest court of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ruled that a homosexually active person may not serve as a minister of any PCUSA churches. This ruling by the denomination's Permanent Judicial Commission overturned the decisions of the Presbytery. "Had the Presbytery acted appropriately, this 'call' would not have been approved," said the commission in its 12-page decision. Under the guidelines of the decision, a celibate homosexual could be hired.

Spahr's reaction? "This decision says either lie or repent," said she. "I will not lie, and I will never repent."

In the light of Holy Scripture's teaching, it simply cannot get any worse than this! The Bible says that effeminate persons will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Speaking of homosexuals and lesbians, Scripture condemns those "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:32).

Christianity Today

CHURCHES MUST REGISTER

Authorities in Ghana have recommended 957 groups for registration under a decree by the country's military leaders, a decree vigorously opposed by Ghana's mainline Protestant and Catholic churches. Known as the Religious Bodies Registration Law, the decree requires that religious groups submit constitutions, lists of trustees, statements of assets, and pastors' salary information to the ruling Provisional National Defense Council.

The Protestant Reformed

Churches' Foreign Mission Committee, under synod's mandate, is investigating Ghana as a possible field for foreign missions. What effects this decree may have for our churches' work remains to be seen. Our prayer is that the door will not be closed.

Christianity Today

CHURCH IN INDIA STRUGGLES

Among the many points of tension facing the church in India today, two in particular stand out: proclaiming the uniqueness of Christ and His salvation in a multi-religious society, and living as a disciple of Christ in the midst of a people whose lifestyle is centered in their non-Christian religions and cultures.

Missionaries are hearing the question, "What is the uniqueness of Christ and His salvation?" Opponents of the gospel say Christ is the same as Krishna, Siva, Buddha, and Guru Nanak. All religions lead to the same God. All faiths save in their own way. Therefore, they say, there is no need to proclaim the uniqueness of Christ, no need to acknowledge

Him as the only Savior and Lord. In fact, the opponents of the Gospel are saying that such a belief (Christ's uniqueness, RDD) is a sign of spiritual arrogance and a hindrance to harmonious relations among peoples of different religions. In one state in India the governor accused Christians of disrupting communal harmony by indulging in conversion. Time and again Indian missionaries have faced hardship and persecution when they have publicly proclaimed the uniqueness of Christ.

The second point of tension is living as a disciple of Christ in the midst of a people who do not acknowledge His lordship or live by Christian ethics. India is a shame-oriented culture where the vast majority of the people do whatever they please. The only "sin" is to be caught, since this brings shame on the individual and his people and their community.

This, and the situation in Ghana, are but two of many indications that it is becoming increasingly difficult to preach the Gospel and live the Christian life in many of the nations of the world. No doubt this will have some effect on the work our sister churches, the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore, are contemplating in India.

Pulse

LEAKAGE OR HEMORRHAGE?

Still another group has seceded from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). The new church, called the Free Christian Reformed Church, consists of some 37 families. These families came mainly from Grace CRC and Second CRC. The church is the second independent Reformed church in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Immanuel Fellowship, organized in 1974 by seceders from several Reformed Church in America congregations, was the first in Kalamazoo.

The Free CRC has named the Rev. Henry VanderKam as its interim pastor. Rev. VanderKam is a retired

75 year old minister who served several large congregations during his long ministerial career in the CRC. VanderKam was president of the CRC home mission board from 1960 to 1965. He was president of the Calvin College and Seminary Board of Trustees from 1970 to 1973. Delegated to synod ten times, VanderKam was an officer of the synod six of those times and was elected president of synod in 1976. Rev. VanderKam is also one of the founders of Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Orange City, Iowa. He served as professor of dogmatics for several years at that institution.

What prompts this former leader in the CRC to leave the denomination? VanderKam sees the CRC going in the same direction as the Gereformeerde Kerken in The Netherlands on such issues as women in office, creation/science, and homosexuality.

Interestingly, Grace CRC was once the congregation of the Rev. Henry Danhof, who together with his consistory was cast out of the CRC along with Revs. Herman Hoeksema and George Ophoff in 1925 because of their opposition to the three points of Common Grace. Grace was an independent church until Danhof retired in the mid-1940s when it rejoined the CRC.

The Free CRC has purchased the former First Assembly of God building and plans to begin worshiping there on January 3, 1993. To date, thirty-one independent congregations totaling over 6400 members have been established by former CRC members. Nine of these congregations are in Western Michigan.

Reformed Believers Press Service

SOMETHING WORTH THINKING ABOUT

G. K. Chesterton in *George Bernard Shaw* wrote, "You are free in our time to say that God does not exist; you are free to say that He exists and is evil; you are free to say . . . that He would like to exist if He could. You

may talk of God as a metaphor or mystification; you may water Him down with gallons of long words, or boil Him to the rags of metaphysics; and it is not merely that nobody punishes, but nobody protests. But if you speak of God as a fact, as a thing like a tiger, as a reason for changing one's conduct, then the modern world will stop you somehow if it can. We are long past talking about whether an unbeliever should be punished for being irreverent. It is now thought irreverent to be a believer."

Christianity Today □

I Shall Go to be With Jesus

When this busy life is ended,
And my work on earth is done;
When I lay aside my burden,
At the setting of the sun,
I shall go to be with Jesus;
I shall see His blessed face;
I shall sing His praise in glory,
Saved by His redeeming grace.

When the sun goes down forever,
And the moon her way forsakes,
With the dawn of judgment morning,
When my dust from sleep awakes,
I shall go to be with Jesus;
I shall see His blessed face;
I shall sing His praise in glory,
Saved by His redeeming grace.

Loved ones who have grown a-weary
And have left me by the way
I shall meet again, and, with them
At the breaking of the day
I shall go to be with Jesus;
I shall see His blessed face;
I shall sing His praise in glory,
Saved by His redeeming grace.

O Thou Everlasting Father,
Love me, guide me, keep me still,
That when Thou shalt have completely
Wrought in me Thy perfect will
I shall go to be with Jesus;
I shall see His blessed face;
I shall sing His praise in glory,
Saved by His redeeming grace.

Standard Bearer, 8-1-33

A Return to India

When the invitation came for us to return to India, nobody expected it to materialize in what one might call the "first joint-venture in missions" between the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore and the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. As it turned out, however, Rev. J. Mahtani and Rev. J. Kortering found themselves on Indian soil for 24 days in the months of October and November 1992. What on earth were they doing there? Instead of writing words to explain and illustrate the mission trip, we present a pictorial record, in the hope that it will place vividly before your eyes the work of the Lord in India.

INDIA ...

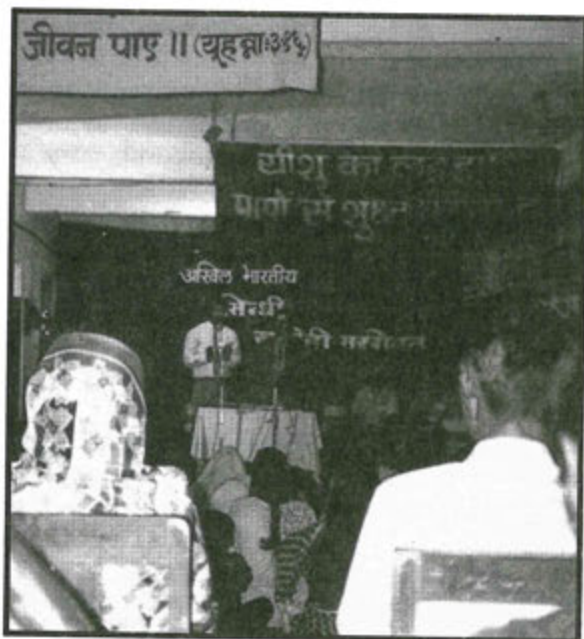


A densely-populated, poverty-stricken land...



with crowded streets, in which sacred cows have the right-of-way.

The Historic Sindhi-Christian Conference



A small crowd, but a blessed gathering...



attended even by a minister from the other side of the world.

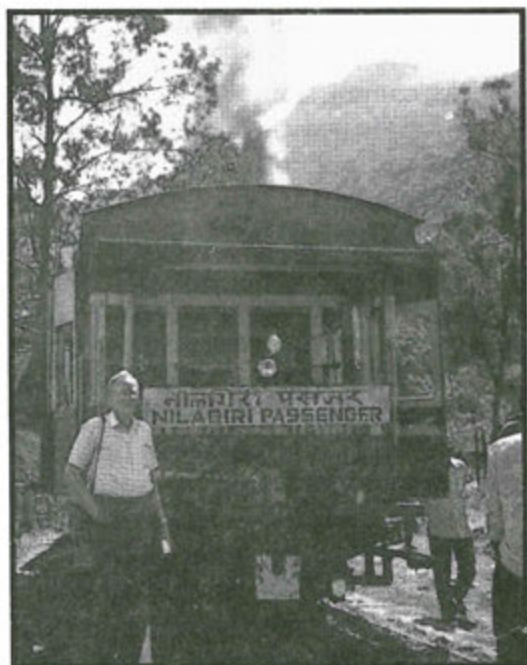


Sindhi Conference hears the Reformed faith.



Speaking to the children in Sunday School.

For Pastor Mahtani it was a return to India for the third time. Twice before, the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church had sent him there to preach the Word and to investigate possible missionary labors. This time, when Pastor Mahtani was invited to Central India, the Mission Committee of the ERCS decided that it would be wise to have Rev. Kortering go along as co-laborer to investigate India as a possible mission field. With the gracious cooperation and sponsorship of the PRC, Rev. Kortering was able to join Rev. Mahtani in this return to India. Together the two pastors attended and spoke at the Sindhi Conference. Then they made their way south to renew the contacts made in the past. They have both come home with exciting reports, a multitude of pictures, and vivid slides of this recent work in India.



Slowest train-ride in the world.



Walk to a village worship service.

Rev. Mahtani is a minister in the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore.



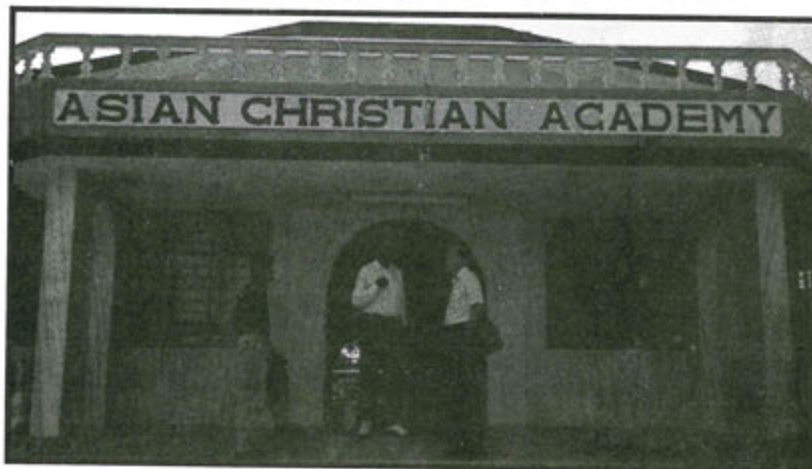
Enjoying fellowship with saints in poverty.



Dressed to look Indian!



A joyful congregation after worship service.



Investigations for future missionary labor

Will the ERCS return again to India? Or will it be a task the Lord would have the PRC to perform?

The mammoth task seems impossible. As in any field, the labors in India are filled with many questions. Both Pastors speak excitedly of the work there, but warn of many difficulties and urge the churches to consider carefully the field without plunging too quickly into the work. As we consider together the work of the Lord in India, let us be reminded of His great commission: "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth; Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations ... and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18, 19). And again, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:37, 38). The Mission Committee of the ERCS is presently studying the mission reports. Recommendations, when ready, will be presented to the ERCS Classis. The PRC is also being kept informed of further developments and possible future labors in India. In the meantime, let us pray, "Thy will be done."

Lesson III

The Beautiful Transition Between Chapters 1 and 2

I Timothy 2:1-7

We should by all means not fail to notice the connecting word (conjunction) "therefore" in the first sentence: "I exhort therefore...." Paul gives the good solid answer to the "wherefore" of the divine exhortation that prayers, intercessions, etc. be raised to God for *all men*! This answer is the end of all contradiction.

Paul comes here with a most authoritative word of Christ to Timothy: Timothy must press this matter upon the sanctified conscience of all the churches, beginning at Ephesus. They must be instructed to be instant in prayer; they must not faint (Rom. 12:12). (Read Luke 18:1ff.) Does this life of fervent prayer not befit them as the temple of the living God, as a people constituted of royal priests, a holy nation? Surely, they are the new work which God has wrought. They are not a church which is limited to a hill in Samaria, nor to an earthly Jerusalem, to be sure. Are they not the house of God which shall be called the house of prayer for all nations (Isa. 56:7, 8)? Did not also Jeremiah write of the better temple, in chapter 7:8-16? Is this not the church, the house of God, of which Paul wrote to these very Ephesians in chapter 2:11-22?

Let every congregation then take notice of the word of exhortation. For this Apostolic word is not merely a word for the time in which Paul and Timothy live and labored; but it is an ordinance of God which obtains in full force as long as the sun and the moon shall endure. (Read Luke 18:1; John 16:33b; Matt. 24:42.) In all times the watchword resounds from the great trumpets of God: Watch and pray, that ye fall not into temptation. Then shall we dwell safely under the shadow of God's wings!

Great reason for us to lift up the banner of prayer! Let it ever be a "first of all" — morning, noon, and night.

Here we should ask and answer two questions. They are suggested in I Timothy 2:1, 2. The first question: For whom must the churches pray? And the second question: For whose temporal and eternal welfare do these prayers ascend on high to God in Christ Jesus?

The first question is answered in the text: for (in behalf of) all men (*anthropoon*) — "for kings and for all that are in authority."

The wording of the text raises a question which calls for an answer based on good exegesis. The key question in our interpretation is this: Who are "all men"? Is "all" here the same as "every" man, woman, and child in all the human race? Does the Holy Spirit here allow us to make a

studied guess? Or does the immediate grammatical context afford us the answer?

It seems that it is good Greek grammar that the second part of the text gives a clear and unequivocal answer. The "all men" are, first of all, "men." That is, they are not angels, not devils, but men. They are all out of the human race, as this human race is under the control of almighty God. They are those of whom Paul speaks in Acts 17:26: "... and hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." From this viewpoint we can clearly see the God-controlled history of the world as it includes all men. These all are they whom Jesus calls the kings of the earth, as they exercise ruthless dominion over all men. However, their great power is under the sovereign control of Christ, the Lord of lords, and King of kings, who sits enthroned at God's right hand. All through history Christ rules the nations for the benefit of His church in the world.

But is it then perhaps not incongruous for the church, the Bride of Christ, to pray in behalf of these nations? Not at all. Whereas the church ever lives as wheat in God's acre, in which she experiences the wrath of the world headed by the Prince of this

world, nevertheless, from out of this world the Son of man in His providential power and supreme authority gathers His church as living members of His spiritual body in the unity of the faith. In the midst of the "all men" of the world dwells the "all men" out of every tribe and nation (Jew and Gentile) who are elected unto everlasting life. Remember the faithful word, worthy of all acceptance, "that Christ Jesus came into this world (*kosmos*) to save sinners." He plucked them out of the present evil world (*aiōn*) to make them His temple. These are the elect sinners who are made a holy temple to the Lord. And as sinner-saints they cry day and night to God as they are surrounded by the "tares" which Satan sowed (Matt. 13:37-43; Gal. 1:4).

There is more in the text. We quote: "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:2-4).

That the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable earthly existence is of the utmost importance and necessity for her well-being in history. A clear-cut case study of this we have in Jeremiah 29:4-7. Take your Bible and read this passage carefully. In this life the church is gathered in the generations of those who fear the Lord. It is gathered in thousands of generations according to God's covenant faithfulness. Here the church in every age dwells, leading an earthly life. Children are born, houses must be built, mouths must be fed, the sick and the dying must be cared for. The church must be the light of the world, that our heavenly Father may be glorified in our good works of faith and love. We must walk in a good conscience. And not one of the elect number of men may perish; all must be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. The church is builded as a city upon a hilltop. She is as a candle upon the candlestick. Christ must grow in us from strength to strength. And from this church

great cries, prayers, and supplications ascend to the throne of grace!

The rock-bottom anchor point is that "there is one God and one mediator of (not between) God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

The verses 5 and 6 require a bit of careful interpretation. We should notice the grammatical implications of the conjunction "for." I trust that my readers will bear with me if I quote from the Greek Lexicon (dictionary), that the Greek term *gar* is properly a particle of affirmation and conclusion, denoting *truly therefore, verily as the case stands*. Something previously was mentioned; and then the cause or reason is given. In verse 5 it refers to the affirmation that God would have prayers and supplications made for all men; God would not have any of these "all men" to perish, but that they might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Why? Because there is *one* God and *one* Mediator, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all — the great testimony of Christ in His own time!

Let us try to understand this.

Let us focus our attention on "one God, one Mediator of God and men." When we take pains to "search the Scriptures" we will see that we are really seeking for the biblical understanding of one of the basic incommunicable attributes of the Triune God. In this case we are confronted in the text with the basic biblical teaching of the *Unity of God*. That God is *One* can briefly be stated that there is only one God and that all God's attributes are *One*.

It was the late Dr. Herman Bavinck who wrote of this in his Reformed dogmatics (*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* Volume II, page 143). We here quote (the translation is ours):

Although there certainly is progress in God's revelation in the development of thought, nonetheless the entire Old Testament teaches the unity of the world and the unity of the human race. This unity is also

consistently taught concerning the election of God and of God's covenant and morality, etc. It is built upon the unity of God. Jehovah is the Creator of the world (Gen. 1-2). His is the world, and He is the judge of all the earth (Gen. 14:19-20; 18:25); He is the only Lord (Deut. 6:4).

In the New Testament this unity of God is set forth in the person of Christ (John 17:3; Acts 17:24; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:5, 6; Eph. 4:5, 6; 1 Tim. 2:5).

If there were more than one God, then the gates of hell would not need to tremble. Then there could be many "saviors"; and there could never be the establishment of one eternal kingdom or church. Nor could there be one will of the one God who will certainly save all, or any, and bring them to the knowledge of the truth. That is the confusion and error both of Pantheism and of Polytheism. The biblical terms of sin and grace, as well as the divine law, would all be meaningless. But now the pillars of truth stand — also of sin and guilt.

There is a comforting rock-bottomness to our salvation when the Holy Spirit writes: "For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men." This one Mediator is really not a Mediator *between* God and men, but He is the Mediator of God and men!

Here we should notice that the Scriptural idea of a Mediator is that the man Christ Jesus has an office; He has work to perform: to save sinners. He is not a mere referee, as were the judges at the Grecian games. But He comes in God's Name and in perfect obedience to fulfill all justice, to pay the guilt and debt of all His people, as the Servant of the Lord. He must be, both in His state of guilt-humiliation and in His present state of glorification at God's right hand, the perfect Mediator of God and men. He is both God and man. (See Heidelberg Catechism, Questions 12-19.) He brought the perfect sacrifice. He could only bring this sacrifice by the bringing of the better sacrifice of His blood through the eternal Spirit. Christ is also the better high priest in the heavenly tabernacle. He is our Mediator

with God in the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God (Heb. 12:22-24). He is always the same Son of God in our flesh, very God of God. He is and remains the man Christ Jesus forever.

Some Suggested Questions:

1. Is the doctrine of election clearly suggested and/or presupposed in the biblical terms "to redeem" and "ransom" in I Timothy 2:6? Can anyone who denies the Reformed doctrine of election and reprobation do justice to these terms in his exposition of the Holy Scriptures?

a. What does it mean to "redeem" dead and guilty sinners? Does it merely mean to make it possible for God to offer salvation?

b. To whom must the redemption-price be paid? To Satan? To a wrathful God? Is this redemption price paid by a God who loves His people, who are steeped in sin and guilt? See Romans 5:6-11.

c. What is the Reformed teaching in the Heidelberg Catechism, Questions 12-15?

2. What is the biblical teaching con-

cerning God as our "Goel=Redeemer" in Ruth 4? Was this simply a nice romantic story, or was this the manner of the birth of Jesus Christ? What is the deep and profound implication of the fact that Shiloh would come forth out of Judah, and that to Him the nations would come? Does this history of the redemption of that small piece of land indicate that all the land belonged to the LORD, and that He would redeem it at His own time for a testimony in Israel and in all the world? □

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

Calvinism and Missions

2. Unconditional Election

Why do some respond favorably to evangelistic efforts and others do not? And why do some reject every effort to win them to Christ?

Why do some believe the preaching of the gospel and repent? And why do others remain in their sins and under the just condemnation of God?

* * * * *

Often the answers to these questions center in the person of the missionary or witness, or on the method used.

Reflecting Scripture, the Calvinistic Canons of Dordrecht answer these questions differently. "That some receive the gift of faith from

God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree" (Canons I, 5). Some are saved because God, before the foundation of the world, merely of grace, and only according to His own sovereign good pleasure, has "chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault... into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ" (Canons I, 7). The elect are by nature no more deserving than others, but God decreed to give them to Christ, to be saved by Him. Also God decreed to give to the elect faith through the preaching of the Gospel. This was for the demonstration of His mercy, and for the praise of His glorious grace. Therefore, the sole basis of this gracious election is the good pleasure of God, according to which He is pleased, not to select certain qualities and actions of men as a condition of salvation, but

to adopt a definite number of specific persons as a peculiar people unto Himself (Canons I, 10).

That God is the One who determines who shall and who shall not be saved is one of the clearest teachings of Scripture. The ones who believe are "as many as were ordained to eternal life" (Acts 13:48). "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (II Thess. 2:13). "But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom. 11:7b). "He [the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ] hath chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:4-6).

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Elk Grove Village, Illinois.

"For the children [Jacob and Esau] being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth" (Rom. 9:11). "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18). The elect are "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11).

* * * * *

The Calvinistic answer, even though it accurately reflects Scripture, is the object of much criticism and even ridicule. "What is the use of preaching at all, if the number of the saved is unchangeably determined." "How can one be zealous and beseeching in preaching if there is election, and especially if the election is unconditional." "If God determined everything beforehand, including who will believe and who will not believe, then why do anything?" The critics believe that one cannot be effective in winning souls (Prov. 11:30) if he holds to the doctrine of election. Therefore, some deny election altogether. Others acknowledge that the Bible teaches that God chose from before the foundation of the world. But in their mind this seems to deny man's responsibility. So they hold to an election which is conditional, an election according to which God chooses those whom He knew (foresaw) would believe.

* * * * *

Calvinism has always maintained *unconditional* election.

It is so very important to remember that man can do nothing to earn either salvation or election. It is equally important to remember that God could deny salvation to everyone, without doing an injustice to anyone. The reason for both is man's total depravity. No one may say, "It isn't fair," if God should not save. The reason is that all deserve hell. Is it unjust for a judge to sentence someone to what he deserves? Natural man deserves condemnation, for he has never done anything to remove

his guilt or to atone for his sin. Natural man has never done anything whereby he obliges God not to punish him as he deserves.

*The sovereign
and gracious purpose of God
in the election of His people
is the only source
and sole basis of faith.*

The Canons of Dordrecht, in Article 9 of the First Head of doctrine, beautifully portray the teaching of Scripture concerning election. The sovereign and gracious purpose of God in the election of His people is the only source and sole basis of faith. Election is not and cannot be based on the fact that God foresaw some virtue or action of man, which virtue and action God had previously appointed as the necessary qualification for election. Foreseen faith, obedience of faith, and holiness are not the cause or condition of election. Rather, those who are elected are chosen *to* faith and *to* the obedience of faith, holiness, etc. God has determined that those chosen "should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). God saves "not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Tim. 1:9).

* * * * *

We answer the critics of unconditional election and of the preaching of election by saying that the church must preach. She is commanded to do so. And part of that which she must preach is the truth of election.

The church really needs only one reason for preaching, and that is that God has commanded her to "preach the word" (II Tim. 4:2). Faithfulness to God demands obedience, not questions and objections. All we need to know is that God has ordained "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21).

Is it necessary to preach the doctrine of election and predestination,

including reprobation? Is it legitimate to believe it, but not preach it? Would it not be better to dwell on the love of God and on the responsibilities of man?

These questions are not recent ones. The authors of the Canons also faced these questions and the charges implied in them. In Article 14 they point out that the doctrine of election was preached by the prophets, by Christ Himself, and by the apostles. They also note that the declaration of election was according to the most wise counsel of God. Additionally, the doctrine of election is clearly revealed in the Scriptures, both in the Old and New Testament. These spiritual fathers conclude that it is still to be published in its proper place. They caution that the truth of election and predestination must be published with the spirit of discretion and piety, and without vainly attempting to pry into the secret ways of the Most High. Further, the Canons say that the declaration of these truths must be for the purpose of the glory of God's most holy name and for the enlivening and comforting of God's people.

*The preaching of
election and reprobation
puts God in His
rightful place.*

The preaching of election and reprobation puts God in His rightful place. Whether that preaching is in the established congregation or in the mission field, it gives the hearers the only proper view of God, namely, a high one. God must always be viewed as "high and lifted up" and as perfectly holy (Isa. 6). The proper preaching of election establishes God's sovereign right to do whatsoever He is pleased, without being arbitrary or wishy-washy. The proclamation of election manifests the glory of God, for it exalts and magnifies God's always effective grace in His undeserved favor toward His people in Jesus Christ.

*The preaching of
predestination
takes away all
in which our flesh
might glory,
and leaves us only God.*

The preaching of predestination also puts man in his proper place, namely, as undeserving of any good thing and worthy only of condemnation. Through his own fault man has fallen from his original state of righteousness, which makes every man "deserving of eternal death, so that God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish, and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin" (Canons I, 1). Before the holy God man is to reply only as did Isaiah, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). The preaching of predestination takes away all in which our flesh might glory, and leaves us only God. The apostle Paul concluded his presentation of predestination in Romans 9-11 with a doxology of praise to Him to whom is to be the glory for ever (Rom. 11:33-36).

The preaching of election on the mission field and in the established congregation is to be with the same care that one preaches any other doctrine of Scripture. No single truth must be taken out of its place in the "whole counsel of God." The Scriptures set the boundaries for all preaching, including that of the truth of predestination. We are warned not to pry inquisitively into this truth, lest "men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest (distort) to their own destruction" (Canons I, 6). The preaching may not present predestination as a "mystery" which contradicts God's love. The preaching of election may not take the place of, or weaken, the earnest call of the gospel

to the sinner to repent and believe. The truth of election and reprobation does not give anyone the right to make judgments as to who is elect and who is reprobate. That is blasphemy. All the pastor and missionary must do is preach the whole counsel of God, resting in the fact that the Lord will use the means of the preaching to draw to Himself all He has chosen, and that God will use the means of the same preaching to be "justly terrible to those, who ... have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh, so long as they are not seriously converted to God" (Canons I, 16). The twofold test for proper preaching of predestination is whether it glorifies God and whether it comforts the believing sinner.

The preaching of election is a source of "unspeakable consolation" (Canons I, 6) in the mission field as much as in the established congregation. The elect are taught they can gain the assurance of their "unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God — such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc." (Canons I, 12). This sense of election gives believers only more reason for humiliation before God, "for adoring the depth of his mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to him, who first manifested so great love towards them" (Canons I, 13). The proper preaching of election warns against carnal security and against any laziness toward responsibilities. The preaching of predestination does not prevent anyone from coming to Christ. Further, those who wish a greater assurance of election must not be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, but must persist in the use of the means which God has appointed for the working of this assurance and wait prayerfully for a season of richer grace.

The truth of election gives every

preacher, whether pastor or missionary, the assurance that his efforts are not in vain. This assurance arises from believing that God has elected some and that it is His good pleasure to send others to hell in order to show "his wrath and to make his power known" (Rom. 11:22). We do not need to feel guilty if all do not respond favorably to the preaching. The assurance of the preacher that his efforts are not in vain arises from believing that the dispensing of salvation is in the hands of the Holy Spirit who calls, through the preaching, those whom God has predestinated. In God we cannot be defeated in all our labors. Over against the total depravity and corruption of natural man is the truth of God's sovereign, irresistible, and irreversible election of grace. The preaching of the truth of predestination frees the preacher from having to save. Faithfully preaching the whole counsel of God, the godly minister and missionary can rest in the Lord to save unto Himself those whom He has chosen.

* * * * *

"May Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who, seated at the Father's right hand, gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth, bring to the truth those who err, shut the mouths of calumniators [false accusers] of sound doctrine, and endue the faithful minister of his Word with the spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all their discourses may tend to the glory of God, and the edification of those who hear them. Amen." (Conclusion to the Canons of Dordrecht.) □

*The difficulties we feel
with regard to predestination
are not derived from
the Word.*

*The Word is full of it,
because it is full of God,
and when we say God
and mean God —
God in all that God is —
we have said Predestination.*

Benjamin B. Warfield

Protestant Reformed Seminary

4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, Michigan 49418
Phone: (616) 531-1490

Robert D. Decker, Rector
Professor of Practical Theology and New Testament

December 10, 1992

Dear friends in Christ:

Under God's blessing we are enjoying a profitable year at the seminary.

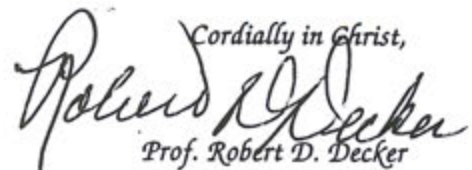
Our student body consists of eight men. Allen Brummel (son of Edgerton, MN Protestant Reformed Church) and Douglas Kuiper (Hope PRC, Walker, MI) expect to graduate in June of 1995. Henry DeJong (South Holland, IL PRC) and Richard Smit (Lynden, WA PRC) will graduate, D.V., in June of 1996. In June of 1994 Christopher Connors and David Higgs, of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, will have completed a three-year course of study. Rev. Bruce Davis (Pastor of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church, Allendale, MI) is studying Dogmatics and Homiletics with us and Rev. Audred Spriensma (recently installed as Pastor of Grandville, MI PRC) is auditing some classes.

Four men from our churches are in their last year of college and will begin their seminary studies in the fall of 1993. A student from the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore is also coming in the fall of 1993. Several men from other denominations have expressed interest in our seminary. We are thankful that God is answering our prayers and inclining the hearts of young men to seek the gospel ministry.

The faculty is kept busy teaching, writing, and preaching in area churches. Prof. Engelsma expects to complete his thesis in the near future, and to receive the Master of Theology degree in May from Calvin Theological Seminary.

Synod authorized the Theological School Committee to proceed with construction drawings for the proposed addition to the building when \$220,000 has been received through voluntary gifts, and to award the construction contract when \$330,000 has been received. To date we have received about \$165,000. We sincerely thank all who have contributed to this project. We really do need the space for our library and a quiet study area for our growing student body. Will you help us reach these goals? Total cost for the 8,000 square foot addition is estimated at \$430,000.

May our covenant God keep our churches and seminary faithful to the rich heritage of the Reformed faith. We covet your prayers and support.

Cordially in Christ,

Prof. Robert D. Decker

RDD:jd

Proper Christian Self-Esteem

(4)

When you study the Scriptures thoroughly, you easily find answer to this question: What is the great evil against which we are warned repeatedly? I ask, Is it indeed that we tend to think too little of ourselves? Quite the contrary! The Bible repeatedly warns us against thinking too highly of ourselves.

Our problem is that we do *not* serve God first, and we do *not* seek the welfare of our neighbor; but we are self-centered and self-seeking.

So in the apostolic age, when the church saw the greatest growth and was in its most healthy state from many points of view, the apostle writes in Romans 12:3: "For I say, through the grace that is given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

A proper evaluation of self in the light of Scripture will leave one very conscious of his own weaknesses and sins. When the Word of God works in us, we know that we are sinful and that we deserve the everlasting wrath of God as we stand before Him in ourselves.

Being in Christ

Our only hope is in Jesus Christ. But a blessed and sure hope it is! And

the apostle Paul would call you to lay hold of that hope by faith, when he writes in Romans 6:11: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The apostle speaks here to Christians. He does not mean to say, "Reckon yourselves what you are not." He does not call you to deceive yourselves. But as those who stand by faith in Christ Jesus, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Though once you were a servant of sin, held in its bondage, now you have died to sin. Sinners we remain, struggling daily. But that relationship of *bondage* to sin no longer has an unbreakable hold on you. You are alive unto God! That is what you have when you are in Christ! Are you in Christ?

Proper Christian self-esteem is really proper Christ-esteem.

When you belong to Christ by faith, you have a most blessed life. Indeed you *are* blessed. Reckon yourself so to be! In other words, look at yourself in Christ. Let His great gift for you be impressed upon your mind. That you belong to Him ought to influence your life and your thinking — also with respect to self.

You see, though Reformed, biblical Christianity does indeed give such a devastating diagnosis of the human condition — a truth found

throughout the Scriptures — it is that same biblical Christianity which elevates the excellency and worth of men and women and young people and children during their life on this earth and forever. It does so by the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Proper Christian self-esteem is *not* something which elevates human pride. Rather, proper Christian self-esteem is that attitude which looks to the excellency of our Savior, and which is the humble, thankful acceptance of God's goodness to us by faith in Christ Jesus.

Conscious of Your Relationship to Christ

Proper Christian self-esteem is really proper *Christ-esteem*. Your *proper* self-esteem may not deny the reality of sin, but must be rooted in Christ's victory over your sin — the recognition of the truth that God looks upon you in Christ as *good* and *His beloved*. To have proper Christian self-esteem is to live in the consciousness that God has declared you righteous, His child, and an heir of eternal life. Do you live in that consciousness?

When you see yourself as one who is righteous in Christ, a friend of God, you may have confidence in the place you occupy as a child of God. For to be a friend of God is to have a place of highest worth and value, as well as a calling that ranks of highest importance — no matter what others may think of what that calling is.

Will you be a wife and mother in the home? What an important calling that is! What a place of value! Though the ungodly do not see it as such, your

Friend who is God says that you have a place of highest worth!

Will you build houses or fix cars or farm or teach? When you do so for Christ's sake as the friend of God, you have a calling of highest worth. You are blessed! Even if others scorn us for the place which we occupy or the work that we do or how we live, we stand before God whose judgment of us is all that counts.

A Misguided Evaluation, An Improper Self-Concept

One reason for our feelings of low self-worth may well be that we use a misguided standard for evaluating ourselves. Our society places all the emphasis on being "number one." A huge emphasis is placed upon being "popular." Ads in magazines and on television portray beautiful women and handsome men, all great athletes, standing in the heights

of popularity. And the way they achieve popularity is set before us as a way very different from the way we are taught in our homes and by our pastors. By the world there is little or no value given to being a Christian—even a Christian in name. And our society will ridicule you if you live as a Christian according to the Bible.

It is easy to get carried away with the world's concept of popularity and worth. Instead of recognizing the gifts which God has given us, we strive to excel in areas that we think will please others. When we are not very successful in those areas—take sports as an example—then we feel that we are not important, or that we are failures.

But who determines whether or not you are "popular"? Who determines whether you are a success or a failure? Are you quick to accept the opinions of your peers and those

around you? Will you let the advertisers determine that for you?

If you let your peers determine your standards, in order that you might be popular, you will find yourself in trouble—without exception. Because you simply will not be able to satisfy your peers and all their standards. If you let your peers determine whether you are a success or failure, you might soon be filled with all sorts of insecurities and doubts.

What is God's evaluation of you? When you belong to Christ, His evaluation of you is this: "You are My friend." No matter that you are not so popular with peers; you are accepted with God. If you are conscious of belonging to Christ, and are striving to exercise the gifts which God in perfect wisdom has given you, you may also be sure that you are pleasing unto God. That is happiness. In that consciousness you must live. □

Guest Article

Rev. Richard Moore

Not Willing That Any Should Perish

In this article we consider a very important text for the church of Christ, especially in the day in which we live. There are many reasons for us to wonder why the Lord tarries. In the evil days in which we live, there arise even in the church questions concerning the wisdom of bringing forth the covenant seed. But the church does bring forth that seed, and she does so trusting in the promises of God. It is with confidence that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise that we bear our children and bring them to be baptized.

We will spend some time in this

article with the Word of God as it is recorded in II Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

The promise of God has been set before the people of God from of old. In the old dispensation the people of God looked to enter into the rest of the eternal inheritance (Heb. 4). The law of the Old Testament spoke of the inheritance that would belong to Israel in typical form. And we read in Ephesians 6:2 this: "Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise...." When the people of God entered into Canaan and were able to build the temple,

they rejoiced that God was faithful to His promises. "Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant" (I Kings 8:56).

This rest was only typical, however, and our fathers looked for another country, a heavenly country. But even as the Father gave unto the Old Testament saints a typical rest according to His promise, so most certainly He will give us the fullness of that promise in Christ. We have in fact already now received the fulfillment of that promise in principle by faith as we receive the Spirit of life. Paul reflects upon this truth when he

Rev. Moore is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa.

says the following in the epistle to the Romans: "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:13-17).

Through faith we are quickened and receive the promise of life in principle, being called out of death to life. Further, this is expressed by our Savior through the apostle when He says in Acts 2:33, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

We now look with expectation to the fulfillment of this promise in the final sense of the word, and strive for the goal of the end of the promise, with spiritual activity. And we have the assurance that as we live in this way we shall obtain it. "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (I Tim. 4:8). Also we read in Hebrews 9:15: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

But some think that God is slack. We find this notion first of all in the context of the major unbelief in the world that is fast heading to destruction. This unbelief is so widespread

that it can be a danger to the faith of God's children. It is for this reason that the apostle addresses this word to the church, that she may have assurance in the face of such an overwhelming opposition to her faith. We must remember that what was true for the church in the day of the apostle is emphatically more true today. The attack upon our faith is even more intense than it was in the day that these words were penned for the church.

Let us examine what was being said then that was a threat to the faith of God's people. There were scoffers who said, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." By that bold declaration they denied God's government of all things, they denied Scripture's testimony of the Flood, and they denied even the creation of all things by God. Further, they lived as though there would be no judgment.

We must understand that there is a reason why this is laid upon the people, why there are those that will harden their hearts to the plain testimony of the Word. And that reason is given also in our context, where we read that the scoffers "walk after their own lusts." In order to follow his own idea of what is right and wrong, in order to maintain a certain peace of mind when walking in direct contradiction with the Word, man must convince himself that such a walk will bear no consequences. But this is a willing disobedience, a willful ignoring of the fact that the world that now is, is not the world that was at the beginning of time. Men reject the truth that God sent judgment before, and that He will do so again. They shall be held accountable for their sin.

Now, lest our faith be shaken because men become more and more perverse, and yet judgment does not come, and we are not yet delivered from this life of sin to the new life of Christ in Heaven, the apostle points out that God is not slack concerning His promise.

Understand that we can be vul-

nerable to the attacks upon our faith, and that we may in weakness begin to listen when virtually the whole world, including the church world, questions the promises of God. We find such an expression by the Psalmist in Psalm 77:6-9: "I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah." God answers these questionings by His people when He says He is not slack, but longsuffering.

The apostle, in the light of all of this, would comfort us as we walk down this pilgrim's pathway, and as we face a world, and even a church world, given to iniquity — especially as we will become the object of the hatred of that world. How can we with confidence bring forth the covenant seed and baptize them according to the promises of God? We may do so, says the apostle, and we may be comforted, for know this: God is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness.

*... time is not a factor
by which God is bound.*

Many have a wrong conception of God. They measure God by their own standards. The apostle, already in the context, will take away this foolish conception of God. He calls our attention to the truth that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and vice versa. This text is often terribly misconstrued, and is often even used, in the present controversy within the church world, to deny the creation of this world by God in six 24-hour periods. What is being taught in the passage from our context is that time is not a factor by which God is bound. Whether a day (24 hours) or whether a thousand years makes no difference to God. For He is not

limited as we are to time. He is the infinite and eternal God, not a man. When we judge God's work to be slack, we fall into the temptation to measure God by our standards.

But God is not slack concerning His promise. We understand that the meaning of the term "slack" is that one tarries, or delays, to carry out what is to be. We may never look at God and His work in this way. It would be exactly contrary to His very Being, as in perfect wisdom He brings all things to pass. For Him to tarry would mean that He takes an inordinate, even an incorrect, amount of time to do what He has promised, and this cannot be. Men may procrastinate. But never may we ascribe procrastination to God. That would be to subject God's work to our standards and limitations. Rather, God brings to pass all things in their perfect time. Even as Christ was brought forth at just the right moment, which God calls the fullness of time, so also shall Christ come again, and bring judgment against the wicked and bring salvation for His people, at just the right time.

God is longsuffering. The idea of this longsuffering has also been much misinterpreted in the present day. Our text is often presented as though God's longsuffering is exercised so that all men of this world may have a chance to repent. It is even presented as though God is willing that all men without distinction come to repentance and salvation, and as if He waits in order to give man this chance. But this is pure Arminianism, free-willism, and it cannot stand. It is true that God's longsuffering means that He is patient to work out His will with respect to the saving of the church, and that because of this He does not yet bring judgment upon the wicked. But this is not in any way due to the wicked or to a desire on God's part to save the reprobate. He is longsuffering to us-ward; and this means that it is His will that the full body of Christ be brought to salvation.

A study of the use of the term longsuffering elsewhere in Scripture

will show that this is indeed the meaning of the word in II Peter 3:9. We find the passage in Exodus 34 at the time of the second giving of the law enlightening. "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Ex. 34:6, 7). The longsuffering here is connected with the grace and goodness of God towards His people, whereby in mercy they are saved. At the same time, this "will by no means clear the guilty," for God will visit the iniquity upon the wicked unbeliever and their children. In II Peter 3:15 we read that we are to "account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation."

God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. What a truth this is! If God is not willing that any should perish, then we know that none shall perish. Otherwise God is not God. This shows that in no way can the longsuffering of God in II Peter 3:9 be made to apply to all men in general. Clearly this is written to the church of believers who find themselves in the midst of trial, and even suffering in the midst of this life. We are given the assurance that God's will is that none of us, none of the elect, shall perish. God remembers His covenant. He shall not turn aside. We have the assurance therefore that His church shall never perish. And this means that it is so not only for us but also for our children who are in Christ.

This does not imply that God does not use means. As we live in the midst of this world it is necessary that we be called out of darkness into the light of His fellowship. We have to be prepared for our place in His kingdom. We must pass through the ways of trial. This we must understand; and this we must also teach our children.

On the other hand, we see that this trial is sent of God exactly to bring His people to repentance and thus to faith and salvation. And so God is longsuffering, and brings to pass all things, not willing that one of His own should perish. All things now serve this end. Wonder of God's Grace!! □

Book Reviews

Communion with God, by John Owen. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991, 209 pages, paper. \$6.96. Abridged by R.J.K. Law. [Reviewed by Rev. T. Miersma.]

John Owen (1616-1683) was one of the pre-eminent English Puritan theologians of his day, preaching before Parliament on several occasions, including the day after the execution of King Charles I. He served as adviser and chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, was dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and continued to be allowed to preach even after the restoration of the monarchy and the Act of Conformity. Though he was not seated as a delegate at the Westminster Assembly, he was nonetheless one of the leading and staunchest Calvinists of his day, opposing both Arminianism and its Amyraldian variation, better known to us as the theology of the well-meant offer. Owen was a prolific and learned writer, thoroughly versed in the Scriptures. His main theological weakness was in the area of church government, for he was an ardent congregationalist.

His book *Communion with God*, was intended both as a devotional work and as a defense of the doctrine of the Trinity. Owen deals with the subject of communion with God from the viewpoint of the believer's communion and fellowship with the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He treats this communion, however, not in a mystical way, but in harmony with God's three-fold revelation of Himself as our Almighty God and Father in Jesus Christ; as the Son of God, our Mediator come

in the flesh; and as the Spirit given to Christ and poured out upon the church. The approach is similar to that of the Heidelberg Catechism. He treats not simply our experience of communion with God as in prayer, but the basis of that communion, the doctrine, as it lies in our redemption and in the sovereign love of God in Christ, and as it is experienced and appropriated by faith through the Word of God. He lays the objective foundation of communion with God as well as setting forth its inward subjective blessings. The subject of the book may be said to be the living reality of the covenant of grace as a relation of communion and fellowship with God.

In the course of his treatment of this subject virtually no doctrine is left uncovered, a characteristic of most Puritan writings and commentaries. The original work includes an extensive treatment of parts of the Song of Solomon and a virtual commentary on certain sections. Much of this is retained in this abridged edition. Owen's treatment of the Song of Solomon is often allegorical in character, an exegetical approach he shares with other Puritans. His conclusions in this connection are Scriptural though sometimes exegetically questionable.

Owen's original edition of this work contained many quotations in the original Greek which make it inaccessible to the average reader. This abridged edition by R.J.K. Law is well done and faithful to the original and succeeds in making the work more readable for the modern reader. As

with most Puritan works, many will still find it somewhat heavy going. The most glaring defect of the abridged edition is its replacing of Owen's Scriptural quotations which were from the King James Version, with quotations from the New King James Version. This change of versions was unnecessary and detracts from the work.

The book is spiritually rich and to be recommended. The pastor who is looking for a new approach to preaching on the catechism may well find it profitable. The Banner of Truth Trust is to be commended for making this work available and more accessible to today's reader. ♦

Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II; edited by Horst Balz & Gerhard Schneider; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing; 555 pp., \$14.95. [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

This work was originally prepared in Germany by German authors, but is now in the process of being translated into English under the auspices of Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. The volume I here review is Volume II; the first volume has already been published and the third is in process of translation.

The informative sheet which came with the book tells us that:

For every word in the New Testament, *EDNT* provides the following: transliteration; declension information for nouns and adjectives; definition; identification and discussion of all or most New Testament occur-

rences with a guide to usage in different contexts; and a bibliography of reference works that discuss the word and passages where the word plays a decisive role. Words are grouped by root and meaning with cross references.

For those who are familiar with Greek lexicons, this one is somewhere between Kittel and Thayer. It is much more complete than Thayer's lexicon; it contains much more material than Thayer, also of an exegetical kind; but it is not nearly as detailed as Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. This balance has decided advantages. It will probably not replace either Thayer or Kittel, but it is worthwhile to those who have neither.

As is to be expected, the work is influenced by modern critical studies of Scripture. To cite but one example, distinction is made between authentic and unauthentic writings of Paul, an obvious denial of the Pauline authorship of those books in the New Testament which claim Paul as their author.

Nor is the book doctrinally sound. To give again but one illustration, in its treatment of the Greek word *eudokeo*, the freedom of the human will is alleged.

Nevertheless, the set can be profitably used for students of Greek, and it will be of some exegetical help as well. We are told that Volume III will also contain an English index which, along with the transliteration of the Greek words, will enable those who have not mastered Greek to make use of this set as well. □

News From Our Churches

Mission Activities

Our readers can well imagine the amount of work that is required to

send Rev. R. Hanko, his wife, and family to Northern Ireland as missionaries of our churches. All kinds of details have to be worked out.

We can report that Rev. Hanko applied for his passports on December 8th. Upon receiving them he can apply for his work permit, which process will take from six to eight weeks.

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

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

He believed that by the first of this year he would have a better picture of the situation, especially with regard to dates. He presently expects to be ready in early March. However, should all details come together sooner, he would be willing to go then.

Classis West meets March 3 in

THE STANDARD BEARER

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

SECOND CLASS
Postage Paid at
Grandville, Michigan

South Holland, IL, and if possible Rev. Hanko would like to attend this meeting as he and his family travel to Michigan. Rev. Hanko is stated Clerk of Classis West and this would enable him to pass his duties over to the assistant clerk in an orderly manner.

We are also able to report at this time that, with the help of Rev. G. VanBaren and members of the CRF of Northern Ireland, a home has been purchased for the Hankos on the mission field.

Buying a home was the most advantageous way to go, primarily because rental property of the size needed for the Hanko family is not easily available. And there are Synodical monies in escrow for this purpose.

In a letter from Northern Ireland dated December 9, Rev. and Mrs. G. VanBaren write to their congregation in Hudsonville, MI that "The sun did shine most of today, ... rather unusual. Today the sun sets at 3:58 p.m. and rises tomorrow at 8:35 a.m. That makes for a day shorter than you have in Michigan."

Congregational Activities

The congregation of the Grandville, MI PRC held a welcome program for their pastor, Rev. A. Spriensma, and his family, on December 17th. A short program was planned, followed by refreshments and a get-acquainted hour.

The Council of the South Holland, IL PRC approved a request from their choir that they be given more opportunities to sing for their congregation by periodically presenting several numbers from the balcony prior to the evening worship services, in place of the organ prelude. The Council has agreed to allow the choir to try this for this choir season.

At a recently held congregational

meeting the members of the Peace PRC of Lynwood, IL approved the proposed general building plan for their new church building.

It is also interesting to note that on Sunday, November 29, the congregation of Peace was faced with two reading services due to their pastor's sudden illness. Instead of these, they were able to watch two sermons on video provided by the Hudsonville, MI PRC, with Rev. Flikkema preaching. Those videos were made this past summer when Rev. R. Flikkema preached for Hudsonville while their pastor was on vacation.

We can also include here a comment or two about the new proposed church in the Georgetown area, north and west of Hudsonville, MI. In its search, the steering committee has located two possible locations in which to hold worship services. The first is a Seventh Day Adventist Church, and the second an elementary school, both located in Bauer.

We can also inform our readers that the steering committee has been unable to propose a starting date to the Hudsonville Council due to the concern of obtaining suitable pulpit supply. With Hudsonville's pastor in Northern Ireland, there just are not enough ministers or professors available to fill all the pulpits in West Michigan every Sunday. And it seems like a bad idea to start a new church with reading services. Until more is learned about Rev. VanBaren's return, there is no definite date for the beginning of these services.

Young People's Activities

The Hull, IA PRC's Young People's Society is sponsoring a "Pennies of Participation Program" to raise funds for the upcoming convention.

During the Christmas season many of our churches' young people

get together and spend a night delivering cards to their churches' elderly, shut-ins, widows, and widowers. I know that it is not always easy to do this, but the people visited really appreciate the cards and singing of carols, as well as just being remembered by the young people.

School Activities

This year the Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI and Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI took collections for the proposed Protestant Reformed School in Randolph, WI. The money collected came from the students themselves and was intended to encourage a sense of giving to the students.

Food for Thought:

A man's free will cannot cure him even of the toothache, or of a sore finger; and yet he madly thinks it is in his power to cure his soul.

A. Toplady

ANNOUNCEMENT

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary Martha Society of the Redlands Congregation would like to express its sincerest sympathy to our members Clarice Gritters, Mary Gail Gaastra, Carol Gaastra, Brenda Gritters, Jeanne Karsemeyer, and Mary Gaastra and their families, in the death of their mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother,

MRS. SUSAN GAASTRA.

May they find comfort in the words of Revelation 14:13, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Pastor den Hartog, President
Tammy VanUffelen, Secretary