



salt shakers

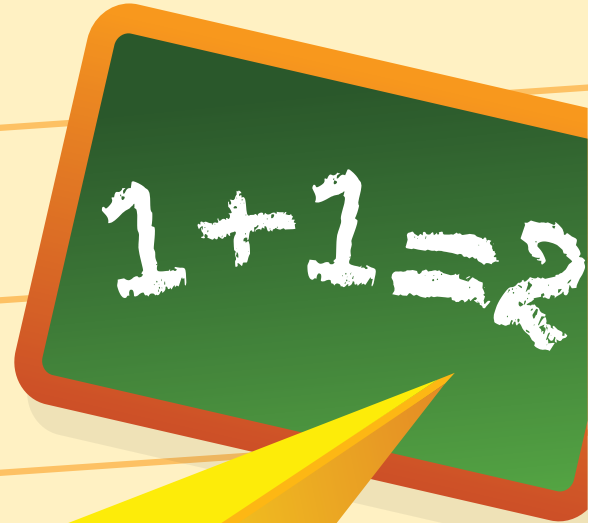
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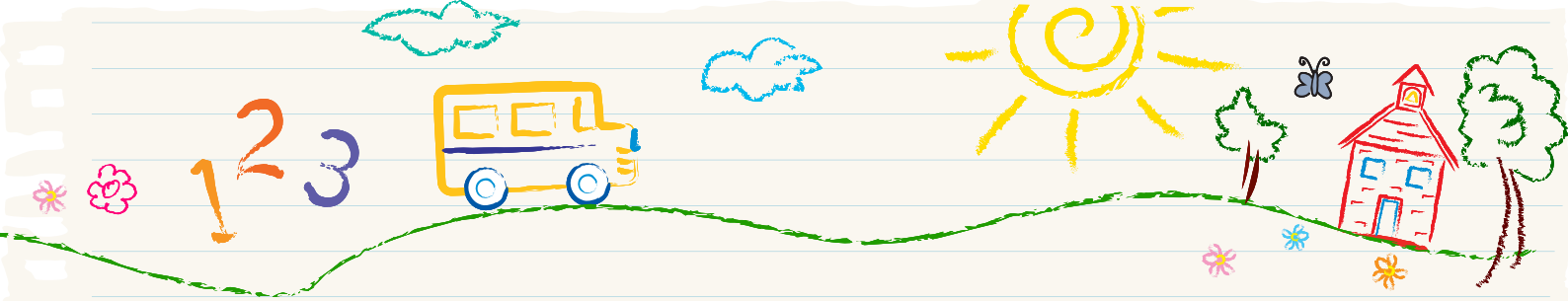
Issue 29 | Nov 2014

"The theory of common grace is incompatible with the gospel of sola gratia."
- Pastor Andy Lanning, Sola de Gratia... et Una Gratia

"... we will reap with joy; but we must also expect some tears in the sowing (Psalm 126:5)."
- Session of CERC, A Good Christian School

"... our calling is to ... make the most of every moment of time to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33)."
- Lim Tze Yan, The Errors of Korean Dramas





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WELCOME TO THE 29TH ISSUE OF SALT SHAKERS!

We are glad to bring you another Issue of this magazine. Indeed, we are blessed to serve the Lord in this manner. We also have an important calling to publish the Truth promiscuously without discrimination, as far as our Master commands and His Spirit leads, in love and all faithfulness.

In Acts 8:26-39, we read a wonderful account of how a man, even a stranger, gains understanding of the Word of God through the means of another Christian. *"The Spirit said unto Philip..."* reminds us in all our explanations and reasoning to be led by the Spirit. Never should we end up championing our own intelligence or belittling the faith of others—for we who have received have no right to glory in ourselves (1 Corinthians 4:7). And so we labour diligently in obedience to God and in love for our brethren. *"And Philip ran thither to him..."* reminds us of the urgency we must have when helping one another to understand the Word of God. Shall we wait and see? Shall we hang around to find out what a small lie about God's Word can do to a brother? No, the love of God constraints us to RUN, and as a humble servant—a waiter, almost—we promptly ask the first question hoping to be asked a question in return. *"... began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus"* reminds us that the content of the Bible—wherever you may be looking at—is for the glory of God as shown in His son, Jesus Christ, whose name is "Jehovah salvation". Every single, little, detail of the Word serves to teach us that the salvation we desperately need is only in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Bible won't give you a pat on your back and tell you you're perfect; in fact, it will set a standard so high that you can only see yourself standing in desperate need of salvation. The Bible won't tell you that God has love and mercy outside of election and salvation; oh no, for if God's love and mercy could be experienced in any other way, then we rob glory from the very name of Jesus! *"... he went on his way rejoicing"* reminds us that the effect of truly understanding God's Word is one of deepest joy. Beware of knowing God's Word without it having any effect in your life—something indifference to the truth will surely bring. Negatively, we do not enter into confusion and chaos by knowing more about His Word. Instead, knowledge of the Truth—who is our Lord Jesus—changes everything. Our lives will never be the same again; for the One who is revealed to us in greater clarity, is also the One who loved us, who gave Himself for us, and who lives in us (Galatians 2:20). All glory to God alone!

Pastor Lanning will be writing the editorial this issue, and it is our sincere *"Understandest thou what thou readest?"* to all our readers who may have questions about the topic.

May God bless your reading and study of His Word, and remember, pass the Salt to whoever may stand in need of it!

Christ regardless, paul

Sola Gratia... et Una Gratia

>> Pastor Andy Lanning



Pastor Andy Lanning is a minister of the Word in CERC.

Sola gratia! Grace alone!

Sola gratia is one of the well-known Latin “five solas” of the Reformation: *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Christus*, *sola Scriptura*, *solus Deo gloria*. The “five solas” summarise the Reformation’s answer to the Roman Catholic Church, which tried to exalt man to a position alongside God. Over against the Roman Catholic teaching that salvation depends partly upon God’s work and partly upon man’s work, the reformers taught that man is justified by faith alone (*sola fide*), because of grace alone (*sola gratia*), on the basis of the work of Christ alone (*solus Christus*). Over against the Roman Catholic teaching that the pope’s word was of equal authority with God’s Word, the reformers taught the authority of Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*). The entire Roman Catholic system robbed God of His glory by giving it to man, whereas the reformers taught that all glory in salvation and revelation belongs to God alone (*solus Deo gloria*).

To this day, *sola gratia* is a dear and beloved doctrine in Reformed churches. This particular “sola” teaches a foundational truth about salvation, namely, that our salvation does not depend in any way upon our worth or works, but upon the sovereign grace of God alone. *Sola gratia* echoes the truth of Ephesians 2:8, 9. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and

that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” If salvation depended upon us, we would perish. Because our salvation depends upon God, we are saved indeed. Thanks be to God that we are saved by grace, and by grace alone! *Sola gratia!* Grace alone!

However, some Reformed teachers and churches today are undermining the glorious gospel of *sola gratia* by their promotion of the theory of common grace. These teachers claim that there are two kinds of divine grace: a particular saving grace of God for His elect people alone, and a non-saving common grace of God for all people. This theory of two graces was recently promoted in Singapore by Rev. Maurice Roberts, a retired minister in the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). Speaking for the 2014 Reformation Day Conference of First Evangelical Reformed Church, which had as its theme *Sola Gratia*, Rev. Roberts taught that God demonstrates His favour toward humanity in two ways: by a common grace for all and a saving grace for His people. The promotional material for the speech promised that Rev. Roberts would “elucidate upon God’s common and saving grace . . .” The speech went beyond this promise, as Rev. Roberts not only elucidated the theory of common grace, but promoted and advocated it as biblical truth.

When Rev. Maurice Roberts, a respected and influential Reformed minister, promotes common grace in Singapore, at the invitation of a Reformed church in Singapore, he gets the attention of Reformed people in Singapore—readers of *Salt Shakers* included. Therefore we are compelled to examine Rev. Roberts’ teaching by asking three questions: What is the theory of common grace? What is the error of common grace? And what are the consequences of common grace?

1. What is the theory of common grace?

Common grace is a theory about God’s

attitude toward all people. It claims that God has a gracious attitude of kindness, compassion, pity, and favour for all men without exception. According to this theory, God’s favour is not limited to His elect people in Christ, but extends to all men, including the reprobate. The name of the theory is helpfully descriptive: *common grace*. The “grace” of *common grace* describes God’s attitude as one of grace, favour, kindness, and compassion. The “common” of *common grace* describes this divine favour as extending to all men in common. According to Rev. Roberts:

“There is . . . a general goodness of God, what you might call a universal kindness of God. Listen to what Jesus says about God: ‘He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.’ He is referring to His heavenly Father, and He says God is kind, merciful to those who never become Christians, who never listen to the gospel, who never read the Bible, who never go to church. God is kind even to these.”

God displays this common grace to all men, so the theory goes, through the many good gifts that He bestows upon them. Not only the elect, but also the reprobate receive many necessary things and many pleasant things from God. According to the theory of common grace, bestowal of such wonderfully good gifts must imply that God also has a positive attitude of grace and favour for all who receive these gifts. According to Rev. Roberts, continuing from the quotation above:

“Now let’s be clear what Jesus meant. He meant that God is so kind that in this life He gives to the wicked many favours which express His goodness and His pity to fallen sinners. What sort of things do I mean? I mean, He gives them food and drink and health and good weather and homes and good government and happiness, etc. You dear people don’t need me to tell you, as I visited your beloved island of Singapore, what a wonderful community you have.

How safe it is, and how much protection you have, and how many services you have of many kinds, and benefits of many kinds. You don't need to be hungry in Singapore - plenty of places to eat, yes. Well, that's a favour from God, and that favour is enjoyed by people who never ever go to church, never ever read the Bible. And Jesus puts it like this: God is kind to the unthankful and to the evil."

Common providence?

Upon reading this description of common grace, some may wonder whether Rev. Roberts is simply teaching a variation of the Reformed doctrine of providence. There may even be some who know that common grace is a false doctrine, and yet are sympathetic to what Rev. Roberts says, who attempt to excuse his theory of common grace by claiming it is merely a theory of common providence.

The term "providence" refers to God's sovereign control over all things. Herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things are distributed to men by God according to His own sovereign will and by His own sovereign direction. Usually, the Reformed faith simply refers to God's sovereign control as "providence". Perhaps it would be legitimate to refer to God's providence as "common providence", because God exercises sovereign control over the elect and the reprobate alike. The elect man and his reprobate neighbour receive the same common providence of rain and sunshine on their crops. They enjoy the protection of the same police force. Their children catch the same flu, and see the same doctor and take the same medicine for relief. God sovereignly distributes to the elect man and to the reprobate man alike.

Such a doctrine of providence, and even "common providence," is biblical and confessional. It is the doctrine of Matthew 5:45. "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." It is the doctrine of Article 13 of the Belgic Confession. "We believe that the same God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but that He rules and

governs them according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment..."

However, Rev. Roberts' theory of common grace is emphatically not a theory of common providence. The Reformed doctrine of providence teaches that God governs both the elect and the reprobate, but it does not teach that God has the same *gracious attitude* toward the elect and reprobate as he governs them. The Reformed doctrine of providence speaks of God's particular favour for the elect, believing saints of God. For example, Article 13 of the Belgic Confession: "This doctrine [of providence] affords us unspeakable consolation, since we are taught thereby that nothing can befall us by chance, but by the direction of our most gracious and heavenly Father . . ." In this article, although God sovereignly distributes to all men in His providence, His favour is only for "us," that is, the elect children of our heavenly Father.

The Reformed doctrine of providence teaches God's universal government, but His particular grace. Rev. Roberts' theory of common grace teaches God's universal government, and God's universal grace. Rev. Roberts' theory is not merely one of common providence, but common grace.

God's wish to save all men

Rev. Roberts intensifies his theory of common grace by claiming that God also desires to save all men. God's common grace, so the teaching goes, is not merely a kindness in God's heart that gives men nice earthly gifts, but a loving-kindness that wishes to give all men the heavenly gift of salvation from sin and eternal life. God's saving grace will only save the elect in the end. But, according to Rev. Roberts, God's common grace makes Him desire the salvation of the elect and the reprobate alike. Quoting Rev. Roberts again:

"But here's the wonderful thing: so kind and generous is God that He expresses to sinners His wish, His desire, that they should all be saved.

Now that's amazing.

I'm going to quote to you now. Listen to the words in Ezekiel 33: 'As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live.' Now God is

saying that to people who hate Him, and who never come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is saying, I have no pleasure in your death, sinners. My wish is that you turn, sinners, from your wicked way."

Rev. Roberts repeatedly uses the term "sinners" in the quotation above. The sinners he is talking about are not elect sinners, predestined to salvation, but reprobate sinners, predestined to hell. They are the sinners "who hate [God], and who never come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." To these reprobate sinners, Rev. Roberts says, "God... expresses... His wish, His desire, that they should all be saved."

2. What is the error of common grace?

Rev. Roberts' theory of common grace is that God has a gracious attitude of kindness and mercy in His heart for all men, including the reprobate; that God distributes earthly gifts to all men in His gracious favour for them; and that God graciously wishes that all men would be saved.

Rev. Roberts' theory of common grace is false doctrine.

It is false doctrine because it is unbiblical. The Bible teaches that God's grace is particular. That is, the objects of God's grace in Scripture are never all men without exception, but always His elect people alone. From the first reference to grace in Genesis 6:8 to the last reference in Revelation 22:21, God's grace is for the elect. Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD (Genesis 6:8), as did Moses (Exodus 33:17). God was gracious to His church in the Old Testament (Exodus 33:16), as He is to His church in the New (Romans 16:24). Grace is for the beloved of God, called to be saints (Romans 1:7), for them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, that call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:2, 3), for the faithful in Christ Jesus, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:1, 2, 4), for all the saints in Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:1, 2), for the saints and faithful brethren in Christ (Colossians 1:1, 2), for the church which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:1), for the dearly beloved (Philemon 1, 3), for the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father (1 Peter 1:2), for them that have obtained like precious faith with the apostles through

the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:1, 2), for the elect lady and her children (2 John 1, 3), and for the servants of Jesus Christ who receive His revelation (Revelation 1:1 with 22:21).

What makes the particularity of God's grace stark and clear is that the Bible always describes God's attitude towards the reprobate as an attitude of wrath, never as an attitude of favour. Always, from eternity to eternity, God curses the wicked. Indeed, His curse permeates their entire earthly life, for His curse is in their house (Proverbs 3:33). He bestows many wonderful gifts upon the ungodly, not because He is gracious to them, but to make their path slippery as they slide into destruction and desolation (Psalm 73). He hates the reprobate Esau (Romans 9:13) and Esau's children, the reprobate nation of Edom (Malachi 1:1-5). He appoints the disobedient to wrath, and makes them stumble in this life upon the Rock of offence (1 Peter 2:7, 8). He before of old ordained men to condemnation, and in this life pronounces woe upon them (Jude 4, 11).

In Rev. Roberts' theory, God's grace is common. In the Bible, God's grace is strictly particular.

The Bible teaches only particular grace, and knows nothing of a common grace, for this profound reason: God's grace is in Jesus Christ. That is, God's attitude of favour is never displayed apart from Christ, but is always grace in Christ. After all, God's attitude of gracious favour is not an attitude first of all for us, His people, but an attitude of gracious favour for Christ Jesus. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Therefore, for us, God's grace is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1). God graciously chose us in Christ in the decree of election (Romans 11:5, Ephesians 1:4). We are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24). God's grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:21). The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor; that we, through His poverty, might be rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). In the ages to come, God will show the exceeding riches of His grace

in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7). Therefore, God declares to His people in Christ, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (2 Thessalonians 3:18).

Because God's grace is in Christ, it always irresistibly and infallibly saves. Grace in Christ does not merely bestow earthly treasures, but heavenly treasures. Grace in Christ does not merely wish to save, but actually saves (Ephesians 2:8, 9), justifies (Romans 3:24), gives eternal life (Romans 5:21), sustains through infirmities (2 Corinthians 12:9), makes accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6), redeems in Christ's blood and forgives sins (Ephesians 1:7), quickens (Ephesians 2:5), calls with a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9), and helps in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

In Rev. Roberts' theory, God has a grace that does not save. In the Bible, God's grace always saves.

3. What are the consequences of common grace?

Churches and teachers that tolerate and promote common grace open themselves up to serious consequences. The worst consequence is that they make a mockery of God. The god of common grace is divided against himself. He cannot make up his mind whether he loves certain people or not, whether he should save them or not. In his eternal decree of reprobation, he righteously hates them and wills their destruction, while in his common grace, he at the same time mercifully wishes their salvation. How perplexed the god of common grace must be as he holds both love and hatred, both blessing and curse in his heart for all of the reprobate! Not even the pagans teach that their idol gods are this confused, but the god of common grace remains impossibly bewildered. Such a god is unstable and confused; such a god is to be pitied. However, the true God of the Bible, the God of particular grace, is not divided against Himself. He is not confused about His attitude toward men. In time and eternity, He graciously blesses His chosen people in Christ; in time and eternity, He righteously curses the reprobate. With perfect consistency, He loves His own; with perfect consistency, He hates the impenitent wicked. Teachers of common grace mock the true God when they assign

to Jehovah the fictional attitude of common grace.

Another, related consequence of common grace is that its proponents not only mock God, but they also mock His grace. In the theory of common grace, God's grace is utterly impotent. In common grace, God supposedly wishes and desires the salvation of all men, but that same grace is unable actually to accomplish the salvation of all men. People continue to "hate Him" and "never come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," even though God expresses to them "His wish, His desire, that they should all be saved." God's so-called common grace fails to accomplish what it desires. It is powerless, impotent, useless grace. Fallen man should tell the god of common grace to keep his grace to himself, thereby sparing both god and man the frustration of such impotence. However, the true grace of God is sovereign, powerful, and irresistible. God's grace always accomplishes what it desires, infallibly saving those whom God desires to save. The "I" in the Reformed acronym TULIP does not stand for "impotent grace" but "irresistible grace". Reformed teachers and Reformed churches who know the irresistible grace of TULIP have no business tolerating, much less teaching, impotent common grace.

Another devastating consequence of common grace is that it opens God's people to doubt whether God is truly good to them. Especially, the child of God who suffers in this life is taught by common grace to question God's goodness to him. After all, if nice earthly things are the evidence of God's favour, then lack of these things must be the evidence of God's anger. This common grace thinking was exactly the sin of Asaph in Psalm 73. He noted with great envy that the wicked prosper (vs. 3) while he was plagued (vs. 14). At first, Asaph approached this problem from a common grace theology, assuming that God's gracious goodness was demonstrated in earthly things. Therefore, his first conclusion was that it was vain to be a child of God, because the wicked received all the evidences of God's grace. "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning"

(vss. 12-14). So spiritually paralyzing were these doubts that they almost drove Asaph to abandon the faith. “But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (vss. 2, 3). These are the awful doubts that common grace theology can create in God’s people. How can Reformed teachers and churches entertain, much less promote, such a theology?

God removed Asaph’s doubt by bringing him finally to understand that God’s attitude toward people is not demonstrated through the provision of earthly things. Rather, God always despises the impenitent ungodly (vs. 20) and is always graciously good to his people (vs. 1). The gifts that God gives in this life to the ungodly only hasten their plunge into destruction (vs. 18, 19), while the sorrows that He sends to His people are used to draw them nearer to Him (vs. 26). God rescued Asaph from devastating spiritual doubt by taking away Asaph’s common grace theology and giving him instead a particular grace theology. Likewise, it is incumbent upon all Reformed teachers and churches today to teach and defend God’s particular grace, and to repudiate the soul-destroying error

of common grace.

Una Gratia

The theory of common grace is false doctrine, with serious consequences. But it is popular false doctrine.

It has able, influential proponents, including Rev. Maurice Roberts. It has many adherents, including large Reformed denominations throughout the nations. It finds sympathy almost wherever it goes in the Reformed world. Indeed, the false doctrine of common grace has now been tolerated in Singapore, as Rev. Roberts openly promoted his theory at the invitation of a local Reformed church. The false doctrine of common grace is popular, and spreading.

Therefore, Reformed believers in Singapore, now more than ever, must stand for the biblical truth of God’s saving, particular grace. Standing for the truth of God’s saving grace will mean vigorously repudiating the theory of common grace as an intolerable false doctrine.

Perhaps Reformed believers in Singapore could even advance the cause of the true doctrine of God’s particular grace by coining a new term: *una gratia*.

The Latin *sola gratia* means “grace alone.” The Latin *una gratia* means “one grace.” Just as *sola gratia* expresses the biblical truth that we are saved by grace alone, so *una gratia* expresses the biblical truth that such saving grace is the only kind of grace there is. There are not two kinds of grace of God, one saving and particular, the other non-saving and common. God’s grace is only saving and particular: one grace, *una gratia*. Just as *sola gratia* is a helpful, memorable way to distinguish the Reformed faith from all theories of works-righteousness, so *una gratia* could be a helpful, memorable way to distinguish the Reformed faith from the theory of common grace. *Sola gratia* is a rallying cry for all lovers of the gospel of grace; *una gratia* could be a rallying cry for all lovers of sovereign, particular grace. *Sola gratia! et (and) Una gratia!*

Regardless of whether Reformed believers use this phrase or not, let us maintain the truth that this phrase represents. We are saved by grace alone, and such saving grace is the only grace there is. By this truth, God is honoured and glorified as the sovereign, gracious God, who mercifully and infallibly saves His own people in Jesus Christ.

Sola gratia! et Una gratia! Soli Deo Gloria!

A Closer Look at Selected Passages

>> Pastor Andy Lanning



Pastor Andy Lanning is a minister of the Word in CERC.

In the course of his speech on God’s grace, Rev. Roberts referred to four passages of Scripture as proof for his theory of common grace: Luke 6:35, Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9, and Luke 13:34. Contrary to Rev. Roberts’ interpretation, none of these passages teach common grace. In fact, all of them teach sovereign, particular grace. Let us take a closer look at these verses to see this.

What about Luke 6:35?

“But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye

therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:35, 36).

Rev. Roberts’ explanation of the passage: “There is... a general goodness of God, what you might call a universal kindness of God. Listen to what Jesus says about God: ‘He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.’ He is referring to his heavenly Father, and he says God is kind, merciful to those who never become Christians, who never listen to the gospel, who never read the Bible, who never go to church. God is kind even to these. Now let’s be clear what Jesus meant. He meant that God is so kind that in this life he gives to the wicked many

favours which express his goodness and his pity to fallen sinners. What sort of things do I mean? I mean, he gives them food and drink and health and good weather and homes and good government and happiness, etc.”

Rev. Roberts interprets the “unthankful” and the “evil” to be the reprobate, “those who never become Christians.” But if that is the proper interpretation, then Luke 6:35 does not merely teach a common, universal grace, but a common, universal salvation. That is because the word “kind” in Luke 6:35 does not merely refer to a non-saving positive attitude of God – a common grace; rather it refers to a redeeming favour of God – a saving grace. The word “kind” in Luke 6:35 is the Greek word *chreestos*, which is used elsewhere in Scripture to refer to God’s saving grace. For example, in Romans 2:4, this kindness is God’s saving goodness that leads to repentance: “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness (*chreestos*) of God leadeth thee to repentance?” Even in Luke 6:35, the immediately following verse makes clear that God’s kindness is His mercy: “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:36). In Luke 6:35, God’s kindness is His saving grace. Therefore, if the “unthankful” and “evil” are the reprobate, as Rev. Roberts says, then the passage teaches universal saving grace. If Rev. Roberts’ interpretation is correct, then the passage proves far more than he intended.

However, let us assume for a moment that Rev. Roberts’ interpretation is correct. Let us assume that the “unthankful” and the “evil” are all men, including the reprobate. And let us assume that God’s “kindness” is merely a common grace kindness, a mere non-saving mildness. Let us now see what the text supposedly teaches: “God is so kind that in this life He gives to the wicked many favours which express His goodness and His pity to fallen sinners. What sort of things do I mean? I mean, He gives them food and drink and health and good weather and homes and good government and happiness, etc.” But what about the fallen sinners who are sick, who are injured, who are abused, who are bereaved, who are starving, who are poor, who are broken down under brutal regimes, who perish in typhoons and earthquakes, whose homes

are broken, who are afraid? In Rev. Roberts’ interpretation of Luke 6:35, there can be no such people, for God is kind to all. If Rev. Roberts’ interpretation is correct, then the passage proves an absurdity.

The proper interpretation of Luke 6:35 is that the “unthankful” and the “evil” are God’s elect people, described according to our sinful nature. God is kind to us with a saving love, even though there is nothing about us that is lovely. We are corrupt, depraved, and fallen; yet, God loved us from all eternity, sent Christ to die for us, and renewed us. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Even now, being born again, we are still often unthankful and still often commit evil; we still have with us the old man of sin. And yet, even now, God is kind to us, bringing us to repentance, strengthening our faith in Jesus Christ, and preparing a home for us in glory. Truly, God is kind to the unthankful and evil!

God’s kindness toward us, who were his enemies by nature, is our motive to love our own enemies. Jesus’ main point in this section of Luke 6 is the command, “Love your enemies” (Luke 6:27, 35). This command is not easy for us to follow, because our enemies are cruel to us. They hate us (Luke 6:27), curse us (28), spitefully use us (28), smite us (29), and steal from us (29). Such enemies do not deserve our love. But then again, we did not deserve God’s love either. His love is not given to those who deserve it, but to those who are by nature unthankful and evil enemies. The Almighty God loves his enemies; as children of the Highest, so must we also love our enemies.

There is one difference between God’s love for his enemies and our love for our enemies: we are called to love all our enemies, while God only loves some of his enemies. God is only kind to the unthankful and evil who are His chosen people in Christ; we are called to love all our enemies without exception, including the reprobate. Why is this? First of all, because God alone knows who the elect and reprobate are, but we do not know. Knowing exactly whom He has chosen, God can be perfectly discriminating in His love. We, on the other hand, cannot discern how God has predestined different people. Who could have known that the

thief on the cross, cruelly mocking Jesus as they both suffered, was elect? Who would have guessed that Paul, fierce persecutor of the church, was one of God’s chosen people? We do not know, as God does, who are the elect and reprobate, and therefore we are called to love all of our enemies. Second, God is sometimes pleased to use our love for our enemies to call His chosen people out of darkness into his marvellous light. When men behold us doing good to those who hate us, blessing those that curse us, praying for those who spitefully use us, turning the other cheek, and giving to everyone who asks (Luke 6:27-30), they may be moved by such kindness to seek its source in God. As Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

God’s kindness in Luke 6:35 is His kindness of saving grace. The unthankful and evil are His elect people, whom God in His kindness saves. Luke 6:35 does not teach common grace, but particular grace.

What about Ezekiel 33:11?

“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11).

Rev. Roberts’ explanation of the passage: “But here’s the wonderful thing: so kind and generous is God that he expresses to sinners his wish, his desire, that they should all be saved. Now that’s amazing. I’m going to quote to you now. Listen to the words in Ezekiel 33. ‘As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live.’ Now God is saying that to people who hate Him and who never come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is saying, ‘I have no pleasure in your death, sinners. My wish is that you turn, sinners, from your wicked way. O, I press upon you, sinners, that you take seriously the claims of the gospel to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, my dear Son.’ Now I find that amazing, because God says that to people who turn their back upon Him, and do not listen to Him, and ever despise what He has to say. And that surely is a sign of the loving-kindness of the Lord.”

In Rev. Roberts' interpretation, the "wicked" in Ezekiel 33 are the reprobate, the "people who hate [God] and who never come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, the reasoning goes, when God says that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, He is expressing "to sinners His wish, His desire, that they should all be saved."

However, the "wicked" in Ezekiel 33:11 are not the reprobate, but the elect. God has no pleasure in the eternal death of His chosen people, even though they were caught up for a time in the wickedness of the apostatising nation of Israel. God makes clear in this verse that He is not talking about all people, but only His chosen people, in two ways.

First, God specifically addresses His particular people: "*Why will ye die, O house of Israel?*" God is not expressing His general attitude about all men throughout the earth. In fact, God is not even addressing all men throughout the earth in this passage. He is talking to, and about, the "house of Israel." The house of Israel was the Old Testament church. These are the people whose death holds no pleasure for God.

If God is talking about His church, why does He call them "wicked"? Because this prophecy was written after the culmination of Israel's apostasy as a nation. Throughout much of the history of the kings, the nation had been desperately wicked, violating every commandment of God with increasing zeal. For her wickedness, what was left of the nation of Israel was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, and the people of God now languished in captivity in Babylon. Nevertheless, God still had His chosen people, His elect remnant, among the captives. God came to them through the prophet Ezekiel with this call to repentance: "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways." Even as God called them to repentance, He announced the good news of His grace—His particular grace—to them: "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

Second, God emphasises the particularity of His grace by adding an important qualifier. God does not merely say, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Rather, He qualifies it by saying, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; *but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*" God is not announcing a general love for

all wicked people, but a love for turning wicked people. And who are the turning wicked people? God's chosen people, who are brought to repent of their sins by the sovereign grace of God. When God turns them, they are turned indeed (Jeremiah 31:18).

Ezekiel 33 does not teach a universal grace of God that desires the salvation of all men, including the reprobate; it teaches a sovereign, particular grace that accomplishes the turning of his elect people in Christ.

What about 2 Peter 3:9?

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

Rev. Roberts made the claim that "so kind and generous is God that he expresses to sinners his wish, his desire, that they should all be saved." After quoting Ezekiel 33:11, he then quoted a portion of this verse. "Listen to what Peter says in 2 Peter 3:9. 'For God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' 2 Peter 3:9. We know very well from these words that God is a kind God, a merciful God, a piteous God."

The "any" and the "all" of 2 Peter 3:9 are not any and all men whatsoever. These words refer very specifically to God's chosen people alone. This would be obvious if Rev. Roberts had quoted the verse in its entirety, especially the phrase that "God is longsuffering to us-ward." The passage is not teaching a general longsuffering of God, but a particular longsuffering – longsuffering to *us*. The "us" toward whom God is longsuffering is the people to whom Peter is writing: "them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). These are the believers, whom God does not merely wish to save, but actually saves. The proper reading of the verse would be this: God is not willing that any *of us* should perish, but that *all of us* should come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9 does not teach a common grace desire of God to save all men, but a saving grace will of God to save all of us, His chosen people in Christ.

What about Luke 13:34?

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13:34).

Rev. Roberts' explanation of the passage: "And if you want to see that [wish for all men's salvation] illustrated in the life of Jesus, then watch what he does when he is preaching on one occasion outside Jerusalem, and the people refuse to believe his message. Did Jesus say to them, 'Oh pity you, you won't listen to my message. Too bad, that's your own fault.' No, no, he wept over Jerusalem. The incarnate Son of God, he wept over sinners. 'O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not.' You see the kindness, the compassion, the pity, the favour which God the Son has for lost sinners."

To understand this passage properly, it is important to quote it correctly. Jesus is not saying that He had often wanted to gather Jerusalem, and that Jerusalem refused to be gathered. Rev. Roberts' mistaken quotation of the verse leaves that impression: "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not." Rather, Jesus is saying that he had often wanted to gather *Jerusalem's children*, but Jerusalem opposed the gathering of her children. An accurate quotation makes this clear: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...; how often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not!"

The children of Jerusalem that Jesus desired to gather were all of His chosen people. However, "Jerusalem" opposed Jesus gathering her children. That is, the rulers of the city and the leaders of the Jews were constantly trying to undermine Jesus' teaching. In fact, the Pharisees had just threatened Jesus with death if He did not leave Jerusalem immediately (Luke 13:31). In doing so, the leaders of the Jews showed that they were of the same spiritual character as those in the Old Testament "which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee."

In spite of the opposition of the leaders,

Jesus would indeed gather all of His people, Jerusalem's children, to Himself. According to Jesus' own word in another place, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). Therefore, Jesus' words are not a lament that His will had been frustrated, but an expression of anger over the leaders' contrary will. As Jesus went on to say, the leaders' house is left to them desolate (Luke 13:35).

Conclusion

The four passages that Rev. Roberts cited do not support his theory of common grace. Only with a superficial reading do they even appear to teach common grace, but a careful study shows that none of them have anything to do with a supposed common grace. In fact, all four passages actually work against Rev. Roberts' theory of common grace, as all of them teach God's saving, particular grace in Christ alone.

The theory of common grace is thoroughly unbiblical. Therefore, let us not give it a voice among us or tolerate it being taught among us. Rather, let us repudiate this false doctrine, and confess the only kind of grace there is: sovereign, particular, saving grace!

And let us do so to the praise of the glory of God's grace!

Proving the Content Sufficiency of Scripture (Belgic Confession 7c)

>> Pastor Angus Stewart



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Belgic Confession 7: The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to Be the Only Rule of Faith

We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein. For, since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures; nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul saith. For, since it is forbidden to add unto or take away any thing from the Word of God, it doth thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. Neither do we consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees, or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule, which the apostles have taught us, saying, Try the spirits whether they are of God. Likewise, if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house.

As proof for the content sufficiency of Scripture, the truth that the Bible provides us with all we need for our doctrine and life, we shall consider, in turn, two passages, II Timothy 3:15-17 and Psalm 19:7-11, by providing commentary on them.

II Timothy 3:15-17

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are

able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15).

The Holy Scriptures in this verse refer to the Old Testament, for some of the New Testament was not written when Paul penned these words and probably none of the New Testament was produced and available to Timothy when he was a child. Thus this verse

teaches that the Old Testament (not even the full Bible) was sufficient for a little child or infant (not an adult), like Timothy who was taught by his godly mother and grandmother (Acts 16:13; II Tim. 1:5; 3:14), to be saved through faith in the coming Christ, the anointed One promised by the prophets.

How much more is the New Testament

and the whole Bible sufficient for the salvation of the elect through its doctrine of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone, powerfully blessed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit? We and our children today have no more need of the apocryphal gospels, the unwritten tradition of the church of Rome, pictures of Jesus or God whispering in our ear than young Timothy did.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:16).

“All Scripture,” by its very nature as a divine oracle, whether this applies to the Old or the New Testament, is God-breathed (the idea of the word “inspired” here). This being the only book directly and infallibly produced by the Holy Spirit, it must have been, and was, given for great purposes so that it is highly “profitable.”

The first of the four purposes for which God gave us His written Word is “doctrine.” This means that the Bible itself is not doctrine. Rather, it is the inspired book from which doctrine is derived or deduced “by good and necessary consequence” (*Westminster Confession 1:6*). Those fundamentalists who rail against the Reformed creeds fail to understand this. Orthodox confessions of the true biblical doctrine are required of the church, for God’s Word tells us here that it was specifically given to us, first of all, “for doctrine”!

The remaining three purposes of Scripture flow from the first. God teaches us the truth (“doctrine”) which admonishes us for our errors and disobedience (“reproof”) so that we are pointed to the right path (“correction”) and told how we must live (“instruction in righteousness”). What more does the saint need for his spiritual and ethical thinking and behaviour as a citizen of the kingdom of God?

“That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:17).

The goal of the God-breathed and highly profitable Scriptures is that “the man of God” (Timothy and all ministers of the Word) and, by extension, all the faithful, both male and female, “may be perfect”—spiritually complete (not sinless), men and women of integrity—and “thoroughly furnished”—properly prepared and equipped—“unto all good works.” Do you see how all-embracing this verse is? “*Perfect*,” “*thoroughly furnished*” (not half-prepared), “*unto all good works*” (not just some).

Remember that II Timothy 3:15-17 comes at the end of the penultimate chapter in Paul’s last canonical letter prior to his martyrdom (4:6-8). The apostle knew whereof he wrote. He had found by experience that the Scriptures are fully sufficient for

doctrine and life—for himself and for the church.

Illumined and blessed to us by the Spirit, the Bible is sufficient for creeds (what we believe), character (what we are) and commands (what we must do). This is what we receive, and what we expect to receive and, thank God, what we do receive, as we read the Bible and listen to faithful preaching with a humble heart and by His grace.

Psalm 19:7-11

Psalm 19:7-11: “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.”

In these verses from a beautiful Psalm about general (vv. 1-6) and special (vv. 7-14) revelation, God’s Word is spoken of as the “law,” “testimony,” “statutes,” “commandment” and “judgments” of the LORD. Scripture is also here called, according to the rules of Hebrew parallelism, the “fear” of the LORD, because it wonderfully

“ The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes...”



declares the glory of God and it is by reading, hearing, discussing, praying and meditating upon the Word that our hearts are filled with a holy awe of the Most High, our heavenly Father in Jesus Christ.

Look at the many adjectives describing the virtues of the Scriptures: “perfect” (i.e., complete), “sure,” “right,” “pure” (i.e., clear), “clean,” everlasting (“enduring forever”), “true” and “righteous altogether.” Behold the many wonderful things the Word of God does, as it is blessed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit: “converting the soul,” “making wise the simple,” “rejoicing the heart” and “enlightening the eyes.”

No wonder that the perfect, pure and perspicuous Scriptures which bring us wisdom, illumination, conversion and joy are “more to be desired” even “than much fine gold” and are “sweeter also than honey.” Not only is the Bible

eminently desirable and sweet, it is also “profitable,” to quote II Timothy 3:16, in two other ways. First, Scripture *warns* us against the snares of sin so that we avoid transgression and chastisement. Second, God *rewards* us richly for “keeping” His Word.

Thus the Christian does not need the world’s political correctness or ungodly philosophies or modern psychology with a thin biblical veneer or preaching filled with “human interest stories.” He needs the Word of God coming to him in reading, sermons, singing the Psalms and fellowship, and abiding in His heart.

Experiential Knowledge

But how does the child of God personally know and feel confident in the sufficiency of Scripture? It comes more and more as the believer reads the Bible again and again, immerses himself in Reformed preaching and feeds upon solid Christian books so

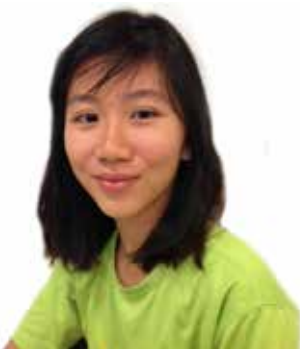
that the Word sinks into his heart and soul. Circumstances will arise—and some very difficult ones too—and he will see how the Scriptures apply and what he must do. He will have his “senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14) and he will “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). He will have no need for charismatic or worldly “supplements” to the Word, for his confession and comfort is “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105)!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Can you think of Bible texts proving the sufficiency of Scripture that are not mentioned in this article?
2. Is your personal grasp of God’s Word sufficient so that you find Scripture providing you with doctrinal and ethical direction? If not, do you realise where the deficiency lies?

The Errors of Korean Dramas (Part 1)

>> Lim Tze Yan



Lim Tze Yan is a confessing young adult in CERC.

Introduction

Dramas in today’s modern society are not confined to television channels but are also easily accessible on the internet. Such accessibility is especially true for Korean dramas. The Korean Wave of entertainment, also known as the *hallyu*, has engulfed many Southeast Asian countries with their catchy and appealing pop songs, films and dramas.

Why such popularity?

Many critics have attributed the popularity of the Korean Wave to the traditional values portrayed in the content of these dramas (Farrar, 2010 & Jian, n.d.). South Korea is “one of many East Asian countries” that still take great pride in their traditions and social values that came from Confucius (Moersch, 2012, p.3). Not surprisingly, therefore, traces of traditional Confucian values can

“ Watching Korean dramas, on the contrary, leads us further away from God and His Word. It causes us to believe the lie that the dramas’ characters and their contents convey – that man can live a good and fulfilling life as long as he walk in the ways of those Confucian values.... ”

be found in a majority of Korean dramas. Many in the Asian culture, including us, Singaporeans, are brought up ingrained with the idea that following Confucian values, such as “family-centred behaviour [and], respect for the elderly” (Jian, n.d., para. 4) is true obedience and honourable behaviour. Therefore, when we come across such age-old values in Korean dramas, we support and applaud them.

However, how should we, Reformed Christians, respond to the *hallyu* of Korean dramas? Should we be engulfed by the *hallyu* too, thinking that Korean dramas are morally a notch above ‘other’ dramas, and that they can teach us good values as well?

Confucianism and its Influence on Korean Dramas

Confucius, a man declared the greatest of all, “the sage without flaw”, held to four main virtues for the foundation to a life of perfect goodness (Shinn, n.d., para. 9). These virtues are sincerity, benevolence, filial piety, and propriety (Shinn, n.d.). They are defined by Confucius as such (Shinn, n.d.):

Sincerity – to be honest, not only in word and deed, but also in one’s heart, as well as faithful in keeping one’s promises.

Benevolence – showing kindness towards others and always ready and

eager to help in times of need.

Filial piety – also known as “the root of all virtue” is bringing honour to one’s family name, respecting and bringing joy to one’s parents.

Propriety – embracing the whole aspect of human conduct; teaching man to do what is right.

As mentioned in the introduction, these virtues are portrayed in most Korean dramas. In the majority of Korean dramas, characters that depict such virtues are “rewarded” with favour and praises from others. On the contrary, characters who portray values that are contrary to Confucianism are “rewarded” with despise from others. One example is a 2005 drama entitled *Delightful Girl Chun-hyang*.

Chun-hyang, the female protagonist, is a typical high school girl – sweet, kind, and smart. She holds multiple jobs such as “deliver[ing] newspapers, clean[ing] ponds and work[ing] as a photographer” to support herself and her mother financially. Chun-hyang also does exceptionally well in her studies, and ranks top in school. As Chun-hyang portrays those fundamental values upheld by Confucius, she is portrayed as a well-liked girl and is highly esteemed by the people in her neighbourhood. On the other hand, Mong-ryong, the male protagonist in the drama,

is the total opposite of Chun-hyang – irresponsible, lazy, and constantly getting into trouble (Wikipedia, 2014). As these attributes are contrary to Confucianism, Mong-ryong is repeatedly berated by his elders and teachers for dishonouring his family’s name and being unfilial.

The Word of God against Korean Dramas

Up till here, this drama with its depicted values sounds pretty good, does it not? The characters, Chun-hyang and Mong-ryong, illustrate positive values which we should learn and negative values which we should stay away from.

However, what is the motive (or foundation) of these fundamental values that the characters of many Korean dramas depict? Does the Word of God consent to the motive of these values that are depicted in Korean Dramas?

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” (2 Timothy 3:5)

In his second letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul warned the young pastor of men who proclaimed to be Christians, who readily lent a hand to the needy, who willingly gave their money to the poor, but denied the power of God. Outwardly, these men looked good, but upon further examination, they had no desire to

glorify, reverence, and worship God. The deeds of these men were done out of self-love (verse 2).

Similarly, these “good deeds” illustrated in Korean dramas are not done in the fear of the Lord. Therefore the underlying motives of these “good virtues” portrayed by the characters are self-seeking. These dramas also portray that man is good by nature if he tries to be good. However, we know that true Christian virtues such as sincerity and filial piety have its fundamental and only source from God, the Fountain of all good. God alone gives His children the Holy Spirit. God promised that “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33). This promise is fulfilled in the New Testament by the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, by the work of the Holy Spirit, our motive for bearing fruit is now founded in Christ alone – as children of God, we strive to live a life of thankfulness that will glorify Him for the salvation that He has given to us (Lord’s Day 32, Q&A 86; Matthew 5:16). Any fruit born apart from this motive is not of Christ – it is antichristian!

The error of Korean dramas—like all other dramas—is that it fails to and never gives God the glory and honour He deserves. Korean dramas do not lead us to Christ. Neither do they teach us to recognise that as totally depraved men, incapable of doing any good at all, we are in need of Christ to give us strength to walk in the Spirit. Watching Korean dramas, on the contrary, leads us further away from God and His Word. It causes us to believe the lie that the dramas’ characters and their contents convey – that man can live a good and fulfilling life as long as he walk in the ways of those Confucian values. As Prof. (then

Pastor) Ronald Cammenga put in his article, *The Christian and Drama*, “The content of the theatre [drama included] must be either that which is holy or that which is sinful. Every subject dealt with must fall into either one of these two categories”. Anything that does not lead us to Christ and the Gospel, is sin. Although Korean Dramas portray ‘good deeds and values’, they are not based on God-centred motives. Thus, these ‘good deeds and values’ are sinful (Romans 14:23b).

Now, knowing that Korean Dramas do not teach us good values, where should we go to for instruction in truly good values?

We must always look to the infallible Word of God to teach us God-centred virtues. As Paul ended off in the same chapter of the second epistle to Timothy, he declared: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (verses 16 and 17). There is no other place where we can be reprovved, corrected and instructed from. Scripture is God’s Word to us, His children; it makes us wise unto salvation and it is where the power of God lies. Scripture does not teach us a form of godliness, but rather; it teaches us true godliness by the power of God, worked by the Spirit of Christ.

Our Response in Accordance to the Word of God

Does Korean drama still draw us with their seemingly moral content?

Paul exhorted Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:5 to turn away from such forms of godliness. Paul’s exhortation is for us too; guard our hearts from false

godliness that is broadcasted through Korean dramas (Proverbs 4:23).

It is not sufficient that we turn away from watching Korean dramas – this is only half of our calling. We can turn away from the entertainment of Korean dramas but continue to waste our time on other frivolous entertainment.

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:15-16)

The other half of our calling as children of Light is to redeem our time. As businessmen who diligently make purchases, not wasting any money-making opportunity, we must be diligent in “buying up” our time; not letting it go to waste on drama watching. In essence, our calling is to walk a sanctified life – a life that makes the most of every moment of time to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). It is prioritising each day’s activities and spending “appropriate amount of time on critical activities” (Mowery, 2013, para. 7). These activities include reading doctrinally sound Christian literature, which are readily available from the Protestant Reformed Churches and from our very own church library. These provide instruction for our spiritual walk and draw us closer to God. Reading simple pamphlets printed by the Christian Literature Ministry can be a stepping stone to reading ‘heavier’ Christian literature. Having our time used on attending Covenant Keepers and church activities spiritually nourishes us, teaching us more about God and His Word. It draws us closer to the brethren in Church, that we may be an encouragement to one another in our pilgrim life. All in all, our calling

as children of God extends to all aspects of our lives – they must be consecrated to God.

Yet, in no way can we attempt to redeem this God-given time by our own strength. Pray—pray to our Heavenly Father for grace to be a diligent steward with the time He has given us. Pray for His strength to work in us to fight the temptation of indulging in worldly and godless Korean dramas. And finally, pray for true godliness towards our Father, that our desire to live antithetically may be motivated only by the love of God.

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The Church and Her Budget

>> Elder Lee Kong Wee



Elder Lee Kong Wee is the husband of Dorcas and their family is blessed with 2 children.

Introduction

The church of Jesus Christ in this present world is the church militant. She fights the good fight of faith with the certain hope that one day she will be the church triumphant. Her members, though saints, washed whiter than snow in the blood of her Head and Saviour Jesus Christ, are yet

sinful. They fight against their mortal (spiritual) enemies in this world – their own sinful flesh, the ungodly world, and the devil. The church militant, while she remains in this present corruptible world, uses means to accomplish the end and goal of her warfare, that is, the realisation of the Kingdom of Christ as the church triumphant in the new heaven and new earth. Among others, money is one of such means.

In the 21st century, money has become the universal currency, or commodity, that drives the economic engine across the globe. It has become a necessary item that virtually every human being needs in his daily life to live and operate in society. This holds true for the Christian and the church too. To carry out her mandate to preach the

Gospel, the church needs money. She is obliged to support the ministers of the Gospel with good and sufficient means for their faithful labours as her under-shepherds. The church needs money to send out missionaries and perform work in mission fields. She needs money to carry out her various ministries and work on this earth, all of which are part of and serve her one great calling on this earth – to preach the everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, I must quickly qualify what I have said above, lest we misunderstand and place a disproportionate amount of importance on money in relation to the Kingdom of God. Necessary as it is, it is after all only one of many means that God is pleased to use for the accomplishment of His purposes. God certainly can accomplish His

eternal purposes without money, for He has infinite resources at His sovereign disposal. But that He has ordained money to have a place in human history only goes to show that even money is part of His eternal plan that serves the realisation of His purpose of establishing finally the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the new heaven and new earth. For one thing, in using money in the service of sin, the ungodly fill up the cup of iniquity and hasten their own destruction and the coming of the Lord.

In approaching the subject of the how the church ought to budget, I want to begin by first considering the fundamental principle that governs the Christian with regards to his attitude towards money. We will only be able to budget properly when we have understood this principle and how it governs our attitude towards money.

The Fundamental Principle

The fundamental principle that governs the believer with regards to his attitude towards money, and more broadly all earthly possessions, is the fact that he is a pilgrim and stranger in this present world. This world is not our home, we are but passing through. We are in the world, but not of the world. Here we have no abiding place to rest our sin-weary souls. Like Abraham, we “look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:10). We are on a journey *home*. As such, our attitude towards our earthly possessions, including money, is that we keep a ‘loose grip’ on them, and are ready to let them go at any time. After all, all the earthly possessions we have in this world are our luggage that we carry with us on our journey home. We need them only for the journey.

When we reach home, we have no use for them any longer. Therefore, our luggage ought not to weigh us down, but rather quicken us in our journey. We are called to use everything that we carry with us to serve and promote the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose Face we desire to see when we finally reach home. The value of money for the Christian pilgrim is not that he can acquire more and more of the things of this earth for his own personal enjoyment and physical comfort, but that he may use it for the advancement of the Kingdom of his Lord while he is yet on this earth, and acquire that which is necessary for his journey home.

The fact that the Christian is a pilgrim and stranger in this present world

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The money, and all earthly possessions, her Lord gives to her while she is on earth, are all to be used towards the end of the realisation of the Kingdom of the Lord...

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guides and directs how he views and spends money. So it is for the church. The money, and all earthly possessions, her Lord gives to her while she is on earth, are all to be used towards the end of the realisation of the Kingdom of her Lord – the heavenly, spiritual kingdom of King Jesus. Not for her

members’ personal pleasure and indulgence. And certainly not for the building of a physical, earthly kingdom in this present world.

What then are some principles that should guide us in our budgeting as a church that flow out of this fundamental principle?

The Church’s One Calling

First and foremost, the church, as the church militant and a ‘body’ of pilgrims and strangers, must be very clear about her **purpose and calling** on this earth. Knowing that this present corruptible world will be finally destroyed by fire on the Day of Judgment, and the new heaven and earth will be ushered in, her goal is not the building of an earthly, physical kingdom. Her cause is not to eradicate poverty, to promote world peace, or to reduce global warming. She does not engage in political debates or seek to have a name and place in society. The church is not called to start up and run businesses in the name of ‘evangelism’. She is not called to be investors in the stock or property market. She is not an entertainment centre or social club. The one, great, and indeed only, calling of the church of Jesus Christ on this earth is the preaching of the Gospel. When Christ was on this earth, He left His disciples without doubt that His main work and focus while He was on earth was to preach the Gospel (Matthew 4:17; 11:1, Mark 1:38, Luke 4:18). All the miracles that He performed were to authenticate His preaching. His entire earthly life as God the Son incarnate, from birth to death, is a living declaration of the Gospel! His last command to the Apostles, and through them to the church, before He ascended into heaven was to preach the Gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:19, Mark

16:15). The Apostles and the early New Testament church understood very well that the one great task their Lord had commissioned them to do was to preach the Gospel (Acts 5:42; 10:42; 16:10; 17:3). And so that was what they gave themselves to do from the very beginning of the NT – in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. The Apostle Paul’s parting command to young pastor Timothy, and by implication to all pastors, called and sent by the church, today, was “*preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*” (2 Tim 4:2). The church is identified and defined by her preaching. Without preaching, there is no church. Everything that the church does flows out of and serves this one purpose and calling.

Therefore, the church’s budget must reflect her primary calling and focus of preaching the Gospel. CERC’s budget must clearly reflect this primary calling and focus of preaching the Gospel. We ensure that our minister and his family are properly cared for. We give generously in support of mission work in fields that the Lord has providentially given to us. We are not stingy when contributing to the benevolence account because we want the deacons always to have sufficient funds to disburse aid to the poor and indigent in our midst. Money is set aside for printing and publishing of solid, Reformed literature and catechism materials. We budget for talks and events that unashamedly proclaim the truth of the Scriptures over against errors and heresies. We organise camps and retreats that are spiritually nourishing and refreshing. We gladly support the budget for the activities of our youths because we

love our Covenant seed and desire to see them firmly established in the truths of the Scriptures and continue to proclaim and live those precious truths from generation to generation.

Implied in her one calling is also the fact that the church must not do, or get involved in, anything that would jeopardize or undermine the preaching of the *truth* of the Gospel. For without the Truth, there is no preaching, and no church. Therefore, her programs and activities all promote the Truth. They are all guided by and consistent with the Truth. The church loves the Truth and guards it jealously. She would not sell it at *any* cost. But she would buy it at *all* cost. Her budget reflects all these unmistakably.

The church’s one and only calling, her *raison d être*, is to preach the glorious Gospel of her King and Lord Jesus Christ. The devil would want to keep her busy with many other things, perhaps even legitimate things. But she must not be distracted or deceived. She must be single-minded and faithful to her one calling, until her Lord returns.

Stewardship

In the **second** place, as pilgrims and strangers on this earth, we must remember that all that we have for our journey are given to us by God. In other words, we are **stewards**. All our earthly possessions, including our money, do not belong to us. Their rightful owner is God, and He has entrusted us with them in this present life to use for the service of His Kingdom and cause. One day we must give an account of our stewardship. The implication is that the church plans her budget carefully and spends prudently and wisely – for it is the Lord’s money that she is using and she must answer to Him how she

has spent it when she reaches home.

The church plans her budget carefully. When submitting their budget proposals or requests to the church Treasurer, ministries and committees must do their ‘homework’ and base their requests on sound and reasonable grounds, such as the previous year’s budget that had proved to be a good estimate, or details of activities planned for the coming year. It ought not to be a ‘guessing’ game or just throwing in some arbitrary numbers. In planning her budget, the church is also mindful that her assets, income, and surplus ought to be able to support the proposed budget. This does not mean she lacks ‘faith’ that the Lord will provide the funds. To budget blindly without working out the sums is to tempt the Lord with our folly and impulsivity. It also demonstrates a misunderstanding of the Biblical doctrine of Providence. We always plan to spend within our means. However, when there are insufficient funds for an important and necessary activity, we can plan to make additional collections to raise the shortfall where appropriate. In this way, we express our faith properly in our Covenant God, trusting Him to provide through the willing giving of His people, out of love for Him and His Truth. Nevertheless, we are not excessively thrifty or calculative, but ever ready to spend when there is a genuine need, or when the opportunity to preach the Gospel or promote the truth presents itself.

Mindful that her money is the Lord’s money, the church spends wisely and prudently. She spends only what is necessary and according to approved guidelines. She keeps careful and proper records of her income and expenditure. In this way, there is transparency and accountability in the

use of her funds. She has nothing to hide. Her account books can stand up squarely to the auditors' scrutiny (since they stand up to the scrutiny of the all-seeing Eye of the Lord). The church has no mind for excessive or extravagant spending. We can certainly spend on renovating our church building, to buy new furniture to replace old ones, to repair damages, etc, but our goal is not to build a palace or to win any architectural awards. We need not go to a five-star hotel or world-class resort for our camps and retreats. When the Lord is pleased to give a church much surplus funds through the generosity of her members, the furthest thought in her mind is how she can flaunt her wealth or to indulge herself; but rather, her foremost concern is: *"How can we use the money to more effectively preach the Gospel and spread the truth of the Scriptures?"* Can we enhance our website to extend

its reach in publishing sermons and classes? What about developing social media capabilities to spread the Truth? Can we buy more good Reformed books to build up our library? Can we print more pamphlets and articles, or even books, for distribution? Are there members in our midst who might need more deaconate help? Do our sister churches need financial or deaconate help?"

The church must be a faithful steward of the money her Master has entrusted to her. Her faithfulness is seen in how she plans her budget and spends her money.

Conclusion

The Lord has given the church, while she is yet on this earth as a pilgrim and stranger, the means of money for the advancement of His Kingdom. She must plan the use of her money carefully, and spend it wisely and

prudently as a good steward in the service of her one great calling of preaching the Gospel to the ends of the world. While she does that, she earnestly and expectantly awaits the return of her Bridegroom to take her home. The Lord grant us faithfulness and wisdom in our budgeting as a church that His Name may be glorified.

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All our earthly possessions, including our money, do not belong to us. Their rightful owner is God...

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A GOOD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

>> Session of CERC

The Session of CERC comprises of: Pastor Andy Lanning, Elder Lee Kong Wee, Elder Leong Fai Chong, Elder Wee Gim Theng, Elder Wong Chee Choong, Elder Chan Chee Seng, Deacon Lim Seow Thong, & Deacon Tang Yoon Chuan.

This month, CERC stands at the beginning of a grand Covenantal project: the establishment of a good Christian school.

The scope of the project is grand. Ahead of us lie many years of labour, many significant questions to answer, much funds to raise, many regulations to satisfy, many sermons, speeches and meetings, and many investigations into the “What”, “How?”, “Why?”, and “When?” of establishing a Christian school.

The standards of the project are grand. Singapore is well-known for excellent academic standards—something we will want to continue in our own school. But the school must also be accessible for those Covenant children who are not as intellectually gifted, so that they also can receive a Covenant education. And most importantly, the education of the school must be Reformed; this is, in the first place, the whole point of establishing our own Christian school. An excellent,

accessible, Reformed institution.

The impact of the project is grand. Until now, the education of our Covenant children has been accomplished through the schools of our land or through a home school curriculum. With the establishment of a Christian school, our children will be educated in a new institution. No longer will they have their catechism together, and their education apart. No longer will their catechism teach one worldview, while their education in the public schools encourage a competing worldview. In a Christian school, their education will be in harmony with their faith, even as they enjoy the Christian fellowship of their classmates.

Anyone who stands at the beginning of such a grand quest will inevitably feel daunted by its enormity. Lest the difficulty of the journey discourage us before we have begun, it is good for us to remember three important Covenant principles of Christian education. Girded with these truths, we will not only begin the project, but will continue it through the years, by God's grace.

The first principle is about God's Covenant demand: God's Covenant with His people demands Christian education for our children. The Christian education of our children is not merely an attractive option for God's people, but a solemn obligation.

This is so because God establishes His Covenant with believers and their seed in the line of continued generations. Not only the mature adults, but the immature children also belong to God. The children's immaturity is no barrier to their friendship with God and inclusion in His family, just as their immaturity

is no barrier to their friendship with their parents and inclusion in their earthly family. Covenant membership is not determined by age, but by God's sovereign decree of election. And it was God's good pleasure to elect His Covenant friends even from the children of believers. "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:7).

Because the elect children of believers are members of God's Covenant, they belong to Him as His own children. Because they are God's own children, they must be raised to know him through a Christian education. About these Covenant children, God commands:

"These words . . . thou shalt teach diligently unto thy children" Deuteronomy 6:7;

"Train up a child in the way he should go" Proverbs 22:6;

"Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" Ephesians 6:4.

It is true that not every child of believing parents will necessarily be a Covenant friend of God. The true Covenant seed of believers is not counted according to the flesh, but according to God's decree of election. That is, not every child born to or adopted by believing parents is automatically a Covenant child, but only those children whom God calls receive the Covenant promise and Spirit of God (Acts 2:39). God may give to believing parents (to their great sorrow) a reprobate son or daughter, as he gave to believing Isaac and Rebekah the reprobate Esau. Such children are

not Israel, but only of Israel; they have no living, spiritual union with Christ as His Covenant friends, but only an external, physical relationship with an earthly family.

However, the fact of reprobation does not negate God's Covenant command regarding our children. For the sake of His true elect children among them, all of the children of believers must be given a Christian education. In the same way that the fact of reprobation does not make us abandon infant baptism, it must also not make us abandon Christian education.

The second principle is about God's Covenant promise: the Christian education of our children depends upon God's Covenant with His people. Our children are God's, and therefore God will see to it that they are instructed. Yes, He calls us to be faithful in our calling. But the outcome does not depend on our faithfulness; it depends entirely on His Covenant mercy. Therefore, we may be sure that our work will be successful, and that the blessing of God will rest upon our children for generations to come.

What encouragement for all who labour in the cause of Christian education! For the father, weary from work, leaving home again in the evening to attend the society meeting; for the mother, lying awake at night with a burden on her soul, thinking over the many needs of her children; for the teacher, under pressure not only to teach the material, but to teach it properly from God's Word; for the school board, seeking to overcome yet another unforeseen obstacle; for the congregation, supporting many other causes in Christ's kingdom, and yet digging deeper into their pockets to ensure proper financial support

for the school. All of you who labour and sigh with the burden of Christian education, hear this blessed news: Your children belong to the Lord! He has made His Covenant with them, and He will bless your efforts for the spiritual education of your children!

The third principle is about God's Covenant generations: Christian education is the work of many generations. In Psalm 78, Asaph mentions several generations who would be taught the works of the Lord, including grandparents (verse 3), grandchildren (verse 4), and even two generations of children that had not yet been born (verse 6). Grasping this truth will make us patient as we labour to establish a school. We must take a long view, not expecting our efforts to bear fruit overnight. By God's grace, we will reap with joy; but we must also expect some tears in the sowing (Psalm 126:5).

However, this truth also stiffens our resolve to begin the work. More generations are coming! As God leads our youth to marriage and family life, more generations are coming! For the sake of "the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children," let us begin the work of establishing a Christian school (Psalm 78:6). Let us not delay, but begin laying solid foundations so that an institution can be operating, Lord willing, in time for these coming generations. The work takes time, so let us begin, and labour with an eye to the future generations of God's church.

These are the Covenant principles, but how shall we put them into practice? We must begin somewhere, but where to begin? The first step is to form a Christian school society, and this we have done by God's grace on 10th October 2014. The society is the organisation, made up of

willing male communicant members of CERC, that actually oversees the establishment of the school. On that day, the society immediately got to work by electing a board of six men who will do the necessary research and bring proposals for the society to adopt. With the board doing the work and the society authorising its plans, our Christian school slowly but surely can be established.

CERC stands at the beginning of a grand Covenantal project: the establishment of a good Christian school. As we embark, we are reminded that "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1). Therefore, we put our hands to the work with the fervent prayer, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it" (Psalm 90:16, 17).

Grounds for Establishing a Christian School

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>> Session of CERC

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At a previous meeting, Session met to discuss what its role should be in the movement to establish a Christian school. As we examined the Church Order and Scripture, we became convinced that Session should set as a goal the establishment of a Christian school by the parents and other members of CERC.

Setting this goal does not mean that Session would run the school, but it does mean that Session will encourage,

admonish, and support the members in their desire and calling to establish a school.

Setting this goal does not mean that Session has a timeline for establishing a school, or that Session believes establishment is imminent. It does mean that Session will call the parents and other members to keep this goal in mind and work toward making this goal feasible.

Decision: That Session set as a goal the establishment of a Christian school by the parents and other members of CERC for the Christian education of their children.

Grounds:

1. Article 21 of the Church Order requires Session to take the lead in encouraging and admonishing parents to establish and use good Christian schools. "

Article 21. *The consistories shall see to*

it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.”

2. Article 41 of the Church Order requires the president of classis to ask each church whether the Christian schools are adequately cared for, implying that each church has a responsibility to support the establishment and maintenance of the schools.

Questions to the delegates, 3. *Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?*

3. Article 44 of the Church Order and the Questions for Church Visitation require the church visitors to ask whether Session is faithful in its duty to see to it that the parents send their children to the Christian school. Questions to the Full Consistory, 18. *Does the consistory see to it that the parents send their children to the Christian school?*

4. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 teaches that the Christian education of our

children is a calling borne by the entire covenant community. All Israel is commanded to teach the children born to parents in Israel. Although this calling is carried out primarily by the parents, the entire covenant community is also responsible for the spiritual formation of the covenant seed. Therefore, it is Session’s duty to lead the congregation in the fulfilment of their covenant calling by setting as a goal the establishment of a Christian school.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9. *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.*

5. The education of the church’s children is critically important. The

children’s education helps form and shape their worldview, helps prepare them for their vocation and calling, and helps develop the gifts that they will use in God’s church and kingdom. Therefore, it is crucial that this education be covenantal in character. The critical importance of covenant education is underscored by Article 21 of the Church Order, which says such education is *according to the demands of the covenant*. By setting the goal of a Christian school, Session promotes such solid covenant education.

6. Session is in the best position right now to lead the congregation into the process of beginning a school. While there are several in the church who are interested in a Christian school, the congregation as a whole waits for the lead of Session.

7. Beginning a school is usually a long term process. By setting the goal of having a Christian school, Session begins that process, thus allowing the necessary time for research and plans.

A Christian Teacher

>> Paul Liu



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

In that same breath with which we talk about schools, we do well to also make mention of the high calling of a teacher. It is important to draw attention to this topic because a school—however grand its name may be—is really only as good as its teachers. This is true of any kind of school, whether it be a public school, or a Christian one. It is also notable

that there are a great number of school teachers in the entire world; in fact, to some extent, it would be true to say that almost everyone is a teacher in one way or another. This may cause some to think that teaching is an easy vocation for everyone and anyone to take up whenever they feel like it, and so they belittle the job of a teacher—as the saying goes, “Those who can’t

do, teach.” At this point, before we adopt the viewpoint of the world, we had better turn to God’s Word to find out what God says about a good, Christian teacher.

The Bible tells you, first of all, that the job of a Christian teacher is one of the most important jobs in the world. This is because the Bible itself is a book of teachings; there are books, letters, recordings, commands, ordinances, exhortations, testimonies—an endless amount of things to be taught! Since the Bible is the Word of God, teaching must be such an important concept and activity to Him. From history, we know that the great men of God from the Old Testament to the New Testament were indeed great teachers and leaders of the Church. The greatest example of all would be our Lord Jesus Christ, who both friend and foe called “Master”, with the idea of Him being a great instructor or teacher. In Ephesians 4:11, the Bible mentions “teachers” in the company of Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors—what a position of importance and privilege! Surely God does not look down on teachers, and in fact the Bible tells that such faithful ones should be valued and treasured.

The second thing which we should know about a Christian teacher, is that being saved by the Cross of Jesus Christ, he (or she) is a disciple and student of Jesus. He daily looks to his Master for guidance and instruction; and every time he goes about his teaching duties, he is filled with the blessedness of being reminded that he is a student of the great Teacher, our Lord Jesus. Wherever one may teach, that must be one of the greatest benefits of such a job—and teachers should never lose sight of that. A

Christian should always be wary of worldly vocations in which his mind is taken far away into the spiritual desert where little or nothing can remind him about his Lord and his calling as a Christian. For Christian teachers, this constant reminder of their own Teacher is an abiding source of strength and inspiration as they labour in this vocation.

It follows from the above point that because a Christian teacher is an earthly example of our Lord Jesus, it is of utmost importance for a Christian teacher to recognise that he must necessarily be a servant of Christ. He must be keenly aware that he takes on an important role in the battle for the Truth, and nothing he does is ever neutral. As a servant of Christ, everything he teaches must glorify God; and he will have no part in propagating the Lie in any curriculum that he teaches. Each class, either directly by the content, or indirectly by being a good testimony, must be for God’s glory and the good of His people within the listeners. And so, we see the great divergence between a worldly teacher and a Christian teacher. They are motivated differently, and so they carry out their jobs differently, and consequently, they seek after vastly different results.

Third, a Christian teacher longs to be Christ-like. While a worldly teacher may resort to violence, fear-mongering, and even deceit to make an unteachable bunch of students appear to have learnt something, a Christian teacher is more concerned with teaching about his Lord and Master. Whether he is teaching in a public or Christian school, a Christian teacher is well aware of his high calling as a teacher and as someone who can, and

must, magnify the one and only True Teacher. He is aware that everything he does is a testimony to others about his Teacher. Whether he is teaching science or math, the true knowledge that he longs to impart to those his students is only the Truth that they stand in great need of. He humbly accepts his job as a “forerunner” of the Gospel that should come through him if God wills it to be so. What better way for a teacher to share about Christ than to show Christ living within him? (Galatians 2:20)

And so he is a teacher who is compassionate toward his students. Though as a teacher, one will obviously know much more than his students, a Christian teacher will not be proud to treat his students with contempt. Just like his Teacher in Mark 6:34, he will be moved with compassion to teach his students more of what is good for them. He will be moved with compassion to teach his students beyond what is in the curriculum if they are lost and without a Shepherd. A Christian teacher follows the example of his compassionate Master, knowing that his willing testimony is a very useful instrument in the hands of our almighty God.

While he starts teaching because of compassion, he continues the work faithfully with patience. If one should scream hopelessly at his students, how will they ever ask the reason of the hope within him (1 Peter 3:15)? Instead of lashing out at a disobedient student, or pulling his own hair out in desperation, a Christian teacher tries teaching it again, and again. Because he knows that patience has been afforded to him on countless occasions by his own Master, so he shows the same patience to his

students (Psalm 145:8). But even more so, we must note, to those who are of the household of faith. If you are patient with unbelievers so that you may win souls (Proverbs 11:30), then how much more must you be patient with lambs who belong to the Lord? So then, teachers in a Christian school ought to be Christians who are patient because of what the Lord has done for them.

A Christ-like teacher will be one who diligently carries out his duty for the good of his students. It is very easy for a teacher to simply offload the entire bulk of knowledge to his students and consider that his job is done. But that is a selfish way of teaching that only serves the convenience of the teacher! Our Lord Jesus was not such a teacher—He was a man of reason, full of logic, ready to discuss, and ready to answer. In fact, have we not seen for ourselves how Jesus so often answered questions with questions of His own? He was not just interested in telling people, He was interested in causing people to come to an understanding of the truth—though that meant everlasting joy to some, and everlasting grief to others.

Such a teaching method requires much effort and diligence. A teacher must be very thoroughly well-versed in the subject at hand to be able to openly discuss and reason with a group of students. Of course, our Lord Jesus knew every subject perfectly, and so He could teach in such a way with ease. For earthly teachers who would follow in their Teacher's way, it would mean hours of studying into the subject, even beyond what is in the textbook,

and even being responsible to know latest discoveries and findings on the subject. Though it is not easy, such hard work and selflessness in order to impart understanding to his students is another thing that sets a Christian teacher apart from the typical worldly teacher.

Just as our Lord Jesus entrusted His life and ministry to His Father in Heaven, the Christian teacher who desires to be Christ-like is also one who trusts God fully for the outcome of his labour. Because he knows that his students are like the land which the LORD has given him to labour in, he will do his best faithfully and depend on the Lord for the harvest. There is no need to get stressed and resort to threats and punishments if students are slower in learning. There is no panic like the ungodly have when there is a famine in the land. A Christian teacher continues faithful, tilling the land with the same care and patience as when he first started, knowing the sure promise of the Word that those who sow in tears shall reap in joy (Psalm 126:5).

This brings us to our fourth and final point: the results and rewards. A Christian teacher does not view academic results in the same way a worldly teacher would. He is more concerned with the spiritual than the physical. While a worldly teacher would judge his class performance based on how many As were scored in a particular subject, a godly teacher would be more concerned about whether the class understood the subject and were properly pointed to the glory of God in the knowledge

they learnt. And in the same vein, a godly teacher could not care for present, earthly rewards and bonuses because he looks forward to future, heavenly rewards and hearing, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

We have seen what high standards there are for someone to be a good Christian teacher. However, we must be reminded that we do not become such great, Christ-like, teachers by our own strength and might. It is only by God's grace that our teaching is sanctified and can be useful instruments in His hand. Though we may be imperfect teachers, often impatient, often frustrated, and often wishing to be doing something else, yet we know we are forgiven by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and can continue to labour free of the cumbering burden of guilt and shame.

Are there good Christian teachers among us? Yes! Even as the world thinks that anyone can be a teacher, we, too, believe that any Christian who seeks God first can be a good Christian teacher. Do you see that in yourself when you explain a Bible passage to someone else; do you see that when you tell children in church to be kind one to another; do you see that when you exhort one another with the Word of God? Even if you only see glimpses of a teacher in yourself, be assured that where God calls, He will also equip in perfect and glorious measure (Hebrews 13:21). May we be willing servants when the day comes for good Christian teachers to stand up and be counted!

What is Reformed? Reformed Worship (VI)

>> Prof. Hanko



Prof Hanko is a retired professor of the Protestant Reformed Theological School. 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.

In our discussion of worship, I was busy with the subject of the regulative principle. The regulative principle means that our worship is regulated by God's Word. That our worship is regulated according to God's Word means that God's Word also controls what elements are to be included in our worship and what elements are to be excluded. It also includes, some claim, how we are to dress and whether or not women should wear hats. And some also claim that the place of worship and its appearance inside the sanctuary and outside the church ought to be determined by Scripture.

You can imagine that there are many differences of opinion on this question. I do not want to get involved in this on-going controversy, for some of our readers are adamant about their position, as for example, the wearing of hats, the use of musical instruments in the singing and even the men and

women sitting on different sides of the church.

There is also a difference in viewpoint here. Luther claimed that it was legitimate to include in the worship everything that was not specifically condemned in Scripture. And so in some branches of Lutheranism, the worship is similar in many respects to that of the Roman Catholic Church.

Calvin, on the other hand, insisted that only those elements might be included in the worship service that were specifically commanded by Scripture. He drew up a liturgy while he was in exile in Strasbourg that is almost identical to the one we use. Except for a slightly differently order, his liturgy had a special part devoted to the confession of sins and their forgiveness, something we include in our congregational prayers—at least we ought to do this.

It contains all those elements that Scripture commands. You may read Calvin to learn of his Scriptural proof for each element. In fact, I would like to have you do this; I can do it for you, but if you do it yourself, you will be more firmly convinced of the beauty of our liturgy. Maybe you can even do it as a worthwhile exercise at one of your Covenant Keepers meetings. You must find Scripture for the following: the votum, the benedictions, the command to include prayer, the command to include singing, and the command to confess our faith.

Don't forget what I said the last time, that you will not find a text that specifically tells us to include this or that element, but the elements that Scripture mentions as part of the church's worship in the Apostolic age are "regulative" for us.

There are a few remarks to make. Calvin preferred a meeting place that was simple and bare from anything that would distract attention from worship. The Roman Catholic Church claimed that images, icons, pictures, elaborate decorations and a gaudy display of candles, priestly robes and decorations would help in worship. It does not! It distracts. Rome teaches that outward display and various motions of kneeling and bowing and waving of hands are themselves worship. Calvin adhered to the Biblical principle of true worship as being in spirit and in truth.

It is true that Calvin, generally speaking, was opposed to musical accompaniment of the singing and any decorations of any kind, including crosses and images. But Calvin, we must remember, was teaching people who had been born and raised in Roman Catholic Churches and who were so accustomed to these things such that they had a difficult time tearing themselves away from them. For us today the true regulative principle is found in our confessions. Do you know where this statement of the regulative principle is found? If

you don't, ask one of your elders.

We must remember that we live in the new dispensation and that, while we are always bound to Scripture's commands as far as our worship is concerned, there is room also for Christian liberty. Christian liberty in worship includes—to mention but a few items—the configuration and interior appearance of the sanctuary, singing with or without musical accompaniment, wearing hats, standing or sitting to sing and/or pray, the order of commanded elements, where to have prayers and how many, which Psalter to use, whether to read the law and the Apostles' Creed, and such like things. To make laws about these things is to be legalistic, and worship must not be bound by laws and regulations that are extra Biblical.

In general, even dress is a matter of Christian liberty, but it is a matter of respect when we come before God to dress decently and appropriately. Sloppy dress, sports togs, everyday clothing—all these show an inability to enter God's presence with fear and trembling, humbling ourselves before His divine majesty, and coming to church in the awareness that in worship we are entering the very presence of the infinitely glorious God, to speak with Him and listen to Him speak to us.

And yet, even dress is a matter of Christian liberty; for if a poor man who can afford nothing but soleless shoes, a dirty shirt, and a pair of torn trousers—complete with a lack of hair product and an unshaven face—enters church and is dressed the way he is because he can afford nothing else, we welcome such a one into our fellowship.

The Session is the body empowered

to make decisions. They must do so carefully. They must consider what Scripture says about the elements of worship as well as the order of these elements, what is edifying to the congregation, what is historically Reformed, and what will be most conducive to worshipping God in spirit and in truth. At the same time, they ought to have what I can only call, a "liturgical sensitivity". I suppose that term is vague. But let me use an illustration to demonstrate what I mean. I like the way Hope Church does things. When the congregation begins to worship under the leadership of the minister, he begins with the words: "Beloved congregation in our Lord Jesus Christ." That is, at this point God is addressing the congregation as His beloved. He is doing that at the very beginning of the service. What a wonder! God is saying: "I have brought you together as my beloved people for whom I have given Christ. I love you and want to talk with you." How appropriate it is then for the congregation to respond: "Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth." That is a confession of our total need for God from whom all blessings come. Then, God speaks again with His blessing: "Grace, mercy and peace be unto you . . ." It is then followed by "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" on the lips of the congregation. It all seems so right; and the holy "conversation" between God and His people is begun and continues as the congregation speaks to God in song, confession and prayer, and God speaks to His people in the address with which the service begins, in Scripture reading, and in the sermon.

It is sometimes tempting to want to change the liturgy of worship, as

if change is going to make it more meaningful. This is simply not true. I attended a high Lutheran service once in which there were chanting, kneeling, responsive reading, and all sorts of motions on the part of the preacher. I was so concerned about sitting when the others sat, standing when they go up, chanting what they were chanting, etc., that I could not give any thought to worshipping God.

I was also ever in a contemporary worship service. I was appalled. There was no sense of being in God's presence and no possibility of genuine worship: the people were dressed like they had just come from a rousing soccer match; the band was raucous and blaring; the drums were more like an army march; everyone was saying one thing or another in a babble of noise; and the singing was what we call here in America, "7/11 songs" – seven words, eleven lines with the words flashed on a screen, and which some like to call "praise songs" when they are neither songs or praise to God, and are empty of any confession of the truth.

Worship must be solemn and reverent, uplifting and in keeping with the injunction: "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."

Although listening is not exactly "Reformed" worship, I thought it would be good to answer the question: How do we listen to a sermon preached? It is not all that easy to listen to a sermon. Jesus speaks of different ways in which people listen in His parable of four kinds of soil at the beginning of Matthew 13. If you have my book, *Mysteries of the Kingdom*, you ought really to read that between now and the next issue of *Salt Shakers*.

MY BRF CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

>> Lisa Ong



Lisa Ong is a confessing youth in CERC.

This year from 26th July to 2nd August, I was given the privilege to attend the British Reformed Fellowship Conference. The theme was “Be Ye Holy (1 Peter 1:16): The Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification” and the main speakers were Prof. Herman Hanko and Prof. David Engelsma.

Held every two years, the BRF Conference is a spiritual treat for people in the British Isles (England, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Scotland, Wales), America (USA and Canada), and more recently, continental Europe (Hungary) and Asia (Singapore!). All in all, eight countries were represented by 126 attendees at Gartmore House, Scotland. No hostile negotiations took place, only sweet fellowship and the partaking of God’s Word.

It was my first time going halfway around the world alone. I waved goodbye to friends and family who saw me off, and catching the last glimpse, I felt ambivalently adventurous and apprehensive. Thankfully, I reached the Conference site without any hiccups. Yet, being in a new setting, there were some things I had to adjust to over the eight days at the conference.

1. The chilly (about 10-15°C) and occasionally damp weather, even though it was summer! Although it rains quite frequently in Singapore, the environmental temperature seldom goes below 23°C. Nevertheless, the fellowship was very warm in contrast to the weather. I fondly recall the moments when I had hour-long conversations with other ladies on the bus to/from day trips; there were just so many things to talk about – the different cultures, raising children, struggles in the Christian life and so on.

2. The time difference between Singapore and Scotland, together with the 17-hour daylight (4:30AM to 9:30PM). It was all the better; there were longer waking hours to enjoy the communion of the saints. At 10:00PM every night, except on Saturday, the night was young for the young at heart as they sang Psalters in parts and participated in social games – Murderer and Psychiatrist (you have to attend to find out what this is!).

3. Being away from family and church in Singapore. But there was no other better place than to be with Christ’s family gathered from different nations. I had a blessed time with Prof. Hanko and Auntie Wilma, and Prof. Engelsma and Auntie Ruth, the spiritual grandparents to many young people. Also, I bunked with two sisters in Christ—Stephanie Adams (USA) and Christina Perkins (England)—we were a multi-continental sisterhood.

4. Getting to know the hundred-odd persons I was meeting for the first time. (Thanks to the organisers for nametags, they were really helpful for the first few days!) It was remarked that the BRF Conference is a foretaste of the fellowship in Heaven, where people of different lands gather to worship and praise God.

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Although I was meeting almost everyone for the first time, yet due to our common love for God, we were no strangers. It was a special experience.

5. Drinking in the beautiful sights and sounds of Scotland, which are so different from the city concrete-jungle of Singapore. Big thanks again to the organisers for the five day-trips to Loch Katrine, Edinburgh, Stirling, St Andrews and Loch Lohmond. I was constantly mesmerised by God's creation and got to appreciate the sites of Reformation History. This appreciation was reinforced by the speeches Pastor Stewart gave on John Knox and James Fraser.

6. Playing badminton almost everyday and participating in the European league futsal (Northern Ireland vs. the Rest). I gladly adapted to this as I enjoy sports and not to mention, my futsal team won! Plus, sports were a great way for me to break the ice as I was a newcomer.

7. Scottish food is obviously different from the Singaporean diet. Although I missed my Singaporean food very much, I was content with fresher

milk that Scotland offered. This is not surprising, given that cows are next-door neighbours to many Scots. By any means, the sincere milk of the Word was even more desirable. Through the speeches, I learnt what it means to be sanctified—to be consecrated to God by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1). One must not confuse sanctification with justification, whereby God declares that we have no sin, for instance when God said "(I have) not beheld iniquity in Jacob" in Numbers 23:21. Sanctification comes after justification as we are able to do good and live lives consecrated to God only if we have been declared righteous by God.

There is a danger in confusing the order of sanctification and justification. One example is the Roman Catholic belief that sanctification is prior to justification; thus man is able to do good and earn his justification. To understand the relationship between sanctification and justification rightly, we must acknowledge that the sin of Adam, Man's federal head, was passed down to all men and killed them all spiritually. But when Christ, the federal head of His people, died to redeem them from their sins, He made them legally righteous before God and sends the Holy Spirit to sanctify them (Romans 5: 12-19).

Yet, sanctification is a work-in-progress in this life due to our fleshly nature (Galatians 5:17) and our battle against spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12). This causes our sanctification to be a painful process. However, this will make us grow more sincere in prayer for the forgiveness of sins and all the more yearn for Heaven. Furthermore, Romans 8 encourages us to endure in fighting against sin as the enemy will

be overcome. This victory is certain because it is not dependent on us, but Christ has won the battle over death and sin for us. We can experience blessed communion with God forever. What a comfort!

Looking forward, the next conference will be held at Castlewellan Castle, Northern Ireland, from 16th to 23rd July 2016. The theme is "Behold, I Come Quickly": The Reformed, Biblical Truth of the End, and the main speakers are Prof. Engelsma and our very own beloved Pastor Lanning.

I have told some of the BRF Conference attendees (all non-Asians), to come to the churches in Singapore and the Philippines in one trip to South-East Asia, and if possible to attend CERC's church camp. Likewise, I hope that we Singaporeans can do the same: attend the Conference and travel the Irish Isles, and worship and fellowship with the saints in Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, and the Limerick Reformed Fellowship in Ireland. This way, we can have more opportunities to enjoy the wonderful catholicity of the church of God.

So come 2016, I strongly urge members of CERC to consider seriously their attendance at the BRF Conference—keep the dates free, start saving money, and express interest promptly when registrations open. Let us desire to learn about the end times and fellowship with the saints from this part of the world.



News from the Churches

SINGAPORE

>> The 10th of October was a significant milestone in the history of CERC. A school society was formed and six men were elected to the school board. The six men are:

Lim Seow Thong (President), Roy Tan (Vice-President), Lim Beng Young (Treasurer), Ivan Chew (Assistant Treasurer), Daniel Tang (Clerk), Wee Gim Theng (Assistant Clerk).

We thank God for His providence in giving us men capable and willing to serve in the formation of a Christian school. May God establish the work of their hands and grant them guidance and wisdom as we, through this board, endeavour to train our Covenant children in the way of the Lord.

>> 19th October was also a very significant day for CERC as Pastor Lanning officially accepted the call to serve as her resident minister. We thank God for Pastor Lanning's faith in accepting the call and pray that God will grant him wisdom and strength in the ministry.

>> Lord willing, our annual Vacation Bible School (VBS) will be held from 9th to 12th December. This year's theme is Army of the King, based on Ephesians 6:13. In addition, our annual CK/CKS camp for youths will be held from 17th to 20th December. This year's theme is Faith of Our Fathers Living Still. Our camp speaker, Pastor Lanning, will be speaking on our reformed forefathers namely, Patrick, Zwingli, Bullinger and Hoeksema. May the Lord use this camp to instil in our youths a passion and conviction of our reformed faith even as we stand in opposition to the wicked world. For more details, please visit <http://ck.cerc.org.sg/camp2014>

>> Our dear brother Aaron Lim, who is currently studying in the Seminary had his first practice preaching in October. He preached based on 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, with Prof. Dykstra as his sermon critic, along with two other classmates. He noted that he was very encouraged by how it went, and is thankful for God's sustaining hand. Besides catechetics and practice preaching, Aaron is also learning New Testament exegesis, dogmatics (theology), church history (medieval), Hebrew reading, and church polity. He notes that they are all very instructive and interesting courses.

USA

>> We thank God for the successful examination of Pastor Joshua Engelsma and his subsequent ordination and installation into the office of the ministry of the Word in Doon, Iowa PRC which was held on 3rd of October. Jeremiah 3:15: "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."

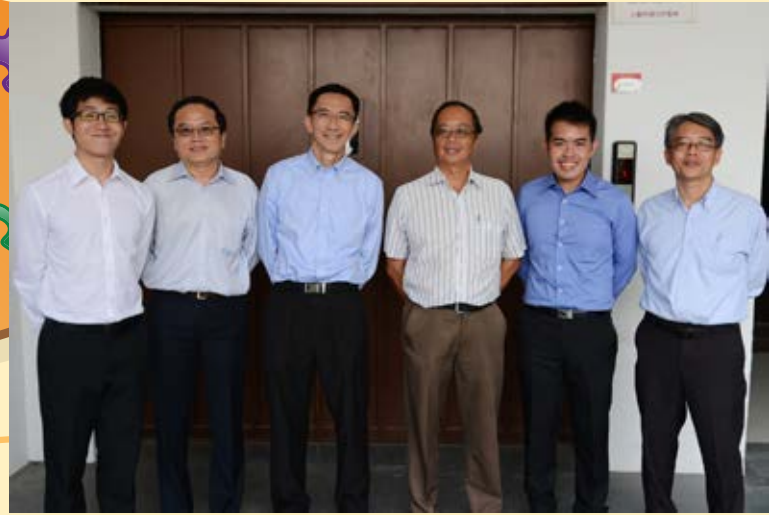
>> Reformation Day was held on 31st October in the PRC and Prof. Russell Dykstra gave a speech on "Abraham Kuyper: A Flawed Reformer". Do visit www.prccrete.org. for more information.

PHILIPPINES

>> Over the weekend of 26th October, Pastor Lanning and his family visited the Philippines. He preached in the First Church of Bulacan for their first worship service (8:30AM), and subsequently in the Berean PRC for their second worship service (1:30PM). Pastor Kleyn, in turn, took over the pulpit supply for CERC and preached for both services.



Men interested to join the school society signing the register



The six men elected to the first school board



Prof and Mrs Hanko being like grandparents to the Burden children during the British Reformed Fellowship Family Conference 2014



The whole family!



The youth learning a new sport - kickball!



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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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