

salt shakers

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Hello

everybody! Welcome to the very first issue of Salt Shakers! There are so many things to be excited about in the work of this magazine/publication/ (what else can we call it?!). First, this is a useful medium for us to represent the cause of Christ in this world (starting with Singapore, of course). So many things are fighting for our eyeballs nowadays –entertainment magazines, television programmes on buses, trains, handphones, computer games, and yes, facebook. Hopefully, Salt Shakers, as a print medium alternative to all things worldly, can be rest for your tired eyes as it provides Christian perspectives and deliverance from the visual avalanche around us. Second, it gives us an awesome opportunity to serve God in ways that weren't possible before. I thank God for the many hands He has strengthened to make this work possible. Everyone has a part to play in our BIG team, and now even those who normally aren't inclined to write even a short paragraph can make a print production possible by helping in other critical areas! May the Lord use this in ways we can't even begin to imagine (Eph 3:20), and as we prayerfully proceed, may God grant us commitment and perseverance to press on. Third, we can go places! We may not always be able to take a flight overseas to speak of His goodness and love, owing to time and budgetary constraints, but a little magazine in an envelope can do that! As the Lord leads, nudges, and sometimes, though hopefully not often, drags us along, let us be bold to bring His Word wherever the lost may be found!

Why is this work called Salt Shakers? First, we are the salt of the earth. (Matt 5:13) Obviously not literally (as in Lot's wife), but we are compared to salt in its effect and function. There's lots to read up on how salt was valuable in that day, how salt preserves, how salt cleanses and heals, but I want to emphasize one thing about salt – it makes the difference. For those who eat food (most of us), we know that there is a great difference between "no salt" and "some salt". It specifically means that our testimony must be in stark contrast to the world! At the hottest parts of the spiritual battle, where God's truth is being attacked the most, there must His salt be found. When our testimony is so similar to what the world preaches, then we are on "mute" and the Bible calls us salt that have lost his savour. So as salt, we must continuously show forth a testimony true to His Word, that others may experience the unmistakable taste of someone whose life has been changed drastically, who lives only for the service and glory of his great God. What then? Well, a salt shaker dispenses salt. And may Salt Shakers dispense the testimonies of all involved that many may be blessed.

We are also called Salt Shakers for another reason! We are salt that shake. In Joel 3:16, when Jehovah speaks, the heavens and earth shake. We desire to be used by God to declare His wondrous works powerfully throughout all the earth, and may the LORD use it so mightily, that we confess that indeed, He is our only hope and strength. Before we think that it's only figurative, go to Acts 16:26! The bold and defiant prayers and singing of Paul and Silas were a testimony so great that God brought about a miraculous earthquake! And while it physically broke the chains and opened the doors to free the prisoners, more importantly, God used their testimony to free the prison keeper and his household from the bondage and shackles of sin and death. Can our LORD use Salt Shakers to loose the bands of those still in "prison"?

So, I hope you have a better idea of our infant magazine and how we align ourselves according to God's Word. Please, read every article inside of here, so that there are no leftovers and nothing goes to waste! And then, pass it on to someone who might need it. Remember, you don't have to wait till someone shouts "PLEASE, PASS THE SALT!"

Christ regardless, paul.

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Book Review on

“When You Pray”

Scripture’s Teaching on Prayer

>> Aaron Lim

Many books on prayer have been written. Yet many fail to do justice to the biblical nature of prayer. The author of this book, however, is careful to maintain Scripture’s teaching on the subject. Every aspect of prayer and every scope of the author’s argument flows from the rich fountain of Scripture. The author puts it rightly, that “our prayers are totally governed by that word” (pg 5).

What stands out powerfully in the book is the author’s treatment of God’s sovereignty in prayer. The modern man’s prayer has reduced God’s sovereignty to the level of his carnal mind. He imagines God to be a pushover Whose eternal counsel can be changed by prayer according to his liking. The author correctly refutes this vain notion. He argues that “prayer presupposes the truth of God’s complete and absolute sovereignty, but it also determines the character of our prayer” (pg 17). Thus “the privilege of prayer, the right to pray, the knowledge of how to pray, and the ability and power to pray...is all of God” (pg 17).

The author is well aware that the request of Jesus’ disciples to teach them to pray (Luk 11:1) also characterises the saints of all ages. He acknowledges that there are times where “spiritual questions and problems so overwhelm our souls, and a sense of our unworthiness is so great, that prayers die on our lips and God seems far away” (pg 27). God’s people, nevertheless, have the blessed assurance that their heavenly Mediator prays for them.

Thoroughly expounding Scripture, the author aptly points out the rich truths of prayer in God’s Word. He faithfully explains what God demands of His people in prayer because in prayer “we speak to the living God, who is exalted in the highest glory” (pg 28). The author also touches on different kinds of prayer for a range of situations God’s people experience in this life. Whether in private or public prayers the author directs our attention to the throne of grace where God is pleased to hear His people’s petitions.

The clear and simple language that the author employs throughout the book renders it extremely readable. It is truly a book suitable for all ages and highly recommended for the child of God who desires his Father’s will in prayer.

Title: When You Pray
 Author: Herman Hanko
 Reformed Free Publishing
 Association, Michigan, USA,
 2006
 Hardback, 177pp



OVERCOMING THE WORLD

>> Pastor Goh

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God” - I John 5:4, 5

As young people, life presents to you many excitements, thrills and at the same time challenges. Right now many of you are still schooling and you have great hopes of doing well in your studies, and getting yourself an exciting career with great prospects of career advancements. But, at the same time, this world is a dangerous place spiritually. There are temptations to sin, evil companions and worldly philosophies that lead us away from God. And we experience that this evil world with its lusts is so strong that we might just be swept along like the Tsunamis that swept many away. What spiritual help is there for us?

We thank God that He knows our spiritual struggles and He has a comforting Word for us. The text begins with the word, “for”. Here the apostle John gives the reason that having the love of God we will obey His commandments and at the same time we do not consider keeping His commandments grievous. This is because we have been born again and at the same time we have been given faith by God. This faith causes us to overcome the world. This is the faith of the work of the Son of God on the cross which He accomplished for us on the cross.

The world to be overcome

What is the world? In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and when it was all created, God declared that it was very good (Genesis 1.31). And everything was created according to the will of God and Adam and Eve knew God and God’s will so that they understood the will of God perfectly. This can be seen in that Adam could name the animals in creation because he understood God’s will for that animal as it stands before God and God’s will of that animal in relation to the animal world. Man and animal experienced this peace and harmony between themselves without devouring one another.

God also created the angels, of whom Lucifer was one of the most beautiful angels. And because Lucifer was lifted with pride who wanted to usurp God’s unique place in creation, God drove Him and those angels who fell with him out of heaven, the abode of God. And the fall of Lucifer has a direct impact upon the first man, Adam. And by the temptation of the devil, our first parents, Adam and Eve fell into sin when they took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which was forbidden for them to eat, according to the command of God.

Before the fall of the angels and of the first parents, the whole world knew God as the only power and the creatures lived according to God’s will. But now with the fall, this world has another power that rivals God, that is the power of the devil. And thus the “world” of this text refers to the world that is utterly opposed to God. And this is the sinful world where

the Scripture says that the devil is the god of this world. And the devil together with the principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places controls this world and seeks the ruin of the child of God. And as such this is the world that prevents the child of God from glorifying the Father, which is the goal of the Christian (the Shorter Westminster Confession of Faith, question and answer 1, what is the chief end of man? Answer: man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever). And in the words of the apostle John, the evil world, of which he commands the Christian, not to love, consists of the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

And let me apply this word to you, young people. This evil world often is represented in two ways: firstly, you are bombarded by the philosophies of this world. One of the important evil philosophies of the world is that life is short, so enjoy while you can. Anyway, everybody is doing it, so there are no such things as right or wrong. This explains why sexual sins like pre-marital sex, adultery, HIV are on the rise. And another area which touches you is the world of music, whether it is pop, rock, or hip-hop and drama. And at this stage of your development, these are so appealing to you because it appeals to the old man of sin and so sometimes you give yourself to it. And you sometimes feel guilty when you indulge yourself in all these and how you wish you could somehow overcome it.

And we thank God that the child of God is not left without any help in overcoming this evil world.

Overcoming the world

It is clear from the words of the text that it is only the child of God who overcomes this evil world. He is one who is born of God that is a new heavenly life has been implanted in his heart so that he has a new spiritual nature to love God, to worship Him and lay down his life for his service. He is also one who has faith which is given to him by God at the moment of regeneration, and as such he embraces Christ as the Son of God with all his heart.

What is it that overcomes the world? The apostle John says, it is our faith that gives us the victory over this evil world. First, this refers to what God has accomplished for us on the cross through our Lord Jesus Christ. This evil world is under the power of the devil because of sin for he who commits sin is the servant of sin. And so, Christ, the fulfillment of the Seed of the woman came in the fullness of time, born of a woman and made under the law, was slain on the cross for our sins. So that by his death on the cross, He inflicted a fatal wound upon the devil and all principalities and powers and thus sin and death has lost its sting on the believer. And so the apostle Paul exclaims, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law".

Secondly, this victory becomes ours through faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And this is why the apostle Paul could say, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". And thus through our Lord Jesus Christ who have the victory over the devil, sin and all temptations.

Practically, when we (I include myself here) face the temptations to sin and tempted to be drawn away from God unto the world, what must be our response? That we must encourage ourselves of the truth that we are already dead to sin in Christ and we are victorious over sin through our Lord Jesus Christ and therefore we should not yield ourselves to commit sin, whether in entertaining evil thoughts or by carrying out that sin. Instead, we must use the members of our own body to serve God and the body of Christ. With our mouths, we can speak forth the grace and glory of God. With our voices, we can sing forth praises of God and with our conduct we can be an example of the believers.

Thanks be to God for
our God-given faith that
overcomes this evil world.
Amen.

Biblical Reconciliation

>> Prof. Hanko

Congratulations

to the young people on starting a new magazine for the covenant youth. It is certainly a very worthwhile venture. May God put His blessing on this venture and use it for building up the young people and strengthening the bonds of the communion of saints.

The subject of reconciliation between those who have been alienated from each other is an important one. We are, after all, a part of the church of Christ; and we live together in the communion of saints. If some in the communion we enjoy are angry with each other, will not speak to each other, and avoid fellowship with others, the communion of the saints suffers. It suffers because the communion of the saints is possible only where there is love for God and love for each other.

The Lord demands of us that we live in peace with each other. He demands of us that we bear each others burdens (Gal. 6:1, 2; 5:13, 14), enjoy each other's fellowship and seek each other's good. If we do not do what he demands of us, we sin. And sin is always the one thing that breaks up communion and fellowship. The communion of the saints means that we live in peace with each other (Psalm 122:6-9).

But in the communion of the saints we are all sinners. And it is a fact, as we all know, that we sin all the time. Not every sin requires reconciliation to restore fellowship. It may be, for example, that a group of people are together, and one of those present says something unkind

about another person. Most of the time we can let these things be as they are with perhaps a short reprimand. We assume of each other that we are all children of God, and that we confess our sins to God. We do not make a big issue out of every sin that our fellow believers or fellow young people commit. There would be no end to that, and it would be very foolish.

But there are other kinds of sins that cannot simply be overlooked. Maybe someone is our group and fellowship has gone to a movie and is now bragging about it; we are offended by that, because we believe that movie attendance is not pleasing to God; and we especially are troubled by the fact that one of our fellow saints brags about it or talks about it as if he or she has done something that others ought to do as well.

Such a sin is, of course a public sin, and the whole group has heard what was said. There are others in the group who are also offended. All are witnesses to a sin in one of our fellow saints. What now must be done?

Or maybe someone has committed a sin of which one of us is the only one who knows it. Supposing, for example, we see someone entering a movie house, although this person does not know that we have seen it. It is a secret sin, for nobody knows except the person sinning and the one who saw that person enter a theater. What must be done?

But maybe someone has said or done something to us personally so that we are badly hurt. Maybe someone has

called us a liar; or maybe someone has poked fun of something we did. Maybe it was done when others were present; or maybe it was done when we were alone with that person. The one was a public sin, for others witnessed it; the other was a secret sin, for only I and one other person know. What Ephesians 4:26 says is important. When someone sins against us, it angers us. But we must not remain angry, We must cease being angry before the end of the day. What must be done?

These questions need answering.

First of all, there is one principle that is so important that we must know it and observe it. In all matters of sin that require reconciliation, the fewer who know about the sin, the better. It is easier to be reconciled when only two are involved than when 13 or 14 are involved. It is easier to be reconciled when only some of the saints are involved than when the consistory must get involved. It is easier for reconciliation to be accomplished when only some in the congregation know about the sin rather than when the sin becomes public knowledge.

This principle is so important that we must all do everything we can to carry it out. I have found, in my own ministry how true this is. I have found this principle to hold for any sin. I have learned this when only two people were involved and when people and a consistory were involved.

I have found it to be true when and if the whole matter finally goes to a classis or even to a synod. There is almost no hope of reconciliation when other ecclesiastical

bodies become involved – even though sometimes they must become involved, for that is the only way to settle a problem.

And so: Keep sins of others secret! Do not get on your hand phone to text messages to others about it; or talk to others: “Do you know what so-and-so did?” We are always eager to tell others about somebody’s sin because by telling someone else what so-and-so did, we mean also to say, “We are not that kind of sinner; we would never do that. Look how holy we are.” That is exactly the way not to reconcile. That makes all problems of sin worse than they ever were.

Another point is that we must be very sure a sin has actually been committed. I recall once that someone said to me, “So-and-so was very cruel to me. I wanted to greet her cheerfully and she would not even talk with me. What must I do?” Obviously the answer was: “Go to her and ask her about it.” This was done, and it turned out that the other person was preoccupied by problems at home, did not mean to be curt and cruel, and felt very sad about it that she had left that impression.

We must be careful in this matter of reconciliation that our concern with sin and the breach it causes in the church of Christ is not concern for ourselves. We do not see another’s sin as a splendid occasion to parade before others our own holiness, but we seek the welfare of the church. So often when someone hurts me, my concern is my feelings, my hurt, my reputation, my honor. If we seek reconciliation for our own sakes, we might

just as well not seek it at all. We are only trying to salvage our own pride, regain our own reputation and shown how pious we are. This is damnable in the sight of God. We want our fellow saints to be saved and will do anything to save them

How then are we commanded to seek reconciliation?

Let us look at it from our own individual viewpoints. That is, I am going to speak in the first person; if I try to keep all the “hes” and “shes” straight and try to explain what happens under different circumstances, I will get hopelessly tangled up in pronouns, and so will you.

If I am witness to a sin of one of my fellow saints, I must go to that person to admonish him/her to repent. This is my solemn obligation before God. To fail is to make myself guilty of sin, for the one who sinned is my fellow saints and has threatened his salvation bu his sin.

I must be sure, however, that the person I saw was indeed guilty of a sin. And I can be certain only by talking with the person who, I think, sinned. I recall that two men once came to me for advice. They had been fishing in Lake Michigan and were on shore in a town quite a bit south of where they lived. They had seen one of their fellow saints in town with a strange woman, and were certain that their fellow saint was guilty of adultery. They went to this man and told him what they had seen and called him to repentance. But the man said that he had a boat docked in the marina of that town and was talking to a lady about selling it to her. They could

“The Lord demands of us that we live in peace with each other. He demands of us that we bear each others burdens (Gal. 6:1, 2; 5:13, 14), enjoy each other’s fellowship and seek each other’s good.”

not prove that he was lying, although they were sure he was. They wanted to go to the consistory and charge the man with adultery.

I told them they must not do that, because they had no certain proof, but that if what they suspected was true, sooner or later the sin would come out, as it did. It is easy to misinterpret someone else's actions and we must be careful that we do not charge anyone falsely or unheard (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 43, 112).

The reaction of the person we go to see may be either that he claims what he did is no sin, or that he did not do what I am claiming he did, or that, although he did what I claim he did, he is not sorry for his actions. Whatever the reason, he refuses to confess the wrong of what he did.

In the case he refuses to repent and confess his sin, I must go a second time, but this time with a witness. This witness need not be a witness to the sin; if the sin is secret, most likely there is no one else who witnessed the sin. But a witness must go along in order to be able to testify that I truly did go to my brother and seek his repentance.

This is what Jesus meant when He outlined the procedure we are to follow in reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-21).

It is clear from Jesus' words that the same procedure must be followed if someone sins against me. Jesus particularly refers to this: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee . . ." (verse 15). In a way, any sin of my brother, even if I am only a witness to it, is "against me," for it is against the communion of the saints, and I am a part of the communion of the saints. Yet there are times when no others are aware of the sin, but only I know.

How we go makes all the difference in the world. I must not go in a better-than-thou spirit, and leave the impression with my brother that I would never do anything like that. I must not go to my brother with a

whip to lash him with my tongue and angrily tell him how devilishly wrong he is. I must go in a spirit of meekness, showing a true heart-felt desire that he repent, and, if he does repent, not send him to the cross, but to kneel there with him and confess my own sins as he confesses his.

But if the one I go to see will not confess his sins even after going with a witness, then I must report it to the consistory, and they must make the matter a matter of discipline. Even when this happens, the sin must be kept as secret as possible. I must tell no one, not even my own wife. The witness must speak of it to no one, not even his closest friend. The consistory must tell it to no one, not even the wives of the elders. If a sin becomes public knowledge, reconciliation is all the more difficult and the congregation is guilty of violating the ninth commandment, that is, guilty of backbiting and/or slander.

But there is another side to this matter. Jesus speaks of it in the Sermon on the Mount: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23, 24). This is an important text and is often forgotten.

Jesus is talking here in the context of a serious warning not to be angry with our brother under any circumstances, nor to speak evil of him – even if we think he deserves it (Eph. 4:26). Let me go back to the use of first person pronouns. I may be angry with my brother because he has said to others that my preaching was lousy, or too doctrinal, or always talking about how great are our sins. Or he may write in "Facebook" (a blog I refuse to go to, read or use: it is only a good excuse for some people to pour out their venom against others) that I do not do myself what I say in my preaching. All this comes to my attention. And I become very angry with the one who wrote it. I say to myself or to others, "That rascal; he doesn't know what he is talking about. He ought

to mind his own business and look at his own faults. I won't have anything to do with him until he comes to me to apologize." If that is what I do, I sin as much as he does.

So on Sunday I go to church to worship God with my other fellow saints. This is what Jesus means by bringing our gift to the altar. In the old dispensation the saints came to worship God with a gift – a cow or sheep or dove, to be sacrificed. While I am in church I am still thinking about what so-and-so said or wrote about me; and maybe I even see him sitting six rows ahead of me.

As long as there is this problem, I cannot worship. There is disharmony, anger, and trouble between me and a brother. The communion of the saints is broken. Something must be done. Reconciliation must take place. And so Jesus instructs me to go to my brother and be reconciled with him. Now I have an obligation placed on me, and I may not simply sit back and wait for my brother to come to me. I may not tell someone else about what my brother has done to me. I may not ask someone else to go to this brother and tell him how angry I am. I must go to him. Jesus puts the obligation on me.

And once again, I may not go in a spirit of anger. I must not come to him and start raving to him about my hurt and about how dreadfully wicked he acted. I seek his salvation, and I desire reconciliation. Maybe I was partly to fault; and I ought to be ready to admit it. But in any case, we are both sinners.

Troubles among young people are probably the most common problems among young people. They say or do things that hurt others. And sooner or later, if they are true covenant young people, they will want reconciliation. If I have hurt someone, I ought to go to confess to the other my wrong. If I do not go to the one whom I hurt but that person comes to me, I ought to confess my wrong with sorrow. If I hurt someone in the presence of other young people, I ought to confess to them all and tell them all that I have been reconciled

to the one I hurt. If confession is made, the sin is forgiven by God and He will once again bless the communion of the saints. If God forgives, we must also forgive each other. How could we do any different?

It is very difficult for any of us to express sorrow for our sins. I have said it a dozen times and now I say it again: The two hardest words in any language to say are, "I'm sorry." We are too proud, too ready to condemn our brother, too insistent on our own position and reputation. Yet it must be done. James is very specific about it: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16). And by "healed" James means reconciled to each other and the spiritual wound healed.

Sometimes, for one reason or another, we do not want to go to our brother when we remember he has something against us. In case we do not want to go to see our brother, there is only one course of action to follow: Forget it! We must forget it completely. We must not hold what our brother has done against him. We must so completely forget it that we do not even remember what our brother has done. If we do not do this, there is a wound in the body of Christ, a breach in the communion of the saints. Such terrible things must not happen in the church.

Paul admonishes us to think others to be better than ourselves (Phil 2:3). The whole passage is worth reading at least once a month. When we live in the church by these principles we follow Christ who was our Servant that He might save us. And the result is peace and unity in the church.

Humility

>> Yang Zhi

What is humility? It is the quality or condition of being humble. There are some people in the Bible who have been made humble by God. One of them is Peter.

Peter, the disciple of Jesus, is somebody who was finally clothed with humility after the hardships of his discipleship. Though he boasted that his loyalty to Jesus would never waver, he still betrayed Jesus. Upon realising his sin, he was greatly humbled and went on to be a powerful instrument for his Lord.

The next person that has humility (perfect humility, to be exact) is Our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. Jesus, before beginning His ministry at 30, was in the temple listening to the preaching of the religious teachers. He listened to them attentively with all meekness , though He knew infinitely more than them. Luke 2:41-52 notes that Jesus was sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. (Doctors meaning teachers or instructors).

Our Lord also showed meekness when He washed His disciples' feet before the Last Supper as recorded in John 13:1-17. Scriptures also tell us of His perfect example, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil 2:8

Humility has been emphasized in Bible. Passages like Proverbs 15:33 tell us that humility comes before honour. Matthew 23:12 says that the humble will be exalted. Likewise, humility is the fruit of God's grace, a key evidence of Christ working in us. In 1 Peter 5:5, Peter says "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.". A disciple of Christ possesses humility. To stay humble and receive God's grace would be to constantly meditate on the height of God's glory. Job 22:29 encourages those who are humble, and reminds us that God "shall save the humble person".

I hope this article might give you a better understanding of humility and be of benefit to you.



Press On!

>> Nicole

In the weeks that Professor Hanko (Prof.) was here, we had the privilege of listening to Prof. expound on the topic, “Reformed Worldview”. The 4 sessions were very enriching, and I am certain that all of us have been blest and are thankful for Prof.’s labour of love amongst our midst, in spite of his age and the distance between Singapore and Michigan. Personally, I am touched and encouraged by Prof. and Mrs. Hanko’s great love for the people of God and especially for the young people in CERC.

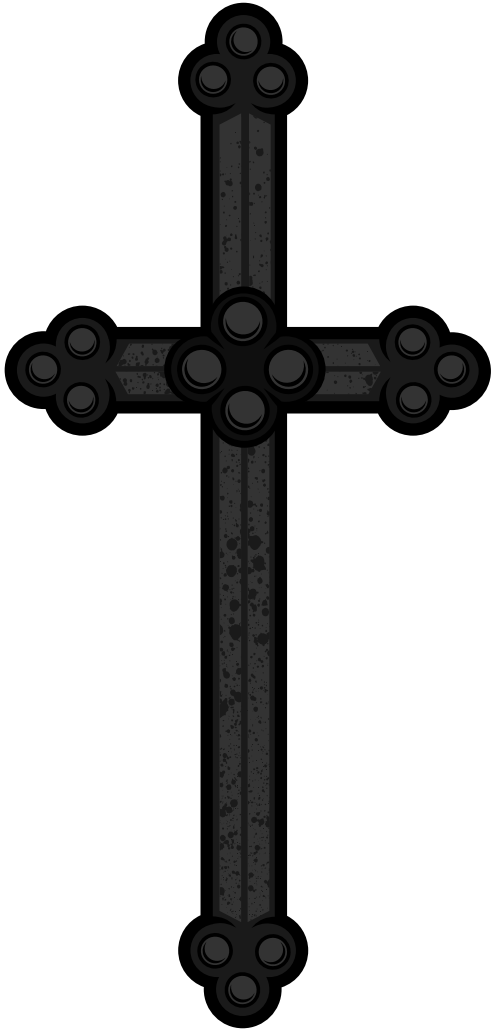
We were reminded of our calling to represent the cause of Christ here on earth. The basis for this calling is Christ’s great work of salvation on the cross. As a result of His saving work, we are no more part of the kingdom of darkness, but belong to the kingdom of Heaven (Col 1:13). How then are we to represent the cause of Christ? We do this mainly through maintaining the sacred Truth that God is God. In doing so, we also preserve an important foundation for godly living, because practical living flows out of the doctrine we believe and uphold.

Our citizenship in Heaven implies that we are but strangers and pilgrims on this earth. How then should we relate to earthly things? We must never think that our calling is to use the things of God to serve sin. Neither is it our calling to take vows of poverty and chastity, secluding ourselves from the world and living a life of “piety”. Instead, we are called to be content with whatever God has blessed us with for God has given us all things richly to enjoy (2 Tim 6: 17) and to use all that is in this world in the service of God. It is important to remember that every single thing God blesses us with remains His. As such, we are not to use them for our selfish purposes and desire, but for the advancement of His kingdom. God gave us money, for example, so that we

can put food on the table. We are called to pray and sanctify the food, using to nourish ourselves physically so that we can serve Him (1 Tim 5: 23). God gives us opportunities for education, so that we can know more about His creation and how to use His creation for His glory. All these mean that we have to constantly examine our hearts in prayer: as schooling young people, do we make an idol out of our studies? Is getting the highest paying job the most important goal in life? How important are our studies to us? Are we seeking first the kingdom of God? Are we faithful to our calling?

The Christian calling is never an easy one; daily we have to struggle against our sinful nature (which includes coveteousness – the desire for more) and fleshy desires. May we never be discouraged by these difficulties! Instead, let us draw strength from God and find joy and peace in Him even as we fight off the trials and temptations that God is pleased to bring our way. Be encouraged that the presence of trials and temptations in our lives is evidence that the Holy Spirit is sanctifying and moulding us so that we become more and more Christ-like. Let us hope in and eagerly await the second coming of Christ, where Christ shall change our vile bodies to be like unto His glorious body (Phil 3:21), and we shall no longer have to struggle with sin, grief, and pain.

As we journey on this earth, may we not be reformed young people only in name, but genuine reformed Christians who fight for and uphold the Truth, and use this Truth as a lamp to guide our footsteps. May we be found faithful to our calling to defend and preserve the Truth.



The Christian and Rock Music

>> Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

What should be the attitude of the child of God toward what is called “rock music”? More specifically stated, what should be the attitude of the child of God of Reformed persuasion toward “rock music”? And more specifically still, what should be the attitude of the child of God of Reformed persuasion who holds both in principle and practice to the truth of the antithesis toward “rock music”?

Perhaps you are asking, “Why make that the subject of an editorial in *The Standard Bearer*? Is that really a question among us? Is it a debatable subject? Is it necessary to discuss this and to point out the reasons why ‘rock’ is wrong, contraband, for the child of God?”

Obviously, my answer to these questions is affirmative. Perhaps I could put it this way: it should not be necessary to discuss this, but it is necessary. And I believe this answer is

realistic. No, I have not taken a survey or a poll to determine to what extent “rock” is indulged in by Protestant Reformed people of various age groups. However, in the first place, I know by experience, both as one who was once a young man himself and as a former parent of covenant youth, the carnal appeal and the temptation which the world’s music holds and which it seems to hold especially for young people; and I have no reason to believe that is any different today than in yesteryear. The only difference is in the particular kind of worldly music and in the degree of the temptation. In my day the world’s music went by different names than it does today. And in my day, perhaps it could be said, the world’s songs, both with respect to their lyrics and their music, were not always as blatantly worldly and as crassly carnal and perverted as they are today. That, however, only points us to the fact that there is development in sin; it does not point to a principal difference. And, in fact, this only means that the temptation of today’s music is greater and that its carnal and sensual and lewd appeal is stronger. If you don’t believe it, or if you don’t allow rock music openly in your home, then I suggest that you unexpectedly ask to listen in upon occasion to what is coming through the headphones of your son’s or daughter’s portable cassette player or radio, or that you turn on the car radio sometime after your young people have been out with the car. You might be in for a shock.

Add to this, in the second place, the tremendous advances in the media in our day. The daily newspaper in many instances promotes rock music and even publishes a separate section of news concerning rock stars and rock groups and reviews the latest gold platter winners, etc. Many a magazine does the same thing, and there are even magazines readily available in any supermarket which are devoted in their entirety to rock stars, rock groups, and their music. Radio stations abound with it, and there are stations devoted solely to the broadcasting of rock music. Records and cassette tapes are readily available on the market, and the equipment to play them is highly refined and easily available. More recently, rock has had a larger place in television shows and in network

productions. And if you happen to have a video cassette player, you can readily obtain cassettes which enable you to watch the perverted musicians with their perverted attire and makeup and their lewd actions while you listen to their carnal music. The temptation, from the viewpoint of sheer availability, is great.

In the third place, I am told that the inroads which rock music has made among our families is probably greater than I imagine. As I said, I have not taken a poll. Besides, in my non-pastoral ministry I am not in a position which affords me much direct contact with our people or opportunity to observe their lifestyle. Moreover, I am not making a blanket indictment of our people on this score. In fact, far be it from me to make any indictment at all; I only wish to sound an earnest warning and to furnish pertinent grounds for that warning. But I am told by some who are in a better position to know and to observe than I am that addiction to “rock” is not uncommon among our young people. I am also told that there are homes where it is not guarded against, or is even allowed and endorsed. I am told that there are even homes in which parents themselves freely indulge in listening to rock music.

This, I think, offers sufficient justification for my addressing the subject editorially. Hence, with some apology to the older generation (who, if they are like me, cringe when they come across some blaring rock while they are tuning the radio for some news), I shall proceed. As I do so, I make a special appeal to our readers to urge their young people also to read this editorial.

There is more than one way to approach this subject.

Frequently the subject is approached from the point of view of the question: what is wrong about rock music?

Now I am not saying that it is altogether wrong to ask this question. In fact, I intend to face this question in the course of this discussion and to comment on some of the evils of rock, as well as to comment on the fundamental evil of it. It is another

question altogether, however, whether this question as to the wrong, or evil, of rock should constitute our fundamental approach.

For one thing, it is quite possible to focus upon a good many aspects of rock music which are wrong, unquestionably wrong, morally corrupt, and yet not to touch upon the fundamental evil of rock. For another, in many instances the very form of the question is defensive and already puts the questioner by implication in the position of defending rock, implying at the same time that unless someone is able to tear down his position and point out conclusively the evils of rock, the questioner will feel free to go on listening. Strange, is it not, that the questioner never seems to ask the question: what is right about rock; that is, right in the sight of God, right as far as my calling as a Christian is concerned, right as far as my calling to walk in the light is concerned?

In recent weeks I have made it my business to pay attention to what is said about this subject in both the secular and the religious press. I even made it a point to listen to some of the cassettes on this subject by Bob Larson Ministries; in fact, I have on my desk at the moment a cassette entitled “Rock Update III,” dated August, 1985.

The secular press has recently been full of the controversy about what is called “sexually explicit” rock music—in distinction, of course, from “sexually implicit” rock. And it was supposed to be some sort of victory when a certain group of influential persons succeeded in getting concessions from producers of records and cassettes so that they would put warnings on the labels stating that a recording contains “sexually explicit material.” The words “sexually explicit” are, of course, a euphemism, a so-called buzz word. What they mean (but do not state) is explicit fornication, filthiness, and perversion that cannot even be mentioned among God’s people. Now no Christian can be in favor of such “sexually explicit” material, to be sure. But the implication is, of course, that as long as

such corrupt and filthy material is only implicit, even brazenly implicit, it need not bear a label, and, of course, is fit to be heard. Meanwhile, the fundamental evil of rock is not attacked.

In a way, the same kind of approach is adopted by the religious press frequently. There can be a lengthy recital of the evils of rock and of “heavy metal” without much reference to principle. And then, of course, the next subject becomes that of so-called Christian rock or gospel rock—the implication being that rock is possibly all right, provided it has some kind of Christian sugar-coating and gospel flavor.

The Bob Larson cassettes take the approach of reciting the evils of rock by quoting the lyrics of many rock hits or by quoting the language of various rock stars, by telling about their perverted dress and makeup and lifestyle. And make no mistake about it: Bob Larson pulls no punches in this regard. What he quotes is frequently so explicit that he leaves blanks where the language is so evil and filthy that he will not repeat it. What he tells in documented form concerning the filthy and perverted lifestyle, the blatant profanity, the Satanism, the perversion in the lyrics—all this is horrifying. In fact, it becomes so nauseating that one is moved to turn off the cassette player. Yet, while there is some value in materials of this kind in the line of concrete evidence, it seems to me that it does not address the basic question.

About this next time.

Article from Standard Bearer Volume 62, Issue 7 Editorial <http://sb.rfpa.org/printarticle.cfm?article=4482>

the importance of doctrine

>> Aaron Lim

“Where there is no doctrine, there is no church.” - Martin Luther

The Scriptures speak of a time where many will not endure sound doctrine (2 Tim 4:3). We live in such a time. The church today has very little interest in doctrine. Professing Christians prefer simple lessons on practical Christian living to doctrinal instruction. They speak passionately of reaching out to the unbelieving. Evangelism becomes the sole preoccupation of the modern church and doctrines are intellectual and boring concepts that have little relevance to her today. Rev. Ronald Hanko accurately depicts the situation of the church world today:

“Doctrine is not highly regarded anymore. In many evangelical churches there is such ignorance of doctrine that even the fundamentals of Christianity are not well understood. Even in churches that remain faithful in their teaching and preaching, there is often little interest in learning and understanding doctrine. The youth are, for the most part, bored by it, and their elders are content with a superficial knowledge of the doctrines of the Reformed faith” (Doctrines According to Godliness).

The Reformed church, by contrast, loves her doctrine. Her doctrines teach her Who the God of the Scriptures is. Her doctrines magnify the glory of her God in all His perfections. They reveal Him as the only sovereign God Whose will alone is to be obeyed. Her doctrines are like a spiritual compass that guide her in the way that she is to live in this world. She guards her doctrines jealously because her God is jealous of His truth. Constantly she seeks to develop her doctrines to grow in a fuller understanding of His Word. She teaches

them faithfully and diligently to her young so that they grow up to be mature men and women who are characterised by godliness. Again Rev. Hanko offers his words of wisdom,

“If the church and the lives of God’s people are to be rescued from superficiality, decline, and all the church troubles that afflict us today, there must be a return to doctrine”. Why return to doctrine?

In the first place, the Reformed faith is a body of doctrine. The Reformed faith which we love so dear consists of doctrines. To confess our faith is to confess doctrine. It is the body of truth concerning God Himself as He reveals Himself in His Word. The doctrines of the Reformed faith proclaim the sovereignty of God in all His works. They reveal Him as the absolute Lord of heaven and earth, the One who created all things and to Whom all things owe their existence. A student of Reformed doctrine is humbled by this truth and stands in awe at Reformed doctrine.

In the second place, doctrine is the foundation of all practical Christian living. A believer can never know how to live aright before God without doctrine. This is because true doctrine is the truth of God’s Word that is a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path (Ps 119:105). The Word of God is profitable for doctrine, to the end that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim 3:16-17). The doctrines which the Reformed believer subscribes to is according to godliness (1 Tim 6:3). He adorns the doctrine of God His Saviour in all things (Tit 2:10). His life is a

pattern of good works and whose doctrine demonstrates incorruptness, gravity and sincerity (Tit 2:7).

Thirdly, doctrines are the truths of Scripture in which the Reformed believer instructs his family. He speaks sound doctrine to them (Tit 2:1) and faithfully explains them because it is his covenant duty as head of the family. By such instruction God causes those whom he weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts to understand doctrine (Isa 28:9). His children receive doctrinal instruction from their catechism classes and grow up in the consciousness of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, doctrines are necessary for the Reformed church to grow in the grace and knowledge of her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18).

She must preach the doctrine of Christ with power (Luk 4:32) to build up and to edify His body. She must by sound doctrine (Tit 1:9) reprove those who oppose themselves to the truth. As the

mother of believers she nourishes them up in the words of faith and of good doctrine (1 Tim 4:6). She exhorts them with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim 4:2). It is the glory of the church, says the puritan William Perkins, to have its doctrine powerful and effectual for the winning of souls (The Art of Prophecy).

The Word of God is dreadfully clear in its warnings against false doctrine. False doctrines are the lies of Satan which corrupt God's truth and all that is true. The Scriptures speak of the wicked doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 16:12). There are those who hold the evil doctrine of Balaam (Rev 2:14) the wicked prophet and despiser of God. Many transgress God's law because they abide not in the doctrine of Christ (2 Jn 1:9).

We who love the doctrines of the Reformed faith are called to try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 Jn 4:1). We study God's Word diligently so that we may rightly divide the word of

truth (2 Tim 2:15). Constantly we place our doctrines to the test of the Scriptures so that we may oppose all that which is contrary to sound doctrine (1 Tim 1:10). Our doctrines identify us as the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). We desire growth and development in our doctrinal understanding so that we are no more like children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Eph 4:14).

Reformation in the true church of Jesus Christ always begins with a return to doctrine. This is the old paths which the prophet Jeremiah spoke of, where is the good way to walk therein to find rest for our souls (Jer 6:16). Luther walked in these paths, as did Calvin and the other faithful reformers. Our brethren in the Protestant Reformed Churches walk in these paths, where to follow will bring us safety and joy immeasurable.

The Lord in His goodness has given to us a young people's magazine, where a platform for the propagation of His truth may be served. In a time where Christians prefer shallow and superficial spiritual reading to solid doctrinal study, let us proclaim God's truth in all its power, depth and beauty. Let others know that we are a people who love our doctrines, who live by them and who will die for them. Let others see the infinite glory of our God in the doctrine we confess! (1 Tim 4:16)

O let us give heed,
serious and diligent
heed, to doctrine!

~~Tiger~~ Woods COUNSELED To Turn To CHRISTIANITY

Much attention has turned to the comments of FoxNews contributor Brit Hume about Tiger Woods. Hume suggested that Woods, the world's number one golfer, who is now better known for his adulterous affairs, should repudiate Buddhism and turn to Christianity. It is reported that on January 3 Hume said to a national TV audience, "I don't think that faith (Buddhism) offers the kind of forgiveness and redemption that is offered by the Christian faith. So my message to Tiger would be, 'Tiger, turn to the Christian faith and you can make a total recovery and be a great example to the world.'" Hume has come under fire for his suggestion, but he reiterated it the next day again on the FoxNews Channel stating, "My sense about Tiger is that he needs something that Christianity, especially, provides and gives and offers. And that is redemption and forgiveness."¹

Predictably Hume's suggestion is drawing harsh criticism. Buddhists are arguing that he has mischaracterized their religion. Members of the media who are not Buddhist, but nevertheless despise Christianity, are criticizing Hume for unnecessarily injecting Christianity into a news story.

An AP article reporting the indignation of Buddhists actually substantiates Hume's point that forgiveness and redemption are not found in that false religion.² Robert Thurman, a professor of Tibetan studies at Columbia University, is quoted as saying, "It is insulting to Buddhism to indicate that Buddhism doesn't take care of its own believers and followers." Will Buddhism take care of Woods and give him forgiveness and redemption? Yes, the article explains, Buddhism teaches that Tiger can find redemption by looking to himself rather than to God. The article reports there is no "creator god (sic) to bestow redemption" nor is there an "accountant in the sky wiping sins off your balance sheet as in Christianity." Tiger must save himself by turning to "an ethical way of life." So Buddhism says, save yourself. We know in the light of Scripture that Woods, like all men except Jesus, cannot live an ethically perfect life because he is by nature dead in sin. Therefore no one can find forgiveness or redemption in Buddhism.

Hume is correct in his assessment that Woods needs to turn to the Christian religion. However, it must be pointed out that forgiveness and redemption are not found “especially” in Christianity; they are found only in Christianity. And it must be emphasized that forgiveness and redemption are based only upon the work of Jesus Christ. I am not sure why Hume did not mention Jesus’ name, but I am afraid that if His name is not mentioned, the impression can be left that Christianity also offers salvation to those who simply change their lives and do good. Woods, like all sinners, does not need to do anything to earn forgiveness, he simply needs to believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

This is not to say that Woods could find forgiveness and redemption by believing in Jesus and then returning to “life as usual.” Oh no, true repentance includes both trusting in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin and a change from sin, or life as usual, to a life of obedience to God. If Woods were truly to turn to Jesus Christ for salvation, evidence of this would be seen in a radical change of life. Not only would he discontinue all adulterous affairs and devote himself to his wife (if she will accept reconciliation), but he would also discontinue his wicked practice of golfing on the Lord’s Day.

Readers of the Standard Bearer with long memories will recall that Woods’ golfing prowess, especially his putting abilities,

were a subject of interest in the debate between Dr. Richard Mouw and Prof. Engelsma concerning the doctrine of Common Grace. In his book *He Shines In All That’s Fair*, Dr. Mouw infamously expressed his belief that, along with the accomplishments of other unbelievers, God delights “in Tiger Woods’ putts” (p. 36). Now that Woods’ multitude of adulterous affairs have come to light, that belief has been further discredited. Before, the question could be put to Dr. Mouw, “Does God really delight in Woods’ ability to putt while he is desecrating the Sabbath Day?” Now we can add this question: “Did God really take delight in Woods’ ability to putt, while he was carrying on adulterous affairs and violating his marriage vows?”

The answer of Scripture is that God “delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of man” (Ps. 147). God does not delight in any of man’s accomplishments. He delights in the broken spirit and the contrite heart. He delights in obedience, not sacrifice. To please God, Woods must turn to Jesus Christ for forgiveness, and with a heart filled with love for God through the power of that forgiveness he must radically change his life. There is no common love of God for all the works of man; there is only a special love of God for His people in Jesus Christ and a special delight that He takes in seeing their lives transformed by the power of His grace. So the Woods’ scandal exposes the superficiality of the doctrine of common grace.

However, I am not interested in merely scoring points in the debate on common grace. The Tiger Woods’ scandal and Hume’s suggestion that he turn to Christ serves as an important reminder for us to have the proper perspective on life. How many of us were impressed with Woods’ ability to hit a golf ball? How many of us are impressed with the ability of other men to shoot a basketball or to throw or catch a football? How many of us are impressed with women who have the abilities of a Martha Stewart? Is it the case that we too tend to overemphasize the accomplishments of these men and women who deny Jesus Christ, while we overlook the importance of living a life of faith and devotion to Jesus Christ? Many of God’s people do not have amazing physical talents and do not lead lives filled with worldly excitement. They simply live their daily lives as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. That is impressive! Let us as Christians imitate God and delight in those who delight in Him through Jesus Christ.

1 Information on Hume’s comments can be found at <http://www.foxnews.com>

2 Tamara Lush, “Comments by Fox’s Brit Hume Upset Some Buddhists,” found at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34745053/>

Article from Standard Bearer Volume 86, Issue 9 All Around Us. <http://sb.rfpa.org/printarticle.cfm?article=12102>

we are
one.

one Lord. one Faith. one body in Christ.
Ephesians 4:5,12

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- Pray for Pastor Lau, that may God keep preserving him and for his recovery according to God's perfect will and plan.
- Pray for Pastor Goh that God will keep using him mightily in the proclamation of God's truth both in Penang and Singapore.
- Pray for those who are having upcoming tests or exams. That they will submit all things to God, study for the purpose of glorifying God alone, and whatever the results, be thankful.
- Pray for those going through trials and sicknesses, may God grant them peace and enable them to trust and submit to His will cheerfully.
- Thank God for enabling the youths to start "Salt Shakers" magazine, may we continue to strive to spread the Reformed faith and have the strength to keep it going.
- Thank God for Professor and Mrs Hanko for coming to labour in our midst these 2 months and for being a great guide and encouragement, especially to the youths.
- Thank God for our new place of worship, may we continue to use this premise for the furtherance of His kingdom.
- Pray for the youths who are going through spiritual trials and are troubled in the spirit. May their eyes be fixed on God and God alone. Looking to Jehovah for all sustenance and strength to press on.
- Pray for the CK anniversary celebration. As we get closer to 3 April let us pray for our youth. Thank God for preserving His children.
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Unveiling of the plaque by Ptr Lau and Prof. Hanko.



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