



# salt shakers

Issue 7 | Apr 2011

In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.  
And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.  
John 1:4-5

**Hello dear Readers!**

Welcome to the 7th Issue of Salt Shakers! By the time you read this, something important and wonderful would have just happened – the institution of the Penang Reformed Fellowship as a church. We praise and thank the Lord for this joyous occasion, whereby He reminds us of the great harvest at hand (Luke 10:2)! It is surely His amazing mercy and grace that has established a people in Penang, to be salt and light for His glory alone. Well if a church is the house of God, and God is Light (1 John 1:5), then a church is the house of Light – a Lighthouse! That will be what I am going to talk about in this editor's note, and may this note about lighthouses be a blessing to you as you reflect on it.

**Churches are lighthouses.** True churches that submit wholly to the rule of Christ and submit humbly to God's Word are great examples of lighthouses. They stand tall and prominent, unwavering amidst the pounding tides and blistering winds, shining forth the Light of God's Word into the darkness that surrounds. Is your church a lighthouse? Is it hidden? Does it shift according to the waves? Does it shine light into darkness?

**God's Word is made up of lighthouses.** In the ship of life, all men travel a treacherous journey bound for shipwreck. Thank God for the lighthouses He puts along the way for those He would save (Psalm 119:105). And thank Him, that there are no uncharted waters so dark, where His lighthouses do not pierce through and illuminate (2 Timothy 3:16). Is God's Word functioning in your life as lighthouses should? Are the lamps dirtied and pointing to where we would like them to point (Mark 7:13)? Is there a lighthouse that is switched "off" because we would rather not see that light?

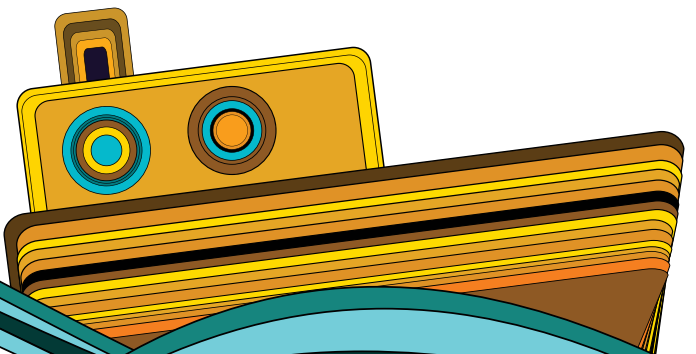
**God's children are lighthouses.** We are children of light (1 Thessalonians 5:5), and we must shine as light should! We must love God first of all, and seek Him first in all parts of our lives, and then love our fellowman with the true love that was shown to us, whether they be our friends, or not (1 Thessalonians 5:15). When we do that, we are lighthouses shining into darkness and revealing the glory of God wherever we go. If God is willing to use us as His lighthouses, those around us may see the light of God, and turn from their evil ways which lead to destruction (Romans 12:20). Are you a lighthouse? Are you a lighthouse that works faithfully? When others see your life, do they see Christ (Galatians 2:20)?

May the Lord help us to use His lighthouses meant for us, that we may become bright and effective lighthouses for Him. Do look out for the missions-related articles and photos in this issue! **Be Salt and Light!**

Christ regardless, paul

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# The Importance of Reading II

>> Prof. Hanko

## **The Importance of Reading for Ministers**

While I am not writing for ministers in these articles, I am interested in pointing out to you who read these articles that your minister ought to learn to read voraciously from his college days on through the whole of his ministry. A minister who does not read is not going to be an effective preacher. He must read widely, continually and with great enthusiasm.

Ministers to whom I have talked who do very little reading often respond, "Our life is so busy that we cannot find time to read." Well, I guess it is true that a minister's life is a busy life, but the appeal to being busy won't serve. As any kind of an adequate excuse. If we wait with out reading till we have time to read, we will never get around to doing any reading, for we will never find the time.

A minister must make time to read. He must include reading in his daily activities. If his only time to read is after midnight, then he better read after midnight, for he must read. He must read to survive.

A good rule of thumb for a minister is that he read at least one book a week. That is 52 books in a year, and that is barely enough. But one book a week is the bare minimum.

We will not talk for the moment about what he should read, but it goes without saying that I am not talking about simple and shallow "evangelical" books that are forever harping on various themes that, if read, are guaranteed to make one a better Christian. 159 pages long, filled with moralism, able to be read in little more than three hours – a minister, if he feels compelled to read such books, ought to read at least six or seven a week. And the market is flooded with them. At Book Seller's Conventions the booths promoting these books are the busiest on the convention floor.

A minister is not like a well of water fed automatically by a nearby spring of water. He is a dry well into which has to be pumped what he needs in his work. He has to keep pumping into that well, or the well will go dry. Maybe some stale and dirty water will finally come up from the bottom when the good water is pumped out. He has to keep putting water in, if he is going to produce water that will slake the thirst of the people of God.

# “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1)

## The Importance of Reading Scripture for Christians

The primary reading material for the Christian is, of course, the Scriptures. The Scriptures have to be read on a regular basis, preferably daily. They are the lamp unto our feet and the light on our pathway. They are not to be read superficially and hastily without thought, but they are the objects of our meditation. I recall that one student of Scripture, it may have been Arthur W. Pink, who wrote that classic book, “The Sovereignty of God,” said that one ought to meditate on the Scriptures by stopping after each word and thinking about what it means by itself and in connection with the rest of the verse. I have tried it, and it is a worthwhile exercise.

But the Bible is not always so easy to understand. One ought to have at hand, a good “Bible Dictionary” to look up unfamiliar terms and names. Such a Dictionary is a wonderful aid. My wife and I still use a Bible Dictionary in our devotions when we want to identify a name or recall how much a “shekel” is.

One ought also to have a commentary handy. Every covenant home ought to have a commentary. I still prefer Calvin’s Commentaries to all others, and, in fact, use only Calvin. Some complain that Calvin is too hard to understand, and this may be true in some places, but perseverance in reading him will pay off in the long run.

The important question when meditating on the Scriptures is not, first of all, “What does this text mean for me?” If that is the first question we ask, we will come up with a Bible that has nothing in it but moral platitudes that do no one any good. The first question is this: What does this text say about God? What doctrine lies at the bottom of this text? What can I learn about God from this text? If you truly follow this pattern, the answers to questions that deal with your life and calling in the world will come of itself.

We can take the simple and well-known text: “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1). The first question is not, What does this text do for me? The answer to that would probably be that we will never lack anything now. Why that is perhaps true, it is more important to ask, What does this text teach us about God? God is our Shepherd. But that makes us think immediately of John 10 where Jesus says, “I am the good Shepherd.” Why does God speak of himself as a Shepherd, and Jesus speak of Himself as a Shepherd?

All kinds of ideas and thoughts now flood our minds and we begin to see what it means that because God is our Shepherd in Christ, we shall never lack anything at all.

The point is that the Christian does not walk in this world by a set of moralistic rules, but he walks by principle and loves out of principle, namely, the principle of the truth.

But we talked about these things already in the articles I wrote on devotions. The point I want to make is that all of us, if we are to be responsible Christians, and responsible Christians know and desire to know doctrine and truth. For to know doctrine is salvation. Our reading must be geared to grow in the area of doctrine.

We do not have to become theologians, but we do have to know what is truth and what is the lie. Catechism instruction helps. So do Bible Study Groups. But, there is no substitute for reading. I might add that this involves knowing the struggles of the church in the past. But this must wait for another time.

# THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

>> Pastor Lau

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." 1 Tim 1:15

## INTRODUCTION

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; .." (Rom. 3:23) All men, with the exception of our Lord Jesus Christ, are sinners according to the Word of God. So, it is interesting to know who among them is chief, and the implications of that.

## WHAT

You must be careful if you plan to go up to someone, call him a sinner and ask him to repent of his sins for the sake of the salvation of his soul. This is because he might be greatly offended and beat you up before you know what has happened. Without the consciousness of God's presence listening to them at all times, most people "consider not that they do evil." (Ecc. 5:1) Most people think that they are doing their best and should not be considered a sinner who needs to repent of any sin.

But God's Word in Rom. 3:23 says that "all have sinned". To sin is to miss the mark, to miss the target of life. It means to live aimlessly like an arrow flying to anywhere but its target. In a competition, such a shot cannot be awarded with any merit points. Illegally moving the target to be hit by the stray arrow will not help to score points. Such despicable behaviour renders total disqualification from the competition. The target is where it should be by the design of the organiser and not of anybody, or of the participants. A sinner is one who misses the target of life, set by his Creator and not by himself.

God created man after His own image and likeness, and expected him to reflect His glory in all their thoughts, words and actions. All men, including women and children, are by nature so totally ignorant of God (not to say of what constitutes His glory) that they are unable to live sinless lives for God's glory. They are all become guilty sinners before God, their consciences meanwhile accusing or else excusing them of all their wrong doings.

“that  
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chief.”

Sin entered the whole human race when the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, chose to rebel against God’s Word forbidding them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Since that dreadful day, all men set up their own targets of life while ignoring the target set by God for them. Everyone is doing what appears right in his own eyes. They care not what God thinks of them. At the final Day of Judgment, it would be a fearful thing to hear the Judge of judges condemning those who are disqualified. It will not be just a “game over”. It will be our eternal destiny.

What does Scripture mean when it speaks of “chief” of sinners? Here in our text, the King James Version of the Bible translates the Greek word, “proton”, as “chief.” This word occurs 100 times in the New Testament. 83 times it was translated as “first” and 10 times as “chief”. The rest as “before”, “former”, “beginning”, “best” and “chiefest.” It’s obvious that the idea of being in the first position of a series is the basic meaning.

So, the chief of sinners means that of all the sinners considered, here is the number one. If we are considering the sinfulness of these sinners, then this one is the number one. In the group, there is none more sinful than him.

Now, who can that chief of sinners be in the text we are considering?

### **WHO**

It is clear that 1 Timothy was written by the Apostle Paul to his spiritual son, Timothy. So, naturally we are to take ‘I’ as referring to Paul himself.

But, there are always those who think differently. Whenever ‘I’ is found within quotation marks, it can legitimately refer to someone else other than the one introducing the quotation. If this be indeed the case, then Paul was merely quoting some well-known saying floating around in those days among the people of God, and the ‘I’ can refer to anyone who spread this saying around. The implication is that the messenger is personally involved in the message as well.

Could readers of God’s Word be allowed to choose their own interpretations of It? In transition, for the time being, I suppose this is unavoidable. Faithful dealings with God’s Word require the seeking of the only one meaning of that Word. The application of that one Word of God may have many legitimate outcomes, but to have multiple meanings is confusing.

When we consider the context, we are convinced that Paul was referring to himself as the chief of sinners.

In verse 11, the Apostle wrote of how the Gospel was committed to him by Christ. He was very conscious of his own unworthiness for this divine call to the ministry. He wrote of how he “... was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: ...” to the beloved people of God. It was of the Lord’s mercy that he was called to preach the Gospel.

The Gospel, preached so enthusiastically by Paul, is the faithful saying of our text: “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

Like many of us today, there were people in Paul’s day who found it hard to believe that the admirable Apostle called himself the chief of sinners in his preaching. Paul wrote to Timothy to confirm that this saying is “faithful” and “worthy of all acceptance.”

## WHY

When we compare our Christian walk with Paul's, we cannot help but feel very small and impoverished in spiritual things. How can anyone consider the Apostle as "the chief of sinners"? The Holy Spirit Who inspired the Word must have something wonderful to teach us as we consider the Holy Text carefully.

Though, indeed a very great man, the Apostle Paul was indeed a humbled man having being chastened of the Lord when he was struck blind and sent into oblivion for a few years. He must have been shown something of how much he owed the Lord to have become such a man of love.

Here in Paul we see an effective Minister of the Gospel of Christ with passion and feeling of a personal experience of God's grace and mercy. If aware that his statement was less than absolutely correct, he was certainly not ashamed of it calling it "faithful" and "worthy of all acceptance".

In passing, we may learn that our imperfect messages to each other, spoken in good faith to edify, may not be as worthless as Satan always makes them out to be. If not for the cleansing, burning coal taken out of the altar to touch his filthy lips, Isaiah could not have ministered the Gospel to the "people of unclean lips". (Isa. 6)

Paul wanted Pastor Timothy to know that sensing one's own unworthiness was no excuse for not preaching the Gospel. In fact, therein lay the power of an effective message. Elsewhere he wrote that when he was weak, God's strength was made perfect in him. Timid Timothy needed that encouragement.

Ministering the Gospel with the hypocritical Jews around was not an easy task for young Timothy, a half-Jew. If the Gospel can give hope to the chief of sinners, no humble preacher of It need be ashamed to declare It loud and clear. All sinners must be called to repentance of sins and to seek salvation in Christ alone.

Our own personal experience of God's saving grace should motivate us to greater zeal for Christ's Kingdom and the spread of the Gospel. Gospel-bearers must deal with the sins in their lives faithfully and regularly with thanksgiving if they want to be effective witnesses. In this way they keep the Gospel relevant and exciting to themselves personally. Otherwise, how can the hearers be convicted by a message which is not real to the messengers themselves?

## CONCLUSION

In our text, the personal reference was to the Apostle Paul himself. Our Lord Jesus opened Paul's eyes to see that he was indeed such a great sinner even though he was proudly imagining that he was serving God. He had missed the mark set by God for him in his life. Can you imagine Paul's biography without the Gospel of Christ? Maybe it would be like that of his great teacher, Gamaliel. The biblical Paul shines brightly for the glory of God. What will your life story be like?

The faithful preaching of the simple Gospel is never in vain as there is no sinner so great that it cannot save. Preachers are encouraged to preach to any sinner who cares to hear.

The Gospel is to be declared authoritatively by great sinners saved by the Sovereign will of God, in the death of Jesus Christ, for their miserable sins, on the Cross.

A<sup>>> Aaron</sup>

# PROPER PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTIAN COURTSHIP I

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”  
Hosea 4:6

If Christian courtship is to be properly approached, then it demands first of all a proper definition. Our young people and their parents must know what Christian courtship involves. They must believe in their hearts the spiritual nature of a covenant relationship and seek to apply Scripture's principles in their relationships. Only then will their relationships and marriages be strong. Only then will their families be spiritually happy ones. Only then will the Church grow in true spiritual strength and unity. Only then will the cause of God's Covenant be established and promoted in the midst of this world.

Far too little instruction has been given on this subject. It appears that most churches, paralyzed by the ignorance of the Covenant doctrine, fail to treat courtship with its due importance. Without a biblical understanding of God's covenant and its sacred implications, these churches flippantly allow their young people to date and marry whoever they will. All that these churches care for is that their marriage partners be professing Christians. Naturally the young people of these churches intermarry with other denominations. Some even forsake the Reformed faith to be joined in holy union with their non-Reformed spouses.

What results from this culture of intermarriage is a weakening of the Reformed faith. Those who leave the Reformed church sell the Reformed faith away. They show very little regard for the Reformed heritage that our spiritual fathers gave their sweat and blood for. Consequently the Reformed faith is lost in the lines of their generations. Their children grow up ignorant of the Reformed faith.

The Reformed Church must never be guilty of allowing her young people to fall into this deadly trap. The Reformed faith is too precious to let the devil ruin it. The Reformed Church holds with high esteem the truth that Jehovah establishes His Covenant with believers and their seed. She is deeply aware that a failure to teach her young people the covenant ways will result in destruction. To neglect the duty to impart the Reformed faith to the next generation will have far-reaching consequences.



Fearful of this threat and motivated by love for her covenant God, the Reformed church will teach her children faithfully. She will preach the truth of Jehovah's Covenant distinctively and apply those lessons in the lives of her covenant young.

During Christian courtship, the most important thing is that the relationship between the two individuals has God at its centre. In His sovereign providence, God brings a young man and a young woman together. Whether they are in the same locality, church or denomination, the covenant God in His wisdom causes their individual paths to cross. It is important to know that God does this in eternity. According to His eternal counsel He has purposed the specific young man and woman to meet, engage in courtship and then marry. The sovereign God does not simply leave it to the will of His children to decide by themselves whom they will marry, but leads them by His hand each step of the way. Christian courtship is, and must be, essentially covenantal in nature because God is the source of the couple's life and journey together. This is a profound truth which deeply humbles the child of God as he considers the extensive power of God's providence.

Christian courtship is essentially covenantal because these two individuals are friends of the living God. They delight to be intimate friends with each other because they share a common, intimate Friend.

Courtship with unbelievers is not covenantal because they are the enemies of God.

This is why the apostle sternly warns believers against being unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14-17). Only a couple who are equally yoked together will grow in true love because that love is rooted in God. God binds them in holy union as members of His covenant.

In Christian courtship, God is the Head of the couple. He governs the couple's way of thinking, feeling and deciding on issues during the course of their relationship. He rules by leading them according to His Word and Spirit. He directs their minds to the Holy Scriptures and governs their relationship by His revealed will. A godly couple thirsts for the Spirit's guidance and instruction. No wonder a couple that prays together stays together!

Christian courtship prepares a young person to leave his father and mother and to cleave inseparably to his wife. It must be approached with all seriousness because it must always be done with a view to marriage – a lifelong commitment. Relationships are not playthings. They involve a great degree of emotional attachment, often leaving painful scars when not properly handled. Far too often these relationships end in breakups because they were not given due seriousness when they were established.

What beautifully characterizes Christian courtship is the spiritual unity established and growing between both believers. Together they are bound by the same faith, truth and love for each other and for the God who has first united them in His eternal love. This unity is an expression of the unity that Christ shares with His Bride, the Church. As the couple grows in their love for God, for His covenant, His truth and His kingdom, so do they grow united in their love for each other. Together they become one as this unity finally reaches its strongest manifestation in marriage.

Covenant parents play a crucial role in the way their children engage in courtship. What kind of partners their children choose is strongly dependent on the instruction given by them and the way they live with each other in the home. Indeed Scripture insists on training up a child to prepare him for covenant courtship and marriage. Covenant instruction is the instrument that God uses to save His people and their seed.

Christian courtship may therefore be defined as an exclusive friendship between two believers, with God as their common, intimate Friend for the purpose of marriage. So then we shall proceed in further depth what Christian courtship entails. May our covenant God establish our minds and teach our willful hearts His truth on this subject, so that we may humbly obey to His glory and our eternal good.

**Only a couple who are equally yoked together  
will grow in true love because that love is  
rooted in God.**

# Review of Prof's

>> Christine

On 7 Dec 2010, Prof Hanko gave a talk on missions, the last talk of the “What the Bible Says” series.

There were 3 themes in his talk relating to missions:

- 1) the Sovereignty of God;
- 2) the church's responsibility;
- 3) the missionary's responsibility.

First, Prof set the facts right on ‘church planting’, the original name of the talk. It is a modern term, not found anywhere in scripture and does not express the idea of missions. It emphasises what man does, having the idea that just about anybody can ‘plant churches’, rather than God's almighty sovereignty in missions.

God's sovereignty in missions can be seen in how God alone knows the elect and where they are, and in the ways God brings His elect the gospel. Scriptural proof is found in Isaiah 55: 11 and 2 Corinthians 2:15-16. The gospel never returns to God void; it always leads to the salvation of His people but also the hardening of the hearts of the reprobate. It is a double edged sword; a savour of life unto life for some but unto others, a savour of death unto death. In fact, mission work is the title of the book of the history of the world, and not a footnote as one author disdainfully relegated it to.

Being assured of God's sovereignty, what of the church's responsibility? Far from taking the back seat and letting God (and a missionary in some foreign land) do all the work, the church has a calling to fulfil. Salvation of the church is in the line of continued generations, due to the covenant God established with Abraham in Genesis 17:7. Therefore, the mission calling of the church begins with the local congregation. It is wrong to have a church wrapped up in outward missions and have covenant children grow up spiritual imbeciles. Instead, as with Christ's instruction to Peter after His resurrection, it is the church's responsibility to “Feed my lambs!” John 21: 15. This is done through the official ministry of the church – preaching. Prof emphasised the importance of catechism teaching.

# Talk on Missions

The witness of the church is also important. The church that does not witness is not a mission church. The witness of a believer is not always the words he speaks, but also his life. Is there a difference between the church and the world? As a believer, is my life conformed to this world, or is it transformed by the renewing of my mind, that I may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God? Romans 12: 2 It is important to get our doctrines right, as doctrines guide our lives.

Missionaries are guided by the Holy Spirit. They go when there is a call, to answer it and determine the sincerity of the call. Paul was called to “Come over into Macedonia, and help us” Acts 16: 9b, and so he went.

Missionaries are accountable to the church, being under the jurisdiction of the consistory of the church which sent him, and does not have free rein to solve problems independently of the consistory. The consistory should be thoroughly acquainted with all aspects of the missionary’s pastoral work.

In preaching the gospel, missionaries should not preach subtly or dilute doctrines for fear of frightening people away. That would be a lack of trust in the Holy Spirit’s work in the hearts of the elect! The missionary’s job is to preach the whole counsel of God, and not adapt sermons to babies in the faith.

Finally, there may be occasions when the missionary is discouraged, because he loves the people he has come to know and done everything he could, but it seems that nothing is working. Or, back home, the church wonders why the number of believers is not increasing. Yet this belies an emphasis on quantity as an indicator of quality. Do we, puny man, trust our sovereign God enough to entrust the numbers to Him?

I have benefitted immensely from Prof’s talks. He speaks the truth in love, for CERC. He does not shy away from difficult topics or questions but tackles them headlong in his talks, shedding Scripture’s light on our paths, guiding our feet. May these lessons stay with us and be applied in our daily lives.

“Come over into Macedonia,  
and help us.” Acts 16:9b

# Philippines: Spreading The Reformed Faith

>> Rev. Daniel Kleyn

I mention at the outset my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to write concerning our mission work here in the Philippines. It is encouraging to know of the interest the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore has shown, and continues to show, in our work. A special word of thanks to the youth for asking me to write for their magazine. I trust this summary will help you know what labour the Lord has given us the privilege to do, and enable you to pray for us and our work with understanding.

## **Development of the Mission Field (1995-2001)**

Initial contact with believers in the Philippines came through correspondence which was received by the Evangelism Committee of the Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois. This was back in the early 1990's.

When it became apparent that the Lord could very well be giving our churches an open door, Evangelism Committee passed on the correspondence to the Foreign Mission Committee.

The FMC subsequently sent a total of seven delegations to the Philippines over a period of five years. These delegations (either two ministers, or a minister and elder) met the many contacts throughout the Philippines with a view to becoming better acquainted with them, finding out about their interest in the Reformed truth, and determining whether the Lord was indeed setting before our churches a place of labour.

The fruit of these visits was that Synod 2001 of the PRCA approved the recommendation of the FMC to declare the Philippines a mission field. Synod also approved calling and sending a missionary. Doon Protestant Reformed Church (in Iowa) was appointed as the calling church for this mission field.

## **Past Missionary Labours (2001-2009)**

Rev. Aud Spriensma accepted the call to serve as missionary in the Philippines in the fall of 2001. After a time of preparation, Rev. Spriensma and his family moved to the field in early 2002. He laboured here for five years (2002-2007). Through the Lord's blessing on that work, a church was instituted in 2006 – the Berean Protestant Reformed Church in the Philippines.

From 2007-2009, Doon PRC continued the calling process for a missionary to replace Rev. Spriensma. In the meantime, the PRCA was able to provide ministers to preach and teach, for periods of a few weeks at a time, in the Berean PRCP during its vacancy.

Synod 2008 approved calling two missionaries to labour together in the Philippines. Soon thereafter, the Lord provided two men to serve as missionaries. Rev. Richard Smit accepted the call in January, 2009. My acceptance was in April, 2009. Each of us then spent five to six months in preparation for the work and move.

This included taking missions courses, doing extensive reading in missions, and beginning to learn the Philippine language, Tagalog (something we still continue to do).

Rev. Smit and his wife Tricia and their eight children moved to the Philippines in July of 2009, and my wife Sharon and I moved here in December of that same year. We live near each other in Antipolo City, an eastern suburb of the city of Manila. This puts us close to Faith Academy, the school where the Smits send their six oldest children.

### **Current Missionary Activities**

Rev. Smit and I, with the approval of Doon PRC and the FMC, have divided up our work in the Philippines along the following lines.

Rev. Smit focuses upon the work in the Berean PRC. He preaches there every Sunday, teaches all the catechism classes, leads the weekly Bible study, does pastoral work, and presides at the consistory meetings.

My work involves preaching and teaching in three different places. On the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month, I preach and teach in the First Reformed Church in Bulacan (about two hours from home). On the 2nd Sunday (and 5th, if there is one), I bring God's Word to the saints in the All of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Gabaldon (about 5 hours from here). And on the 4th Sunday of each month, I preach and teach in the Christian Faith Ministry in Batasan Hills (about 1 hour from home). Needless to say, Sharon and I cover quite a few miles in our car.

In all three places, I preach on the Heidelberg Catechism. In Bulacan and Batasan Hills, I also lead a study of the Church Order of Dordt. In Gabaldon, I have the opportunity to teach a Bible History catechism class for the children, and in Bulacan, a class on the Belgic Confession of Faith for the young people there.

While this is the general division of our labours, Rev. Smit and I also assist each other in our work. We occasionally do a pulpit exchange. We regularly consult with each other about our work. We both correspond and/or visit with various other contacts we have in the Philippines. And we work together in some other areas of the work of missions here, as well.

One of those areas is 7M. This acronym stands for "Metro Manila Monthly Monday Morning Ministers' Meeting." Our 7M meets twice a month. Its purpose is to provide instruction for present and future ministers. Rev. Smit and I lecture in Reformed dogmatics. Rev. Smit has covered introduction to Reformed dogmatics, and I am currently providing instruction in the loci of Theology. When that is complete, Rev. Smit will lead the men in a study of Anthropology. We have two pastors and one student for the ministry attending these meetings.

Another area in which we work together is that of seeking to establish a federation of Reformed churches here. At this point in time, the First Reformed Church in Bulacan and the Berean Protestant Reformed Church have as their desire and goal to form such a federation. With a view to this, we are especially providing instruction in Reformed Church Government through a study of the Church Order of Dordt. The two congregations also seek to come to a better knowledge of each other, both on an official as well as on a personal level. With that in view, we were able recently to have a combined outing for the youth of both churches, something the young people very much enjoyed. In fact, some were asking when the next one would be.

One more work and goal we have before us is to assist the Berean PRC in their desire to establish a sister church relationship with the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. We discuss this matter regularly at the Berean consistory meetings. Rev. Smit has also given

given instruction to the Berean congregation concerning this, with lectures on the principles, practice, and necessity of establishing such a relationship. We do not know yet when this relationship might be established, but are thankful for the desire as well as for the opportunity to work toward this good goal.

I should mention one more thing, and that is that the Lord has given the Berean PRCP a student for the ministry, Bro. Vernon Ibe. Currently he is studying in the Protestant Reformed seminary in Grandville, Michigan, USA. Later this year (beginning in July), he will be having a six month internship with Rev. R. Van Overloop in Grace PRC. He is looking forward to this part of his preparation for the ministry. But he is also looking forward to completing his studies with a view to returning to his home country and taking up the work of the ministry here. We too eagerly anticipate his return – Lord willing, in 2012.

### **Conclusion**

If you are interested in more information about our work and life here, including pictures, feel free to browse the blog Sharon is doing. See [www.kleynsphilippines.blogspot.com](http://www.kleynsphilippines.blogspot.com).

We covet your prayers, and assure you that you are remembered often in prayer too. May God's blessing continue to rest upon us as we, with you, strive to give a good witness to His glorious truth in Southeast Asia. Truly the harvest is plenteous. Surely the day of Christ's return approaches quickly. What a joy and privilege to be used of our Sovereign God for the spread of His Word. May the Lord keep us faithful and prosper our work with a view to the ingathering of His elect and the coming of the great day of Jesus Christ.

# THE INSTITUTION OF THE COVENANT GRACE CHURCH IN PENANG

>> Pastor Goh

The Penang Reformed Fellowship is now organised as a local Reformed Church in the island of Penang, West Malaysia. The new name of this church is Covenant Grace Church. They are properly instituted with five families as founding members and two elders properly elected and ordained. All this took place in the morning worship service on 13 March in Penang.

Regarding this institution, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving for what God has done, namely, to establish a Reformed witness on the island of Penang. And God-willing, this congregation will be a beacon light not only to Northern Malaysia but also to the rest of Malaysia, including Sarawak and Sabah. God has also answered the prayers of these five families: that a Reformed Church be established, not only for this generation but also for the generations to come so that the future generations of Penangites would also know the Reformed Faith. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the work of grace in the hearts of our brethren.

Pastor Goh preached on the text, I Timothy 3.15 for that occasion, "... the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth". And, he exhorted the congregation along the following lines: the main point that the apostle Paul wanted to bring across to Pastor Timothy was that the church upholds the truth. The church upholds the truth in four ways. First, the church upholds the truth by proclaiming it. Second, the church upholds the truth by defending the truth over against the lie of the devil. Third, the church upholds the truth by developing it. And finally, the church upholds the truth by preserving it for future generations.

At the institution which took place after the sermon, the founding members, regular worshippers, and past regular worshippers were present.



The founding members of Covenant Grace Church are as follows:

Mr & Mrs Leow Sian Beng

Mr & Mrs Paul Tan Kok Poh, Jonathan, Timothy and Nicholas

Mr & Mrs Calvin Lim Fook Loong, Chloe and Ian

Mrs Neo Siew Chan, Caitlyn

Mr & Mrs Yee Fook Khong, Hong Chun



Elder Paul Tan Kok Poh signing the Formula of Subscription.



Elder Leow Sian Beng signing the Formula of Subscription.



Elder Paul Tan Kok Poh leading in the reading of the Covenant of Commitment.

Immediately after the morning sermon, Pastor Goh read a letter from the Session of CERC addressed to the Penang Reformed Fellowship to affirm that the founding members were in full communion and of good report in CERC. And according to PRF's request to be organised as a local church in Penang, the Session of CERC released these associate members to become the founding members of Covenant Grace Church.

The next thing that took place was the election of two elders. Brothers Leow Sian Beng and Paul Tan Kok Poh were both elected to the office of elder, and thereafter, they were ordained as elders of the newly instituted church. In the laying of hands, Pastor Lau also joined in to ordain the elders. After the worship service, there was the signing of the formula of subscription by the two newly elected elders and the recitation of the covenant of commitment by the newly instituted congregation.

Delegates from both CERC and FERC were also present. From CERC: Elders Leong Fai Chong and Wong Chee Choong and Deacon Felix Chan Chee Seng. And from FERC: brother Choo Ker Ming and his wife Kwee Siew. Gifts of appreciation were presented to CERC, FERC, Pastor Lau and Pastor Goh. Finally, buffet lunch was served, Malaysian style.

May we continue to pray for Covenant Grace Church, that God will keep her faithful to the truth, that she will be a beacon light in Penang and the marks of the true church will be evident in her midst.

Total depravity, or total inability, describes man's absolutely sinful and corrupted fallen state as a result of original sin. When Adam, the representative head of the whole human race fell into sin, the entire human race fell too. This is clearly shown in Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Hence, every single man, head for head is totally depraved. Since the fall, every single person, even a newborn baby, is depraved as he is born in sin. This is seen in Psalm 51:5 which says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This implies that sin is deeply embedded into man's nature. He is totally ruined and willingly turns to evil from the very day that he was born.

# Total Depravity >> Hui Qi

Because man is born into sin, every part of him is totally depraved. Man is wicked, corrupt, perverse and opposed to God in his nature. He is inclined to serve his own will and desires and to reject the rule of God, as proven in Genesis 6:5 "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." He is also unable to serve and love God wholly with all his heart, mind and strength. Man rests under the curse of sin and is wholly incapable of loving God or to do anything which merits salvation. Even the good which man may intend to do have false motives. This is seen in Romans 3:10-12 "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

This doctrine of total depravity, however, is denied by most Christians today and avoided by many as it is not seen as a "friendly" doctrine. Many of them cannot accept that they are totally depraved such that they are unable to do any good by themselves. They assert that there is a difference between total depravity and absolute depravity. Their understanding is that man is totally depraved, but not absolutely depraved. They falsely claim that man, although sinful, is still able to do some good, such as to do good works, or to choose God. This is absolutely wrong as since the fall, man is completely unable to do any good. Psalm 14:1-3, The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the



“John 3:3,  
 Jesus answered and said unto  
 him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee,  
 Except a man be born again,  
 he cannot see the  
 kingdom of God.”

children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their belief further emphasizes their wickedness, as the nature of fallen man is such that he readily listens to any theory which makes him even partly independent of God as he wishes to be the master of his fate and the captain of his soul. This is seen in many other beliefs too.

Total depravity also proves to man that all his claims of goodness are unfounded, and it shows him that his only hope of a change in life lies in the sovereign and divine grace of the Almighty God. The old man is constantly opposed towards God. It is only the power of the Holy Spirit, which works in man's cold and hardened heart, which allows him to be saved.

This alone proves the eternal and infinite love of God when he sent his only begotten son Jesus Christ to die on the cross so as to provide redemption for His people. John 3:3, Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

From this, we are to learn that there is no room for pride. We owe everything that we have to God. We ought to be thankful for and appreciate God's unconditional grace, and further rely on Him and use the means of grace that He has given us, such as the preaching of His Word, family devotions, prayer and youth group activities so that we can grow more in Him. Furthermore, we are not to look down on others. By comparing ourselves to others and deeming ourselves better, we are full of pride,

and as we are warned in Proverbs 16:18, pride goeth before destruction. In fact, we have absolutely nothing to be proud of, as the scriptures clearly says that we are all equally depraved, dead, and wicked, and we have all gone astray.

Only through understanding our depravity, are we able to comprehend how great the measure of God's love is for us when he unconditionally elects us, wretched sinners, and saves us from eternal damnation in hell even though we are such unworthy creatures who continue to sin against Him time and again. Our lost, ruined and helpless state must be constantly set before us so that we can comprehend our depravity and thank God for the gift of salvation that He has bestowed on us.

# unconditional election >> Elias

The Five Points of Calvinism are a summary of the difference between Calvinism and Armenianism, as a point-by-point response to the five points of the Armenian Remonstrance. Identified by namely, Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and the Perseverance of the Saints, TULIP, in short, is the doctrine that the Covenant Keepers (CK) was studying over the past year.

As a start, the Five Points of Calvinism, commonly known as TULIP, were set forth by the Synod of Dort back in the years 1618-1619. These points came as a rejection to the controversial Armenian objections raised by Dutch churches to the Belgic Confession which were documented in The Remonstrance of 1610. As a result, the Canons of Dort was published, being the judgment of the National Synod, containing the five essential points that are crucial to the Reformed doctrine till today.

One of the points, Unconditional Election, will be what this article aims to shed some light on, sharing briefly what CK has learnt with respect to this topic and providing some insight to the reader. As many are now discarding this doctrine and embracing falsehood, hopefully through this article, the reader might be spurred on to research more into Unconditional Election and the Reformed faith, and embrace the truth which God has inscribed in the Scriptures.

## **The Meaning of Unconditional Election**

So, what is Unconditional Election? What seems like a very complicated doctrine can be easily broken down into its two key words, “Unconditional” and “Election”. Election is basically the eternal choice by God of certain definite individuals in Jesus Christ unto salvation. Unconditional then means that this election took place without any need for man to fulfill any conditions to inherit that salvation. This means that man by no means have to do any good works to enable him to be saved. The Reformed doctrine is one that says that all the election in itself has nothing to do with man, but is only reliant on the sovereignty and will of God.

With that comes great scepticism that the doctrine is biblical. You might ask, If God is love, why does he save some and hate others without any criteria? How on earth can Unconditional Election be a teaching of scripture? With that, here are some Bible verses that do support the judgement concluded by the Synod of Dort against the followers of Jacobus Arminius.

Ephesians 1:11. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Ephesians 2:8. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

These verses expound on the truth of the Scriptures that God indeed does choose His people through predestination. This means that He determined, before the foundation of the world, who would be His elect and be saved unto eternal salvation. This ordination is definitely not one that man chooses, but rather a gift of God.

Romans 9:15-16. “For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

With this Unconditional Election comes reprobation which is the display of God’s justice. The reprobate are due for destruction, one example being Esau as taught by Apostle Paul in Romans 9:11-13. “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” Reprobation is not a denial of a loving God, but rather it displays the justice required by God’s holiness and His intolerance of any sin. There is no compromise to His righteousness and sovereignty, resulting in the coexistence of reprobation and man’s responsibility for his own sin.

## Difficult Passages

Some passages provide certain ambiguity and at first glance might not seem to support the Reformed stance:

Romans 8:28-30. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

This verse seems to support the Armenian stance that God has a crystal ball which he uses to see into the future of who will accept Him and believe in Him. However, the Bible cannot possibly be contradictory by having differing doctrines. At a second look, we can then interpret "foreknow" to be one of love like how "Adam knew Eve" in Genesis 4:1. This love must precede predestination as seen in Ephesians 1:3-5 where God, "in love, having predestinated us (His elect) unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself (God), according to the good pleasure of His will." Thus with accurate interpretation, we see that the Reformed faith is the true reading of the Word of God.

## Denials – Free Will

Along with these difficult passages come denials that teach falsehood with regards to doctrine. One such denial is Freewill which teaches that ordinary man, man outside of and apart from the grace of God, is able to choose Jesus Christ and salvation. Those that believe in this, namely the Pelagians and Arminians are compelled to reject predestination. According to those who hold to this doctrine of free will, the decisive choice for salvation is not of God but of man. Consequentially, Election becomes conditional and apparently God in eternity simply looks down the corridors of history, sees who will choose Him and who will not, elects those who do and rejects the rest. Predestination is reduced to mere prescience. God chooses those who choose Him.

The folly of this teaching ought to be apparent. If salvation depended on man's choice, no man would be saved: "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10-12). The teaching of the free will not only denies the total depravity of fallen man, but it is also an assault on God's sovereign predestination. In the clearest possible language Jesus declares in John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you..."

Other denials include the doctrines of common grace and the free offer of the gospel that also contradict the Bible and the teaching of the Reformed faith. As Reformed Christians, we must always be on guard against any heresies and false teaching that might infiltrate the church.

## Practical Application

Knowing the truth is not enough. Knowing how to apply it to one's life is equally important. Only through application can we then see a change in one's spiritual health, everything owing to God's sovereignty. The doctrine of predestination and the consistent maintaining of this doctrine are of the greatest practical importance for the church. It is not true, as the enemies allege, that this doctrine is cold, lifeless, and of no practical value. For a doctrine that is essential to the gospel, Unconditional Election does have learning points.

The faithful confession of the doctrine of predestination is vital for the life of the antithesis to which every child of God is called. Denial of predestination, as history shows, inevitably leads to a breakdown of the antithesis. Antithesis means the separation between the church and the world, and the spiritually separate life the Christian is called to live over and against the world. We are to be in the world but not of the world.

The practical implication of the doctrine of predestination forbids the church to have common cause with the world. To use the words of the prophet to King Jehoshaphat, who had sinfully made an alliance with wicked Ahab, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?" (II Chron. 19:2) Whether it is being unequally yoked or having a common cause with unbelievers, Christians should definitely shun away and not partake of what the ungodly do.

With this implication, hopefully this article has impressed upon the reader the truths of the doctrine of Unconditional Election, that one might live an antithetical life, giving all glory to God alone.

# limited atonement

>> Ming Hui

The doctrine of Limited Atonement is the third of the Five Points of Calvinism, and is represented by the letter L in the acronym TULIP.

What is the implication of the word limited? The word limited implies that Christ died for only a limited number of people. John 17:9 says, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me; for they are thine." This clearly shows that Christ's atonement is for His elect only, and He prays for them continually. This is not because His power is limited, but because it was God's sovereign will that it be so. The only thing limited is the number of people for whom Christ died.

What does the word atonement mean? The word atonement means "a payment for." It suggests "making one out of that which has been divided." Christ paid for His people's sins on the cross, and this payment resulted in His people becoming at one with God, while previously they were separated from Him by sin. The word atonement also implies that Christ's death actually saves, instead of merely making salvation an available option. Matthew 1:21, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he

shall save his people from their sins." Christ shall save His people from their sins.

So, what does limited atonement mean? Limited atonement means that Christ died only for His elect, and His death was totally efficacious for them, so they are definitely, 100% saved. John 6:37-39 says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." And John 10:14-15, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." Christ loses none of His sheep, for whom He lays down His life. He accomplished the Father's will. That is, He saved every single one of those whom God had given to Him, and these who are Christ's shall never be separated from His love (Romans 8:38-39), and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand, but they will follow Christ and obey His voice

(John 10:27-28). Whereas those who are not among Christ's elect will not believe (John 10:26), and thus will never be saved.

Limited atonement shows the sovereignty of God in that those, and only those, whom God elects, will be saved, and others whom God has sovereignly reprobated, will be condemned to everlasting damnation. This shows that God, and God alone, is in control of all things. Total depravity is the reason why the atonement of Christ for His people must be efficacious for them; because total depravity teaches that man has no ability in himself to accept Christ (Romans 3:9-12; Romans 5:12; John 6:44,65), so we need the atonement of Christ as our only means of salvation. Those who put their trust in Christ only do so because God graciously grants them the gift of faith. Unconditional election teaches that man's faith is not a condition to his salvation, but that salvation is all of grace (Ephesians 2:8), and God elects those who will be saved. Thus, atonement is limited due to God's sovereign election. Limited atonement can only happen through irresistible grace, the unmerited favor of God upon those whom He will. The atonement of Christ for His people can never expire, and they will never fall away, but God will preserve them to the end (Psalm 37:28).

In summary, the doctrine of limited atonement teaches four things: First, that Christ's death is the only atonement for sin (Colossians 1:14, John 14:6, Romans 5:8-10); second, that all those for whom Christ died are really and completely saved, and their salvation is guaranteed (John 3:16b); third, that Christ died for only a particular number of people (Ephesians 1:5,11, Titus 2:14, Romans 11:5); and last, these people are those whom God has ordained in eternity to be His people (Ephesians 1:4).

Limited atonement gives believers full assurance of their salvation, and in this truth, we see the absolute sovereignty of God over all.

# Free Willism: Another Gospel

>> Prof. David J. Engelsma

## There is one gospel.

This gospel is the message of salvation in Jesus Christ by grace alone. "Grace alone" means that God saves sinners. God saves sinners according to His own attitude of favour (grace) toward those sinners whom He saves. God saves sinners by His own quickening power (grace) in the hearts of those whom He wills to save. "Grace alone" means that grace is without supplement, condition, or assistance.

"Grace alone" means that the salvation of sinners does not depend on, is not due to, and is not accomplished by the worth, will, or work of those sinners. Not at all! Not any aspect of salvation! "Grace alone" means that man does not save himself.

This is why the gospel is good news. This is why the gospel exalts God. This is also why the gospel is offensive to men.

Offended by grace - free, sovereign, particular, almighty grace - men change God's gospel, creating other gospels more to their liking. There are many of them. All have one thing in common: they are gospels of man.

One such gospel is free-willism. This is the message that God's salvation of the sinner depends upon the activity of the sinner's will. The sinner's will is free, that is, it is able to choose for God as well as against Him. By the free, sovereign activity of his will, the sinner makes God's willingness (grace) to save him effectual.

By this act of his will, the sinner allows God's quickening power (grace) to have its way with him. The salvation proclaimed by the gospel of free-willism is man's salvation of himself by choosing God, opening up his heart to let Jesus in, making a decision for Christ, accepting the offer made well-meaningly to all, and fulfilling the prerequisite for regeneration and conversion.

This gospel is wildly popular.

But it is "another" gospel. It is "another gospel" precisely in the sense in which the apostle speaks of "another gospel" in Galatians 1:6-9. It is a gospel that adds a work of man to the work of God in Jesus Christ. It is a message that makes the grace of God dependent upon some act of man. It is a message that calls the sinner to cooperate with God in Christ. It is a message that rejects "grace alone" for "grace and" (or, "grace but"). The other gospel in the Galatian churches was "grace and human circumcision" Free-willism is the gospel of "grace and human will."

As "another gospel," free-willism is not an acceptable, though somewhat deficient, version of the gospel, but a perversion of the one gospel. It is not an encouraging, though undeveloped, beginning of the gospel, out of which the full gospel can be expected to grow, but an enemy of the one gospel that nurses a murderous hatred toward the one gospel and those who confess it.

Free-willism is no gospel. It is not the good news that the gracious God conceived in eternity and revealed in time in Jesus Christ. It is not the faith of the Bible. Free-willism sets forth another way of salvation than the way of faith in Christ: the decision decision for Christ by the dead sinner.

It proclaims another saviour than Jesus Christ: the willing sinner. It worships another god than the God of the one gospel: a nice, well-intentioned, loving, helpless, bumbling deity, who is perfectly, willing to share the glory of salvation with every Tom, Dick, and Harry.

Free-willism denies the cross. The cross redeemed no one. The cross accomplished nothing. The cross was not substitutionary satisfaction of the justice of God regarding those for whom Christ died. Many for whom Christ died perish in hell. Those who are saved by the cross are saved, not because of their decision for Christ, their acceptance of the well-meant offer, their act of believing.

This condemnation of free-willism is not the private opinion of the author of this article. Much less is it the eccentric stand of the denomination of churches in which he is a minister.

That free-willism is another gospel, which is no gospel, is the official confession, and urgent testimony, of the Reformed churches in the world. They have voiced their confession, once for all time, in the Canons of Dordt. Free-willism, which at that time took form in the heresy of Arminianism, the Reformed churches have damned as "the Pelagian error out of hell." Many Reformed churches require all their officebearers to subscribe this creed. Subscription explicitly expresses that the one subscribing agrees with Dordt's condemnation of free-willism. It binds the subscriber "to refute and contradict" this false teaching and "to exert (himself) in keeping the Church free from such errors."

Presbyterians who affirm commitment to the system of doctrine set down in the Westminster Standards likewise express condemnation of free-willism as another gospel. For the system of doctrine set down in the confession and catechisms of Westminster is the gospel of salvation by grace alone, to which free-willism is diametrically opposite. God judges free-willism as another gospel in His inspired, clear, and authoritative Word. He does this in every passage that teaches salvation by His own gracious will and work. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that (faith) not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

God exposes free-willism by name as one of the leading forms of the false gospel that always threatens to supplant the one gospel: "So then it (salvation) is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). Salvation is not of man's will. Man's will and willing have nothing to do with the saving of elect sinners. They are excluded as much as is man's running, or working. But the teaching that salvation is at least partly' a matter of man's will is as much an enemy of the gospel of salvation by God's mercy alone as is the teaching that man's own works cooperate in salvation. The one gospel is the message that salvation is alone of God who shows mercy.

Against the one gospel stand two other gospels, which are no gospels: salvation by man's willing, and salvation by man's working. Both agree that man saves himself, at least in part.

To teach that salvation depends on, or is due to, or is made effectual by man's choosing Christ, or opening his heart to let Christ come in, or accepting an offer made well-meaningly to all, or fulfilling a condition in order then to be born against and converted is the lie. It is not merely a lie. It is the lie. In comparison with this gross blasphemy, this monstrous robbery of God of His glory in the work

of salvation, women in church office is a small sin. Free-willism is a real threat today to the true churches of Christ. Free-willism has always been the heart of the false church that is Rome. Luther taught us this in his *On the Bondage of the Will*. Now free-willism has infiltrated and corrupted much of Protestantism. Many of the self-styled "evangelical" churches and preachers are free-willist. These are the churches and churchmen represented by the magazine *Christianity Today*. These are the preachers who dominate religious radio and television. This is the reason why Billy Graham and his associates cooperate with the Roman Catholic clergy in their "evangelical" endeavours. This is the reason why prominent Protestant "evangelicals" are defecting to Rome. This is the reason for the recent union of "evangelicals" and Roman Catholics. The "evangelicals" have the same gospel that Rome has: man saves man by his free-will.

The threat is graver. There are toleration of, compromise with, and even approval of free-willism within the Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Men who profess Calvinism (a mere identifying label of the gospel that God saves men-elect men-by sovereign grace alone) and who are esteemed as Calvinists speak well of, and defend, free-willism as gospel. Arminian free-willism is not the best and highest form of the gospel. It definitely leaves something to be desired. It could be wished that it would shake off certain of its weaknesses. But it is, for .a11 this, gospel. It is the one gospel. James I. Packer, who, though not ecclesiastically Presbyterian or Reformed himself, nevertheless has tremendous influence on Presbyterian and Reformed churches and Christians, compromises with Wesleyan free-willism in an article that is bearing bitter fruit in Reformed circles. Packer is intent on defending the gospel preached by John Wesley-Wesley, who blasphemed God's eternal predestination (source and foundation of the gospel of grace) as few enemies of grace have ever done.

**“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that (faith) not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8, 9).**

Packer speaks of "evangelical Arminianism." He claims that "Wesley's teaching included so much Reformation truth." Packer diagnoses Arminianism, that is, the gospel of free-willism, as "an impoverishing reaction from it (Reformation teaching), involving a partial denial of the biblical faith in the God of all grace. The lapse is less serious in some cases ..." "Calvinists should therefore approach professed Arminians as brother evangelicals trapped in weakening theological mistakes, and seek to help them to a better mind" ("Arminianisms," in *The Manifold Grace of God*, Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference, 1968).

Free-willism is not "another gospel." The condemnation of Dordt does not apply to this brand of free-willism. The Presbyterian theologian John M. Frame tolerates, if he does not approve, free-willism in his recent work on C. Van Til: There is a great gulf between Christianity and unbelief.... Is there also a "great gulf" between Reformed Christians and non-Reformed Christians . . . ? Arminianism . . . (is) erroneous in some measure, I would say, but (it has) much in common with the Reformed faith at the deepest level. Thus, we should not criticize (it) in the same terms that we use to criticize unbelief.... I am confident that Reformed believers are, in general, of one heart with their Arminian brothers and sisters (Cornelius Van Til, P&R, 1995, pp. 211,212). Free-willism is not "another gospel." Dordt was wrong in its condemnation of free-willism.

The acceptance of free-willism within the nominally Reformed churches is evident from the murderous opposition on the part of these churches to churches and ministers that condemn free-willism as soul-destroying, God-dishonouring heresy. The "Conclusion" of the Canons of Dordt indicates the enraged slander of the Reformed churches by the free-willists at the time of the synod of Dordt. Today, all these slanders are wrapped up in one epithet, and hurled at the churches that are faithful to Dordt: "hyper-calvinist!"

There are ministers who are being killed all the day long by nominal Calvinists for no other offense than that they preach the gospel of grace in such a way that they expose and condemn free-willism as the lie.

As might be expected from the expressions of tolerance for free-willism and from the rage at those who dare to condemn free-willism, the error itself now corrupts the confession and preaching of many Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Wherever the doctrine of a love of God in the gospel for all men and a desire of God in the preaching of the gospel to save all men is accepted and defended, there free-willism has established its stronghold. In time, the entire system of the doctrine of salvation by sovereign grace alone will be systematically destroyed.

And the end will be sheer theological modernism.

In his *Crossed Fingers*, reviewed in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*, Gary North demonstrates that the apostasy of the Northern Presbyterian Church began with the toleration of Arminianism. The history of the Christian Reformed Church provides the same terrible lesson. Herman Bavinck gave the warning long ago when he wrote, "Remonstrantism (Arminianism) paved the way for rationalism" (*The Doctrine of God*, Eerdmans, 1951, p 366). Reformed churches must preach and teach salvation by sovereign grace alone. As they do, they must condemn free-willism.

Reformed Christians must confess salvation by sovereign grace alone. As they do, they must condemn free-willism.

This stand will preserve us, as Reformed churches and as Reformed Christians, in the dangerous times in which we live and are called to glorify God by a sound confession and an obedient walk. It will keep us as churches out of ungodly, destructive ecumenical alliances. We have no unity with free-willist Rome.

We have no unity with free-willist "evangelical" Protestantism. We have no unity with compromising Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

It will keep the Reformed Christian out of such a movement as Promise Keepers. The Reformed Christian may not subject himself to free-willist preaching. He may not worship with those who claim to have saved themselves by their free will. He may not pretend spiritual oneness with those who hold "another gospel." He may not promise to help break down the denominational barriers between Calvinist and Arminian churches. God forbid!

It will keep the Reformed Christian out of interdenominational Bible studies. How can a Reformed Christian tolerate study of the Word of God that professes to be neutral and non-committal regarding the doctrinal difference between Calvinism and Arminianism, that is, between the one gospel and "another gospel"? How can a Reformed Christian participate in a Bible study that gives equal time to free-willism and sovereign grace? How can a Reformed Christian be involved in a Bible study that does not defend salvation by grace alone and condemn free-willism?

The good and right stand for grace and against free-will must govern our church membership, our lively church membership.

Where is sovereign grace faithfully and uncompromisingly preached and defended, with an accompanying condemnation of free-will?

There, and nowhere else, every child of God belongs, come what may.

There, and nowhere else, I belong, with my family, come what may.

**For there, and nowhere else, is the one gospel.**

&gt;&gt; Sister Daisy

# UNITY OF THE CHURCH

Review and reflections on “Biblical Ecumenicity” article by Prof Herman Hanko

The church is the creation of God which He forms through Jesus Christ. She is called the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), the temple of God (Eph 2:20-22), a royal priesthood and an holy nation (1 Pet 2:9), a vine and its branches (Jn 15:1), the bride of Christ (Rev 21:9) and many other figures.

The unity of the church is thus a unity of the body of Christ. Just as a body has many members, believers are many members of the same body of Christ. Christ died that His church might have a new life in Him. The church exists in Christ and lives out of Christ. The church is one in Christ, even as Christ is one in God. (Jn 17:21).

The unity of the church in Christ is a unity of faith in the truth of God's Word. The church is a unity of faith because the believer is engrafted into Christ by faith. By His Word and by His Spirit, Christ gathers, defends and preserves His church. The unity of the church must be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Himself being the chief corner stone (Eph 2:9). Only where Scripture is the infallible rule of faith and life can true unity prevail.

## **Institutional Unity**

Each local congregation is a complete manifestation of the body of Christ. The rule of Christ is represented by the office-bearers, who exercise the rule through the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments and the exercise of Christian discipline. The church expresses her unity by means of creeds, which are confessions of the truth of God's Word.

The local congregation may only join with other congregations in denominational activities when they are united in the same truth of Christ. Only when denominations are formed on the basis of a mutual confession of the same truth can there be any true unity. The historic confessions of the truth unite the church of today with the churches of all ages and make of all the church of Christ one spiritual universal church.

## **Does Modern Ecumenicity Express This Unity?**

By Ecumenicity, is meant the movement of churches to unite under one ecclesiastical roof. Modern ecumenicity takes on different forms:

1) There are attempts being made to include all religions in the world under one universal and world-wide syncretistic religion which will embrace all men. This union of all religions will bind all men in a common brotherhood under a universal god.

2) Another form of ecumenical movement is the formation of various organizations which are the unions of Christian denominations, in which each denomination retains its own denominational structure but cooperates in various ecclesiastical enterprises. These organizations range from the very liberal World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches, to the more conservative organizations such as the International Council of Christian Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

3) There is also a merging of distinct denominations into one large church such as the Consultations on Church Unity (COCU) and various branches of Presbyterianism.

Modern ecumenicity falls short in important respects from the scriptural unity of the church.



“ There is  
 one body, and  
 one Spirit,  
 even as ye are  
 called in one  
 hope of your  
 calling; One  
 Lord,  
 one faith,  
 one baptism,  
 One God and  
 Father of  
 all, who is  
 above all, and  
 through all,  
 and in you all.”  
 Eph 4:4-6

The impetus for modern ecumenicity was found in the mission field historically. In the mission work of the church, the church was embarrassed by the fact that different denominations worked in the same places teaching different doctrines. The first ecumenical organizations were mission organizations.

However the concept of mission work has been excluded as an impelling force in ecumenicity and it has been replaced by what is called 'service'. The original Executive Committee of the Life and World Movement (a forerunner of the World Council of Churches) sharply defined this when it said in an official policy paper: "Doctrine divides, Service unites". The calling to serve has been the underlying factor in many ecumenical movements. A social gospel with the implied promise of a heaven here upon earth has substituted the true gospel preaching of the whole counsel of God. Their goal is unity at any cost. The concern of ecumenical leaders is a one-world church. The underlying premise is doctrine is relative, subject to change, adaptable to every new generation. The Bible is no longer regarded as the infallible inspired Word of God as a rule of faith and life. The ecumenical movement has mired itself in the political and sociological issues of the day.

Thus, can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3)

### **The Calling**

As the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ nears, the efforts to bring all denominations and churches together into a one-world church will increase.

Our calling is to condemn such false unity unceasingly and unwaveringly. We must not have any part in false ecumenicity. The time will come that those who refuse ecumenicity will invite persecution and will even be denied the right to existence.

The church must treasure her unity in the truth of Christ. Where the truth is preached in purity, the saints of the true church of Christ will grow in truth and thus true unity will come to fuller expression. The historic confessions of the Word of God must serve as the basis of unity. The true child of God must not be deceived by great apostasy (corruption of God's Word). The true church of Christ is called to live in one faith, one Spirit, one God (Eph 4:4-6), though all the forces of hell seek to destroy her. God shall preserve His spiritual universal church, His Body, His Bride till the final unity of the church is achieved in the tabernacle of God (Rev 21:3).



# Prayer & Thanksgiving

*By the Beulah BS group*

## **THANKSGIVING**

Thank God for His great blessings to VBS 2010. May the Lord continue to grant the children faith and the desire to believe in and wait upon the Lord.

Thank God for blessing the students who cleared their 'O' Level exams in 2010.

Thank God for the safe arrival of Rev Ronald Van Overloop and his wife Sue on 25 February 2011. We wish them a pleasant stay in CERC. Do extend our hand of fellowship and hospitality to them.

Thanks be to Jehovah for being our true and living God!

Thank God the institution of the Penang Reformed Fellowship as a formal church in March 2011. May the Lord also grant His servants brethren Paul Tan and Leow Sian Beng courage and strength as they consider the call to become the elders of the new church.

## **SUPPLICATION**

Pray that God will continue to strengthen the hearts and minds of His people so that they may be equipped to defend the gospel faithfully.

Pray that God will help all cell groups to study the word of God diligently so that they may have deeper knowledge of the truth.

Pray that God's sovereign will and His mighty healing hand will be upon Madam Tan, Pastor Lau, Brother Ishu Mahtani as they recover from their illnesses.

Pray for the Church Camp Committee 2011 that the Lord will grant them the wisdom and capabilities to plan a wonderful and exciting camp for CERC.

Pray for all students who are pursuing their education overseas that they will continue to seek the Lord's will.

Pray that God will make CERC a prayerful and an earnest church, hungry for the truth.

Pray that the Lord will mightily use the services of Rev. Ronald Van Overloop as he prepares and delivers God's Word during his short stay in CERC in the month of March 2011. May God bless the congregation as they listen attentively to the messages.



*Institution of the Covenant  
Grace Church  
in Penang*







### **Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church**

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

#### **Place of Worship**

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

#### **Time of Worship**

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

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