

BOOK REVIEWS

by G. VanDer Schaaf

Religions of the World by Earl Schipper; Baker Book House, 1982; 147 pp., \$3.45 (paper).

This little book presents the basic tenets and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam. Each religion is given one-chapter treatment: the chapters themselves are divided into sections on historical development, belief and doctrines, and lifestyles and practices. In addition, each chapter includes questions for further study, a list of further readings, and a list of films dealing with the religion under consideration.

This book can serve as a very helpful introduction to each religion. Each religion is reduced to its very simplest terms, and the information is related in a straightforward, easy-to-understand manner. Such an overview as this book provides can give a solid foundation for further study.

The book is prefaced by remarks concerning the importance of studying world religions. These remarks include an examination of what the author considers to be two points-of-view that many Christians bring to world religions.

The first viewpoint is that which considers "all non-Christian religions as totally bereft of truth and virtue, without any awareness of God or His demands, and thus completely immersed in the blackness of total depravity." The second viewpoint is that of "cultural relativism," whereby all religions are equally valid, being just different paths to the same ultimate good.

The second view Schipper rightly denounces as a denial of the truth that salvation is in Christ alone. The first view, however, Schipper sees as a denial of the common grace which is operative in every man's heart, so that while Romans 1:18-25 is certainly true, religions which deny the headship of Christ can still occasionally contain basically "Christian" doctrines and practices from which the Christian can derive benefit.

The Protestant Reformed reader will reject this view, of course. Still, I consider *Religions of the World* to be a worthwhile little book, as long as it sticks to the facts. With this reservation, I recommend it for school and personal libraries. ■



Markings on a Long Journey: Writings of John J. Timmerman, edited by Rodney J. Mulder and John H. Timmerman; Baker Book House, 1982; 290 pp., \$9.95 (p).

This volume is a collection of essays, meditations, and reminiscences authored by Dr. John J. Timmerman. Dr. Timmerman taught in the English Department of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan for thirty years. During that time, many future Protestant Reformed teachers and perhaps many present *Perspectives* readers were privileged to be members of his classes. This reviewer was one of those so privileged.

Dr. Timmerman possessed the three most important qualities a Christian teacher can have. First of all, he knew his stuff. With all due respect to the many fine men and women who have had to endure me in their classrooms, I have never met a man with such complete and wide command of his subject matter. Secondly, he knew his faith, and this deep, personal knowledge and love of the Reformed heritage was everywhere and always in evidence. Thirdly, he knew his calling. Every Christian teacher knows how difficult it is to attain and promote truly Christian education. It is so easy to let Christian implication and application become merely tag-ons or sugar-coating on what remains secular

instruction. Such was not the case in Dr. Timmerman's classes. He achieved more than the much touted "integration of faith and learning." What he had was more a permeation of faith and belief with learning. This unity provided the foundation, the content, and the animating energy of his instruction. His standards of literary excellence, his criteria of critical judgment were as unbending and outspoken as the Scriptures that provided their ultimate framework. And while it was not always possible for the Protestant Reformed student to agree with Dr. Timmerman, one always knew exactly where the man stood, and why.

These same qualities of faith, purpose, and broad learning distinguish the pieces found in *Markings on a Long Journey*. The book has something for everyone: essays on baseball, black neighbors, and John Bunyan, meditations on Sunday sermons and sabbath sacrilege, even satires on American "Literature" and the licentious American Way of life. Timmerman's style is impeccable, his wit is lively and amusing and his insights, observations, and exhortations are instructive and edifying.

I enjoyed most a series of essays titled "'Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus': Sundays and Sermons," in which Timmerman again and again insists on the supremacy of

