

- Are man-made songs “the word of Christ”? Will the church be able to stand before God on the judgment day with their uninspired hymnals and say, “We sang the Word of Christ”?
– *Rev. Angus Stewart, Singing the Canonical Psalms.*
- If for the sake of his life, his comfort, his education, his business, family, name, standing, or reputation a man will stand aloof from the people of God and will not partake of the reproach of Christ with them, then he will lose everything in the world that is to come.
– *Rev. Nathan Langerak, Moses’ Choice.*
- We know that the tried and tested way of ‘sounding down’ the truth to you and have you ‘echo back the truth’, is one of the best ways, if not the best way, for you to learn and remember the grand, biblical truths of the Reformed faith.
– *Lee Kong Wee, Catechism and Memory.*



salt shakers
joel 3:16 matthew 5:16

Issue 42 | Mar 2017

Dare to Stand:
REPROACH & REWARD



Lest We Forget (II)	3	The Sin of Silence	15
Scripture's Covenant Youth [V]: Moses	5	Christian Denominations (I): The Unity of Christ's Church	17
Singing the Canonical Psalms (III)	7	Prof. David Engelsma's Eschatology Notes [III]	19
Dare to Stand: Reproach and Reward - Moses' Choice	9	Interview with Rev. Emmanuel Singh (I)	22
Catechism and Memory	11	A Sure Hope	24
A Reformed Man's View of National Service	13	News from the Churches	27

WELCOME TO THE 42ND ISSUE OF SALT SHAKERS!

Dear Readers,

We continue our theme "Dare to Stand". As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the 1517 Reformation, each issue this year will contain quotes from notable reformers whom God used to return the church from the doctrines of men to the truths of scripture! Last issue, we were reminded of Martin Luther's courageous stand for the truth at the Diet of Worms. In this issue, we hear the words of another brave reformer, Guido de Bres, author of our beloved Belgic Confession. By the power of our Lord, Guido de Bres was given the necessary grace to make the ultimate sacrifice for his faith, while laying hold onto the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phi. 3:10). Guido de Bres was executed at the hands of the Roman Catholic authorities in 1565, a martyr and father of Reformed doctrine. Look out for his quote!

But what does the life and death of Guido de Bres 450 years ago have to do with us today? Besides that we today confess with our mouths what de Bres confessed with his life, de Bres' struggle was our struggle. We have not yet resisted unto blood as he did, nor are we on the run for our lives for the truth of God, as he was. Yet, de Bres faced the same fears, doubts, and sins as we do today. There were times when he was afraid, when he was selfish, times when he gave a weak and faithless witness. He was a person subject to like passions as we are. But God gave Guido de Bres gifts: the gift of a clear conscience before God, the gift of innocence in Christ, and ultimately the victory. These gifts we too will receive in the course of, and at the end of our own journeys.

So beloved readers, dare to stand, not in your own strength, but in the strength of Christ, who alone will give you the grace to do so. Stand against the unbelief of the world, against the lies of Satan, against yourself: the temptations of the old man and the flesh. Take up your cross and follow Him, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, as Guido de Bres discovered. Thus only will you find rest for your souls (Matt. 11:29).

Read on, and may you be encouraged and strengthened by the articles that follow in this issue of Salt Shakers.

Remember to pass the salt!

Pro Rege,
Lee Yang



LEST WE FORGET [II]

>>Aaron Lim



Aaron Lim is a member of CERC and the editor of the Salt Shakers.

Lest We Forget

In the last editorial, I mentioned that through the ecclesiastical contacts of First Evangelical Reformed Church (FERC) in Singapore, the Arminian doctrines of common grace, the well-meant offer of the gospel, and the conditional covenant have made inroads into the Reformed churches in Singapore. In ten short years after their adoption of divorce and remarriage, these Arminian doctrines have found fertile ground in FERC.

Lest we forget, it was only ten years ago in 2007 that FERC still belonged to a faithful denomination, the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore (ERCS). For over twenty years, the ERCS confessed the sovereignty and particularity of God's grace in salvation. Prior to her institution in 1982, she had received distinctive instruction in the Reformed faith through her contact with the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA).

As early as 1979, emissaries from the PRCA began instructing the young group of believers in Singapore concerning the heresy of common grace and the particularity of God's grace. These emissaries reported the instruction that they gave:

We stressed that the grace called common is a non-entity and exists only in the minds of those who seek justification for fellowship with the world, whose good deeds are ethically ever only corrupt, while they indeed may be good in a functional sense. We emphasized the absolute antithesis established by God's particular grace as our God calls children of light out of the children of darkness, life out of death, etc. This speech was very appreciatively received by many and they saw clearly that we are called to an antithetical walk.¹

The emissaries also explained the PRCA's rejection of the well-meant gospel offer:

We emphasized that the truth of election is not an hindrance to missions as is often alleged, but that it is instead an incentive for the guarantee that God has His people and that Christ has sheep which He must gather through the preaching of the Gospel by the Church.²

In 1982, after the young group of believers was organised into the ERCS, they expressed wholehearted agreement

with the truths confessed by the PRCA:

We believe God has blessed you in a very special way and given you a measure of the truth that is largely lost to the churches of our day. We believe that God who gives you this truth so that we may learn from you, will in no wise leave you no avenue to proclaim it... We in the E.R.C.S. love the truth your churches have brought us...³

Through the ministries of two PRCA ministers working in the ERCS, Rev. Arie den Hartog and Rev. Jason Kortering, the ERCS continued to be instructed more fully in the Reformed faith. The two ministers on loan to the ERCS were instrumental in developing the young church's understanding and conviction of the Reformed faith. Zealously, they preached, taught, and gave much advice to the young church. They officiated at many

“The two ministers on loan to the ERCS were instrumental in developing the young church's understanding and conviction of the Reformed faith.”

¹ Acts of Synod and Yearbook, Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 1979, 71-2.

² Acts of Synod and Yearbook, Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 1979, 71-2.

³ Acts of Synod and Yearbook, Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 1982, 82.

“... trouble was already brewing in the ERCS. When emissaries from the PRCA’s contact committee visited the ERCS in 2003...”

weddings, instructing young couples in the biblical truth of marriage and the covenant home. They were also actively involved in the mission work of the ERCS. Their faithful ministries were used powerfully by God to develop the ERCS into a faithful Reformed church.

The Lord prospered the ERCS in those years. Many were gathered into the church out of heathendom. Marriages were aplenty. Young, godly families were characteristic of the ERCS. The denomination was entering into another phase of life, where the second generation of Reformed believers was rising. In 1986, a daughter congregation, Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church, was organised. At their peak, the ERCS numbered over three hundred members. The denomination was spiritually healthy and vibrant.

In 1996, based on the reports of the ERCS’ minister-on-loan, Rev. Kortering, the PRCA’s Contact Committee reported that the doctrinal distinctives concerning the preaching, God’s covenant and grace were

preached:

Although the ERCS has not taken an official position on the doctrines of the covenant, common grace, and free offer, they continue to preach and teach the faithful Reformed position.⁴

In 1997, Rev. Kortering reported that the doctrinal distinctives were understood and settled:

The doctrines of the covenant, the well-meant offer, and common grace are no longer issues in the ERCS. The ERCS have grown in their understanding and appreciation of the Reformed position in these areas. The ERCS are also being more and more identified with the PRC by the church community in Singapore.⁵

Giving hearty approval to the instruction given by the ministers on loan, the ERCS expressed their unity in the faith with the PRCA:

This indeed is another golden opportunity for our two churches to express our unity in the faith and support of each other in this increasingly dark and sinful world of unbelief... The Reformed faith, which we have come to know and love through the ministry of your churches, we will uphold and defend with all our might in the Far East... In our observation of you, we continue to notice, with great delight, your steadfast defense of the Reformed faith in all your publications. Your undaunted effort to clarify your fine theological position is helping the Reformed community more and more to develop in greater depth of understanding of the truth.⁶

A Broad-Minded Spirit

Nevertheless, trouble was already brewing in the ERCS. When emissaries from the PRCA’s contact committee visited the ERCS in 2003, they expressed some “real concerns about a ‘broad-minded’ spirit in the ERCS”. This broad-minded spirit would surface a year later in the controversy over divorce and remarriage that wrecked chaos in the denomination. This broad-minded spirit manifested itself in an eagerness to learn and embrace the doctrine of divorce and remarriage that was taught by other denominations, which doctrine had been repudiated by the two PRCA ministers during their lengthy ministries in the ERCS. Today, the broad-minded spirit is very much alive in FERC. Ministers of different theological stripes are invited to preach there.

Recounting the history of the ERCS, Rev. den Hartog astutely observes that one of the main reasons for apostasy in the ERCS was a broad-minded spirit in her leadership:

“A broad-minded spirit always spells the destruction of a faithful denomination, as history proves”

⁴ Acts of Synod and Yearbook, Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 1996, 97-8.

⁵ Acts of Synod and Yearbook, Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 1997, 91.

⁶ Acts of Synod and Yearbook, Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 1996, 151-2.

⁷ Acts of Synod and Yearbook, Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2003, 93.

⁸ Arie den Hartog, Lessons from the Beloved Church of Jesus Christ Now Among Us, in the Salt Shakers (Aug. 2014, Issue 27), 22.

There were those in the ERCS who in these controversies became convinced that they did not want to continue in the direction presented by men from the PRCA. The direction was considered too narrow, and there arose a desire instead to have closer fellowship with other churches. There was a strong desire on the part of some of the leaders to be more broad minded and open in tolerating different doctrinal teachings in the church that came from several different denominations which came through new members who joined the ERCS over the years.⁸

A broad-minded spirit always spells the destruction of a faithful denomination, as history proves. Broad-mindedness necessarily implies a toleration of

different doctrines, worldviews, and practices in the church. When a church is not narrowly on guard against the wolves that seek to enter the sheepfold, she becomes susceptible to many errors and temptations.

The only remedy for a broad-minded spirit is the narrow-mindedness of Scripture and the narrow-mindedness of the Reformed confessions. In an age which celebrates an open-mindedness to every conceivable false doctrine and immorality, being narrow-minded is not popular. It is scorned and rejected by many. Jesus Himself told us: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be

which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-4). Many indeed prefer the broad and comfortable way, but shun the narrow and difficult way of the cross, of the holy Scriptures, and of the Reformed faith.

But Jesus assures us that the narrow way is the way of life and of salvation. That narrow way is the way of walking faithfully in His Word, and rejecting all things contrary to it. That is the way that CERC embraces. We are a narrow-minded church. In the way of the narrow-mindedness of the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions, we remain a faithful Reformed church.

SCRIPTURE'S COVENANT YOUTH (V): MOSES

>>Prof. Herman Hanko



Prof. Herman Hanko is a professor emeritus of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. His present work consists of authoring new books for the RFP, writing for the Salt Shakers, and maintaining an online forum for the young people in Singapore. He has been to CERC many times and is dear to the people here.

After my discussion of Joseph as an example of a very godly covenant youth, I consider with you Moses, an unusual child of God, who lived about 400 years after Joseph. I have written about Moses in the forum articles, and do not intend to repeat what I said in those articles. In fact, most of what I discussed in those articles were events in Moses' life as a grown man. And this series of articles is about youth.

In Exodus 2:2 we are told that the parents of Moses saw when he was born that Moses was a "goodly child", and so they hid him for three months rather than give him to Pharaoh's police to have him killed according to the king's command. The mention of Moses as a hero of faith in Hebrews 11 repeats

what Exodus says: the parents saw that he was a "proper" child. But "proper" is the same as "goodly", and the Revised Version translates the word in Hebrews as "goodly".

Many guesses have been made about the meaning of "goodly". Some say the meaning is that Moses was an exceptionally beautiful baby. Others say that at his birth Moses already possessed abilities that could only be done by children older than he. They speculate that Moses was already able to walk, or to speak; or that his understanding was beyond that of a baby. Some even speculate that he had a halo above his head.

The Bible does not tell us and we may not speculate or curiously inquire into what God has chosen not to reveal. It is, however, clear from the actions of Moses' parents that something about the baby made them sure that this child had a special work in God's covenant.

There is one expression in the narrative of Hebrews 11 that has struck my attention and forced me to ponder why it should be included in the Biblical narrative. The text in Hebrew 11 tells us that Moses' choice for God's people was "when he was come to years".

The expression most probably did not refer to Moses' physical and mental maturity. In our churches, generally, young people, born and raised in the church, make confession of faith when they "come to years". That is, they have come to physical and mental maturity. We interpret that expression to mean, therefore, that God has so determined that covenant children come to years when they are physically, mentally, and spiritually mature. They are adults because they are ready to leave father and mother's sheltering care. They are adults because they have attained such maturity that they are able to think and act for themselves without the guidance of covenant parents.

The spiritual development of a covenant child is a wonderful work of God. It comes with physical and mental maturity.

In the first five years of a child's life, he is so dependent on his parents that he can do nothing by himself and needs constant help. Also, he depends on them to teach him what he has to know. And, in the child's mind, what the parents say is truth, not to be challenged. When little children are

taught to pray, the parents tell them what to pray. When they ask, "Why must we speak to someone whom we cannot even see?", the parents assure them that God, though invisible, hears what they say. They accept that without question.

This continues when they start school, for whatever their teachers say has to be true, because "Teacher said so". The parents have a greater task if their children have to go to public schools, for teachers tell children things that are not true. Parents must know what their children are learning and must correct any wrong ideas by pointing to what God says.

As they develop into their early teens, most children begin to think that they can now make their own decisions and no longer need the guidance and discipline of parents. But deep down in their hearts children of the covenant know they need parents yet for a while. And while they may argue with parents and claim to be "old enough to decide for myself", they know they are not, and the struggle to be independent when they are still dependent is a large part of the difficulties early teenagers have. I have always found the most difficult catechism classes and children at home to teach are those in their early teens.

But by mid-teens young people come to a point of maturity. Maturity means that in their development spiritually and intellectually, they receive and examine what they have been taught, not mechanically, but because they have thought it over, compared it with Scripture and come to their own conclusion as to whether what they are taught is true or false. In the church, they are ready to make confession of

"The spiritual development of a covenant child is a wonderful work of God."

faith. They not only believe what they do because they were taught this by parents and teachers, but because they have found what they were taught as true. They themselves have compared their knowledge with the Word of God. They know it is true, not because mom and dad have said so, not because the preacher has said so, but because they have compared it with Scripture and found that it is taught in the Bible.

So, by the time young people reach their late teens or early twenties, they are physically, mentally, and spiritually ready to make confession of faith and take their place in God's church as responsible and eager contributing members of the church. We could say, "When so and so came to years he made his choice for the people of God – as Moses did". Moses made his choice for the people of God when he came to years. So do we!

Confession of faith is a very important event in the life of a Christian youth. It is so important that I would like to discuss it in some detail. But it is better to do so in another article.

SINGING THE CANONICAL PSALMS (III)

>>Rev. Angus Stewart



Rev. Angus Stewart is the minister of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

Spiritual Songs

After showing in the previous article that the “psalms”, “hymns” and “songs” of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 are different words for what we refer to as the canonical Psalms, we now continue our consideration of these two key verses:

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19).

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16).

Qualifying the word “songs” in both texts is the adjective “spiritual”. “Spiritual” in the Bible means a lot more than religious; “spiritual” in Scripture means of, belonging to or determined by the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 speak of songs that are of the Spirit and the 150 Psalms

are most definitely songs of the Holy Spirit. They are inspired or breathed forth by the Holy Spirit as His Word (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). Quoting Psalm 95:7, Hebrews 3:7-8 states, “As the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts”.

B. B. Warfield explains the word “spiritual” in Scripture:

Of the twenty-five instances in which the word occurs in the New Testament, in no single case does it sink even as low in its reference as the human spirit; and in twenty-four of them is derived from [pneuma], the Holy Spirit. In this sense of belonging to, or determined by, the Holy Spirit, the New Testament usage [of “spiritual”] is uniform with the one single exception of Eph. 6:12, where it seems to refer to the higher though superhuman intelligences [i.e., (evil) angels, who are “spirits” (cf. Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7, 14)]. The appropriate translation for it [i.e., “spiritual”] in each case is spirit-given, or spirit-led, or spirit-determined.¹

All would agree that the adjective “spiritual” (“of the Spirit”) certainly qualifies the word “songs.” It may well also qualify “psalms” and “hymns”, as well as “songs”. This would fit with Greek grammar and the scriptural meaning of all three nouns.

At this point someone might say, “So the verse then means sing psalms, psalms and psalms”. To that we respond, “Yes! Have you never noticed that the Bible contains many such

triplets?” The apostle Peter preached on the day of Pentecost that the Lord Jesus Christ was divinely approved by “miracles and wonders and signs” (Act. 2:22)—different ways of speaking of one thing: miracles! According to Exodus 34:7, God forgives “iniquity and transgression and sin”—again, different ways of saying essentially the same thing. The three nouns “psalms”, “hymns” and “songs” are used in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 because these are the three terms—the only three words—used in the Bible for the “spiritual” or Spirit-breathed Psalms, which God gave for His church to sing.

Other Points From Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16

There are various combinations used in the Psalter titles of the Greek Septuagint, the Old Testament of most of the early church. Twelve times we are told that one of the inspired odes is a “psalm” and a “song”, the first and third terms used in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. Twice a canonical Psalm is called a “psalm” and a “hymn”, the first two of the three terms used in these key texts. In the heading of Psalm 75, numbered Psalm 76 in the Septuagint, the words “psalm”, “hymn” and “song” are used—the precise three terms found in Ephesians and Colossians. This combination of “singing and making

¹ Quoted in Michael Bushell, *Songs of Zion* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 1999), pp. 90-91.

melody” in “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” in Ephesians 5:19 is found in other places and in different forms in the Septuagint Psalter (e.g., Ps. 26:6; 56:8; 104:2; 107:2).²

With these inspired odes, Christians are well-equipped to fulfil the calling of “teaching and admonishing one another” (Col. 3:16). This is what we do in singing according to the Bible. This is part of the purpose of our sung praise—teaching and admonishing one another—as well as glorifying God and strengthening ourselves in our Rock.³ One of the words used in the Hebrew Psalm titles is “Maschil” which refers to teaching or instruction. All will agree that the rich content of the 150 Psalms gives us a lot of teaching. The more you sing the Psalms with the saints, the more you will realize that you are all “teaching and admonishing one another” by God’s holy Word.

Let us take Psalm 37 as an example: “Trust in the Lord, and do good”, “Delight thyself also in the Lord”, “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him”, “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself”, “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil” (vv. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8). In the church’s corporate singing, we are “teaching and admonishing one another” with the *infallible* Psalms. Do we wish to teach and admonish in the church with *fallible* man-made hymns which can err and, in many instances, have erred?⁴

Colossians 3:16 speaks of “the word of Christ”. The Psalms are undoubtedly the Word of Christ since He authored them, for “the Spirit of Christ” spoke in the Old Testament (particularly the Psalms) of His “sufferings ... and the glory that should follow” (1 Pet. 1:12). The Psalms speak of the Lord Jesus directly (e.g., Ps. 2) and by type, especially through David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, who is a great type of Christ, as the persecuted and glorious king (e.g., Ps. 16; 18; 22; 24; 41; 55; 68; 69; 110). God put David through his experiences to teach us about Jesus Christ’s sufferings and victory.⁵ Also the many references to the bloody sacrifices of the ceremonial law typify the oblation of the crucified Son of God (e.g., Ps. 22; 40; 51).⁶

Thus, by teaching and admonishing one another with God’s own Psalms, “the word of Christ” dwells in us “richly” (Col. 3:16), so that we enjoy covenant fellowship with the holy Trinity. Are man-made songs “the word of Christ”? Will the church be able to stand before God on the judgment day with their uninspired hymnals and say, “We sang the Word of Christ”?

Furthermore, Colossians 3:16 says that we are to teach and admonish one another with these spiritual songs “in all wisdom”. Regarding the Psalter, God’s songbook, we can say with certainty that we teach and admonish “in all wisdom”, since it is authored by Christ who is the very wisdom of God (Pro. 8; 1 Cor. 1:24) and it reveals

God’s wisdom. Is there any human hymn book that contains “all wisdom”? Moreover, Ephesians 5 states that singing God’s Psalms (v. 19) is a way of being “filled with the Holy Spirit” (v. 18). This is the connection between verse 18 and verse 19 in Ephesians 5! Singing “the Lord’s song[s]” (Ps. 137:4) is a divinely-given means to be filled with the Holy Ghost. This divine infilling has nothing to do with the “second blessing” experience touted by Pentecostalism but everything to do with singing the inspired Psalms!

In Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, it must also be noted that we are not called to *write* the worship songs. There are all sorts of spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament (e.g., Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-10). There are six church offices in the New Testament: some extraordinary and temporary (apostles, prophets, and evangelists) and some ordinary and permanent (pastors, elders, and deacons). Yet there is no New Testament office for anyone to write the church’s songs, nor does the New Testament mention any gift of the Spirit for this.

But we do have this beautiful gift from God: the 150 inspired Psalms! Many of these spiritual songs were penned by David, who was gifted with the requisite grace as the one “anointed” by the “Spirit of the Lord” in his office as “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam. 23:1-2). So we do not *write* a song; we *sing* a song and we sing “the songs of Zion” (Ps. 137:3).

² Bushell, *Songs of Zion*, p. 87.

³ Cf. “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16; cf. Eph. 5:19).

⁴ Cf. Angus Stewart, “Our Own Hymn Book Versus God’s Own Hymn Book: A Critique of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster Hymnal” (www.cprf.co.uk/articles/freepresbyterianhymnal.htm).

⁵ Other messianic Psalms include Psalms 45, 72, 89 and 118.

⁶ Melchizedek is another great type of Christ our priest spoken of in the Psalms (Ps. 110:4), as the epistle to the Hebrews explains at length (Heb. 5-7).

DARE TO STAND: REPROACH AND REWARD - MOSES' CHOICE

>>Rev. Nathan Langerak



Rev. Nathan Langerak is the minister of Crete Protestant Reformed Church in Crete, Illinois.

Hebrews 11:24-26 Moses' Choice

A Choice!

Choose. A man must choose. A man does choose. When the Reformed faith condemns the Arminian error that the natural man has a free will by which he is able to choose or to reject Jesus, the Reformed faith does not deny that man chooses. It does not even deny that man chooses about Jesus. God made man a rational, moral creature. As a rational, moral creature man has a will. With his will he chooses. With his will man chooses not only in things natural, but also in things spiritual. In those spiritual things the choice that man must make is stark: heaven or hell, life or death, God or sin, Christ or Satan, obedience or disobedience. The consequences of the choice are eternal. Man must choose. God demands in the gospel that man choose. Man will choose. God will judge man for his choice.

The terrible truth about the natural man is that when confronted with that choice he always chooses wrongly.

With his will he chooses sin, death, hell, Satan, and disobedience, and he chooses against God, Christ, heaven, and salvation. Choose. Man must choose. Man does choose. Man always chooses the evil.

Amazing choice!

Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Moses chose opposite of the natural man. Moses' choice is the choice of faith. Moses' choice is the choice that faith always makes otherwise that professed faith is no faith at all.

A choice is picking one among alternatives. If a man chooses a piece of property, then that choice was made between alternatives. If there is no alternative, there is no choice. In the choice the mind prefers one alternative over another. At its deepest level a choice is a matter of love. What a man loves he chooses. That preference involves the evaluation of the alternatives and the judgment that for some reason the one is preferable. What the mind prefers the will chooses.

There were alternatives for Moses.

Moses saw the one alternative in the home of Pharaoh's daughter. He was called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. This had not always been his lot. She drew him from the water where Amram and Jochebed had laid him in his ark among the reeds. Perhaps making fun of the deadly decree of her wicked

father, she gave him his name, Moses, one drawn from the water. She adopted him. He became her son. She was his mother. Pharaoh was his grand-father. The whole court and the entire nation knew that.

The son of Pharaoh's daughter came to years and became great in Egypt. He enjoyed all the advantages of his well-connected position. If not heir to the throne of Egypt he was at least brought up as one. He was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt and had access to all the opportunities for worldly pleasure, advancement, and success that Egypt provided.

But he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. With that refusal he also renounced all the pleasures and treasures of Egypt. He went out of her house. He renounced his family, his upbringing, his home, his present course of life, and his future in Egypt. He sealed his decision by killing an Egyptian. When Pharaoh heard this he sought to kill him.

Rather, he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. Moses' choice was the choice of God, Christ, obedience, and salvation. Do not misunderstand that. Moses chose God and Christ and salvation by choosing to be with God's people. Moses was acquainted with them. His mother had him for a few years. No doubt she taught him about the people of God. A kingdom of God, where God dwells and where He bestows His grace, a kingdom of riches, life, salvation, and blessing. To be with

those people is to be with God for God dwells with them. To be with God is salvation. To live apart from God is was death. No doubt he saw them—on his inspections of the kingdom, resplendent in his princely accoutrements, enjoying the wealth and privilege of Egypt—an enslaved, beaten, despised, and afflicted people of God.

Stark choice!

To be with Egypt was to have pleasure and success now, but to be without God. Friendship with the world is enmity against God. To be with the people of God was to have God, but affliction. One could not remain with Egypt and have God. One could not join the people of God and avoid affliction. Moses chose to be with the people of God and to suffer affliction with them rather than to enjoy the pleasures of Egypt.

Believing choice!

The unbelieving, natural man makes a choice too. With his mind he weighs the alternatives and judges one better than the other. With his will he chooses what his mind prefers. But his mind is dark and his will in bondage because of sin. With his darkened mind he evaluates: church or the world, pleasures or affliction. By the measure and the thinking of the sinful mind the world and pleasure weighs very heavy, and the people of God and affliction are esteemed very lightly. With his mind he loves sin. With his will bound under the power of sin he chooses what his mind prefers: Egypt, pleasure, and death. The natural man cannot, he will not, and he cannot will to make Moses' choice.

Not the Arminians' proud choice. Do

not confuse Moses' choice with theirs. See how different Moses' choice is. The Arminian choice is a choice to believe. Moses' choice was a choice of faith. He had the faith already and by it he chose.

That faith was God's gift to him in fulfilment of His promise to be the God of Abraham and to his seed. That faith was union with Christ. That faith was the certain knowledge of all that God promised as true and the assurance that it was for Moses. God gave him the power to believe and the act of believing also. By that faith alone he was justified and saved apart from his choice. In that choice his faith was revealed as true faith.

By that faith he made his choice because by faith he considered and judged the relative worth of the alternatives. By faith he could make that choice because of what faith did in him. Faith illuminated his mind so that he saw clearly and evaluated properly. Faith renewed his will so that he chose what the illuminated mind preferred. By faith he became a spiritual man who judged all things spiritually. At its most profound level it was a change of love. He loved God, Christ, and his people. Faith chooses what faith loves—Christ—just as the natural man chooses what he loves—the world and sin.

In his choice by faith he considered this: He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt and he considered the pleasures of Egypt sin.

All the treasures Egypt that he could have staying aloof from the people of God, he judged as the pleasures of sin. When he saw Egypt, he saw sin. Egypt was representative of the world of sin

and darkness as that world is under the power of Satan, as it wars against God, exists under the curse of God, and will be destroyed by God. He rejected Egypt and its sin when he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

By faith he chose the people of God because he reckoned their sufferings the reproach of Christ. The reproach of Christ is the reproach that Christ suffered when He came into the world. He was laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn. They tried to kill Him as a baby. They tempted Him or flattered Him to trap Him in His words. They tried to push Him over a cliff. They tried to stone Him. They came out against Him with swords and staves. They forsook Him and fled. They bound Him. They tried Him. They condemned Him. They put a crown of thrones on His head and a sceptre in His hand, and they beat Him with His sceptre and cut Him with His crown. They took His clothes. They nailed Him to the tree. Still they burned in enmity against Him and the whole mob mocked and ridiculed His shame. With an insatiable hatred they spoke evil of the dead, called Him a deceiver, and posted a guard at His tomb.

When Moses saw their affliction he saw Christ's reproach. He saw Christ there among the people of God. That is why he joined. There is no other and can be no other reason to join a church than the truth—which is Christ—is there. Because Christ was there their affliction was Christ's reproach. The Old Testament church had Him in promise and so shared His reproach. Christ left behind some of His reproach for the New Testament church too.

Believing Israel's affliction to be the reproach of Christ, Moses valued that

reproach greater treasure than any treasure of Egypt, indeed eternal riches. There is nothing more precious to God than the suffering of His son.

Clear Choice!

Moses had respect unto the recompense of the reward. He saw clearly the rich reward that God gives Christ's reproach. Not blind faith. Faith sees. Faith chooses differently because faith sees differently. The natural man can only see with the physical eyes, or worse still, with spiritual eyes of unbelief, blind with hatred toward God. The eyes of faith are able to see unseen and eternal things. It is like having two pieces of land. One is obviously lush and good to make a man rich now. The other is barren but full of gold beneath its surface. Whether you are able to perceive what lies beneath the surface will affect your choice. Faith chooses differently because it sees differently.

When Christ came and suffered His reproach, He earned and merited an eternal reward for the people of God in their affliction. Moses saw that reward.

He saw Egypt's reward too. He saw clearly that Egypt's pleasure was only for a season. They had their reward in the form of eternity in hell.

The affliction of the people of God has its reward: suffering now for an eternity of joy and pleasure forevermore at God's right hand.

The reproach of Christ brings its own reward. The believer's suffering does not earn that reward. Neither does his choice merit that reward. Jesus Christ earned the reward through His suffering on the cross. God appointed the reward to His elect for all eternity. The sufferings of the child of God for which the reward is given are not

worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.

If a man will stand aloof from the people of God for the sake of his life, his comfort, his education, his business, family, name, standing, or reputation, then he will lose everything in the world that is to come. In that choice, his professed faith is also revealed to be no faith at all. He gains his life in this world, only to lose his soul in the next.

If a man chooses to be with the people of God, he chooses Christ and His reproach, and he will have an eternal reward. His choice is the clear choice of faith. By that faith he is saved now and in eternity. That is always faith's choice: affliction with the people of God, rather than the pleasures of sin for a season. Choose. A man must choose. A man will choose. His choice will have its reward now and eternally.

CATECHISM AND MEMORY

>>Lee Kong Wee



Lee Kong Wee is an elder in CERC.

Introduction

Dear young people, you and I can be very thankful to our covenant God that He has preserved the practice of catechism instruction and learning for you and our

children in our church. This practice is an 'old path' that goes all the way to the beginning of the church in the Old Testament.¹ Though it languished for a while in the Middle Ages, it was restored during the Reformation. But alas, this heritage of the Reformation is all but lost in modern Christendom today. The concept, much less the practice, of catechism instruction is hardly known in the church world today. This is undoubtedly one of the main reasons why many churches are weak in doctrine and do not know the basics of the Christian faith. The truth of the Bible is not systematically taught to covenant children and new

adult believers to ground them firmly in the faith. Doctrine is glossed over, decried as divisive, and downplayed in favour of a teaching that is man-centred, minimises sin and focuses on universal love and ecumenical union. God's Word is not taught, but man's godless philosophy. Unless a church returns to the old path of faithful catechism instruction, she will not maintain the truth of the Scriptures in her generations.

¹ Gritters, Barry (2008). *Catechism: The Old Path, the Good Way* (1) Michigan, USA: RFP, Standard Bearer, Vol. 84, Issue 20.

The inestimable value of faithful catechism instruction cannot be overstated. It will take a separate article (or even a book) all by itself to underscore this point. In this article, this fact will be assumed. We then move on to discuss the practical aspect of catechism and memory. A few words about the importance of memorising catechism ought to be said so that you have the proper motivation in memorising your catechism. Then we'll look at some ways to help you in your practice of catechism memorisation.

Why

Why must you memorise your catechism each week before you go to class? Why do your minister and parents require it of you? Because your parents and this church take our calling and baptismal vow to instruct you in the doctrine of the Scriptures to the utmost of our power seriously. We know that the tried and tested way of 'sounding down' the truth to you and have you 'echo back the truth', is one of the best ways, if not *the* best way, for you to *learn and remember* the grand, biblical truths of the Reformed faith. Memorising the catechism questions and answers will fix the truth in your minds. When as young children, you memorise the Bible stories, you inscribe biblical history and facts deep in your young and absorbent minds. As the doctrines and truths of Scripture are taught to you and woven into your lives from as young as you can remember, they shape your thinking and mould your character, so that you grow up to be God-fearing young men and women. And by God's grace, you will one day confess publicly before the church that precious faith you've been taught and have come to love.

As you grow into adulthood and face the trials of life, as you *certainly* will, then having the catechism in your memories will enable you to draw strength and find comfort to go through those difficult times. The beautiful language of our Heidelberg Catechism will come to you as you lay hold, by faith, of the glorious truth of our certain preservation as God's children unto the end, assured that "*I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ...yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation*". Thus strengthened, you persevere in your pilgrim's pathway, looking for the city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

And if the Lord leads you to find a godly spouse and enter marriage, and give you children, then you will also teach them the catechism, require that they memorise the questions and answers, and explain to them the inestimable spiritual value of doing so by your own experience. In this way, the church, through you and other godly families, will raise up another generation who knows the Lord. And the cycle continues from generation to generation. Thus, God by His sovereign grace is pleased to preserve His truth among us and His church in our generations until the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

How

I hope you see why it is important that you memorise your catechism, and you are now properly motivated to do it. So how can you better memorise your catechism? Here are two ways I have found helpful for myself and my family.

First, Memorise the overview or big

picture of the catechism. For the younger children's catechism, memorise which main sections of OT or NT history the various stories fall into. For the older children, memorise the overall structure of the Heidelberg Catechism (Introduction : Q&A 1-2; Sin : Q&A 3-11; Salvation : Q&A 12-85; Service : Q&A 86-129). Having this big picture constantly at the back of your mind would not only help you to memorise the specific questions and answers better, but also helps you appreciate how a particular truth fits into the overall biblical narrative or the entire body of faith. For example, when the HC deals with the requirements of the law commandment by commandment, it does so under the 3rd section of the catechism on 'Thankfulness', showing that the 10 Commandments continue to be relevant in the life of a child of God as a rule for thankful living. So, as you memorise the questions and answers to each of the Commandments, you are always mindful that you obey them not to earn any favour or reward with God, but to express your deep gratitude for His sovereign grace in saving you from all your sin and misery.

Second, make catechism memory part of your daily routine. Parents, make it part of the daily routine of your child. Perhaps during lunch or dinner time, you could take out your catechism book (or an electronic version on your mobile phone) and memorise the questions (you have one week - so you don't have to memorise everything in one sitting!). Parents can go through the catechism with their children before or after family devotion times. Just like we do for our personal and family devotions, build catechism memorisation into your daily routine. Once you establish the habit, it will become easier. Perhaps initially the daily memorisation feels onerous.

Some days you would probably miss doing it. Many times, you might feel like giving up. But don't! Pray and ask the Lord for strength. Persevere, for in the long term, not only does it become easier, but you will also begin to enjoy it and realise how much you're learning each day! The benefits far outweigh any difficulties you may encounter, for you are building up an entire storehouse of the knowledge of the truth of God's Word. That is priceless!

Conclusion

Catechism instruction and memorisation is one of the greatest blessings for the church. It is part of our rich reformed heritage. Let us treasure it and preserve its practice in CERC.

Parents, be not weary in the well-doing of having your children memorise the catechism, week in and week out. For in due season, you shall reap. This is the Lord's promise: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Pro. 22:6). Young people, memorise your catechism! It will do you, and the church of which you are a living member, great spiritual good – now and in the generations to come.

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A REFORMED MAN'S VIEW OF NATIONAL SERVICE

>>Paul Ong



Paul Ong is a confessing young adult in CERC.

Introduction

God, in His sovereign counsel, has tasked Singaporean young men to give two years of their time to "National Service". This article aims to give readers a brief overview of National Service, some of the struggles that the servicemen may face, and a Christian's response to National Service.

Singapore is a young and tiny country that gained her own independence after separating from Malaysia on 9 August 1965. Singapore had to develop her own armed forces to maintain her sovereignty and to deter possible invasions. Thus, conscription was introduced in post-independence Singapore through the National Service Act of 1967. All Singaporean males and second-generation male permanent residents who reside in Singapore are required to undergo a period of two years of compulsory service when they reach eighteen years of age in either the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), or the Singapore Police Force (SPF). In layman terms, they will either be a soldier, a firefighter, or a policeman. National Service is compulsory and

those who fail to comply will be seen as deserters, and will be severely dealt with in the military court. National Service is commonly spilt into three different phases - the Basic Military Training Phase, the Active Operations Phase, and the Operationally Ready Phase (ORD). All who go through National Service will have to go through basic military training in training institutes, which will range from 9 weeks to 30 weeks, before going into the active operations phase where they will be enrolled into an active unit and spend the remaining time of national service there. The serviceman will complete his two years of National Service in the first two phases, after which he will be finally declared as "Operationally Ready" and enters into the ORD Phase, where his National Service temporarily ends.

It Is Not Easy

National Service is not warmly welcomed even among Christians in Singapore. A life of routine and regimentation is not easy to get used to. However, God foreordains every unique circumstance in our lives and National Service is no different. National Service is a calling from God for every young man in Singapore. To be a soldier is not something foreign to a Christian, after all, for we have been trained as soldiers for Christ.

Outfield operations and exercises are the bread and butter of a serviceman, especially those who serve within the SAF. Often, we would hear that they are required to be away for extended periods of time to train in camp or to be overseas for exercises. It is not uncommon to hear that these trainings and exercises take place multiple times a year and as a result cause many Christian young men to miss church and Sunday worship. This can be frustrating because they usually have no say in their training or exercise schedules. If they were given a choice, they would definitely not want to train and work on Sundays, but frequent the house of God and worship Him on Sundays. In frustrating times like these, we have to remember that God's ways are higher than our ways (Isa. 59:9), and be wary and not allow discontentment to breed in our hearts due to the unhappiness we experience for being away from church, and then turn into unmotivated workers. God dislikes discontented and unmotivated workers, for He reminds us in the Bible, "whatsoever we do, we do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men" (Col. 3:23). Our God is a great and all-knowing God. He knows what we need more than we think. Therefore, His ways are far higher than our ways. We

also confess that that "He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1). We are God's children and He watches over us as His own, so much that without the will of our Father, not a hair can fall from our head, and this applies to us during our National Service as well. All things (including National Service) work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. (Rom. 8:28).

Remember the Sabbath Day

Through the course of National Service, it is inevitable that servicemen will miss church and Sunday worship. God commands us to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy, and this command has one of the greatest importance. He created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. He designated the Sabbath Day for His people to rest (Deut. 5:14). The Sabbath Day was also given as a covenant sign to identify those who are the people of God. Exodus 31:13 says, "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you". After knowing all these, the important question that we have to ask ourselves this: can we keep the Sabbath Day when we are not in church worshipping God?

Even though we may be away from the church, we are still called to remember and keep the Sabbath Day and preserve our identity as a Christian with great care and consciousness. Being away

from church and in an environment that does not promote the sanctity of the Sabbath Day, we should be even more mindful and diligent in keeping the Sabbath Day. We fail to keep the Sabbath Day when we forget the Sabbath Day itself. Therefore, it is crucial to remember the Sabbath Day, and to keep it holy (Ex. 20:8). That day is important and precious to a Christian. To keep the Sabbath Day holy means to consecrate the day to the worship of God. So, remember your devotions! The Word of God is life! Read the Bible whenever you have the opportunity to or even talk to your fellow serviceman about spiritual topics. Text a church brother or sister or tune in to the online sermons on your phone if possible. Let all these be to the honour, glory and devotion of God. Nevertheless, all these are only possible with time. But more often than not, we know that most of the time it is not so. Therefore pray for grace to remember the Sabbath Day even when you are busy. Remember the Lord even on that day, and do all things to the worship of His holy name. God is our helper. He will sustain our soul (Ps. 54:4). Crave and long for the day when you can be back in God's house worshipping Him together with your brothers and sisters in Christ again.

Friends Matter!

Not only will the young Christian men be away from church, they will also be placed in a godless environment where the majority of their peers will be of a different faith. They speak a different language, they think and behave differently. This calls for great attention as you young men will be spending a large amount of time with them and potentially be influenced by their ungodly beliefs and behaviours.

We do not want to sit “in the seat of the scornful” (Ps. 1:1b) unknowingly. The Bible warns us: “He that walketh with wise (men) shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Pro. 13:20). Therefore, we have to exercise our wisdom in the choice of acquaintances we allow into our lives because once we allow them in, it will be hard to get them out. Serving in National Service is not easy and one may also say that inevitably some form of comradeship will be formed after going through thick and thin together. This can be true. However, the Word of God reminds us that we are a holy

people and may not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). This is a command for us as Christians to live antithetically, a life of spiritual separation from the wicked world. We do not have to physically separate ourselves from our non-Christian servicemen but it all boils down to saying “no” when sin is involved. And when you have time, spend it with your church friends! “He that walketh with wise (men) shall be wise” (Pro. 13:20). Church friends are a great source of spiritual support when your spiritual life is challenged. They are able to give wise counsel from the Word of God

because they know and love God.

Conclusion

National Service is a path our Lord has ordained our young men to go through. They may experience varying good or challenging times. Let us always seek God in prayer to aid and preserve our spiritual brothers in Christ in these times. Do not be discouraged for our God is good! Press on! Remember, Everyday Requires Prayer! (ERP!)

THE SIN OF SILENCE

>>Paul Goh



Paul Goh is a member of CERC.

turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

20 Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

Dear Covenant Youth,

Although this passage concerns the calling of the watchman or the minister of God's flock, it is not contrary to the principles of God's Word that I

apply this Word of God to your lives, for all of God's people are called to be “watchmen” over the lives of our brethren or to be our brother's keepers (Gen. 4:9), and even to admonish them if we see that he is overtaken in a fault (Gal. 5:1-2).

Whenever I come across this passage of God's Word, it never fails to bring a chill to my spine, and I am sure you will have the same reaction. This is perhaps one of the most serious, frightening, awesome word of God in the whole of Scripture. This text together with the title of the article has to do with our awesome responsibility in the sight of God.

What is it about this text that causes one to sit up and pay attention to the message? It is this: we are responsible for the blood of our brethren if we do not bring the Word of God to warn them when we know they are walking in sin.

Ezekiel 3:17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he

God does not allow us any excuse for not bringing a word of warning from His Word to them. Perhaps, we say in our hearts, “oh, they ought to know – no need for me to remind them”, or “I don’t wish to *rock the boat* and cause my brethren to dislike me”. This Word of God does not allow us to be delinquent in our duty.

There is not a more straightforward and direct word of God than this text. What does this text teach me? First, it is our solemn responsibility to warn those who belong to the instituted church of God who sin against Him. In it, there are both the wicked and the righteous – who have departed from the way of God and live a wicked life outwardly. Then, there are those who seem to be righteous but have been overtaken in sin. Both of these groups belong to the household of God. To both groups, we must warn them of their sins and waywardness. Then, it is a fearful thing that God in sovereignty places a stumbling block in the lives of the wicked. Such a stumbling block causes one to fall and sin. It is the result of God’s judgment upon the person who has hardened his heart and refuses to turn from his sins.

Whatever is the situation, our calling is to warn him of his sins, and if he

“...we are responsible for the blood of our brethren if we do not bring the Word of God to warn them when we know they are walking in sin”

repents from his sins, we have not only saved a sinning soul from death but also our own soul. But, second, if we do turn a blind eye to his sin and fail to warn him of his sin, then when he dies in his impenitence, we are responsible for his sin, simply because we have failed in our duty to warn of his sin. Third, if we warn him of his sin, and he ignores the warning, then our soul is saved but the one who refuses to listen to our admonition will be damned.

Now, practically, what are the sins of our brethren? Let me name a few: not keeping the Lord’s Day holy, failure to attend to the chief means of grace in the preaching of God’s Word and partaking of the Lord’s Supper, living a double life, worldliness, materialism, spiritual adultery and others. It is important that our brethren turn from their sins because they will incur God’s hottest wrath and displeasure. God will not wink His eye at sin and let the sinner go. Our motivation to warn them is the love of our brethren and our desire for their eternal good and blessings to come upon them. Their good that we seek is greater than their displeasure and anger that we may experience from them as a result of pointing out their sin. Ultimately, our greatest motivation is to please God, to conform to His law, and to see to it that His creatures abide by His Word and reflect His glory.

The positive teaching means that in our lives we are always testifying about God – His honour, name, good pleasure, sovereignty, and will. However, whenever we see God robbed of His glory, we cannot be silent but must speak up. This is the reason why silence is sin when sin is committed, especially when we have witnessed it. If we could prevent sin being committed, we will by warning against it. But most of the

“...we must never admonish our brother in a haughty way...”

time, we cannot not prevent it and are witnesses of the sin. Then, our calling is to call the sinning brethren to repent and turn from his wicked ways.

But, we must never admonish our brother in a haughty way, as if we are higher and know better. We could be the ones who have been overtaken in our faults. Thus, we come in the spirit of humility, realising that we could have fallen in the same sins. Furthermore, the timing of that admonition is also very important. We must pray that God give us the grace, wisdom and the humility to confront our brother with love.

Dear Father in heaven, forgive me for being silent when I ought to speak - to speak of your goodness, beauty, grace, and love. Forgive me of the fear of men – what they think of me but not concerned what thou wouldst think of me. Forgive me for the sake of Jesus, who died for my sins on the cross. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS [I]: THE UNITY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

>>Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma



Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma is the minister of Pittsburgh Protestant Reformed Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The church is the body of Christ.

Membership in this body is exclusive. The church is made up only of God's elect people chosen in Christ from eternity unto faith. The body of Christ is elect in Christ. Since these elect are chosen by God unto faith, it is also true that only those characterized by a true and living faith belong to the body of Christ. Faith is that gift of God by which God grafts each one of His elect people into Jesus Christ that as a result they become one with Him. This is how they become members of Christ's body. God by His grace works within their hearts binding them by faith to Jesus Christ that as a result each one becomes a particular member in the body of Christ. All those who are in Christ by a true and living faith are members of His body. No one else.

This body of Christ is the holy catholic church we confess together with the Apostles Creed, "I believe an holy catholic church". The Nicene Creed states it this way "I believe one holy catholic and apostolic church". In other words we believe in the church's unity.

This means, in the first place, that there is one, and only one, church. There is one body of Christ made up of God's saints from the beginning of the world to the end. Now, some would insist that the church is only saved and gathered by God in the New Dispensation. They claim, that God began gathering the church at the time of Pentecost. The saints in the Old Dispensation do not belong to Christ's church. They are God's kingdom people and have little or nothing to do with the gathering of the church in the New Testament. After all, they would contend, the church of Christ cannot exist before Christ was born. If the church is the body of Christ and Christ was not yet born how could someone belong to that body?

We together with the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 21; Q & A 54 confess "that the Son of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves unto Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in truth faith". We confess this because the Bible very clearly teaches it. There are several proofs that can be cited from Scripture in this regard. We will limit ourselves to three of them.

First, if the body of Christ is made up of those whom God chose from eternity in Christ it follows that God's saints in the Old Testament who are also God's elect belong to the church of Christ too. Second, if God grafts each of His people into the body of Christ by faith then believers in the Old Testament were grafted into Christ too even

though Christ was not yet born. The only difference between the faith of the saints in the Old Testament as opposed to the faith of those in the New is that in the Old Testament God's people looked forward in faith to the coming of their Messiah. Believers in the New Testament look back to Jesus Christ with that same faith. But the faith is the same. Hebrews 11 testifies to the faith of God saints in the Old Testament. Besides, Scripture clearly teaches that believers today are by faith the spiritual children of Abraham. Abraham, as we learn in Romans 4 and in Galatians 3, is the father of all believers.

The third proof that God's saints in the Old Testament were members of Christ's church is found in those passages in the New Testament that referred to God's people in the Old Testament as church. Speaking of Moses, Stephen testifies in Acts 7:38, "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us". Notice how Stephen

"...Scripture clearly teaches that believers today are by faith the spiritual children of Abraham..."

calls the nation of Israel “the church in the wilderness”. Another passage of this nature is given us in Hebrews 12:22-23, “But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect”. In this passage the writer to the Hebrews uses the terms mount S(Z)ion, Jerusalem, and the general assembly and church of the firstborn to describe the same body of people.

We believe in one church - the body of Christ. That church is a unity. It is unified in Christ who is the Head of the church.

This body of Christ, however, cannot be seen with our earthly eyes. It is a spiritual body gathered from the beginning of time to the end and from all nations. The only time we will be able to see the entire body of Christ will be at the end of time when Christ gathers all His elect people together with Him in the new heavens and earth. As such, the church as the body of Christ is an object of faith. It can be seen only with the eyes of faith. We believe there is an

holy, catholic church.

Though this is true, it is also evident from Scripture that this body of Christ has always manifested itself visibly in this world by means of the church institute. At any given time throughout history the church of Christ has appeared in the form of an earthly organization or institution. This too is according to Christ's command. Christ is the Head of the church, but He is no longer on earth. He reigns over the church from heaven at God's right hand. For that reason, Christ appoints certain men as His visible representatives on earth to rule the church on His behalf. They are His undershepherds (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Christ uses these men to gather, defend, and preserve His church. The church of Christ both in the Old and New Testaments stood under the rule of these men whom God appointed. The kingdom of Israel was a theocracy, a nation under God's rule. God was her King. God appointed prophets and priests to serve in office on His behalf. Later when the people of Israel in their sin insisted on having a king like the other nations, God appointed kings to rule on His behalf. In this way, the church in the Old Testament functioned under the three offices of prophet, priest, and king.

In the New Testament church these offices were replaced by that of minister, deacon, and elder. The church in the New Testament therefore carried on as an institution as well. It is an institution just as was the kingdom of Israel in the Old Testament. The church of the Old and New Testaments received the calling to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and exercise discipline on those who revealed by their confession and walk to be unbelieving. This three-fold calling was performed in

a manner appropriate for the particular dispensation in which it was fulfilled. In the Old Testament the prophets preached the Word. In the New the pastors and teachers preach the Word. In the Old Testament, the elders of the people and later the kings ruled. These administered discipline. In the New the elders rule over the flock of Jesus Christ and administer discipline. In the Old Testament the priests administered the mercies of Christ. In the New the deacons administer such mercies. The point is: the body of Christ becomes visible in this world in the gathering of believers and their seed in the church institute.

There is one crucial difference between the church as the body of Christ and the church institute, however. The church as the body of Christ is made up of only elect. Its membership is exclusively that of believers. The church institute embodies those elect believers, but there are also members of the church institute who are not believers. Some of these are born into the church in the generations of believers. They are not all Israel that are of Israel. Others creep into the church unawares. They are hypocrites that appear on the outside to be believers but are not truly so. The church institute therefore, though necessary, is not pure and holy as is the body of Jesus Christ in this world.

All these truths we must understand if we are to ascertain why there are denominations. In fact, these truths will determine the necessity of denominations. We can say this even in light of the truth that the church is one, and that every denomination of churches is called to strive to maintain the unity of the church as the body of Christ. This we will begin to explain in the next article.

“We believe in one church - the body of Christ. That church is a unity. It is unified in Christ who is the Head of the church.”

PROF. DAVID ENGELSMA'S ESCHATOLOGY NOTES (III)

>>Aaron Lim



Prof. David Engelsma is a professor emeritus of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. He was Professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament Studies from 1988 to 2008, and has been an ordained minister since 1963.

The Book of Revelation

Biblically, the end of all things speaks of the last things in terms of the goal that God has with creation, human history, and especially the history of the church. That goal is the very same as the last thing – the second bodily coming of Jesus Christ.

Our study in this class will consist of examining what the Bible teaches concerning the last things, in closest connection with what all of us are experiencing presently in creation and in history. We want to see this especially in light of the book of Revelation. Fittingly, Revelation is the last book of the Bible. Unfortunately, it is also the least well-understood book of the Bible. Our study will shed light on what we are experiencing in the present time. In addition, the events that are taking place today will not only bear out the prophecies of Revelation, but also serve to make more clear to us what the book

of Revelation is prophesying about the last days in its vivid, figurative language.

The book of Revelation is in the main figurative. It consists not of plain, straightforward construction, but in pictures and figures. The book of Revelation itself tells us in 1:2. John saw, not heard the truth about the last things. The book teaches us by way of pictures and visions. To interpret those visions correctly is a challenge. Although the church has in general understood the basic teachings of Revelation, it is only when these visions are transpiring in history that the church will be able to clearly and fully grasp its teachings. As these prophecies are happening in their full, final reality will the church clearly grasp the teachings about the end times.

The book shows us “the things which must shortly come to pass”. That is the summary of the content of the entire book. The actual taking place of these things will help the church to grasp the prophecy of them. The description of the events in the book of Revelation will make plain to the church what she is going through, what she is experiencing with a clarity that she never had before. Although the book forewarns us of what is going to happen, we will only understand clearly what the book is teaching when these things take place.

The Letters to the Seven Churches (chapters 2-3)

The first important thing that one must realize, is that these letters are part of the teaching in the book of Revelation about the last things. They are not

just a short section on the doctrine of the church preceding the teaching about the last things that will follow in chapters 4 and following. That is often the idea that is left by the preaching on these letters to the seven churches by ministers. It happens sometimes that a minister decides to preach the doctrine of the church in the light of the letters to the seven churches. The minister himself supposes and gives the congregation to suppose that these letters are an independent section on ecclesiology.

The letters to the seven churches are an aspect of the book of Revelation, an aspect of the truth of the things that must shortly come to pass. We must expect them to take place shortly in connection with and preceding the second coming of Jesus Christ. Rev. 2-3 teaches that in the last days, churches that had been true churches of Jesus Christ will fall away, and will apostatise. We remember similar warnings in 2 Thess. 2:3. There, the apostle says that one of the signs of the very end will be a great falling away. The apostasy of

“Revelation is the last book of the Bible. Unfortunately, it is also the least well-understood book of the Bible.”

“These great evils that amount to a falling away can happen to us, can be found in us.”

churches that had been true churches of Jesus Christ – that truth is the subject of Rev. 2-3. Jesus taught the same in Matt. 24:11-12. The love of many shall wax cold. That is, love for God and love for His law and gospel. That is going to be cold in the last days. That is a description of apostasy in the churches.

Notice that this warning comes first in the book of Revelation. So crucially important is this matter of the falling away of churches that this comes first in Jesus’ instruction concerning the apostle John. Let us never forget that. This must take place and will take place. And then reflect on the fact that we are seeing this take place in our day as never before in the history of the NT church. The falling away of churches that once were true churches of Jesus Christ. What we have in the seven letters is not merely a sign that we observe in the Roman Catholic church, the liberal Protestant, Reformed and Presbyterian churches that are becoming cold in their love. It is a sign that calls the members in such churches to exert themselves to bring such churches to repentance and reformation. Then also, the warning about the falling of the churches in Rev. 2-3 calls true churches to remain faithful.

Apply this in a practical way. I suppose that the majority of you are members of the PRC. We must apply the warning of Rev. 2-3 to ourselves, to the PRC congregation that we are members of. These great evils that amount to a falling away can happen to us, can be found in us. Take note of the fact that these seven churches in Rev. 2-3 were once true churches of Jesus Christ. They were organized by apostles of Jesus Christ, by Paul himself. He laid the foundation. In the course of 30-40 years after the apostles formed one of these churches, there was a female preacher on the pulpit and catechism room, who was teaching the people to commit fornication, to live infamously and wickedly.

I do not believe that members of true churches should live suspiciously, that we should come to church looking for heresy, or living in the fellowship of the church with a critical eye. But there is another danger that is equally serious, and that is that we take for granted that everything is going on fine because we had been established on a strong foundation. This departure can happen to us. The minister and elders must especially be on their guard. But we Reformed believe in the office of all believers. Every member of a true congregation is called by Jesus Christ to observe flagrant departure in the preaching and conduct of the church. The churches are responsible before God to observe such departure.

Most of the churches in Rev. 2-3 had fallen away, or contained such errors that threatened apostasy. Rev. 2:4. That is a serious error, a fundamental error – losing her first love. They had a strong love in the beginning when they were first converted, when they knew the gospel of Jesus Christ that delivered

her from the filth and corruption of the world. That is as serious as a man or wife losing their love for their spouse.

Look at Pergamos in Rev. 2:14-16. This church had once been a sound, true church of Jesus Christ. He commands them to repent, and threatens to fight them as an enemy with the sword of His mouth. That is what comes first in the book of Revelation with regard to eschatology – the falling away of churches. Look at Thyatira in Rev. 2:18-26. Look at Sardis in Rev. 3:1-4. The Lord threatens to come upon them as a thief, as an enemy. Always when a church falls away, sexual immorality abounds. The last example is Laodicea in Rev. 3:14-17. Of the seven, only two were faithful. Only two were approved by Jesus Christ in his examination of them – Smyrna and Philadelphia. Calculate that percentage.

First, notice that the falling away of the churches resulted from a loss of love and zeal for God and His doctrine. That is made known in His word. Ephesus left its first love (2:4). Pergamos tolerated the false doctrine of Balaam (2:14). Thyatira tolerated

“...notice that the falling away of the churches resulted from a loss of love and zeal for God and His doctrine.”

“...the nature of the falling away of the churches was the practice and tolerance of immorality – especially sexual immorality.”

a female preacher and false doctrine. Sardis was spiritually dead – no life of Christ in the congregation. Laodicea was lukewarm, disgusting to God. The falling away that characterises the churches in the last days is the loss of love and zeal.

Second, the nature of the falling away of the churches was the practice and tolerance of immorality – especially sexual immorality. The churches are always in bondage to that sin. That is the nature of the society in the West. It is not surprising that this is especially the nature of the immorality that infects the churches in the last days – sexual immorality. That is the nature of the television programmes, the movies, the featured magazines today. That is the practice increasingly of the people who call themselves Christians. Pornography, fornication, adultery, and homosexuality.

With regard to the nature of this apostasy, in some cases there was outright antinomism. Antinomism is the outstanding characteristic of the apostate churches in Rev. 2-3. Antinomism is not simply lawless behaviour, but it is the teaching that because we are saved and justified by

faith alone, we may freely commit all kinds of wicked behaviour. We will be forgiven, we are saved by grace, therefore we may sin freely. Antinomism is a teaching that opposes the law. It denies that the law of God is still the guide for the saved child of God. It advocates immoral behaviour on the ground that we are not saved by our works anyway.

There are preachers that take that bold position openly today. Usually antinomism disguises itself somewhat. Our sinful nature is prone to antinomism. Rev. 2:14,15, 20, 24 teach that. It was not just practical immorality. It was a doctrine, a theology that was taught by the Nicolaitans. The doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans is antinomism. Sin as you please because you are living by grace alone. The female preacher at Thyatira was teaching the people to plunge the depths of Satan so that they will know the grace of Christ to save them.

Is that in churches today, churches that used to be true, sound Reformed and Presbyterian churches? The doctrine of antinomism is as much a reality in 2015 as it was during the writing of Revelation. If there is no such extreme lawlessness of antinomism, then the apostasy of the churches consists of tolerance towards false worship and

conduct. There is no discipline, a lack of discipline in the churches. There is no excommunication of members in the church who show themselves to be living impenitently in sin. Rev. 3:4. Most of the church had defiled their garments. It is well-known that they were living in immorality, and they were not disciplined. The bride and body of Jesus Christ could be such a filthy creature as the people in Sardis were.

The same thing holds for the worship of the churches. In their public worship they were advocating a doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. The sins of these five churches are evident in the churches today, even in churches that in certain respects are praiseworthy. The churches that are sharply rebuked in Rev. 2-3 were praised in other aspects of their church life. Ephesus, for example. There was discipline in that church, and opposition to false doctrine. There were commendable qualities in the church at Ephesus. Nevertheless, Christ had somewhat against her because she had lost her first love. There was tolerance of false doctrine, immoral behaviour, coolness with regard to God and His truth.

“The doctrine of antinomism is as much a reality in 2015 as it was during the writing of Revelation.”

INTERVIEW WITH REV. EMMANUEL SINGH [I]

Note from the Editor: This interview was conducted by the Salt Shakers when Rev. Emmanuel Singh was in Singapore for his examination on 29 October 2016, according to Article 9 of the Church Order. Rev. Singh sustained his examination and subsequently was installed as CERC's missionary to Kolkata on 8 January 2017. We thank Rev. Singh for his time and insightful remarks.

Salt Shakers: How did you come to know the Reformed faith?

Rev. Singh: It was 2003, and I was a performing artist before I came to the ministry. I was a musician in a band performing in America. One of the performances in Minneapolis was at the Bethlehem Baptist church, where

John Piper ministered. You know John Piper? Another Calvinistic preacher...

SS: Yes, John Piper.

Rev. Singh: At his church in the afternoon, our band had our practice in the morning for an evening performance. At lunch-time, I was just browsing the rooms, and one of the rooms was their bookstore. I found this pink-coloured book; the name of the author is also Pink. (laughs).

SS: A.W. Pink.

Rev. Singh: Yeah, A.W. Pink. The book is called The Sovereignty of God. At that time, I was a student of theology in India. I worked in a Christian organisation called Operation Mobilization. I worked with them for nine years. It's a para-church organisation. So mainly, my responsibility was in America to raise funds for this organisation through music performing and speaking to people about the untouchable Dalits. I was mainly performing music. During this time, many of my band members

were Presbyterian, and many of them were Calvinist. Even our lead singer was a Calvinist.

Now the church where I grew up is a Brethren church. In the Brethren church, the spiritual mentor taught me a little bit about Calvinism. In the Brethren church, most do not believe Calvinism. However, one of the elders also taught me that Calvinism is a very true doctrine. This is not practiced by the Brethren or widely accepted, but personally I was convinced by the issue. But (besides that), I was not really bothered about what was Calvinism. But when I was in the US reading these books, that brought me closer to understanding especially about the doctrine of soteriology.

SS: Soteriology?

Rev. Singh: Yes, because this book teaches soteriology: the operation of God in salvation, the operation of

“So reading that book was a big battle in my life. Do I remain faithful to the organisation and “reform” the system, or do I reform myself?”



“I was confused by all these preachers, and that’s when I realised I have to rely on the Scriptures alone.”

God in prayer, and many topics. But the primary focus of this book is to lead us to understand that God is sovereign in all things. So reading that book was a big battle in my life. Do I remain faithful to the organisation and “reform” the system, or do I reform myself? (Laughs) Like Luther. In the end, I left the organisation.

SS: So your organisation didn’t believe in God’s sovereignty?

Rev. Singh: Yeah. So though I was playing in different states, in my mind I kept asking questions about doctrine. It was the Lord’s provision that He brought me to read these books. I believe that it was by God’s sovereignty that I read these books – to understand God’s sovereignty.

So, after that, I finished my Masters of Divinity from the same organisation in India. Now when I was in seminary, they asked me to use the NIV Bible, and I never used the NIV before. There was a lot of conflict with my professors. My professors told me that most of the cult groups use the King James. NIV is more accepted by worldwide Christians. But my definition of NIV was –

SS: “Not Inspired Version”. (Laughs).

Rev. Singh: “Not Inspired Version”. Yes. So a lot of conflict, and after what I read from the Sovereignty of God, I realized that it doesn’t quite match with Piper, John MacArthur, other fundamentalist preachers. We must understand the whole counsel of God. If someone wants to teach the bible, teaching only soteriology is not enough. Soteriology is one part of doctrine. But you also have to understand the ecclesiastical order of the church. The gospel allows us to be regenerated, saved... what after that? There is the church. You also have to relate to the true church of God. I was confused by all these preachers, and that’s when I realised I have to rely on the Scriptures alone. In America, a lot of people follow the preachers. It is the same in India – many people rely on the preacher more than the word. I felt there was a big conflict with what I was studying and what I believed.

In India I had to leave the church. I spent Sundays reading the word with my family. Because going to church, you become very sad, hearing all the wrong doctrines. I was thinking: what do I do? Where can there be a good sermon to listen to? Because, on the internet, you can find many kinds of sermons. Sometimes they are very good, sometimes they are very rubbish.

“And I said, yes, I would like to study Reformed doctrine more!”

So suddenly, I searched for “reformed gospel”, and Reformed Witness Hour came up. I listened to Pastor (Carl) Haak, and I felt, this is something – what I believe, what I teach, this man also does. But then, I thought it would be very difficult to reach this man. Because you know in America, in big churches, you cannot reach the pastor. When church members die, the pastors don’t know. Big churches number fifty-sixty thousand. It is very difficult to talk to the ministers of these churches. I thought, it would probably be very hard to reach Pastor Haak also.

But one day I saw on the Reformed Witness Hour that there is a phone number. Back then, it was very expensive to make a call to the US. I said (laughs) – let me try. Money is not important, what is important is the truth. So I called him. He was so excited to hear about me, and he asked, would you like to study the bible? And I said, yes, I would like to study Reformed doctrine more!

Although I was a theological graduate, when I came to the Reformed faith, my degree was not enough. So then, he connected me with other Reformed ministers – Rev. Van Overloop, Jason Koterling, Rodney Kleyn, Pastor Haak himself, Rev. Woudenberg, one of the PR missionaries. So we all started to do skype calling, one hour a week, for me to study the Reformed doctrines.

In the meantime, I had resigned from my previous organisation. I had joined that organisation originally to be a missionary. It was difficult to be faithful to that sort of para-church, because they come up with and accept all kinds of doctrines. The para-church believes all doctrines. So when you are particular with your doctrine, you cannot survive.

You have to come out. So I came out, and at that time, those retired PR ministers supported me financially from their own personal contribution. Eventually they said, “Rev. Singh, join the PRC. Be ordained and become a PR minister”. At that time, I was studying Reformed dogmatics with them. They were also helping me with the confessions (the Three Forms of Unity). So it was a long journey from 2009 to 2016.

SS: Seven years.

Rev. Singh: Yes.

SS: Which year did you hear the Reformed Witness Hour?

Rev. Singh: 2008.

SS: And when did you start going overseas and playing for Operation Mobilization?

Rev. Singh: 2003 onwards.

SS: And you played what instrument?

Rev. Singh: Indian drums. I had done my bachelors degree in Indian classical music. I also taught overseas students music.

(To be continued...)

A SURE HOPE

>>Noelene Wong



Noelene Wong is a member of CERC.

Looking straight ahead, your eyes are fixed upon the cross. You are reminded of your most wonderful promises given by your Father. The undeserving salvation, plenteous mercy for the chief of sinners, the perfect love bestowed and experienced, given by the Holy of holies, the King of kings, the Lord of lords. You marvel. How can such a God love me? I am so blessed. All praise, glory and honour belong to Him alone...

The heavens rumble, the winds blow. Dark clouds roll in one after another and drizzles start to become showers and thunders of rain. Where is the cross? Your vision of the cross is blurred as you look through the misty window, searching for the long dazed cross. Rain is on the windowpane. I cannot see what is up ahead! Where is the cross? You wipe your spectacles and windowpane. It is not working. Where is the cross? You panic. Why can I not see it anymore?

You drop all things and run into the car. You say to yourself, I'm going to look for the cross. You try to turn the car engine on – it is not working. You turn the key multiple times trying to start the car. It still does not work. In frustration you slam on the accelerator and lash out a cry. You think to yourself, why is everything not working? I'm going to run, you said to yourself.

Convinced, you dash out of the car and into the rain.

As soon as you stepped out of the covers, the rain lashes at you. The further you went, the greater intensity the rain fell on you. It feels like needles piercing through the epidermis layer of your skin. You are completely drenched. The strokes on your back weigh on you every step you take towards the cross,

“Do you think the Lord still does not know what you are doing if you cannot see Him?”

“When afflictions hit us, and cover our clear sight of God’s love towards us, we often fall.”

somewhere further up, up there where you think it is.

As you hunch your way up, you peek around through your water-covered lenses. Blur images of houses, cars and buildings. Squinting, you see people are safe in their abodes. They are sitting. They are happy! They... Look, they have their eyes on other things. You think to yourself, shouldn't we always set our eyes upon the cross? Your pace slows down as you start to wonder. Yes, only upon the cross... You look at others. Wow, you think to yourself, it seems good to be living luxuriously under shelter rather than to brave the rain. They can do whatever they want! You stop outside a house to look at the expressions of the people in there. They smirk and scorn at you, how foolish it is to brave the rain. Wait, I'm not foolish! I don't have to be in the rain! I can turn back to my home too. What about the cr...? Small steps back turn to big strides. Before you know it, you are sprinting back home.

But... What... what about the..., the..., cross? What about the cross? What about remembering God's sweet promises? What about praising God, the One you said whom all praise, glory

and honour belong to? Are you going to forget everything else just to sit in the comforts of your chair? Just because the wind blew and the clouds covered the cross, that you no longer can see it? Do you think the Lord still does not know what you are doing if you cannot see Him? And you can do whatever you want?

~

In our frailty we often do that. When afflictions hit us, and cover our clear sight of God's love towards us, we often fall. In our short sightedness, we think that God does not love us anymore because He has sent us difficulties in our life. We have sorrow, pain, and tears. But, is not what God said we would have in our life? Jesus had them all, to the greatest depths in fact. What makes us think that our life will be a bed of roses and that we may snooze in the comfy chair all day, if our Elder Brother went through all that? Have you not read Psalms 34:19 – “Many are the **afflictions** of the **righteous**.”? Or did you forget it? Or chose to ignore and think that this is not the right path God has set out for you? Take heed, do not deceive yourself.

Through the afflictions we often look for reasons and evidences of His love towards us too. We dig frantically with our own means. We try to reason with our human understanding. But remember, beloved, we may not measure God's love with the circumstances of our lives. What kind of a gospel do you believe in if you think that God only loves those whose life is smooth sailing, rich and famous? Measure God's love for us through Christ alone. If God is perfect and eternal, so is His love towards us. And it truly is towards us.

Fix your eyes upon God, not on ourselves. Our life is as a pot, moulded by our wise Potter. What say shall we have in how our life should be? Empty yourselves, and fill our heart with the Lord. Be humble and see the Lord's counsel. This is His story, His world, His ways. We are in this world for His glory's sake. We do not need to know every specific reason for His doings. He does not have to report to us why He determines every little detail in our lives. If God is glorified by our lives, what else do we want? Did you not sing, 'I have decided to follow Jesus' since young?

If you are unhappy with your life, there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey Him. Commit to His ways for you, humbly and cheerfully. The Lord will show you in His time that His ways are right. And they are always right.

~

You kept on going though the storm rages and others ridicule you. You are confident and persuaded to look for the cross that you love. I want to see it again, with my eyes, you say. I love the cross for there is my hope. Then you recall a verse. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Not seen? Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and all the other heroes of faith in Hebrews 11

“The clouds blocking the cross do not mean that the cross is gone.”

did not see their Messiah with their physical eyes. But yet they did that which was pleasing to God in earnest expectation for the Saviour. They kept their eyes fixed upon Him, spiritually. In faith, they looked forward and hoped for the Messiah. They continued on in their sojourn believing that God's Word is true.

Your footsteps start to slow down and ultimately come to a stop. You pick up speed and head towards home. You found yourself sprinting back home! Not because you did not want others to see you braving the rain and seeking to find God in the storm, but because your spiritual eyes are now opened. The Word has become clearer and well defined such that you have gained understanding. You understand that

though the weather causes you to lose sight of the cross, and your physical eyes cannot see God in front of you, the cross is still there. God still loves you, His elect. The clouds blocking the cross do not mean that the cross is gone. It is just hidden from clear direct sight. Now you may head home with all joy and hope knowing that it is still there, and you can see it by faith.

REMEMBERING 500 YEARS OF THE 1517 REFORMATION

GUIDO DE BRES' QUOTE:

“My lady, the good cause for which I suffer and the good conscience God has given me make my bread sweeter and my sleep sounder than those of my persecutors. It is guilt that makes a chain heavy. Innocence makes my chains light. I glory in them as my badges of honor.”

Source: Hanko, H. (1999). Portraits of Faithful Saints. Jenison: Reformed Free Publishing Association. Retrieved from Reformed Free Publishing Association : <http://www.prca.org/books/portraits/debres.htm>



News from the Churches

Singapore

On 22 January, Curtis Lehnert made public confession of faith in CERC. His wife, Esther, along with their two children, Gabriella and Roman, received the sacrament of baptism.

Michael and June Lee's infant daughter, Hannah Lee, was also baptised on 12 February.

"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" (Gen. 17:7).

On the same day, Rev. Lanning also announced that he was led by the Lord to decline the call extended from First PRC of Holland, Michigan.

Lord willing, this year's CERC Church camp will be held from 12 June to 15 June at Awana Genting. The camp speaker will be Rev. A Lanning, with the theme being: "Zion Founded on the Mountains".

Kolkata

The Kolkata Church Camp which was cancelled last year due to the currency crisis, is currently being rescheduled to 21 to 23 April. Session approved Rev. Lanning to speak at the camp.

Philippines

The Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (PRCP) Young People's Camp will be held from 12 April to 14 April at Paradise Adventure Camp, Tungko, San Jose Del Monte City, Bulacan. The camp theme is "Love Not The World" based on 1 John 2:15 and there will be three speeches: "Youth and Money" (By Rev. J Flores), "Youth and Technology" (By Rev. L. Trinidad), and "Youth and Society" (by Rev. V. Ibe).



Chinese New Year gathering



Baptism of Hannah Lee, daughter of Michael and June



Farewell dinner for Tom and Gretine Bodbyl



Covenant Keepers outing to Sungei Buloh with Jeff Kotman



Enjoying durian desserts with Jeff Kotman



Enjoying the company of the Poortingas

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.

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Standard Industrial Building
Singapore 368813

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

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