

- “Catechism is not something, therefore, that a student “squeezes” into his busy schedule, if he has time. Rather, the catechism lesson gets priority over the school work.”

*Prof. Dykstra - Busy Students and the Bible: Is There Time?*

- “Ants work hard for the colony, and so we too are called to work hard to help bring our friends to spiritual rest. Encourage or admonish each other to listen attentively, using our energy and attention to grow from the preaching.”

*Josiah Tan - Ants*

- “... are you more interested in the things of the world? Do you make time for devotions already now? Or are you a Sunday-only Christian? You can prepare for fatherhood by...”

*Daniel Holstege - Preparing for Fatherhood (Part 1)*



**salt shakers**  
joel 3:16 matthew 5:16

Issue 35 | Nov 2015



SO TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS,  
THAT WE MAY APPLY OUR HEARTS UNTO WISDOM.

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## DEAR READERS, WELCOME TO THE 35TH ISSUE OF SALT SHAKERS!

It is now November, and before long another year will be behind us. Looking back, we remember the faithfulness of our Lord in keeping us through our journey on this earth. We recall past sermons and Lord's suppers, and the comforting whisper of our Saviour teaching us, succouring and encouraging us on our weary pilgrimage. Looking back on world events, we see the Lord's hand in moving and directing all things in this late hour of history – Supreme Court decisions, parliamentary elections, world conflicts, and the spread of the Gospel. In our personal and congregational lives we remember joys and celebrations, marriages and births in God's covenant, and peace in God's house. We remember as well struggles with sin, fears and doubts, and for some, severe trials and chastisement.

Dear reader, what paths have you walked this year? Busy though it was, perhaps many of us may be able to summarize its happenings in 5 minutes. That which was long in the doing, proves brief in the telling. That too is the judgment of Moses in Psalm 90, which is good for us to consider together at the turn of 2015. Inspired by the Spirit, Moses declares that a thousand years are but as a watch in the night in the eyes of God.

In our youth perhaps, the evil days come not. But behold, in the evening the grass is cut down, and

withereth. And we find: we spend our years as a tale that is told. A whole year is again past, and we can hardly comprehend it. As we look back on the year's many and varied experiences, we say with Moses: "Yet is their strength labour and sorrow". Of all our earthly accomplishments, Moses says – the wind of time blows over them and they are gone, and we fly away! What then, we ask, is the hope of it all?

And yet, there is hope! Christ does not leave us without light on our journey. There is hope, because these threescore years and ten are not all there is to life. That is the bleak "hope" of the unbeliever and the ever more popular #YOLO philosophy. The pilgrim however, has his eyes set on the heavenly kingdom and the face of his Saviour. The pilgrim looks to a final day – a day that fills the wicked and unbelieving with horror, but that fills the pilgrim with indescribable joy.

There is hope too, on this side of heaven. We are afflicted by Satan, the world and our flesh all our days, yet we hear the words of Christ before He was crucified: "But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." His victory was certain before the foundations of the world. In Christ, we have this victory over all sin and affliction already. Though our enemies trouble us for a time, we live in the knowledge of their defeat and our present triumph.

All the more in the risen Lord, we are assured that on this side of the river we can pray with confidence "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

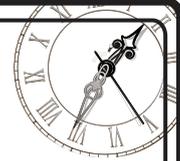
And we have hope, that though our days on this earth appear short and weary; our labours are not in vain! For as we plead with the inspired psalmist, let thy work appear! Man's work fades away, but in the Lord they endure. Looking to Christ alone as the author and finisher of our faith, we can pray with confidence, "yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

Dear readers, we look back on an eventful year that is past, and look onward to a new one in our hope in Christ. As with the psalmist, let us learn to number our days and apply our hearts unto wisdom. Let us commit the coming year into the hands of Jehovah, who alone knows all our days; who alone is our dwelling place in all generations.

Remember to pass the salt!  
Lee Yang

\*The committee would like to make the following correction and apology for a mistake in the print version of Salt Shakers Issue 34: the writer of "The Public Schools (Exams)" is Joseph Teo, not Joshua Teo. We sincerely regret this error.\*

# Give Me Thine Heart



>> Paul Liu



*Paul Liu* is a confessing adult in CERC and is married to Anthea. He is the Editor of Salt Shakers.

*My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. Proverbs 23:26*

There are literally so many things that I would more easily give. Father, why not ask of me my weekly offering in the collection bag? I would gladly fork out more. Why not ask me for greater sacrifice of my time and efforts for your Kingdom's work? I would do my best to spend more for you. Why not ask for my hand? And I would suffer inconvenience for the rest of my life—for your sake. Or maybe my eyes? I would deny myself Creation's beauty for the rest of my life—it is almost impossible, but still easier. But why, my heart? The very source of life for my entire being; the very first organ in my body, and the muscle that moves faithfully at every moment to supply streams of life to every part of my being. Why?

And it would be easier if that was what You were really asking for. I could remove my beating heart, and submit to the end of my days because my Creator has required it of me.

It would be a painful moment, to say farewell to all dear to me in this life—not forgetting all my earthly possessions—but in an instant of courage and strength, I could possibly give it. Oh, how I wish that was what my Lord requires of me!

But no, my Lord has to ask of me my heart. I am undone! Because within me lies not a faithful and living heart, but a deceitful and desperately wicked one (Jeremiah 17:9). How can I give something that I do not even know? On my chest, a little to the left, rests my physical heart. I shall know where to find it if my God requires it of me. But if I do not even know my heart, I cannot give it. This lovely request leaves me in anguish and tears, because I simply am not capable of giving what is asked of me.

Many times, I have packaged my heart because it was so beautiful to me, full of love and kind service to others—and I knew Father would be so happy to finally receive my wonderful heart. But when Father opened my heart, it was black, rotting, and shockingly disgusting (Mark 7:21-23). That was not what I saw, prepared, and brought! Believe me, Lord, forgive me, for that was not what I meant to bring.

On other occasions, I put my heart safely in my pocket to bring it to the Lord, once again imagining the joy on His face to receive my heart. But when standing before Him, I frantically search everywhere for my heart—it is nowhere to be found (Proverbs 28:26). I cry and cannot be consoled,

for it is impossible, Lord, for me to give you what I cannot safely keep.

But even if I succeed in capturing a beautiful heart and passing it to Father, it still falls far short of what He really wants from me. For the giving of my heart is not a single act of wrapping it up, holding it tight, and passing it on to Him, but it is a turning and setting of my entire heart to faithfully love, worship, adore, and obey Father at every single moment. In better words, it is to “love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

In my foolishness and rashness, this request was something that seemed achievable and part of my “To-do” list as a Christian. But in my clarity, I realise that this is something difficult, troubling, and discomfoting. I know I have to give my heart, I know what it means, and I know that I can never give it to Father—no matter how hard I try.

And that is when I realise that this question has a familiar and melodious tune. It is not shouted as a strict command to do or die. No, in fact, I have heard this voice before—many times—and this just another gentle reminder; like a father who patiently reminds his son to be good. Oh yes, I am addressed clearly before anything else is said—“my son”. No one knows me better than Father (Psalm 139), and yes, He knows that I keep failing over and over again to give Him my heart, but yet He says again gently,

“My son, give me thine heart...” This is my infinitely patient Father (Psalm 145:8, 103:10-12) reminding me again—and again—that my heart belongs to Him.

But why am I a son of such a great Father? What have I done to deserve the privilege of hearing this wonderful reminder over and over again? Why am I so blessed to have the kind attention of the Highest? If I am Father’s son, then I know that I have an older brother, a beautiful one who was begotten (John 3:16), and His name is Jesus. He gave the best possible example by giving His heart to Father (Luke 22:42), and not just His heart, but also His soul, His strength, and His very life. Jesus shed His blood to cleanse me from my sins, and to make me whiter than snow. He gave His life to give me righteousness so that I might be called *son* as one who is adopted (2 Corinthians 6:18).

What a comfort it is to be called “son”! Father first reminds me of who I am, before reminding me of what I must do. His very words wipe away all tears from my eyes because it shows He is mindful that I do not always give Him my heart—and yet I am *son*. He knows I am prone to turn my heart to idolatry, lusts, and wickedness—and yet I am *son*. He knows I take the heart that is whiter than snow, and drag it through the mire, over and over again—and yet I am *son*. He knows I cannot do it anymore, and in guilt would rather not be called *son* anymore—but then He puts me before everyone to declare me as *son*. My tears of sorrow give way to tears of gratitude. How can Father be so sure that I am *son*? Because in grace and mercy, He chose me to be *son* (Ephesians 1:4); and because the work of the Cross is more powerful than all my sin, all the temptation in the world, and even the devil himself.

Who I am will never change, because it is not dependant on me, but anchored in God’s love and His work through Jesus Christ.

If God’s love for His adopted sons is so great, how much more His love for His only begotten Son! The Covenant fellowship and magnitude of love within the triune God is something we cannot hope to grasp or imagine. But even in earthly terms, what could be dearer to a father than his child? What lies in the chest of man? What lies in the bosom of Father? Jesus, the only begotten Son, is there (John 1:18). If Father gave Jesus—whom He loved so dearly—to save me, am I not a recipient of Father’s very own heart?

I am *son*, and Father has first given me His heart. I begin to see what Father means. He is not asking me for things earthly, or spiritual, in order for Him to reward me for my righteousness. He is not asking for me to love him in order to merit His love for me—He knows I cannot. He is saying, “You are already my son because I have given you my heart, give me your heart...” I have no other response than to say, “Forgive me Lord, here is my heart.” Wash it daily, Father, for it is daily stained; keep it daily, for it is prone to wander. I love You Father, because You first loved me (1 John 4:19).

His is a love that gives life. A love that quickens my heart and turns it more and more towards Father. It makes giving my heart to Father a possibility—no, rather, a matter of time. His love overwhelms and overpowers my failing and rotten heart, causing it to be comforted, won over, and finally given completely to Father.

And so I carefully tend to the heart that I know rightly belongs to God. It is still far, far, from perfect, but it

will not be willingly imperfect. In every moment, at every victory, and at every fall, I must diligently keep my heart (Proverbs 4:23). How is my heart kept? It is described as observing Father’s ways, keeping His testimonies (Psalm 119:2), and applying the balm of God’s Word to strengthen or heal my heart.

Never shall I stray from the Word of God! Even in my darkest hour, at my weakest moment, may God’s Word be my companion. For either the Word shall convict me to flee from evil, or it shall convict me to flee to the Cross—I need the grace of Father’s Word all the time. If I take heed to the Word of God, I shall be cleansed; and if I hide His Word in my heart, it becomes more and more filled up, till it be wholly given to Father. Psalm 119:9-11 says it far better, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy Word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

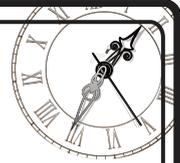
The last part of the verse reveals what I know only too well: My eyes rest where my heart lies. My physical eyes, as well as the eyes of my heart, are prone to wander and sin just as my heart is filthy and dead without the saving work of Jesus. And in no uncertain terms, Father requires my eyes just as He wants all of my heart.

To be continued...

*1 John 2:1 “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:”*

## Charismaticism (III): The Baptism With the Holy Spirit

>> Pastor Angus Stewart



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### Introduction

Having summarised the history of the three waves of modern charismatic Christianity or renewalism from the early nineteenth century onwards (Pentecostalism, Charismaticism and Neo-Charismaticism), as well as their precursors in earlier church history (including the Holiness Movement, John Wesley, Edward Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church, the French prophets, elements in Anabaptism and Roman Catholicism, and Montanism), in our two previous articles, we now turn to the major distinctive doctrines and/or practices of modern renewalism. Logically, the Pentecostal and Charismatic teaching on the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a second blessing subsequent to conversion is the place to begin.

This idea of a second blessing has a very bad history. Contrary to biblical and Reformed teaching, some Puritans held that assurance was a sort of second blessing. The last article pointed out that John Wesley and the

Holiness Movement, which flowed from him, taught that the second blessing was entire sanctification. For various revivalist preachers, such as R. A. Torrey and D. L. Moody, the second blessing was “power for service.” The Pentecostals and Charismatics took the idea of a second blessing and poured new content into it, identifying it as a post-conversion baptism with the Holy Spirit, evidenced by tongue speaking.

We should distinguish three main aspects of the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Pentecostalism and Charismaticism. The first is *subsequence*, that is, this baptism occurs after (i.e., subsequent to) conversion. A person is saved and then, at some time in the near or distant future, he or she may receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Second, there is the *initial evidence* of the baptism with the Holy Spirit to prove that one has been so baptised, namely, tongue speaking. Third, there are the *conditions*, which are things one must do or desire or be in order to be baptised with the Holy Spirit so that one speaks in tongues. These include, although they are listed and expressed in various ways, seeking, yielding, praying, purifying your heart, etc.

### 1 Corinthians 12:13 and the Three Aspects

1 Corinthians 12:13 presents the Christian position against all three aspects of the Pentecostal and Charismatic teaching on baptism with

the Holy Spirit: “For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

First, this verse explodes the myth of subsequence because it teaches that the believer is “baptised” by the Holy Spirit *when* he is made part of Christ’s body and, therefore, of Christ Himself. Thus he is baptised with the Holy Spirit *at* his regeneration and union with Jesus Christ, and not *after* it. Since the child of God is baptised by the Spirit at his regeneration and not *after* it, there is not a single true believer—not one!—who was baptised with the Holy Spirit *after* his regeneration. The text lays great emphasis upon this: “For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

Second, 1 Corinthians 12:13 also addresses the *evidence* of this baptism. The evidence of being baptised with the Spirit is not speaking in tongues. Even the Pentecostals and Charismatics would have to grant this, if they follow the exegesis of this verse, because even they do not believe that *every* child of God speaks in tongues. The evidence or proof or result of being baptised of the Holy Spirit is, according to 1 Corinthians 12:13, drinking the Holy Spirit and so drawing from Him all our refreshment, life and salvation, because He brings to us Christ’s

salvation. Those who are baptised by the Holy Spirit live by faith in Jesus Christ crucified as Saviour and Lord. This, and not speaking gibberish, is the evidence of a person who has been baptised into Christ and His body.

Having looked at the Pentecostal and Charismatic view of baptism with the Holy Spirit in terms of subsequence and evidence, we turn, third, to its view of *conditions*. There are no conditions for our being joined to Jesus Christ as members of His body. If there were such conditions, all of fallen humanity would perish, for how could dead sinners ever perform such mighty works as raising themselves from the dead and uniting themselves to the risen Christ? It is the Spirit of the Lord alone who regenerates us, lifts us from spiritual death and engrafts us into our Saviour. It is “by one Spirit” that we are “all baptised into [the] one body” of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13)—not man’s supposed free will, not his cooperation with God and not his fulfilling conditions. Unconditional election leads to unconditional regeneration, which is equivalent to unconditional baptism by the Holy Spirit.

This internal spiritual baptism is signified and sealed in external water baptism. The message of water baptism is that the all-powerful, sovereign God not only washes away all the sins of His people but that He also regenerates all His elect, giving them new life in Jesus Christ by baptizing us into Him and His body. The Pentecostal and Charismatic view of the baptism with the Holy Spirit strips us of the real meaning of the sacrament of baptism.

## 2 Peter 1 and the Christian Life

In connection with 1 Corinthians 12:13, we should also consider Peter’s

words on the growth of our Christian life in 2 Peter 1:2-7:

(2) Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, (3) According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: (4) Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (5) And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; (6) And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; (7) And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

This beautiful passage states that “grace and peace” come to us through knowing God in Jesus Christ (v. 2). It adds that God’s divine power has given us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (v. 3). Since in our regeneration or baptism with the Spirit of Christ, we have “all things that pertain unto life and godliness,” we do not need any second baptism. But what we do need—and to this the text calls us—is to grow in knowledge and add to our faith both virtue and knowledge (v. 5), as well as temperance, patience and godliness (v. 6), and brotherly kindness and charity (v. 7). In keeping with this calling, we are given “exceeding great and precious promises” that, through faith, we may more and more partake of the divine nature, in terms of God’s communicable attributes (v. 4).

In regeneration, the believer is united with Jesus Christ, so he must walk in holiness each day, and seek more

and more to be filled with the Spirit by God’s grace. Whereas a drunken man is filled with alcoholic spirits and so comes under their intoxicating influence and behaves accordingly, the believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit comes under the Spirit’s influence and so thinks, speaks and walks in a godly manner, according to the pattern set forth in inspired Scripture.

On the other hand, the baptism with the Holy Spirit of Pentecostalism and Charismaticism flows from and expresses a false doctrine of salvation: salvation by the free will of the sinner. It belittles regeneration and union with Jesus Christ as merely the first steps. The emphasis is placed on another greater baptism which must be sought and which is only experienced by some elite Christians. It, therefore, creates a two-tiered system of Christians: the “haves” and the “have nots.”

In so doing, the renewalist baptism with the Holy Spirit militates against the unity of the church. It attacks the church’s oneness not only by its false doctrine (for all heresy attacks the unity of the church) but also because it teaches two baptisms: the first baptism for salvation and the second baptism being the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Yet Ephesians 4:5, which specifically deals with the unity of the church, teaches there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Therefore, two baptisms flow from and lead to two faiths and two lords.

On top of all this, and at a very practical and personal level, those who have sought the baptism of the Holy Spirit—I was once foolishly among their number—have lost precious time and energy which, to put it mildly, could have been spent on much better things. Some have

even lost their sanity, because their great zeal for this “blessing” was coupled with an honesty which kept them from faking it by letting their tongue roll around in their head (as they were told to do) and pretending that now God had blessed them with a miraculous gift. It is for some of these reasons and others that the third of the three modern renewal waves, Neo-Pentecostalism, has dropped, or, at least, does not insist upon, the Pentecostal and Charismatic doctrine of baptism with the Holy Spirit.

### **Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 and the *Historia Salutis***

The objection from Pentecostal and Charismatic circles is, “What then about the outpourings of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19? Do not these chapters prove the renewalist

doctrine of subsequence, that since these people were baptised with the Holy Spirit after their conversion so too may people today?”

The answer is that these passages are not to be understood as teaching the *ordo salutis*, that is, the order of salvation for the individual believer. These four chapters do not establish, and were not intended to establish, the order of salvation: first, one is converted and, afterward, one may receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Instead of the *ordo salutis*, Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 deal with (another Latin term) the *historia salutis*, that is, the history of salvation. The *historia salutis* is not the history of salvation for the *individual* but the history of salvation for the *church*.

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2,

the Old Testament Jewish church was baptised by the Spirit of the risen and glorified Christ so that it is now grown up like a child who has matured and entered into the father’s inheritance. This is the argument of Galatians 4:1-7. Acts 8, 10 and 19 are to be understood as extensions of Pentecost and not *repetitions*. These three chapters indicate that [1] the Samaritans were also saved with full New Testament Messianic salvation (Acts 8), as were [2] the Gentiles in Cornelius’ house (Acts 10) and [3] the followers of John the Baptist in Ephesus who had been unaware that Christ had come (Acts 19). All were baptised into the body of Jesus Christ, the exalted Lord, like us too, “whether we be Jews or Gentiles” (1 Corinthians 12:13)!

## Knowledge of Total Depravity and Self-Esteem

>> Marcus Wee



Marcus Wee is a confessing young adult in CERC.

### **Knowledge of Total Depravity and Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem is a topic that the world is fascinated with. A low self-esteem has been linked to many problems, and people are obsessed with improving their self-esteem. There is no shortage of guides on doing so, in the form of self-help books, instruction manuals, psychologists, and psychiatrists. In this article we analyse the teachings of worldly self-esteem, and contrast it to what the Bible teaches about Christian self-esteem.

### **Worldly Self-Esteem**

A definition of self-esteem, basic enough to be universally accepted, is: a person’s evaluation of one’s own self-worth, or the extent to which one views himself as good, competent, and decent.

This presupposes that there exists some sort of good, competence, or decency that humans have which would allow them to evaluate their own self-worth. Carl Rogers, one of the founders of humanistic psychology, taught that humans are inherently good.

According to him, it is by focusing our minds on our goodness that humans are able to reach our fullest potential. Even if worldly psychology does not assert the existence of an objective good, it teaches that self-worth can be derived subjectively –I only need to *think* that I am good, and thereby possess a high self-esteem.

What is the basis of people’s evaluation of their own self-worth? There are many psychological theories that point to both others and ourselves. Others: we compare ourselves to others, and when we think we are better than them at something, we feel good and competent. The opinions of others also matter to us. When they think we are good, decent people and we know that, we view ourselves more positively. Ourselves: we introspect to derive a sense of self-worth. We know our own strengths and weaknesses; focusing on our strengths causes us to feel good. We also have an ideal view of how we should be, based on our own standards and values. When we are able to match up to this ideal view, we too feel good.

### Test of Scripture

As with all teachings, we must test worldly self-esteem against the truth of Scripture. Scripture is inspired by God, infallible and authoritative in all that it teaches, and applicable to every aspect of our lives. Scripture is the truth, and the sole authority on the matter of self-esteem. We must determine whether the teachings of worldly self-esteem are true or false based on whether its teachings are supported by Scripture, or contrary to it. We look at the basic presupposition of worldly self-esteem: that there is some measure of good, decency, or competence in man, which allows him to derive self-esteem from. We thus

“ worldly psychology ... teaches that –I only need to think that I am good, and thereby possess a high self-esteem. ”

ask the question, “Does man possess any good in himself?”, and look to Scripture for the answer.

### Does man possess any good in himself?

*Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

*Jeremiah 17: 9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

Scripture states that man is born in sin, and that his heart is desperately wicked. This shows that man is inherently evil, and utterly sinful within. By implication, everything he does is tainted with sin. Perhaps, though, despite all of man’s sinfulness, could there still be some good in him from which he can derive some self-esteem?

*Gen 6: 5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

*Rom 3: 10 As it is written, There is none*

*righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth , there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

Man’s depravity is total. Every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart is evil; this was so in Noah’s time, and nothing has changed since then. There is none righteous. What good does man have, what shred of decency does he possess, to make himself feel worthy? There is none that understandeth. What form of competence does man have, or any that matters, if he does not understand God’s way? As totally depraved humans, we have none whatsoever, nothing of ourselves that we can derive any self-worth from. And so Scripture’s answer to the question, “Does man possess any good in himself?” is an emphatic NO.

### Whom should be the basis for comparison?

Worldly self-esteem is false at its very core – its teachings are premised upon the goodness of man, which is shown by Scripture to be false. Naturally, its other parts are false as well. It teaches that how man derives self-worth is through introspection, and comparison with others. However, if I am totally depraved, and possess not one ounce of goodness, how can I derive any form of self-worth upon introspection? And if everyone else is equally sinful, how can I better esteem myself better upon comparison?

Rather, the right basis for comparison is neither ourselves nor others, but must be God Himself. It is only when we learn about the holiness of God that we realise that for all our outward decency, we have a total lack of goodness within. It is only when we see

the perfection that God's law demands that we realise our incompetence in keeping any of it. We will realise that any sort of 'goodness' that we possess of ourselves relative to others really is insignificant in God's sight, for all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa 64:6).

### How should we respond?

Will we then pretend that we are good, better than our neighbour in some way, and therein derive our self-esteem? Will we pretend that we are not totally depraved, and that hell does not deservedly await us for our sins? To do so would be like the person who, in the face of an oncoming tsunami, turns her back to it and pretends that all is well. However, there will come a time when the pretender will have to come to grips with the full force of reality, whether it be the crushing weight of water, or far worse - the hot, fierce wrath of God every moment and for all eternity. The world chooses to pretend. The world, fully knowing the reality of man's total depravity as stated by Scripture, twists it and chooses to pretend that man is good, a testament itself to that very depravity (Rom 1:18-25). The world derives its self-esteem through pretense.

As Christians, by God's grace, we know better. We must recognise our total depravity, as clearly taught by Scripture, and evidenced in our own lives. We must realise what is the just punishment for our sins, the eternal death of our souls in hell (Rom 6:23). What then? Is that all there all to it? Are we instead like the person who turns around to witness the swelling, roaring wall of water about to crash down on him, and covers his head in resignation of death? Do we live in abject misery all our lives, with the knowledge that God's eternal wrath

awaits us at the end of our sorrowful earthly existence?

### **Christian Self-Esteem**

Thanks be to God that this is not so! Knowledge of our total depravity is necessary for Christian self-esteem, but it is not sufficient. It is an important first piece, but by no means the complete picture. That we are totally depraved is indeed the reality, but it is not the only reality that we must know.

Equally real and important is the fact of deliverance from our sins. It is necessary to know about our salvation, about how when we were ungodly sinners, enemies of God, He loved us and sent Christ to die for our sins, so that we are justified and saved from eternal death (Rom 5:6-10), and now have a crown of life awaiting us in heaven (II Tim 4:8). All these we have in Christ! He was made "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor 5:21). We have the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us, such that no one is able to condemn us (Rom 8:34).

Christian self-esteem, then, consists first in looking at ourselves and finding total worthlessness, sinfulness, and unrighteousness. But Christian self-esteem does not end with that. It looks to Christ, God's only begotten and beloved Son, in whom we become the adopted children of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. It looks to Christ, the perfect, worthy Lamb of God, in whom we see perfect righteousness, righteousness that we dare call our own only because it has been unconditionally imputed upon us undeserving sinners. And it rests assured that in Christ alone, we are worthy – and God Himself declares us so!

### **Conclusion**

To make itself feel good, worldly self-esteem pretends that sin does not exist. However, for all its vain attempts to imagine an inflated sense of self-worth, it falls short of the self-worth afforded by Christian self-esteem, one that recognises the reality of sin, and that one's worth is found in Christ alone.

Irony of ironies! The world, hell-bent in its pursuit of self-esteem, looks for it everywhere except in the right place, the only place where any can be found, and where it is found in the highest measure. So would we be, but for the grace of God which has opened our eyes to the reality of sin, and freely given us salvation in Christ, and the greatest possible self-esteem. There is no room for pride; let us not boast in anything of ourselves – for we have none to boast of – but let us say, "I will boast in Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection."

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Christian self-esteem, then, consists first in looking at ourselves and finding total worthlessness, sinfulness, and unrighteousness...

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## BUSY STUDENTS AND THE BIBLE: IS THERE TIME?



>> Prof. Dykstra



*Prof. Russell Dykstra* was ordained and installed as a minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America in 1986. Ten years later, he was appointed as Professor of Church History and New Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. He has been to Singapore and visited CERC four times.

The word “school” brings a mixed reaction not only among people, but even within each person’s soul. For those who enjoy learning, the term brings mostly cheery thoughts, for the school is an institution that conveys new and ever higher knowledge. For others, school is not so endearing.

School involves pressure of one kind or another, from teachers, fellow students, parents, or even ourselves. Academic study, if done in earnest, is hard work. School produces the pressure of assignments clamouring to be completed, and the stress of examinations at different levels.

In addition, many hard decisions must be made with regards to schools. A student stands before such decisions as: What school to attend? What classes to take? Where to put the greatest amount of study time? Of all the mass of material given in school, what is really important to learn?

All these questions point to, and are largely determined by the more central question: What is my calling in life? What will God have me to do?

The purpose of this article is to ask you (as a student) to step back from your studies, and to take a look at your goals, your direction, and accordingly, to evaluate the time spent on various activities as a student. As Christians, we all have in us a desire to walk in the way of wisdom. The way of wisdom leads to life and blessing. The opposite way is foolish, and that leads to sorrow and destruction.

So consider these questions: How do our current school studies relate to seeking of *wisdom*? Do these studies *give* us wisdom? Do they help us to *walk* in wisdom? Even if we should conclude that our studies in school/university can help us to walk in wisdom, it becomes immediately plain that more and different study will be needed for one to walk in true wisdom. Thus the theme of the article is that students in Singapore must set as their goal to study the Bible and the confessions. [1] Of all the things they must learn, they need to know theology (i.e., the truth of God) and continue to grow in their knowledge and understanding of God.

### **Wisdom**

What is wisdom and why do we need it? The true wisdom is in God, for it is one of His attributes. Scripture calls Jehovah, “the only wise God” (1 Timothy 1:17; Jude 25). Wisdom

is the ability to use all things in such a way that they serve one particular (good) goal. God has perfect wisdom. With that wisdom God is able to determine the *goal* that is the highest good. That highest good is the glory of His own name. Also in His wisdom God determines the *way* that is best to accomplish the good goal. For God has complete knowledge. And, God knows all the factors because He is the Creator and the Sustainer of all things. In addition, God is sovereign, and thus able to control all the various factors. Finally, being the holy one, God has no sin to mar His judgment in all His plans and the accomplishment of His plans.

We are created by that all-wise God to fit into His perfect plan. Each of us is created with the exact personality, gifts, and circumstances to enable us to fulfil God’s wise purpose. Although God has created each believer to glorify Him, the exact *manner* in which this will be done is unique to each believer. Thus the purpose and function is different for each person.

That raises the question that each Christian faces, namely, what is God’s purpose for me? How am I to take all my gifts, opportunities, and possessions, and live in such a way that I consciously glorify God in the highest way that I can? To know that, and to live that way, requires that we have wisdom.

The Bible gives two essential elements of wisdom, namely, knowledge and understanding. [2] Knowledge

involves gathering information and facts. Understanding gives one the ability to use the facts to explain how or why something works. Understanding makes plain the relationships between various material things, or events, or people. Wisdom is built upon them both. Wisdom uses knowledge and understanding to make decisions that are good and right, and that will accomplish a particular goal.

In the schools of the world, one should definitely acquire knowledge. On that knowledge the teachers can build to give understanding and problem solving abilities. However, all that these schools can provide is *earthly* understanding, not the *true* understanding. For God is the true reality, and true understanding involves grasping how all things are related to God. The world's schools do not allow the knowledge of the one true God to be in the classroom, much less to explain relationships. A believing student may well say (without pride, for he knows it is God's gift), "I have more understanding than all my teachers" (Psalm 119:99).

With that true knowledge of God, and proper understanding (both gifts from God), the believer pursues true wisdom. He desires to use all that God has given—his gifts, time, and possessions—for the highest goal of serving God. We are told to pray for wisdom, and God promises never to turn a sincere request away (James 1:5-8). The Bible also reminds us that Christ is the wisdom of God (Proverbs 8 emphasizes this), and that God has made Christ to be wisdom unto us (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Therefore with a view to gaining wisdom, believers seek the true knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. And the source of that knowledge is the

Bible, with the Reformed Confessions as guide. From the Bible we learn of God the Creator of all things in Christ. We learn that Christ upholds the entire creation. The tree studied in science lives and has its particular characteristics because God created it and upholds it minute by minute. The chemicals react in the laboratory as determined by Christ Who upholds the entire creation, and controls that chemical reaction.

The Scriptures teach that God is "the most High...whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation...and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Daniel 4:34-35). The believing student thus understands that Singapore is the financial power that it is because God determined it for His purposes. God gave leaders with earthly wisdom. God gave the citizens intelligence and drive to work together. God gave peace and stability to the land so that it could develop. God led foreign companies to pour millions of dollars into Singaporean investments. God rules.

This understanding removes any pride. It also changes the focus of all our labours. The motive for working hard is not "Let's make Singapore #1." Or, "We can make our company the best in the world." Or, "I want to fill my bank accounts with money." Rather, the desire is, "How can I serve God, as I serve my country; as I faithfully promote the good of my company; as I labour for money that I may be able to support the cause of Christ's kingdom and care for the poor?"

You see then how much we need God's wisdom as students. Yes, we need diligence, hard work, and good

judgment to make good decisions. Nothing changes there. But the goal is different. A Christian works diligently in school because he seeks the knowledge of God's world and of His providential care. He desires to be equipped to serve God eventually in the calling and station to which God is calling him.

For the young man or woman who desires to follow the path of wisdom, it will take constant, conscious, determined, daily *turning*. His or her natural motivation, and that of the students in class, cannot be followed, for it is wrong. And, it is easiest to adopt the goals of the society around us – high grades, a good school, and a well-paying job. Who does not secretly dream of being honoured for one's accomplishments, making millions of dollars? Would it not be thrilling to contribute to making one's country be the best, and one's company tops in the world? In addition, the pressures of the school's demands are high. Singaporeans in their later thirties and older openly admit that they are glad they did not experience the kind of pressure in school that the students have today.

Students (as all God's people) must turn from all that, and must determine that God is first in their lives, and only God. Nothing competes with God. Nothing is next to God. We must determine to live before Him, to live for Him, and to live unto Him.

All this makes plain that we must *know* this God. A believing student seeks *first* the knowledge of God. Catechism is *not* something, therefore, that a student "squeezes" into his busy schedule, if he has time. Rather, the catechism lesson gets priority over the school work. The preparation for catechism is not superficial; it is

thorough, because she wants to know God better. CK or CKS Bible studies will be something he does not want to miss. She comes prepared to discuss the passage in order that she may grow in the knowledge of God in Christ. This sets the pattern for the rest of their lives: coming to various Bible studies prepared, and delving into the Reformed Confessions seeking to know God better.

Many are the demands that are placed on students in Singapore. Society at large wants an educated populous to promote the wellbeing of the country. Believing students likewise want to be good citizens of Singapore. But they realize they are also citizens of a country that is heavenly and

spiritual. They are ruled by the King of that kingdom. Therefore they thirst for the true knowledge of God and His Son. They are mindful of God's admonition, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:7). Accordingly, they *make time* to study the truth of God, expressly studying the Bible and the *confessions*.

*Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is*

*in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.*

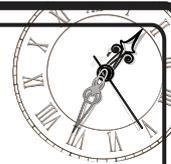
(Proverbs 3:13-18)

[1] I write "students in Singapore" not because they alone have this need. On the contrary, students in every land need to study the Bible. The article is written especially for the students in Singapore, according to the request of Salt Shakers.

[2] Proverbs 2:6 puts all three together: "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

# ANTS

>> Josiah Tan



Josiah Tan is a confessing young adult in CERC and a founding member of Salt Shakers since its conception five years ago.

Proverbs 30:24-25 "There be four *things which are* little upon the earth, but *they are* exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer;"

Ants have a special place in my

childhood. I recall spending so much time playing with them once, that when I closed my eyes at night, I could still see them crawling around.

About 6,000 years ago, the first ants crawled on the earth. To be exact, they appeared on the sixth day of the creation week. They were created by God through His Word. In God's infinite wisdom, He created these magnificent creatures—so small, yet so wise. In less than a centimetre, you would find three parts of an ant. First, the head, where many impossibly complicated sensory organs are squeezed in. These sensory organs detect chemicals, air currents, vibrations and even rain when it is approaching! All these organs are

squeezed into a space smaller than a pin head. The other two parts of the ant are the mesosoma and the metasoma (which house important internal organs, including those of the reproductive, respiratory (tracheae), and excretory systems). God's creation infinitely exceeds any manmade micro or nano technology. Man does not even come close to understanding the biology of an ant, much less "making" one. It deeply humbles man to know that by one word, God made 22,000 types of ants (an estimate by a scientist on the number of species of ants).

Individually, ants are not strong. We all know that with the stomp of our foot or with the pressure of our little finger, we can easily flatten tiny ants that

find their way to our food. Observe ants, and you will learn that ants are really useless when they are isolated. We too, like ants, when isolated from our brothers and sisters in the Lord are most weak and vulnerable. We become more subject to the temptations of the devil. Sometimes in our adolescence we feel lonely even though we are surrounded by people who care about us. We feel confused, as if we are alone, confronted with issues that are even hard to identify.

Let us meditate together on how wise ants are, and learn from them. *Proverbs* tells us that ants have wisdom to gather food for their colony for the present as well as the future. But how are they able to gather enough food? Are not ants small and weak?

Ants do not fight for themselves. Rather, they fight for the advancement of the whole colony.

So often we belittle these little creatures, but when ants forget themselves and work together, they become overwhelming. When ants are fighting to subdue their prey, such as a praying mantis, they are not afraid to throw themselves into the frontline of the battle. The first wave of ants charges up to the bigger and stronger praying mantis, even though their death is certain. They know, even if they end up in the jaws of the praying mantis, that their brothers and sisters will march forward and overrun the prey. Because ants are willing to throw their lives in the fray for the sake of their brothers and sisters, they are able to save the whole colony.

Ants work together.

If there is one reason why ants can thrive, it is because they work together. Their working together is key to bringing down their prey and protecting the colony successfully.

For example, fire ants, when experiencing a flood, gather together to form a living raft to float the colony. These ants huddle together and use their bodies, interlocked, to make a life raft. Other species of ants work with their colony to form long bridges and ladders for the rest of the colony to get from place to place. Because ants work together, they can undertake projects a hundred times bigger than themselves.

Ants are firm in their purpose.

The army ants (*Eciton burchellii*), found in South America, have massive colonies housing up to two million ants. These two million ants act as one organism. They devour whatever that crawls and creeps on the forest floor. The colony goes on daily raids. With many ants to feed, the ants must move fast to keep up with the demand for food. In their raids, these ants use their bodies to fill up potholes in the pathway between their nest and the targeted prey. By filling these potholes, the ants greatly increase the speed and traffic of the raiding ants. This is important as it allows them to outrun their often larger and stronger prey, swarming them completely and attacking their weak points. These ants will cooperate with one another if the pothole is too big for one ant. Once in a hole, the ant(s) can stay there for hours until it is dark or traffic has slowed down before returning back to the nest. Imagine using your body to be stepped on and battered for the cause of the colony! Humble and hardworking ants! It is no wonder that they can gather enough food for the day and store for the future.

The wisdom of the ants can be applied to us. Sometimes in our youth, our feelings may tell us that we should not work with some people in the church, or that we should not allow

brothers and sisters to step over us. We often do not work much, like the ants. We often do not work well with others as we ought to, but rather selectively, even though it hurts the spiritual growth of the whole church. While such feelings of hurt and pride are very real, they do lead us astray. Our King of kings, Jesus Christ, worked to His death for the Kingdom of Heaven. The worthy Lamb who alone could carry out God's counsel and rule all nations washed the feet of His younger brothers. How can we improve in our service of the colony?

At other times in our youth we feel that with so many other people working so hard and busying themselves in the gospel, it is no longer "special" if we do it. How would anybody acknowledge the work I am doing if my hands and legs are stretched out, face toward the ground, filling up just a pothole for others to walk over me? Ants do not get a pat on the back for risking their lives and bodies for their colony. They just keep working for the cause of the whole colony, often dying in the process. This is the reason why the colony thrives. We too do not need to stand out, speak the loudest, or look the most tired or hardworking. We can learn from the ants who simply work. God gives His soldiers strength to be courageously selfless and consumed with zeal for the Kingdom of God, for Zion.

How can we apply these spiritual lessons from *Proverbs* practically? Let us start by thinking about the responsibilities that God has given you and me – in the home as a son or daughter to our parents. How have we approached the chores and duties they have assigned us? How do we approach our school work? We ought to be as diligent as ants!

Think about our responsibility to our younger siblings, when we know they are walking in sin, indulging in things they should not be, or when they are not growing spiritually. How are we approaching the difficult task of being our brother's or sister's keeper? Do we make excuses for the demanded labouring in God's Word with them? We ought to serve as much as ants!

Think about our friends in our clique, whose lives seem perfectly fine. School is fine, family is fine, and army is fine. Everyone is fine, except that our brother's or sister's spiritual growth has stagnated. Sitting under the preaching of the Word has become a time for day dreaming and listening sluggishly. Ants work hard for the colony, and so we too are called to work hard to help bring our friends to spiritual rest. Encourage or admonish each other to listen attentively, using our energy and attention to grow from the preaching. Ants bring in food during the summer for the colony. We too ought to labour conscientiously to bring our friends and classmates to the bread of life. By

His grace He uses us mightily.

Oh, the wisdom of ants! They serve the colony and are so diligent in it. We serve the highest purpose in the whole world. We serve the Kingdom of God. People in the world serve kings and presidents whose rule is temporal, people who eventually turn to dust. But we serve the eternal God, the King of all kings, and Lord of all lords, who has no beginning or end. All the purposes of the world come to an end, but our purpose, the God we serve, is everlasting.

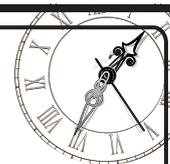
It is okay to let others step on you. It is okay to be "faceless" in the work you do. This is how God wants us to be. It is okay to feel like you are not important by the standards of the world, or not popular in the eyes of school mates. The world tells you to focus on your self-worth and self-potential. Self, self, self. But we are really not important. God is! And before we swing to a self-pitying mood, we need to know that because of God's love through Jesus Christ, we

are precious! Not in ourselves, surely, but in the blood of our sacrificial, foot-washing, Ruler-of-the-universe King. We are so precious to God, whether our fickle emotions tell us or not. (HC Q&A 55: First, that all and every one, who believes, being members of Christ, are in common, partakers of him, and of all his riches and gifts;) God's unconditional, unrelenting, unending love teaches us the wisdom of the ants and more. He teaches us the joy of humbly and diligently serving the colony. After all we are a gathering of weak people, working together under the headship of Jesus Christ. We together seek to give our bodies and lives for the sake of the advancement of the Kingdom of God. (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A55: "... secondly, that every one must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members.") Look out for the nearest pothole and fill it up, that the colony may advance forward together.

Pro Rege!

## HYPER GRACE

>> Milton Ho



*Milton Ho* is a confessing young adult in CERC. He serves on the Salt Shakers committee and is in charge of distributing each issue to addresses in Singapore, USA, the Philippines and Australia, among others.

Joseph Prince is the senior pastor of New Creation Church Singapore, a non-denominational mega church with 31,000 members. His church's membership grew tremendously from 150 in 1990, to more than 10,000 by 2004, and to 30,000 by mid-2013. He attributes this growth to a message he claims to have received from God to preach the message of grace radically.

So what is this message about, and how is it different from the message of grace preached in our Reformed churches, noting the apparent results based on the difference in the growth rate of our churches? This article attempts to establish that whilst Prince essentially preaches from the Word of God, the message is blended with false doctrines and thus becomes harmful to the believer in knowing who God

is, who the believer is, how he should lead his life, and thus how it conflicts with the Reformed faith which we hold to.

Personally, I came to know about God through my attendance at a Pentecostal church, which taught me who God was, how to pray, and what it means to be a Christian. However, I left the Pentecostal church due to obvious errors made known to me from my study of Calvinism (TULIP), errors which are not just present but aggressively preached in Prince's church.

The "message of grace" Prince preaches has two key themes, which are based on his roots in the Word of Faith movement. This movement taught that believers can possess the promises of God for health and wealth through their positive confession of God's Word (their proof text would be Mark 11:22-23).

### **Theme 1: Hyper Grace/Antinomianism**

This is the first error, and it concerns God's Law. Prince's teachings on the law (found in the Old Testament) suggest that it has no usage after a person is converted to Christianity. To Prince, the law has only a negative purpose, to reveal sin to the world – in other words, the law's sole purpose is to condemn the world, the reason being that no man has the ability to keep the law, and thus the law is not meant for Man to keep. Although he rightly cites Romans 8:1 in his book *Destined to Reign* as a reason for believers to be comforted that we are no longer condemned under the law, he also erroneously extends it further to say that the believer is free to do what he wants because he is now covered under God's unlimited grace (pp.15-16). This teaching is dangerous as it perverts the grace God gives to us as license for immorality (Jude 1:4).

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“message of grace”... taught that believers can possess the promises of God for health and wealth...”

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This is antinomianism.

We see how Prince accomplishes this by lumping both the ceremonial laws which are no longer binding to New Testament Christians together with enduring universal moral laws which are still relevant to believers, and disregarding both sets of laws because the believer is under the new covenant of grace. Prince states this in his book *Unmerited Favor* (pp.100). He demonstrates the practise of this in various sermons (such as *The Link Between Righteousness and Health; Forgiven Righteously Through Jesus; and Live With Full Assurance and Confidence*) and other books that he has written, as he is found saying that if a person under sin comes to him and confesses his or her sin, he does not preach repentance, but tells the person that he or she is “highly favoured of God” despite their sin, regardless of their sin. He believes that this convicts them of their righteousness in Christ instead, and is a better way to move a person's heart to do good. This particular practise of Prince in New Creation violates one of the three Marks of a True Church as stated in Article 24 of the Belgic Confession, namely proper church discipline for correcting sins.

We must be aware of what the law of God does for unbelievers and Christians, and also know its place in our lives, for the usages of the law are threefold: it restrains sin and promotes

righteousness, leads us to the conviction of sin and tutors us to Christ, and sets an ethical rule of life for believers (a full study of how the law is still applicable to us modern day believers can be found in 11 Lord's Days in the Heidelberg Catechism. Please read from Lord's Day 34 until Lord's Day 44). The rejection of the third usage of the law makes Prince guilty of antinomianism.

### **Theme 2: The Prosperity/Health & Wealth Gospel**

Prince's teachings on Hyper Grace leads to the Health & Wealth Gospel, otherwise known as the Prosperity Gospel. He might have recently stopped preaching the regular “give as much as you can, so God will multiply it ten/forty/hundredfold and give it back to you” Prosperity Gospel message, but the Health & Wealth Gospel is still prevalent in essence in his preaching.

“There is no such thing as the Prosperity Gospel, it is the Gospel of Grace!” Prince often says this in his sermons. For those who are not familiar with the Prosperity Gospel, it teaches that God will grant believers success, wealth, health, and a life of victory, rather than defeat, poverty, and failure in life – in *this* life. This teaching highlights God's sovereignty in providing these blessings, but puts the onus on the believer, in the sense that all the Christian needs to do is believe, in order to receive these benefits.

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... holding on to the Prosperity Gospel and Hyper Grace would cause the believer to be “rights-centred”, rather than “stewardship-centred” in his walk, giving in order to receive the promised blessings for himself...

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This understanding of biblical promises is unbiblical, as it poses two problems. Firstly, it makes faith, or exercising one’s faith a work in itself, as the motive of exercising your faith would be to receive God’s grace, which we know is actually freely given to us. God knows what we need to live a life of godliness on this earth (Matthew 6:25-26, 2 Peter 1:3). Secondly, it does not address those who lead a godly life, yet do not receive these promises throughout their lives. Prince teaches that Isaiah 53:5 means that sickness and diseases are not from God as Christ’s death on the cross has abolished even all His people’s infirmities, and that 2 Corinthians 8:9 declares that Christ has borne and got rid of our curse of poverty, therefore guaranteeing wealth (*Unmerited Favor*, pp. 29).

Is the Christian promised perfect health and bountiful wealth on this

side of eternity, though? To a certain degree, yes God hears our prayers for our daily bread, performs healing of the sick and supplies our needs, but to such an unlimited extent as taught by Prince? No way! For one, we knew that even the Apostle Paul was stricken with a physical illness which was never cured (2 Corinthians 12:7), and examining passages like Job 1:22 and Psalm 39:10, we know that God does bring death, financial frustration, and powerlessness to the faithful believer, perhaps due to chastisement for our sins (Hebrews 12:8) or a testing of our faith to make it stronger (1 Peter 1:7). It is not due to a lack of exercise of our faith that we fail to claim God’s grace, like what Prince teaches. Matthew 6:19-21, Philippians 3:8-11, and Philippians 4:6-7 make it clear that what God promises us is instead incorruptible riches in heaven, including peace that surpasses all understanding, and the knowledge of Christ and the power of His resurrection – unlimited treasures only on the heavenly side of salvation!

Prince is right in saying that the Prosperity Gospel does not exist, but betrays his statement when he preaches “You are righteous by faith, so speak: God’s favour is all over my business, whatever I do prospers!” (sermon, *The Holy Spirit Convicts Us of Righteousness*). Let us instead rely on the Bible’s explanation of God’s providence, set out to us in Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 10, “We can be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and with a view to the future we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature shall separate us from his love; for all creatures are so completely in his hand that without his will they cannot so much as move.”

### **The Crux of the Matter**

In conclusion, while God can turn the

false Prosperity Gospel for the good of His people in order to bring them to the final realisation of the Truth, we must never let our guard down with regards to Prince’s teachings. They are so mingled with errors which cause believers to have a false understanding of God and their Christian walk, ultimately leading to the danger of Christians worshipping another Christ and believing in another gospel, which is the lie (2 Corinthians 11:4). Therefore we must be clear of what the errors are and avoid those practises”, and instead conscientiously guard our hearts by receiving the pure preaching of the Word of God and cling on to the tenets which form our Reformed faith.

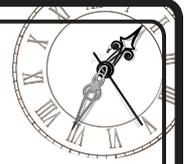
By focusing only on certain aspects of Christianity and neglecting the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), the combined effect of holding on to the Prosperity Gospel and Hyper Grace would cause the believer to be “rights-centred”, rather than “stewardship-centred” in his walk, giving in order to receive the promised blessings for himself, and not giving in order to help the church nor giving because he is grateful to God for His mercy and grace towards him as an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10). We can easily see how people are drawn to Prince’s teachings as it promotes a comfortable life for the Christian.

As a closing thought, we know that many of our friends in school and colleagues at work are attending these churches which preach hyper grace to receive their spiritual food every Sunday. Being their fellow brother or sister in Christ, we have an obligation to warn them, in the spirit of meekness and also considering ourselves (Galatians 6:1), of the errors of hyper grace and what God actually instructs us through the bible. How will you, dear reader, go about doing so?

# What is Reformed?

## Reformed In Church Government (II)

>> Prof. Hanko



*Prof. Herman Hanko* is a retired professor of the Protestant Reformed Seminary. His present work consists of preaching at Hope Protestant Reformed Church, writing for the Salt Shakers magazine, writing in a forum for the young people in Singapore, and writing new books. He has been to CERC many times and is dear to the people here.

### Introduction

The question might be asked: Why should young people be interested in church government? Many young people are not very interested in this subject and do not see any reason why they should be. In a way, I think this might be true for the girls and young ladies, although it is good even for them to know how and why Christ rules in his church. It will help them understand better what goes on in the government of the church and why things are done the way they are.

I knew a lady once who thought that regular meetings of people of God, even in Bible Study Groups, ought to have a Constitution, and that Constitution ought to be the Church Order. That was misplaced zeal and a reason why women ought to know something about church government.

But young men ought to know and

understand church government too, for they may be called in the future to serve in a special office, and it is essential for them, being a part of the government of the church, to know how the church is governed. They, as office bearers in the church, are responsible for the proper and Biblical government of the church.

So I will devote a few articles to this subject.

### The Special Offices in the Congregation

Biblical and Reformed Church Government holds to the Scriptural principle of special, chosen men from a congregation who occupy special offices in the church. In the new dispensational church these offices are: minister, elder and deacon.

Some Presbyterian Churches hold to two offices in the church: elder and deacon. But these churches divide the elders between teaching elders (minister) and ruling elders (elder). In the early history of Presbyterianism in the United States long and learned debates were carried on in the broader assemblies over the question whether there are two or three offices in a congregation. Reformed Churches, so far as I know, always taught that it was Biblical to have three offices.

Calvin, in his church polity in Geneva spoke of four offices in the church: minister, elder, deacon and professor of theology. Our own Church Order, before a few revisions in it were made, had an article that also spoke of professors of theology as a separate office.

But, generally speaking, Reformed Churches considered professors of theology to hold the office of minister, and thus the church was complete with three offices. They did this on the basis of two Scriptural passages. The first is a passage in which Paul instructs Timothy, minister in the church of Ephesus, to instruct other young men to be ministers. "And the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit them to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2). Clearly, instruction of future ministers is the task of one already a minister.

The second passage is in Ephesians 4:11: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Paul is speaking here of the gifts that the ascended Lord gives to his church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers. In other words, pastors and teachers hold the same office: Christ gives to the church pastors who are also teachers. The Reformed Churches, for the most part, have recognized the fact that Seminary instruction is one aspect of the ministerial office.

This position has one important implication: The work of professors in the Seminary is also a part of the **official** ministry of the gospel. Professors in the Seminary preach! They do not preach as ministers do on the pulpit, but they bring the word of God and that word of God, which prepares young men for the ministry, is

a means of grace. Students must submit to that instruction in the same way that members of a congregation submit to the preaching on the Lord's Day.

It is my hope that, if the Lord tarry, a Seminary can be started somewhere in the Orient where native pastors can be taught for the churches in that part of the world.

### **The Offices in the Old Testament and in the New Testament**

There were three special offices in the nation of Israel, the Old Testament church: prophets, priests and kings. All three were found in the nation only after Israel received a king. Before that time, the heads of families and judges functioned as office bearers. Adam was created as a prophet, priest and king, but lost his office when he fell. But God preserved a remnant of Adam's office in the men mentioned in the genealogy of the line of Christ: Seth, Methuselah, Lamech, etc. Later the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, held offices in their families and clans. During the time of the judges, the judges served as office bearers in Israel, and some of them, Moses and Samuel, held an early form of all three offices: prophets, priests and kings.

Besides these men, while Israel was in the wilderness, and at the advice of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, a body of elders and judges was formed. This body of elders remained in Israel through their whole history and were called *The Sanhedrin* in the new dispensation.

After Pentecost, when the new dispensation started, the apostles established three offices in the church. The apostles themselves, because of their unique office, held all three offices; but as the churches were established and grew, out of the apostolic office arose the three distinct offices that are to this day present in the church:

minister, elder and deacon (Acts 6:1-7, Acts 14:23, 1 Timothy 4:14).

Turning now to the duties of each office, in the old dispensation, the office of prophet, while it remained a separate office, was also shared by the other offices. The office of prophet is established that God might, through that office, bring His Word to His people. But Saul prophesied (1 Samuel 10:10-12), David and Solomon, both kings, prophesied when they wrote part of Scripture, and Caiaphas, a wicked high priest, also prophesied (John 11:49-52).

Today also, as in the case of Saul, Balaam and Caiaphas, it is possible for unregenerated men to hold one of these offices, and God may even use them in his church.

This same duty of the offices is carried over into the new dispensation. Ministers are the equivalent of prophets and hold that special office. They bring the word of God. But elders also bring the word of God, although they did this in their rule of the church. Deacons also bring the word of God, because in their care of the poor, they too must bring their alms along with "comforting words from Scripture" (Quoted from the *Form for the Installation of Office Bearers*).

After prophets, priests and kings were ordained in the old dispensational church; while all three office bearers brought God's Word, that was only true of the prophetic office. It was a great sin for a king to sacrifice, or for a priest to rule. The two offices had to be kept separate from each other. King Saul lost the kingdom partly because he sacrificed (1 Samuel 13:5-14); and Uzziah was stricken with leprosy because he tried to make sacrifices (2 Chronicles 26:16-21). So in the new dispensation, the offices of elder and

deacon are to be kept separate from each other.

Christ rules his church through these offices. Where these offices do not exist, Christ is not present. Christ brings his word to the church through ministers especially; he rules over his church through elders; and he brings mercy to his church through the deacons. That is why the office bearers, when ordained, answer "Yes" to the question whether they believe that they are called by Christ to their office.

The offices in the church are the very heart of church government.

In most churches today, these ideas are lost. Some churches have no deacons; some churches consider the office of elder to be a seat in a Board of Directors; some ministers rule the church by themselves and will not allow anyone to have any say in the church; some mega-churches have no office bearers at all; some ministers are never ordained, but function by popular vote. These churches cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be called Reformed.

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# Preparing for Fatherhood (I)



>> Daniel Holstege



*Pastor Daniel Holstege* is Minister of the Word at First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland in West Michigan, USA. In March 2012, he came to Singapore to assist CERC in her pulpit needs.

Four years ago this November my life changed in such a profound way that I will never be the same again. I became a father for the first time. I will never forget that day when our son was born into this world. Hearing him cry for the first time made my heart leap for joy. Finding out his gender at the moment of birth was also a thrilling experience. Unexpected tears streamed down my face. Then the nurses wrapped up that little boy and handed him to me, and I held him in my arms. I brought him right over to my wife so she too could see the precious little gift God had given to us. I was now a father. Since then I have become a father again. Our twin girls are now two years old. They were quite a pleasant surprise. I will never forget that day either, when my wife told me what her doctor told her: We are having twins! What? Wow! Okay. Wonderful! My wife and I have been blessed with three children, and we confess with thankfulness to God, “Lo, children are an heritage of the

LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Psalm 127:3). As I write this paragraph, my three little ones are still sleeping in their beds. But soon they will be awake, and another day of being a father will begin.

Is it possible to prepare for fatherhood? I admit to you right at the outset that I did not consciously prepare for fatherhood. Nor do I have a guilty conscience about that. I am sure that I thought about fatherhood from time to time. But I did not consciously prepare myself for that possible future reality. In many ways, of course, you cannot prepare for fatherhood. You will not know what fatherhood fully entails until you become a father. I had no idea how much patience was going to be demanded of me by having an infant in the house, and later two infants at once! I had no idea how much a little one could cry, how loudly, demandingly, and persistently. I had no idea how often my children would rudely interrupt me when I am talking to other adults. I had no idea how I would react to these things, whether I would maintain my composure or become frustrated. Now I know. But I do not think I could have consciously prepared myself for it.

Besides, who knows what God has in store for you in your life? It is hard to prepare for something if you do not know whether or not it is in your future. Maybe you will be single your whole life. Or maybe you will get married, but God will not give you any children. Maybe God will give

you one child, but only after years of barrenness. Maybe He will give you many children, soon after marriage, and throughout your married life. Maybe He will give you twins, as He did for us. Or maybe He will send you a child with a severe disability. You never know. God calls you to be content in whatsoever state of life He puts you (Philippians 4:11). Yet it is good to desire children. Nowadays we hear a lot about family planning. I do not know if this is popular in Singapore too, but it is almost considered a necessity here in America. Supposedly before you have children you should sit down and plan out how many you want, when you want them, and in what intervals. Usually this results in a married couple deciding to have no more than one or two children so that they can enjoy a comfortable and wealthy life. Over against this prevailing practice, God calls us to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). If God gives us a spouse, He also calls us to seek children, even many children. We are to have a *mentality of desiring children* as long as we are able. So young men, do you desire to be fathers? That is the first step in preparing for fatherhood—desiring children! “Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them” (Psalm 127:5).

Well, is it possible to prepare for fatherhood? Yes, of course it is possible. Is it necessary? Yes, it is also necessary, even if we are not consciously thinking of these things as preparation for fatherhood. Preparation, in the context of this article, means prior to becoming a father you do certain things which will

help you transition more smoothly into fatherhood, meet its demands more easily, and make you more likely to be a good father. It is possible that a young man is preparing for fatherhood, by God's grace, even though he does not realise it. But it is also very proper for a young man to prepare consciously for the possibility of being a father. If you want to play soccer, you might prepare yourself by running every day. If you want to be a doctor, you will prepare yourself by rigorous academic study. If you want to be a father, what should you do to prepare yourself? Let me use the rest of this article to draw your attention to some aspects of Christian fatherhood. An important way to prepare is to make yourself aware of what fatherhood involves. Then in my next article I will discuss some of the challenges involved and how to prepare for fatherhood by overcoming those challenges.

Maybe some men, even Christian men, have the idea that preparing for fatherhood simply means getting a good education and career so they can support children financially. Well, I do not deny the wisdom of getting a good education and a good job. "If any would not work," the apostle Paul told the saints at Thessalonica, "neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). But fatherhood involves much more than providing food, clothing, and shelter to our children. It goes without saying, does it not, that fathers must provide for their children? But I want to draw your attention to some more important aspects of fatherhood, and thus show how to prepare.

First, a Christian father must first be a Christian husband. A man who treats his wife disrespectfully and unlovingly fails to be a good father. A man who is always shouting at his wife in front of the children, venting his anger and

frustration at her, is a terrible father. A man who decides to divorce his wife, except it be for fornication (Matthew 19:9), and thinks he can still be a good father, has utterly lost his way and is believing a lie. If a man is a wicked husband, he teaches his children to be wicked. If a man is always fighting with his wife, he makes his home a fearful environment and does untold emotional and spiritual damage to his children. If a man leaves his wife, he destroys his home. Before you can be a good and godly father, you must learn to love your wife. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). A man who loves his wife in the day to day life of the home, is able to be a good father. Marriage is the most fundamental institution of society, prior even to parenthood. God first instituted marriage, and only then said to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:27-28). God first brought Adam his wife, and said, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24), and only later did they have children.

So young men, as you seek a wife, remember that you will be called to love this woman for the rest of your life. Oh, we are all called to love all of our neighbours—that is true. But your wife will be your closest neighbour. She will be, Lord willing, the mother of your children. You had better ask yourself some penetrating questions. Does this woman share my Reformed worldview? Do our personalities complement each other well? Loving your girlfriend is really quite easy. But loving your wife is not merely an emotional attraction that stirs up feelings of excitement. It is to give up your life for her, to seek her wellbeing in every respect, at the cost of your own desires. Preparing for

fatherhood means first preparing for marriage. And that means praying for the grace to love others, and someday your wife, in the way laid out in Scripture (1 Corinthians 13).

Second, a Christian father must be the spiritual leader of his home. Are you ready to be spiritual leaders, young men? If not, then you are not ready for marriage or fatherhood. Then you must prepare yourselves in this respect. Spiritual leadership means you take responsibility for the atmosphere of the home. It means you have left behind the carefree days of childhood and recognise yourself to be a man upon whom the Lord has put weighty responsibilities. And it means you carry out those responsibilities. You take to heart the demand of the Covenant found in Scripture: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Who takes the lead in family prayer? You do. Who teaches the children how to pray? You do. Who makes sure the children know their catechism lessons? You do. Who sets the rules of the television and internet, what is allowed and forbidden, how much time is allowed? You do. Who will use the rod of correction to drive foolishness from the heart of the children (Proverbs 22:15)? You will. Who will make sure the children are in church on Sunday sitting under the preaching of the gospel? You will. Who sets the tone of conversation in the home? You do. Of course, I do not

mean that you will do all these things by yourself. You and your wife will be a team in these matters. But you must be the spiritual leader. Are you a person who already now loves to talk about spiritual things? Or are you more interested in the things of the world? Do you make time for devotions already now? Or are you a Sunday-only Christian? You can prepare for fatherhood by immersing yourself in the Word of God and spiritual things, as the above text calls us to do.

Third, a Christian father must set a good example for his children. He must first give heed to what Paul says, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Ephesians 5:1-2). He must then also be able to say to his children what Paul said to the saints at Philippi, "Be followers together of me" (Philippians 3:17). A father is, whether he knows it or not, an example to his children, for good and evil. We reject the theory of the Pelagians that all humans are sinful merely because children imitate the sins of their parents (Canons III/IV.2). Nevertheless, children do imitate their parents. I often bring this up to catechism students. I remember when our son was one or two, that he would follow me on a Sunday morning as I paced back and forth through the house going over my sermon in my head. I was always quite amused. He would even put his hands behind his back, because he saw me do that too. Well, it is not such an amusing thing when our children imitate our sins. Christian fathers and mothers are probably the most influential people in the lives of their children, at least early on. Our children look to us as the model of how to behave, what is right and wrong.

Are you prepared, young men, to have little children watching you and doing what you do? They will listen to the way you talk, the kind of language you use, the tone of your voice. They will observe what you watch on television, how much time you spend on the computer, and what kind of music you listen to. They will easily notice what is most important to you, whether it is money or vacation, or church or prayer. And they will follow in your footsteps. Are you prepared to say to them, be followers of me? If not, then you are not ready for fatherhood. Then you must put away whatever sinful and worldly habits you have developed in your life, and strive by the grace of God to be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Fourth, a Christian father has compassion on his children. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Psalm 103:13). "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children" (1 Thessalonians 2:11). In a way, of course, this is natural to most men. The paternal instinct kicks into action as soon as you become a father. I am sure that what I experienced on that day when our son was born, those emotions and love, is something common to most fathers. There are, however, men whose natural paternal love wanes, who grow angry and let the sun go down on their anger, who become bitter and frustrated toward their children. A Christian father, on the other hand, is one who repents of such anger and flees to the cross of Christ for forgiveness whenever it arises. He is one who puts off that old man with his deeds and puts on the new man who is filled with love, compassion, kindness, patience, and humility, also toward his children. When your son, from fear of

a stranger, runs away, trips, falls, and slams his head into a steel chair, as my son did on his second birthday, your heart aches for him as he screams in pain and a large bump appears on his head. When he blatantly disobeys you, and you chasten him on his rear end with the rod, and he cries and says he is sorry, your heart pities him and you say, "I forgive you." When he begs you to read books to him, to play with him, to sing with him, even if you are a busy man, you love your child and so you do it. After all, "Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith" (Proverbs 15:16-17). By putting off the old man and putting on the new man, which includes compassion and kindness, already as a single young men, you are preparing for fatherhood.

Preparing for fatherhood is a very proper way to view your progress in the Christian life as a young man. As part of your preparation you would do well to read some of the Protestant Reformed booklets on the subject of "the family". You can order them in hardcopy or find and read them online at [www.prca-evangelism.org](http://www.prca-evangelism.org). There you will find good food for thought written by Protestant Reformed professors and ministers. There are, of course, many good books on family life by other Reformed authors as well. But if you have not read much yet, a good place to begin is with the pamphlets found through the link given above.

In my next article I hope to look at some of the challenges that young men need to face and overcome to be good, godly fathers.

## Our Children's Education: A Covenant Necessity (V) - Covenant Education as a Demand of the Covenant



>> Aaron Lim



Aaron Lim is a confessing young adult in CERC and has been studying in the Protestant Reformed Seminary since August 2013.

A Chinese proverb says it well that every parent desires his or her child to become a dragon. The meaning of this proverb is that parents naturally wish for their children to succeed in life. This is naturally true of believers too. In a fiercely competitive society like Singapore's, it is conceivable that Covenant parents are greatly concerned about the future of their children. How will our Covenant young survive in this spiritually hostile world where sin and ungodliness pervades? How will they find their means of livelihood where the wicked often seek to harm God's people?

The comfort believers receive comes from the truth of Scripture where God has promised to be their God and their seeds' in their generations for an everlasting Covenant (Genesis 17:7). He has promised never to leave nor to forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). The Heidelberg Catechism confirms these promises by assuring us that we are not our own but belong to Jesus Christ, so that all things are subservient to our salvation (LD1, Q&A1). God, our

Father, on whom we rely so entirely, will provide us with all things necessary for soul and body (LD9, Q&A26).

God's Covenant friendship with Covenant parents is sufficient assurance for them.

As Covenant parents, we must turn to the Scriptures to find the basis for Covenant education. I wish to prove the demand on three grounds:

1. The Doctrine of Infant Baptism
2. The Doctrine of the Covenant
3. Our Reformed Fathers

### 1. The Doctrine of Infant Baptism

Although the doctrine of infant baptism stems from the Covenant and ought to be treated in the second contention, I believe the doctrine specially provides the starting platform for the contention for Covenant education. Following Scripture's command, Reformed parents baptise their children.

The Belgic Confession beautifully explains the basis for infant baptism:

Infants of believers *"ought to be baptised and sealed with the sign of the Covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised upon the same promises which are made unto our children. And indeed Christ shed His blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful than for adult persons"* (Article 34).

The Heidelberg Catechism affirms the truth:

Infants of believers *"are included in the Covenant and church of God...since redemption from sin by the blood of*

*Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult"* (LD27, Q&A74).

When Covenant parents present their children before the LORD for baptism, they confess that *"infants are to be baptised as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His Covenant."* They *"promise and intend to see these children, when come to years of discretion, instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of [their] power".* Furthermore, they are to *"be piously and religiously educated, [so that they] increase and grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Form for the Administration of Baptism).

Infant baptism implies that our children belong to Jehovah, since our



Children who are holy must receive an entirely different and distinctively separate education from ungodly children.



elect children are cleansed by the blood of His Son. Our elect children are baptised into Christ (Romans 6:3) and are therefore partakers of His death and resurrection. The cross is as effective for them as for mature believers.

Unlike the erroneous Baptists who treat their children as unbelievers and unregenerate, the Reformed church insists that her Covenant young are “holy” (1 Corinthians 7:14). For this reason they must receive a holy education—one that instils in them holiness and trains them to lead a life of holiness. It is especially striking that the Heidelberg Catechism declares that by way of baptism our infants are “distinguished from the children of unbelievers” (LD7, Q&A74). It only follows logically that the education they receive must be “distinguished from the children of unbelievers”. For this reason Covenant parents may not allow their Covenant seed to receive the same education as unbelieving seed. It is no less than a contradiction to the vows we made as Covenant parents when we simply place our children in the public schools without any concern of what they might be learning.

Children who are holy must receive an entirely different and distinctively separate education from ungodly children. Children who are sanctified in Christ must receive a sanctified education.

## 2. The Doctrine of the Covenant

Reformed parents know from Scripture that the Covenant they share with Jehovah is not a contract in which they have conditions to fulfil. The education they give to their Covenant seed is not a condition they have to meet to enjoy the blessings of the Covenant. Believing parents know that they are by nature depraved and spiritually impotent to satisfy any of Jehovah’s commands.

But because the Covenant is God’s friendship with His people, Covenant parents who enjoy this friendship know their part in the Covenant. They are friend-servants to their friend-Master. They confess that their Covenant God saves them and their seed by establishing, maintaining, and

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“to learn rightly  
to know the only  
true God; trust  
in Him alone,  
with humility and  
patience submit  
to Him; expect all  
good things from  
Him only; love,  
fear, and glorify  
Him with my  
whole heart”

”

perfecting His Covenant with them in Jesus Christ. They know it is not only their responsibility, but also their high privilege to raise Covenant seed for the LORD. And so they do it to the utmost of their power.

Covenant education serves to bring Covenant seed into consciousness of their Covenant friendship with Jehovah. In obedience to their

Covenant God, Reformed parents give their children a Covenant education. It is part of keeping the Covenant He has established with them. They are deeply aware that a failure to give their children a Covenant education would result in them refusing to walk in His ways (Psalm 78:4-11).

Because they belong in God’s Covenant, Covenant parents know that they have a radically different purpose in raising Covenant seed. Their goals are never aligned with the wicked world, but are always in sharp contrast. They are raising children for the glory and purpose of the LORD. That purpose is beautifully summarised in the Heidelberg Catechism: “to learn rightly to know the only true God; trust in Him alone, with humility and patience submit to Him; expect all good things from Him only; love, fear, and glorify Him with my whole heart” (LD34, Q&A94). Our children must be taught to know, that their chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q1).

In giving our children a Covenant education, Prof. Engelsma points out:

*“We aim at mature men and women of the Covenant” (pg. 92, Reformed Education).*

Mature men and women of the Covenant are those who are deeply conscious of their Covenant friendship with God, live in obedience to Him, and who direct all of their life to His glory alone.

In raising Covenant seed, parents must have the welfare of the church in mind. They love the church dearly because Christ paid the ultimate sacrifice to redeem the church from her misery. Covenant parents are spiritual visionaries. They are conscious of the truth that “from the beginning to the end of the world, [Christ] gathers,

“ Covenant parents begin the instruction of their children from the moment they are born. They do so, not in the earnest hope that when these children grow older, they will remember what they were taught and then come to Christ. ”

defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word...a church chosen to everlasting life” (HC LD21, Q&A54). So they give their Covenant children a Covenant education for the church in her generations to come.

Prof. Engelsma is especially right on this point:

*“Covenant thinking reckons with the future good of the coming generations”* (pg. 17, *Reformed Education*).

Pastor Steven Key explains this point:

*“So this Covenant instruction, passed on from generation to generation, is the means whereby each succeeding generation learns to set its hope in God and to keep His commandments”* (*Biblical Basis & Goal of Christian Education*, Standard Bearer, Nov. 15, 2005).

Faithfulness to God’s Covenant demands that we raise our Covenant children to know the ways of the Covenant intimately.

### 3. Our Reformed Fathers

The education of Covenant seed weighed heavily on the minds of our Reformed fathers. They understood clearly the sheer importance of educating Covenant children in the ways of the Covenant. To neglect Covenant education meant spiritual death for future generations.

We who call ourselves Calvinists can

find support from the man himself:

*“Calvin recognized that the church would not last another generation if the children did not receive catechetical instruction, plus thorough parental Christian education. He saw the urgent need not only for training in the faith, but for secular education from good teachers... With a pastor’s heart, he also drew up ordinances for Christian schools. Calvin understood that the church had responsibility to promote the Christian education of the children”* (pg. 16, *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, Nov. 2009).

Luther understood that *“for the church to remain faithful it must teach - explicitly, purposefully, and programmatically - the gospel and orthodox theology, and it must do so to the young”* (pg. 151, *Martin Luther*, Stephen J. Nichols, P&R Publishing, 2002). Hence *“Luther wrote extensively on education because the education of the children of the church was crucial to him”* (pg. 131, *Portraits of Faithful Saints*, Herman Hanko, RFPA, 1999).

In his condemnation of public education, Pastor Herman Hoeksema *“prayed in his congregational prayer that God’s Covenant people might not in the education of their children deliver them over to the gates of hell - his forceful characterization of the public school system”*. He did this knowing *“that*

*the congregation was opposed in large measure to Christian education”* (pg. 396, *Portraits of Faithful Saints*, Herman Hanko, RFPA, 1999).

Prof. Herman Hanko’s insightful observation is correct:

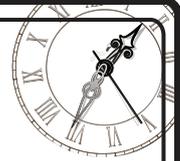
*“Covenant parents begin the instruction of their children from the moment they are born. They do so, not in the earnest hope that when these children grow older, they will remember what they were taught and then come to Christ. Parents do so because they believe that God is at work in the hearts of these elect children of the Covenant, and that Covenant instruction is used by God to work conscious faith and salvation in them, as small as they may be”* (pg. 144, *We and Our Children*, RFPA, 2004).

Prof. Engelsma offers sharp words:

*“God’s children must be godly taught; Covenant children must be taught to fear God; children separated unto God must be kept apart from wicked teachers and wicked children; sanctified children must be taught and disciplined to be holy”* (pg. 69, *Reformed Education*).

The list goes on and there are plenty more Reformed men who have written extensively on Christian education. All had one thing in common: the future of the church depended on a solid Christian education for their Covenant children.

# Do You Remember?



>> Lim Yang Zhi



Yang Zhi Lim is a confessing young adult in CERC.

By October 25, forty-three weeks' worth of sermons would have been preached this year in CERC—that is, 86 sermons. Of these, 75 have been preached by our minister. Of the 75, 18 are on Jeremiah; 36, on the Heidelberg Catechism; and 21, based on specific contexts. The remaining 11 were delivered by other qualified men.

Of all these sermons, how much do you and I remember? If we split the sermons into those four categories, pick one category and mentally recall as much as you can about the sermons in that category. Can you remember the content of those sermons? Perhaps some general points? How about the meanings of various phrases and words in the sermons' texts? What about the doctrines within the texts, and the applications of the texts?

Fret not if your memory fails you at this point. Our goal in this article is to review briefly some aspects of the sermons we have heard this year. Because of the lack of space, we will not go through the sermons delivered

by others but focus on the sermons preached by our minister.

Last, just to make sure everyone really is thinking back about the sermons, I have left some blanks in the review for you to fill up *by memory* (Answers are found at the end of the article).

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Let us start our review with our series on the book of Jeremiah. The prophet Jeremiah was sent by God to bring His Word to the nation (1) J\_\_\_ from the time of King (2) J\_\_\_ to the time of the captivity.

One important message that Jeremiah always cried is this: (3) R\_\_\_ and b\_\_\_! Sometimes, Jeremiah used different words: (4) A\_\_\_ your way; (5) b\_\_\_ your f\_\_\_ ground; etc.; ultimately, Jeremiah sought to turn the people from their sins. Those whom God had graciously chosen returned to God; those who never were God's continued in their wickedness.

The next section is our Heidelberg Catechism sermons: Divided into three sections, this confession systematically explains our (6) m\_\_\_, r\_\_\_, and t\_\_\_.

One aspect of the catechism repeatedly emphasized in the sermons is that the doctrines of our Reformed faith are *personal*. The large terms of *justification* ((7.) QA\_\_\_) and *sanctification* ((8.) LD\_\_\_) affect our entire lives. Who is justified? Who is sanctified? We learn to say, "God's people," but we also learn to say, "I am justified and sanctified!"

Moving to the final category: We have

had sermons delivered during events such as a confession of faith ((9.) "h\_\_\_ the t\_\_\_") and a baptism ((10.) name the text), and nationwide occasions like National Day and CNY ((11.) name the texts). Also included in this category is a series of sermons about a matter in our church's mission-work ((12.) name that matter and the texts that were preached on, and summarize the matter's conclusions).

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Were you able to fill in the blanks? That review was a skim-through, but a good start. But what if we struggled to remember the sermons? What does it even mean to remember a sermon?

Remembering involves recalling information. To remember the sermon, then, means we retain certain details of the sermon—the text itself, the meaning of words/phrases, the text's overall message, applications, etc.

There are some practical ways to help recall such details. Asking ourselves questions about the sermon is one. In a sentence, what is the sermon's main point? What is the meaning of this word or that name in the text? What are the text's doctrines explained in the sermon? How does the text apply to our lives? How does the text speak about Jesus Christ? These questions help refresh our memories of the sermon; they may even lead us to think of other truths in the text that the sermon could not cover.

Memorizing the sermon's text also can

help us recall the sermon. After all, the focus of the sermon is its text and what the *text* means. When we memorize the text after hearing a sermon, we will retain the sermon's explanation of the text's overall message. So memorize Psalm 67:1-2, or take up Jeremiah 4:3-4 (just to name two texts).

Lastly, talk to others about the sermon. The sermons and texts I remember the most are the sermons and texts I have discussed with my family and friends. So it likely will be for you.

But remembering also includes *action*. Remembering what we have heard involves acting, speaking, and thinking according to what we have heard. The psalmist sung, "Thy Word have I hid [remembered] in my heart." Why? "That I might not sin against thee!" The psalmist remembered God's Word, so *that* he could live according to that Word.

Apply this idea of *action* to remembering the sermons we hear. During the sermon, when God calls us through the book of Jeremiah, "Repent and believe, the daughter of my people!" we must live according to that Word—stop the sinful habits of our lives and seek to obey God. Or, when God reveals to us the depth of His grace through the catechism, we must latch to His Word by faith and live in harmony with that grace. By the time you read this article, we would have finished the catechism's treatment of the commandments. To remember its instruction on the commandments means we are doers of those commandments—starting from our hearts!

In short, remembering the sermon involves our minds (memory) and our hearts (obedience).

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To remember a sermon is a difficult task. It is difficult, because remembering

involves obeying God's Word. But difficulty also lies in *thinking* about the Word—about the sermon, that is. Sundays are eventful and, hence, tiresome days. And to think of how much work we have to do from Monday to Saturday! Where is there time to think about two sermons every week? Time! *Therein* is the difficulty.

Difficulty, yes; but there is reward in remembering. Go back to our previous point: Remembering the sermons is *action*. But remembering the sermons also *leads* to action.

The sermon has to lead to action. It, after all, is not man's word. The sermon is God's Word that never returns void. When the sermon is delivered, God through it works in our hearts to nurture us unto obedience.

Because God works through the sermons, God also works in us through *our memory* of the sermons to live according to what He says. God's call of repentance gives us strength to repent. God's call to obedience gives us strength to obey.

The sermons calling our office-bearers, "rule and show mercy!" when remembered, will strengthen them *to* rule and *to* show mercy. The sermons calling the entire congregation, "teach My children!" when remembered, will strengthen all of us to pursue a Christian school. The sermons calling our church, "preach My gospel, and baptize!" when remembered, will stir our hearts to pray and give for the mission-work in Kolkata.

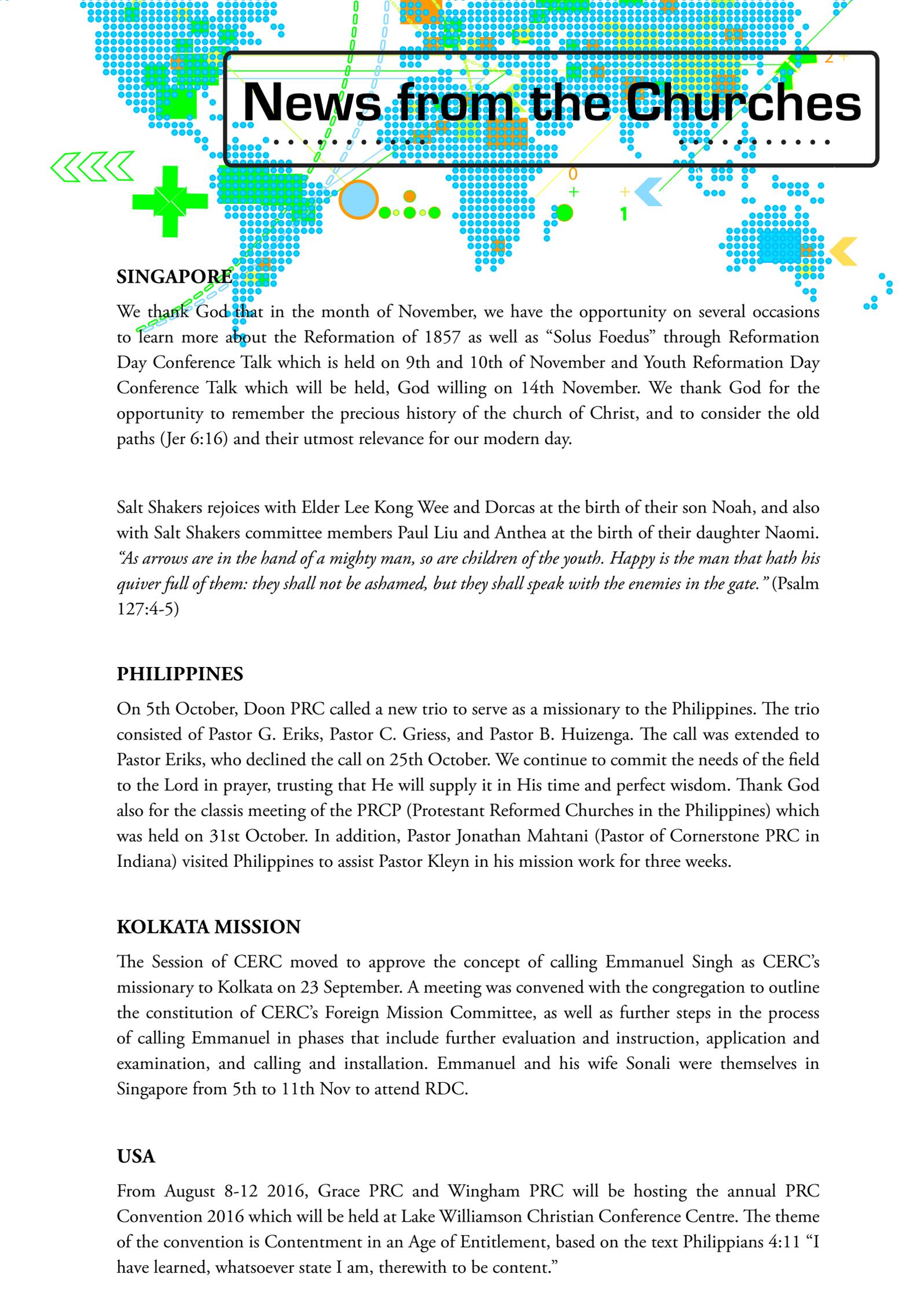
Strength—there is the reward!

A difficult task, yes. "Where is time?" Nowhere—unless we *make* time. Save a time in the morning or night to read through the text. Spend your time on the MRT recalling the sermon. There is reward; *make* time!

Do you remember? Do I remember? I know I can't. But I will, by His grace. So will you.

#### Answers

1. *Judah*
2. *Josiah*
3. *Repent and believe!*
4. *Amend your way*
5. *Break up your fallow ground*
6. *Misery, redemption, and thanksgiving.*
7. *(QA59/60/61)*
8. *(LD33)*
9. *("hold the traditions")*
10. *(HC QA74)*
11. *(Ruth 4:11-12; Daniel 8).*
12. *(Read "Baptism on the Mission Field" Report, adopted by our session).*



# News from the Churches

## **SINGAPORE**

We thank God that in the month of November, we have the opportunity on several occasions to learn more about the Reformation of 1857 as well as “Solus Foedus” through Reformation Day Conference Talk which is held on 9th and 10th of November and Youth Reformation Day Conference Talk which will be held, God willing on 14th November. We thank God for the opportunity to remember the precious history of the church of Christ, and to consider the old paths (Jer 6:16) and their utmost relevance for our modern day.

Salt Shakers rejoices with Elder Lee Kong Wee and Dorcas at the birth of their son Noah, and also with Salt Shakers committee members Paul Liu and Anthea at the birth of their daughter Naomi. *“As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.”* (Psalm 127:4-5)

## **PHILIPPINES**

On 5th October, Doon PRC called a new trio to serve as a missionary to the Philippines. The trio consisted of Pastor G. Eriks, Pastor C. Griess, and Pastor B. Huizenga. The call was extended to Pastor Eriks, who declined the call on 25th October. We continue to commit the needs of the field to the Lord in prayer, trusting that He will supply it in His time and perfect wisdom. Thank God also for the classis meeting of the PRCP (Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines) which was held on 31st October. In addition, Pastor Jonathan Mahtani (Pastor of Cornerstone PRC in Indiana) visited Philippines to assist Pastor Kleyn in his mission work for three weeks.

## **KOLKATA MISSION**

The Session of CERC moved to approve the concept of calling Emmanuel Singh as CERC’s missionary to Kolkata on 23 September. A meeting was convened with the congregation to outline the constitution of CERC’s Foreign Mission Committee, as well as further steps in the process of calling Emmanuel in phases that include further evaluation and instruction, application and examination, and calling and installation. Emmanuel and his wife Sonali were themselves in Singapore from 5th to 11th Nov to attend RDC.

## **USA**

From August 8-12 2016, Grace PRC and Wingham PRC will be hosting the annual PRC Convention 2016 which will be held at Lake Williamson Christian Conference Centre. The theme of the convention is Contentment in an Age of Entitlement, based on the text Philippians 4:11 “I have learned, whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”



CERC celebrates our 28th Anniversary



Gethsemane group singing at our 28th Anniversary



Cake cutting at our 28th Anniversary



Homeschoolers' outing



Fellowship with new visitors

*The CERC youth camp will be held from 16-19 Dec, with Pastor Andy Lanning speaking on the topic of "Revelations - Letters to the Churches."*  
  
*Email the committee at [ckckscamp2015@gmail.com](mailto:ckckscamp2015@gmail.com) for more details.*

**Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church**

We are a Reformed Church that holds to the doctrines of the Reformation as they are expressed in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt.

Place of Worship  
11, Jalan Mesin #04-00  
Standard Industrial Building  
Singapore 368813

Time of Worship  
Morning Service:  
9:30am to 11:00am  
Afternoon Service:  
2:00pm to 3:00pm

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