



salt shakers
joel 3:16 matthew 5:16

Issue 11 | Nov 2011

**“By grace God’s Son,
our only Saviour,
Came down to earth
to bear our sin.**

**Was it because of your
own merit That Jesus
died your soul to win?**

**No, it was grace,
and grace alone,
That brought Him from
His heav’nly throne.”**

Dear Readers

Welcome to the 11th Issue of Salt Shakers! May God use this magazine to bless and comfort you through His Word. Mark 1:40-45

There is probably no other experience in life that portrays the Reformation more than a leper being healed. A leper, as he worsens, becomes disgusting and monstrous. His skin changes colour with sores, lumps, and bumps peppered all over his body. It is difficult to recognise him; he loses his identity, he hides his face. Oh, but when he is miraculously healed, imagine the new, child-like skin and perfect form of his body. He can enjoy the light; he is a new man; he is become who he is meant to be. Can someone who has experienced such a change quietly rejoice and disappear? Can his human might contain the grace that was shown to him? No! Even when the Son of God told him to be quiet, his weakness made him "publish it much, and blaze abroad the matter"! Such joy, and such reckless need to tell all of His Saviour!

Does your church know what the Reformation is? Is it the work of your Saviour? Where is your joy?

Christ regardless, paul

Please read on to find out more about the special insert for this issue:

To commemorate the great Protestant Reformation, Salt Shakers has included, in this issue, a timeline of the church's history. A gentle reminder to readers as they study and look through the people under 'Reformers' is that many of those reformers did much good to the church but are NOT perfect human beings. They have had their fair share of strengths and weaknesses, just like us. But at the same time,

I do not wish to have readers think that someone who has more weaknesses than strengths should be called a heretic and not a reformer. For example, Johannes Cocceius was a one of the defenders of the Reformed faith, yet he introduced the error of biblical theology, which led to the dangerous error of dispensationalism. In short, this timeline should not be used to define who is a reformer and who is a heretic as this is not its purpose. Rather, this timeline is to help us see how different events and people, as God's instruments, have shaped the churches we see today. Whether they brought false doctrines or defended the truth, we can all learn from them. Through those who defended the truth, we can admire the courage God has given to them to stand for truth even at the brink of death. Through those who brought about erroneous false doctrines, we can learn how that certain doctrine polluted the church, how it affected the future of Christ's church, and how to defend against such errors. Remember, they (and we, too) are God's tools; as Martin Luther puts it, we 'did nothing... the Word did it all'.

Brother Lim Yang Zhi

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"AN EXCERPT FROM MODERN BIBLE VERSIONS"

>> Professor David Engelsma

There is, at the present time, a proliferation of new translations, revisions, and paraphrases of the Bible. One after another, new versions of the Bible pour off the presses, so that it becomes difficult to keep up with them.

It has not always been so. In 1611, the King James Version appeared - a translation of the Bible into English by theologians and ministers in England which is known as the "Authorized Version." For over 250 years, it was, for all practical purposes, the only Bible in the English language. During the years 1881-1885, the King James Version was revised in England, and this revision, after some changes were made for American readers, became the American Standard Version, published in 1901. In 1937, the National Council of Churches authorized a thorough revision of the 1901 version, and they published the Revised Standard Version in 1951. This proved to be a popular Bible.

In the last few years, many English versions have come on the market: The Jerusalem Bible (1966); The New English Bible (1970); The Living Bible (1971); and, very recently, The New International Version - to name only a few. The justification for all these new versions is the alleged weaknesses of the King James Bible. The King James Version is criticized as containing many, serious errors; as not based on the best manuscripts of Scripture, especially as regards the New Testament; and as being unclear in its language. Due to the development of the English language, it is charged, modern readers can no longer understand the K.J.V.: it fails to communicate the Word to modern readers. The "Preface" of the Revised Standard Version is representative of this criticism. It states: "the King James Version has grave defects... (which) call for revision of the English translation." One of these defects is that "The King James Version of the New Testament was based upon a Greek text that was marred by mistakes, containing the accumulated errors of fourteen centuries of manuscript copying . . . We now possess many more ancient

manuscripts of the New Testament, and are far better equipped to seek to recover the original wording of the Greek text."

In addition: "A major reason for revision of the King James Version, which is valid for both the Old Testament and the New Testament, is the change since 1611 in English usage. Many forms of expression have become archaic. Other words are obsolete and no longer understood by the common reader. The greatest problem, however, is presented by the English words which are still in constant use but now convey a different meaning from that which they had in 1611 and in the King James Version." The modern versions make the claim that they will give the Word in a clear, up-to-date manner.

If the King James Version were the Bible originally inspired by God - the so-called "autographa" - there would be no problem with the modern versions. In this case, we would simply condemn them as deviations and demand that men stick with the version inspired by God. But this is not what the King James Version is. It is a translation by men in the early 1600's of certain documents called manuscripts that have come down to us in the original languages of Scripture: Hebrew and Greek. The King James Version is not a perfect translation. It is to be regretted that the translators did not consistently render the outstanding name of God in the Old Testament as Jehovah, but instead gave it as LORD. There is archaic language in the King James Version, e.g., "wottest" for "know"; "let" for "restrain" (II Thess. 2); "conversation" for "conduct"; "take no thought" for "be not anxious" (Matt. 6); etc. It is conceivable that, in time, the English language changes to such an extent that 17th century English becomes unintelligible, and a new translation is not only permissible, but even demanded. God's people must have a Bible in their own language. This was a vital concern of the Reformation. Luther translated the Bible into German. Tyndale translated it into English. The Synod of Dort saw to it that the Bible

was translated into Dutch. If we were stuck with a translation in the English of Chaucer, a new translation would be required.

We are not simply against change, all change. This would be a blind, hide-bound traditionalism, neither defensible nor healthy. Think of the necessity, some years back, of changing from Dutch to English in the worship services. Some fiercely opposed this change, but we wisely made it. No, we do not simply oppose change, but we do ask: Is the change good? This is the question regarding the modern Bible versions.

ARE THEY A BLESSING? OR A CURSE?

To be a good, usable version, a Bible must have three qualities. First, it must be a translation that is thoroughly faithful to the Word of God. It must be faithful to all the words that God inspired as they have come down in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, i.e., it must be the very Word of God, from beginning to end. Since all scripture is inspired of God, an inspiration that extends to the very words (verbal inspiration - II Timothy 3:15-17), the translation must be faithful with a faithfulness that extends to the very words. This does not demand a word-for-word translation, but it does mean that where the Spirit has "seed," as of one, the translation must not have "seeds," as of many, and that where the Spirit has "the Word became flesh," the translation must not put "Christ became flesh." This characteristic is fundamental. Whatever lacks faithfulness is worthless, in fact, a threat, for a book purporting to be the Bible, the Word of God, is not the Word, but a word of man.

Secondly, a good version must be clear. It must be clear to "the common man." Every believer, though he be a youth behind a plough, must be able to read and understand the particular version of Scripture. The great translator, Tyndale, put it this way: "If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou doest." Clarity is an inherent quality of

God's Scripture. The New Testament, as is well known, was written in the Greek of the common people - not the Greek of the universities. This is also a basic requirement of a Bible version, hardly inferior to the requirement of faithfulness.

Thirdly, a version should have a good style, a pleasing, smooth-flowing, readable style. The style should also be dignified. There must be a dignity about the version, It is God's Word after all, the Word of the majestic, holy, glorious God. This condemns the slangy, vulgar hip-talk and jive of some modern versions, which, although promoted as "the language of the people, is not the language of the people, but the language of a certain, limited, obnoxious segment of the people. It is certainly not the language of GOD, and this is what the Bible is. In the light of these requirements, the modern Bible versions are seen to be a curse, not a blessing for the Church. They are doing incalculable harm and threaten to do still more harm in the future. I hasten to add that this does not mean that we may not have them and use them along with the King James Version, always checking them against the original or a reliable English translation such as the King James Version. I have many versions and use them, even the one that angers me the most and that I can use only to point out its errors - The Living Bible. But I have reference to the modern versions as replacements for the King James Version and as Bibles that are used regularly in home, school, and church. They fail the test of the first fundamental requirement: faithfulness to the inspired Word. Failing in this, they also fail the second test: clarity - they do not clearly give the reader the very Word of God. They either corrupt or hide important doctrines of Holy Scripture: creation; the Trinity; the Deity of Jesus; total depravity; predestination; and others. I will show this a little later.

There is a reason for this. The explanation is the apostasy of the Protestant Churches since the days of the King James Version. All of the modern versions have appeared after the 1800's, the age of unbelief regarding the doctrine of the infallible inspiration of Scripture. Originating in Germany, this unbelief - known as "higher criticism" -spread throughout the world. Since it was unbelief

regarding the fundamental doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture - really, the denial that Scripture is the Word of God - it extended to ALL the doctrines of the Christian religion. Creation was doubted; the Virgin Birth was questioned; total depravity through the transgression of a real first parent was denied. NOTHING taught in the Bible was believed any longer. The theologians and ministers who translate the Bible are no longer strong in the Lord and faithful. Their unbelief becomes evident in their translation. It must. Whether the erroneous translations are deliberate or not - and I am convinced that much is deliberate corruption of the Word - the spiritual weakness of the modern Protestant Church is necessarily reflected in their versions of the Bible. Men have helped translate Holy Scripture who personally deny the doctrine of inspiration, the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of the fall, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the like.

It takes a strong church and believing men to translate the Bible, and our age does not abound with such. It is not enough to have expert knowledge of Hebrew and Greek - this is not even the main qualification of a translator. But one must have a child-like faith that the Bible is the Word of God, an utter dependence upon Scripture as the foundation of the Church, and such a reverence for it that one trembles at its Word. Such men were Tyndale, Luther, the King James men, and the Reformed theologians and preachers of Dordt. Where are they today? The presence of bad translations in the Church and their use by the people is a serious matter. People do not take the threat of bad versions seriously enough. Parents let them come into their homes and schools, and consistories allow them in the pews. The seriousness is simply this, that the Bible is the basis of everything for Protestantism. "Scripture alone" is our confession. It is different for Rome. Their authority is the Church itself, expressing itself through the Pope. Whether there are Bibles or not, is not vital for Rome. But for the true Church of Jesus Christ, for the Reformed Church, Scripture is the sole basis of doctrine and life, the foundation of the Church herself. Since Scripture has this position, the Bible that is in use in a Church will affect

and mould every aspect of the faith and life of the Church and every aspect of the faith and life of the members of the Church. If the Bible version is a bad one, it will gradually overhaul everything for the worse. There is no more effective, no more certain, no more thorough method for a Church to commit spiritual suicide than to bring in a bad Bible and let it have its way in the congregation.

Significant doctrines of the Christian faith have been established on the basis of exact readings of certain texts. If these texts are changed in the version used by the people, the doctrines are jeopardized in the mind of the people and will eventually be lost. When the doctrine crumbles, the edifice of a godly life, built on this foundation of doctrine, will also topple, e.g., the Christian Church has laid down the doctrine of total depravity, over against the Pelagian heresy of the innate goodness of man, on the basis of such passages as Ephesians 2:1, which says that the natural man is "dead in trespasses and sins," and Romans 8:7, which teaches that the carnal mind "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." This cardinal doctrine is the ground of the humility of the Christian life - it is the death-blow to all human pride. When The Living Bible translates the former passage so as to omit the word, "dead" and the latter so as to omit the word, "can" thus leaving out the truth that man lacks the ABILITY to obey the law, it undermines the doctrine of total depravity, opens the door to Pelagius, and produces proud people.

Think once of the essential importance of the bible of the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses for that synagogue of Satan and its miserable heresy. Everyone is aware, I suppose, that the Bible with which they come to our door is not our Bible, but their own special creation. It is no more the Bible of the Christian faith than is The Book of Mormon or the Koran. The bible of the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses is a deliberate perversion of the Bible, (masquerading as a version) to get rid of the Bible's teaching of the Deity of Jesus and the Trinity. In their bible, they have made John 1:1, where the apostle states that the Word Who became flesh in Jesus Christ "was God," read: "and the Word was a god." 'This bible has results - it results in another body than the true

Church of Christ, a sect, and it results in the everlasting damnation of all those whom it leads astray. They call their bible, by the way The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. It is not without its grim humour that the Watchtower group pushes its bible by means of the same come-on used by the modern versions: "Read the Word of God in modern-day English."

Think also of the importance to Rome in its controversy with the Reformed faith of its own peculiar version of Scripture. Rome's version in English has long been the Douay Bible. Recently, a new Roman Catholic version in English has appeared: The Jerusalem Bible. These versions include the apocryphal books of the Old Testament from which Rome can prove its doctrines of purgatory, prayers for the dead, and meritorious good works, and translate key passages in a way favourable to Rome. e.g., The Jerusalem Bible renders Matthew 1:25 thus: "and, though he had not had intercourse with her, she gave birth to a son," etc. - in this way protecting Rome's doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity and undergirding the whole of Rome's Mariolatry. Again, it gives Romans 8:28 as: "We know that by turning everything to their good God co-operates with all those who love him..." thus promoting Rome's fundamental teaching of synergism.

So, it should be evident to all that what version the Church uses is an important matter. In opposing corrupt versions, we are fighting essentially the same battle that our spiritual ancestors fought in the Reformation: the battle for the presence and authority of the Word of God. The only difference is that then the Bible was withheld from the Church, whereas now it is buried and distorted by multitudes of bad versions.

CAN WE STILL USE THE KING JAMES VERSION?

If the modern versions are unsatisfactory, what then? We can and should continue to use the King James Version. It is faithful, completely faithful to the infallibly inspired, sacred Scriptures. No one has ever accused it of unfaithfulness. Even those passages that are not found in the better manuscripts, e.g., 1 John 5:7, are not contrary to sound doctrine, but are in

harmony with the teaching of Scripture in other, uncontested passages. The King James Version IS the Word of God; when you have it before you, you have the uncorrupted Word. You can trust it, rely on it, and safely let it continue to work its work on the Church, on your home and family, on your Christian school, and on your personal Christian life. It is faithful, and this is the main criterion of a Bible version.

The King James Version is also clear. There are odd words now and then, words unfamiliar to 20th century Americans, but on the whole it is clear. It is clear in Genesis 1 regarding creation; it is clear in Genesis 3 regarding the fall; it is clear in the gospels regarding salvation in Jesus; it is clear in the historical books; it is clear everywhere. I deny the common charge that the King James Version is impenetrably murky, especially for children. I did not find it so for myself as a child and a youth; I do not find it so for my own family of small children; I do not find it so for the many children and young people in the congregation. Rather, I find that a child can understand the King James Version.

Concerning the excellent style of the King James Version, any praise from me would be superfluous. Its beauty is well-known. It has moulded our thinking, our writing, and our speaking. It has the dignity and solemnity that befits the Word of God. Besides, it uses the words of the Church of the past, the language of the creeds, so that the person who learns the King James Version also becomes familiar with the terms of Church history and Church doctrine: justification, sanctification, regeneration, predestination, and the like. The new versions are dropping these words, and we may expect that we will shortly hear that the old creeds must be scrapped or revised, because "no one understands their terminology anymore." We need feel no compulsion to change Bibles just because change is the order of the day. We are the CHURCH, the only solid reality in all the changing, fickle world, and we are solid because we are builded on the imperishable, unchanging Word of God. In the world, there is a craze for new things; everything old is despised - every few years a new car with a radically different design; new stereo equipment regularly; a new style of

clothing whether the old is worn out or not; even a new wife or husband periodically. This creeps into the Church too: every other year a new gospel, now Barthianism, then the death of God message, and who knows what after that; pop-top, throw-away creeds to reflect every passing religious fad; and, now, throwaway Bibles - today The Living Bible and perhaps another version next year. This confuses the people of God. One evidence of this confusion is the weakness of the present generation of young people as concerns memorization of the Bible. With all their different versions, they memorize none of them.

We should stick to the King James Version, but we must USE it, really and diligently use it. The problem today, whether for young or old, is not that the King James Version is dark and hard to understand, but that we are not faithful to read and study it and that parents and churches are unfaithful in teaching it. The appalling ignorance of the Word in our age is not an intellectual problem, but a spiritual one. There is a demand that everything come easily; people want an easy-chair, push-button life - also as regards the knowledge of the Word and things spiritual. The children in catechism, used to the lazy, sit-back-and-relax "instruction" of television, have the attitude, "Now entertain us, and get through to us if you can." Grown-ups desire instant, painless attainment of Christian maturity, and even perfection, by turning the switch of "the baptism of the Spirit" in Pentecostalism. The same thing holds true with regard to the knowledge of Scripture - it must be made easy. So, we get "Bibles" with racy covers, striking pictures and comments on all kinds of current events scattered throughout, and a watered-down content. But growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ is not easy. Scripture is clear, but it is not easy. God gives us knowledge of the Word through hard study, memorization, work! This is true for pastors, adults, and children.

Let the churches preach and teach the Word; let the parents read and explain it to their children at home; let the Christian school teachers teach it at school; and let every child of God study it daily on his own. Then, there will be knowledge of the Scriptures among us as there was in former times.

How do I know I am a true child of God? ||

>> Pastor Ronald Hanko

In this second article on the assurance of salvation, I would like to show that there are many of God's people who have struggled with this problem. Scripture itself gives examples of believers who lacked the assurance of salvation for a time.

Knowing this is often helpful in dealing with a lack of assurance. Sometimes when we have little or no assurance, we compare ourselves to others and it seems that everyone else is happy and assured and so we begin to think that we are different – that we are not Christians at all. It is good, then, to be reminded that it is possible to be a child of God and yet have these struggles.

One example of a believer who was troubled by doubts is Asaph in Psalm 77. Asaph seems to have struggled with doubts more often – he writes along the same lines in Psalm 73. In fact there are many Psalms, 38, 42, 69, in which believers express discouragement and doubt.

In Psalm 77 Asaph says, quoting from the Psalter, "The thought of God brought me no peace, but rather made my fears increase." He felt cast off by God and talks about God's mercy and favour being gone. Yet it is clear from this Psalm, especially verses 10-12, that Asaph was one of God's dear children. Only a child of God could say what he says in those verses.

Job was another child of God who went through a period of distress and doubt. Remember that Job was a righteous man and a child of God, yet he says in Job 23: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him" (verses 8 and 9).

The Apostle Paul is another example. He does not tell us much of what happened but apparently while he was in Macedonia on his third missionary journey, he went through a difficult time spiritually. He speaks of this in II Corinthians 7:5, "Our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side;

without were fightings, within were fears." But he adds, "Nevertheless, God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus."

There are other examples as well. David in Psalm 32:4 speaks of a time of spiritual drought and of God's hand being heavy on him. Abraham had to be encouraged by God after his separation from Lot and told not to be afraid (Gen. 15:1). Jeremiah had his struggles also: "He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity" (La. 3:15-17).

In some cases, these times of doubt and distress were the result of sins committed. That certainly was the case with David in Psalm 32, and Peter is another example. Having denied his Lord three times, he did not dare to say that he loved Jesus when Jesus asked him, "Simon Peter, lovest thou me more than these?" Our English version does not get that across, since we only have one word for love in English where the Greek has several, but twice Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" and Peter uses a word that could be translated, "Lord you know I like you." When Jesus asks Peter a third time then He uses that word, "Do you like me?" and so we read that Peter was grieved because Jesus said the third time "Do you like me?" He clearly did not dare to put himself on the same level as the other disciples because of his sin.

There's a lesson in that for us. If we are struggling because of sin in our lives, the sin must be confessed and we must seek forgiveness for the sin in the blood and cross of our Saviour. Nevertheless, as many of the other examples demonstrate, the problem is not always unconfessed sin. There is no evidence in the case of Job, of Abraham, of Asaph, of Paul or of Jeremiah that their struggles were the result of such hidden sins.

Even then, however, it may be that while we are not guilty of some terrible,

unconfessed sin, our knowledge of our sinfulness can be part of our struggle. Then, too, the answer to our struggles is confession of our sinfulness and seeing again what God has done for us in Christ. Daily repentance is essential to the assurance of salvation.

What is more, we must also understand that doubts, fears, and a lack of assurance are sinful. The fact that many of God's people have had these struggles does not change this. We must confess not only our sinfulness, and the sins we commit every day, but our doubts also – that is the way of peace and assurance.

This is clearly seen in the example of Asaph in Psalm 77. He says there in verse 10, "And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High," or as we sing it in the Psalter, "These doubts and fears that trouble me, were born of my infirmity." Doubts are common, and it is helpful to know that, but they are sin nevertheless.

That may seem strange, but is important in light of 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Confession of sin is important both because it is the way of experiencing God's grace and blessing, and because through it we experience relief from the consequences of our sins.

Confession of sin, especially of our doubts, is the first step in finding for ourselves the assurance of salvation. That is really the promise of God in I Peter 5:6, 7, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

All of this is not to say, though, that having assurance is simply a matter of following certain steps. Assurance is a gift of God and when we lack it comes in the way of asking, of confessing our unworthiness, of trusting in the blood of Christ, and when our faith in Christ is weak, asking that God will strengthen our faith.

MUSIC IV

>> Prof. Hanko

Young People's Forum (III.9)

Dear Young People,

In the last installment we talked about the corruption of music by the world. There is also a lot of corruption of religious music. We ought to discuss this also.

Religious music can be corrupted either through the tunes or the lyrics. The tunes are inappropriate for religious music in different ways. Sometimes religious music is written in such a way that the music itself sounds like (and probably is) totally worldly. This happens when "religious rock," something which is becoming increasingly common, is sung by religious groups and in religious services. Music inappropriate for genuine religious use is often found in what are called in America "praise choruses." They are ditties that repeat over and over the same notes, and they are frequently made as "jazzy" as possible. Genuine religious music makes no attempt to imitate the world as closely as possible, but rather leads one to worship. Music is, after all, a way of worshipping God. It is a beautiful way; it is a significant way; it is a unique way unlike other forms of worship. If music is worship, music must be an expression of God's greatness and glory, expressive of His own divine blessedness, and giving us the vehicle to be in His presence in covenant fellowship. It is, therefore, solemn and properly in keeping with the nature of the emotions that arise in our souls when we come near to God. If we are humbled before His divine majesty, our music is in a minor key and expresses sorrow and contrition. Psalter number 140 is a good example of this: "God be merciful to me; on thy grace I rest my plea . . ." The emotions of sorrow for sin are expressed in the music as well as in the lyrics. With joyful praise to God, the music takes on a different mood. "Praise ye, praise ye the Lord . . ." cannot be sung as a funeral dirge; if it is, it loses its force. Music as worship cannot make use of the world's jazz. It is not possible to sing Psalter number 407 to hard rock.

While the music is not in itself bad, in some Psalter numbers the emotion of the words is not expressed. Psalter number 136 is a case in point. The music is of a frolicking sort, but the words speak of the foolishness and ultimate destruction of those who make the attainment of earthly possessions their goal in life. Psalter number 400 is somewhat an opposite of 136. It is a song of praise, and yet, if sung according to the time signature, it is music more fitting for a funeral. Our Psalter is not perfect in this respect.

And so music itself must be according to the laws of God in the creation in order to be a proper vehicle for worship. I often wonder what music in heaven will be like when music and words are perfect; and the whole church and all the angels join in one great anthem of praise to God and his Christ. We will not be in the audience listening; we will be in the choir! But music can also be corrupted by the lyrics. When I was in primary school, although I went to a Christian School, it was not a Protestant Reformed School and we only rarely sang Psalter numbers. As I recall, in all my years in primary school I learned only two Psalter numbers: numbers 1 and 7. We sang hymns, many hymns, all sorts of hymns, mostly hymns with very poor words and hymns which were thoroughly Arminian. I came to understand why it was said way back in the 17th century that the Arminians sang their way into the church. (That is, they taught the people to sing hymns with Arminian lyrics – songs that the people loved.) The tunes were tricky and appealing; the words were catchy and easy to understand. But they were so frequently all about man.

There is a lesson here about proper covenant education. My parents could not help but send us to schools other than Protestant Reformed Schools, for the latter did not yet exist. They did the best they could. They even sent me, when I was less than 16 years old 2000 miles away from home so that I could go to a Christian High School. They did this because there were Protestant Reformed Churches where I went to school and I stayed with Protestant Reformed people. But it was far from home, and I missed home very much. But the point I want to make is that even now, the words of hymns come readily to my mind, even though

perhaps I have not heard them for 50 years or more. If one is played on a CD, the words jump into my mind. But that is not so with Psalter numbers. I know quite a few of them and can recite the words of many; but they still present problems and I easily get the words wrong, fail to remember them exactly, and get verses all jumbled up. What one learns when one is a child is never forgotten. The same is not true of what is learned later in life. Still, to this day, sometimes old Arminian hymns come to mind and run over and over through my head all day long. It is irritating and annoying.

There are hymns which are beautiful: they have beautiful music and Biblical words. I think, for example, of such hymns as "The Church's One Foundation is Jesus Christ Her Lord," "My God how Wonderful Thou Art," "When I Survey The Wondrous Cross," and such like hymns. But there are also miserable, unbiblical and downright heretical hymns which no Christian ought to sing. My wife is a good piano player. She will often sit at the piano in the evening playing from different books of religious music. She plays a lot of Psalter numbers; she sometimes plays hymns; but strangely enough (maybe not so strangely) some hymns she starts to play and soon quits, because we both know the words, and we find it hard to get them out of our throats. And she always finds herself going back to the Psalter. There is a magnificent and very beautiful tradition of solemn religious music that is the inheritance of the church. Almost all the time this music has lyrics that are taken directly from Scripture – though not necessarily from the Psalms. There are the great oratorios of the church: "The Messiah," "Elijah," "Israel in Egypt," etc. There is an abundance of beautiful organ music, extensively played in the great cathedrals in the British Isles and throughout Europe. There are glorious songs, taken from Scripture, that have been a part of the musical life of thousands of saints: "Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found," "O Lord most holy," and such like music. What I mean to say is that if a child of God wants to listen to music with an iPod, even while studying, reading, driving, or walking, CDs are available with all this music on them – not to mention the music produced by musical groups in our own

churches. The choices are not between worldly music and no music; the choice is between worldly music and church music.

Music used in the public worship service in church is something that I also intend to discuss. But this will have to wait until next time.

With love in the Lord,
Prof

Young People's Forum (III.10)

I mentioned in the last forum article that there is a vast amount of classical religious music available, which the Christian who wants to live an antithetical life can and may enjoy. But in this article I want to make my case for singing the Psalms in the divine worship services. I have long defended this proposition, and I still believe it is true today.

First of all, I have objections to singing hymns in the worship services. Many years ago I was put on a study committee appointed by Synod to study the matter of singing other songs than our Psalter in the worship services. The Synod was interested in examining the question whether singing other versifications of other parts of Scripture was to be approved. The question was not, whether to introduce into the worship hymns that were not versifications of Scripture, but what are sometimes called "free hymns": that is, hymns that are not versifications of specific texts, but rather about various doctrines or themes in Scripture. We spent a great deal of time in our study and accumulated reams of papers that were studies of the "hymn question" as it arose over and over again in the history of the Reformed Churches. The most important thing we discovered in all this study was that every time a church, in whatever land it was found, introduced free hymns into the worship, it soon departed from the truth. We asked ourselves why this was the case. The answer we came up with was that, although the church was very particular about what hymns were sung, soon, because of the clamor of the people, more and more hymns were introduced, many of which were not Reformed at all. As one church historian put it: "Arminianism sang its way into the

church." So, we advised Synod not to open the door to any kind of hymns, for fear that introducing any hymn into the church would lead the church away from the Psalms altogether. The Synod agreed.

I freely admit that there are good hymns. To name only a few, I could mention "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "My God, How wonderful Thou Art," "The Church's One Foundation," and others. However, I do have objections against many hymns that ought not to be sung in the church. These objections are the following.

First, the origin of some hymns, which may seem doctrinally sound, are written by wicked people. For example, the hymn "Faith of Our Fathers" was written by a French Roman Catholic who was trying to persuade the people of France to stay Roman Catholic while the stench of the burning bodies of Protestant martyrs filled the air. I think the words fit Protestant martyrs and people of God very well, but I keep smelling this awful smell every time I sing it.

Second, many hymns are outright heresy. My wife and I were talking about a hymn we often sang in our Christian school days – although we went to different schools. The first verse goes like this: "Almost persuaded, now to believe; almost persuaded, Christ to receive. Hear now some soul to say, 'Go, Spirit, go thy way.' Some more convenient day, on thee I'll call." What a wretched song that was! I still am ashamed to think that we used to sing it with gusto. The same thing is true of many, many hymns. "Jesus Is Tenderly Calling Thee Home," "Throw Out the Lifeline," "Brighten the Corner Where you are," "Life is Like a Mountain Railway," "I Come to the Garden Alone," and many others. You probably do not have many of these songs in Singapore, but you may very well have similar ones.

Third, many hymns, especially more modern ones, are simple ditties which have no content of significance and no meaning worth our effort. Paul tells us, both in Colossians and in Ephesians, to sing with understanding and being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18-20, Col 3:16, 17). These ditties are popular because they have appealing music with catchy tunes and rhythms, and simple lyrics

that require no effort on our part to know what they mean.

Fourth, the music is frequently not in keeping with the solemnity of worship. Worship is entering the presence of the infinitely holy God before whom the cherubims cover their faces with their wings and cry all the day, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory." Imagine that while the angels are covering their faces in holy adoration, we come bouncing, dancing and swaying into his presence with silly little ditties on our lips.

Fifth, so many of the hymns are not necessarily heretical, but they are not God-centered.

They may even be, in a certain sense, Christ-centered, but they lead us to Christ only. They are wrongly Christ-centered, for we go to Christ as the way to God. We must go to Christ, but we may not stay there; we must go through Christ to God. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," Christ tells us. An example might be the well-known hymn, "Rock of Ages." I like that hymn. It was written by a sound Calvinist, though Baptist. I was in his church in Southern England and stood in his pulpit. His name was Augustus Toplady. John Wesley hated him and slandered him because he was a staunch Calvinist and Wesley was thoroughly Arminian who denied all that Calvinism stood for. John Wesley's brother, Charles, as Arminian as John, wrote many hymns that are still sung today.

I like to sing "Rock of Ages," and can enjoy singing it. But if you ask me whether it is helpful in worship on the Lord's Day, then I know that I need more, for I may not stop at the "Rock of Ages," but must go on to the Rock that is higher than I (Psalm 61:2, where the Hebrew has, "Lead me to the rock that is too high for me.")

Some of you might want to say, "Oh, these are little things. Don't be so picky. You get all bent out of shape over little things that make no difference. And now you want us to do the same." Well, I'm not so sure about that. It seems to be that little things are very important when we are talking about our presence in God's dwelling place. If it is true that we are, as Isaiah says, less than a

speck of dust in the scales, or a drop of water on the bottom lip of a bucket, and God is so great that heaven and earth cannot contain him; if it is true that we are dreadfully wicked sinners in the presence of a holy God whose holiness is such a bright light that even angels cannot look at it; if to talk with God is more of a miracle than if a small spider in the corner of the room where I am sitting would talk with me; if I would never dare to enter the presence

of the queen of England with holes in my trousers, sandals on my feet, hair uncombed, a rag for a shirt, unshaven and unwashed, frolicking and prancing around whistling, “Roll Out the Barrel, and We’ll Have a Barrel of fun” a song sung in beer halls; if all these things are true, then it seems to me we are obligated to give some thought to how we can come into God’s presence on the Lord’s Day and call our appearance, our conduct - how we act and talk, little

things of no account and of importance. God has given us a book filled with songs He inspired by His Holy Spirit. It would seem to me that we are safest and most pleasing to God when we use this book. But there are positive reasons also why God’s book of songs seems to me to be the best. I’ll wait with that until next time.

With love in the Lord,
Prof

WHY I LOVE SINGING THE PSALMS >> Elias PSALMS 73

Psalter 202

Being a Christian since young, I have always sung the Psalters. Its tunes are very familiar and comforting especially in dark and difficult times. Psalter 202 is a well-known Psalter to many Reformed Christians; however, we often do not pay attention to the lyrics when singing. Hopefully we will all continue to strive to benefit from singing during worship services by internalising the words and not just care about the pitching and volume of the musical notes.

Guidance and Glory

Adapted from Psalm 73, Psalter 202 reflects the Psalmist’s relationship with God. The three different segments of this Psalm are, namely, the lamentation of the Psalmist amidst his temptations, how he gained victory, and last, how he profited from it.

With the Psalm being one where the Psalmist shows his triumph over his envy of the wicked’s prosperity, there is much rejoicing and praising of God. The appropriate title “Guidance and Glory” embodies what the Psalm is about, seeking guidance from God and giving him all glory afterward.

Stanza 1

In doubt and temptation I rest, Lord, in Thee;

My hand is in Thy hand, Thou carest for me;

My soul with Thy counsel through life Thou wilt guide,

And afterward make me in glory abide.

The 1st Stanza is directly taken from verses 22 to 24. It speaks of the Psalmist’s trust in the Lord. At the start, he was envious that the wicked “are not in trouble as other men” but “prosper in the world” despite sinning and disobeying God’s law. These benefits that they enjoyed made the Psalmist jealous and caused him to question God about his predicament. However, he prayed to God and realised that the wicked, regardless of their earthly wealth, will end in destruction. Hence, the lyrics portray the Psalmist’s conviction that God will always care for him as a shepherd cares for his sheep. He also acknowledges that God’s guidance is life-long, until life in heaven and eternal glory.

This stanza encapsulates the essence of Guidance in the Psalter's Title "Guidance and Glory". In the darkest of our trials, we can remember the lyrics of this stanza and remind ourselves that God will always care for us. He will never leave us nor forsake us, but will always guide us through trials and temptations. This is a very encouraging thought that we should share with all who are troubled and facing distress in life.

Stanza 2

*In glory Thou only my portion shalt be,
On earth for none other I long but for Thee;
My flesh and heart falter, but God is my stay,
The strength of my spirit, my portion for aye.*

The following Stanza's lyrics are inspired from verses 25 to 26. The second stanza is a personal conviction of the Psalmist of which we all should have. The words show a sincere desire, and acceptance, for God to be his one and only source of strength and encouragement. With a recognition that his body is faltering and failing, he firmly maintains that God is his strength. God is the healer that causes all sorts of fatigue and human weakness, frailties and sins, to disappear. He does miracles.

Once again, this stanza talks of God being our refuge, a strong tower whom we can rely and depend on. It is comforting to know that despite our wretched self, God will always be the rock of our heart and our portion. But more importantly, the second line reminds us dearly that our sole purpose on earth is to live for God. We must sound his praise abroad.

Stanza 3

*All they that forsake Thee must perish and die,
But near to my Saviour most blessed am I;
I make Thee my refuge, my Lord and my God;
Thy grace and Thy glory I publish abroad.*

The last Stanza is adapted from verses 27 to 28. It is very similar to the other 2 stanzas where the lyrics describe the Psalmist's feelings as he overcomes his temptations. There is a comparison with the wicked, who will face destruction in hell. This third and last stanza also emphasises on publishing and proclaiming God's grace and glory abroad.

With the juxtaposition of the Psalmist's blessedness and the wicked's eternal damnation, it is indeed a privilege to be the elect, chosen by God. When we look back at all that God has done for us, we must realise that it all happened, not of our will but of God's will. Despite how much we can ever do, our gratitude to God will never be enough.

Chorus

My favourite portion of this song, the chorus is an overall conclusion of the Psalm, giving thanks to God.

*My God, I will extol Thee and ever bless Thy Name;
Each day will I give thanks to Thee And all Thy praise proclaim.*

Different from the rest of the stanzas, the chorus is adapted from Psalm 145 instead of Psalm 37. A psalm of Praise, it is apt as the chorus which is to be sung after every stanza. The emotive words are a way of showing gratitude to God, to whom all glory and praise should be given. This chorus also serves as a reminder that the praise of the LORD should be in our mouths every single day. Regardless of what we may be facing, curses and complains should never fill our mouth. Instead, the proclaiming of God's praise, infinite majesty, and honour should take precedence.

Application

By deconstructing this Psalter's lyrics and understanding its significance to the Psalmist, we as Christians can apply it constructively to our spiritual walk with God. The 3 stanzas and chorus combine, telling us the Psalmist's joy and comfort in overcoming his temptations. With the Psalter being sung every Lord's Day, we must remember the importance of the words. Never should we sing for the praise of men or forget that our voices are but an instrument for us to praise our Almighty Father. During song sessions, may we also exhort each other on the Psalters' context and significance so that singing becomes more meaningful and we can better meditate on the lyrics whilst singing.

A Proper Perspective on Christian Courtship V

Subjection to the Head & With a View to Marriage

>> Aaron

Subjection to the Head

“Being in subjection refers to the inner attitude of a wife’s heart, according to which she knows her husband to be in authority over her and freely wills it.” – Prof. David Engelsma

In the covenant marriage between Christ and the Church, He calls His bride to be in subjection to Him. Christ is the faithful Husband who alone knows how to love His wife and care for her as her Head. The Church on earth is constantly embroiled in the bitter struggle against sin and the wicked world. At times the Church loses her strength and focus, falling away to the wiles of the devil. For this reason she must constantly subject herself to Christ, her Husband, who will guide her through all her struggles until she reaches her heavenly home. The Bride’s submission to her Husband is a mark of her faithfulness and love for Him.

I fear our age of higher education has severely damaged the covenant calling for women to be in subjection to their husbands. Our young men and women are taught in their schools that they stand on equal footing. Subjection to the man is perceived as a weakness or an ancient attempt to place the woman under bondage. The women must, as they are commonly taught, stamp their authority in all spheres of life. In the institutions of learning, workplace and home they must excel better than the men. Only then can their true potential be achieved.

The Word of God speaks otherwise. It cannot be emphasized enough that the Word of God alone teaches us where the true calling of a woman lies. A woman of God knows that her calling lies in the home, where she is to be a help-meet for her husband and the keeper of the home. She shuns the world’s ideas of feminism and wisely prepares herself for this cause. In all of her choices of studies, work and lifestyle, she prepares to sacrifice her own private ambitions and to align her goals with her husband’s. This, she knows, is a noble and high calling. She knows this is a task so sacred that she will devote herself entirely to it.

I am often puzzled why our young women are so strongly desirous of higher education. It is, of course, not wrong to seek more knowledge to improve and cultivate our minds. It is also not wrong to pursue higher levels of skills and proficiency to prepare for future work. But I must warn our young women to be extremely careful as they pursue higher education. I know the universities in Singapore demand a great deal out of their students. Obtaining that basic degree involves a lot of hard work and study throughout the four years. After all those years of hard labour, one naturally desires to reap the rewards. The great spiritual danger is that our young covenant women decide to put off marriage and childbirth to focus on their careers. Such talk, says Gertrude Hoeksema in her book “Peaceable Fruit for the Nurturing of Covenant Youth”, is “borrowed from the world, and the philosophy behind it comes straight

from hell”. As a covenant young woman engages in courtship, she has to prepare herself to be in subjection to her boyfriend, her husband-to-be. This is not always easy as she is an individual with a unique mind and will. Sinful pride and willfulness can often hinder her from surrendering her will to her boyfriend. It is my judgment that the devil uses the privileges of higher education to stir up sinful pride in our covenant young women. He shows them that they are academically and intellectually as able as the young men in the church, if not more so. This pride has the powerful danger of preventing our young women from being in subjection in courtship and marriage. When our young women are unable to subject themselves to their husbands, their relationships will be drowned by chaos, bitterness and resentment.

For a covenant young woman, to be in subjection means to acknowledge that God has placed another person in her life to be in authority over her. Her boyfriend and husband-to-be assumes leadership over her and decides for her. He becomes responsible for her. A woman who loves God submits to this cheerfully because she trusts God’s wisdom more than her own. Although the man that God entrusts to be her head is as sinful as she is, God is nevertheless pleased to do so. It is His divine prerogative for a covenant relationship and marriage to function in this manner. In this manner, He will bless and keep His covenant children faithful to each other. Subjection also implies the inner attitude and cultivation

of the heart. When covenant courtship is engaged with a spiritual mindset, a covenant young woman experiences a wonderful change of character. She begins to lose her identity by assuming it with her husband-to-be. No longer does she retain her individual lifestyle and exercise her will as freely as an individual. She looks forward to the day when her very own name will be assumed with her husband's. This is where the transformation of becoming one flesh starts to take place. A godly woman knows this as God's will for her. A meek and quiet spirit, of which Scripture dictates is of great price in the sight of God, allows her to submit to this. To be in subjection also means to give her life to the cause of the covenant home. The home is the place where she can achieve her true potential. God in His wisdom and power creatively fashioned the woman so that all her physical, mental, emotional and spiritual attributes are suited for her work in the home. There she functions as the guide of the household, being in subjection to her husband and nurturing her children in the fear of the LORD. There she fulfills the calling that God has given to her and it is where she will truly be blessed. No wonder the Scriptures teach that in childbearing she shall be saved.

Once again we need God's grace to enable us to be in subjection, for we are by nature sinful and most prone to proud rebellion. A covenant relationship prospers when covenant women submit themselves cheerfully to their husbands. May the Lord teach us to submit to Him so that we may submit ourselves to His covenant calling for us.

With a View to Marriage

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Eph 5:31-12

The covenant God who establishes the institution of marriage purposed it to be a reflection of the marriage between Christ and the Church. As he binds two believers, body and soul, in the union of marriage, He testifies to them of the unbreakable bond that He shares with them. His covenant with His people is unbreakable because He maintains it.

He has given His only begotten Son as proof of His sovereign power and love for His Church. He is her Husband, a covenant Friend who establishes, maintains and perfects her salvation in the cross of Christ. As discussed in the early chapters, covenant courtship is to be approached with all seriousness because it is the necessary platform to marriage. It is oftentimes tempting to enter into relationships rashly with somebody we fancy. God made us as emotional beings with the desire to love and be loved. Our emotions are powerful sources of energy that affect our thinking and actions. Courtship is a time when strong feelings and emotions are very active. Covenant young people risk bearing emotional scars and painful experiences when they treat courtship lightly. Without understanding the responsibilities and implications of courtship, those who rush into it do so to their hurt.

In truth, covenant courtship prepares a couple to leave their parents and cleave to each other as one flesh. As they grow in an intimate knowledge and love for each other, they must prepare themselves for a lifelong commitment. God ordained marriage to cure man of his loneliness. He gave man a woman to make him complete. For this reason God demands an inseparable union between husband and wife throughout their lifetime. The form for marriage insists that each spouse "faithfully assist[s] the other in all things that belong to this life and a better". Courtship demands responsibility. It demands faithfulness to care exclusively for each other's needs as brother and sister in Christ. It is a constant giving of oneself for the other's benefit, as Christ gave Himself for the Church. A man of God promises, according to the form for marriage, "never to forsake her, to love her faithfully, to maintain her, as a faithful and pious husband is bound to do to his lawful wife". As covenant couples commit themselves to a lifelong bond, they must be profoundly aware of all the dangers that threaten this commitment. These dangers sometimes appear in the form of false doctrines that creep into the church. False doctrines have their source in the devil whose interest is to defile the institution of marriage and to hurt the cause of God's covenant in this world. It is deeply grievous that even in Reformed circles there are churches who deny the lifelong permanency of the marriage bond. They

falsely assert that the Scriptures allow divorce to destroy the marriage bond. This is nothing more than a sinful and convenient way out of a broken marriage. This evil doctrine cheapens the grace of God that always sustains a covenant couple's relationship through all its ups and downs. Another danger that threatens a couple's lifelong commitment is the sinful tendency to take each other for granted. How often we fail to appreciate the friendships we have around us. It is all the more saddening that in marriage, the best of friends can fail to love and appreciate each other adequately. They are constantly arguing and picking on each other's faults, refusing to surrender to each other as God calls them to. The lack of God's love in their relationship becomes increasingly apparent.

A couple who is truly committed to the God-ordained institution of marriage will understand that God is the One who binds them in true love and faithfulness. Marriage counselor Dr. Ed Wheat writes accurately that "it is God's will in every marriage that the couple love each other with an absorbing spiritual, emotional and physical attraction that continues to grow throughout their lifetime together". It is nothing less than amazing that an old couple, having been together for so many years, can still find so much to be attracted to in each other. I think of Professor and Mrs. Hanko, whose loving and godly marriage ought to be an example for our young people to follow.

A covenant couple prizes the grace of God because they know that without it, their relationship will give way to the dangers that threaten it. We need His grace to prepare for marriage. More so, when we enter into marriage and live in it. Marriage implies faithfulness. Only a God who is faithful can enable His children to be faithful to each other. May the Lord help us to be faithful in our courtship and marriages.

"it is God's will in every marriage that the couple love each other with an absorbing spiritual, emotional and physical attraction that continues to grow throughout their lifetime together".

RDC ECHO

>> Sis Ruth Teo

On 7 Nov 2011, Professor Hanko gave two messages on guarding the truth. The two messages covered the following topics:

- 1) Why do Christians commemorate the 16th century protestant reformation?
- 2) How do we live as reformed Christians in the 21st century?

There were three main points in his talk:

- 1) The Truth that needs guarding
- 2) The importance of that Truth Today
- 3) Our Calling to Guard The Truth

First, Professor explained what guarding and contending for the faith which Jude had written about meant. Faith is not merely voicing out our opinion or fighting for something, but faith is believing. Also, he emphasized the Truth that needs to be guarded. The Truth that God is God. (Psalm 100:3, Deut 4:39) This struck me because we often overlook this important and fundamental truth. Do we truly know who God is? Do we know our God who is sovereign, all-powerful and eternal? Because God is eternal, all power belongs to Him. Because God is sovereign, he chooses His elect and by His grace, gives salvation to His people. (Jonah 2:9)

Professor Hanko also mentioned the three outstanding men who fought hard for the truth, particularly on the doctrine of predestination and the sovereignty of God. They were Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Knox. John Calvin was called by his enemies, a “God-intoxicated” man. What a wonderful name that could be said of a man! Calvin dedicated his life to the truth of the Gospel. He gives the answer to this question: “What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 1). Are we willing to be like Calvin who truly lived each second of his life for God? Do we treasure God’s Truth and desire to guard it all our life?

Why is guarding the Truth of such great importance? Professor Hanko emphasised that it is of utmost importance because, firstly, God alone must receive all glory, and secondly, it preserves God’s truth in the line of generations.

God alone must receive all glory. 1 Peter 4:11 states: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever, Amen” (1 Pet. 4:11). “Guarding the Truth involves protecting and maintaining the Truth. Only in this way can we honour God, for He created us to do so. There are various Psalters that speak of our praise to God for His glory. “All glory unto God we yield, Jehovah is our help and shield; all praise and honour we will bring, To Israel’s Holy One, our King. (Psalter 242, vs.4). Also, Psalter 76 vs.1 puts it beautifully, “All glory and strength and dominion accord; Ascribe to Him glory, and render Him honour, in beauty of holiness, worship the Lord.” Soli Deo Gloria; may we ascribe all glory to God!

It preserves God’s truth in the line of generations. Only by guarding the Truth will the Church be firmly grounded throughout generations. If there is disunity in the Church regarding God’s Truth, it threatens the life of the Church. I believe what Professor Hanko said is very applicable to us as youths. We form the next generation, and being part of it, do we love the Church, God’s Truth and His people? Do we desire to love God and learn more about Him?

In conclusion, Professor Hanko stated that the calling to guard the truth begins with loving the Truth (Jude 3). It is wrong for a church to compromise the Truth and stand with those who deny the truths of Scripture. Instead, we should remain firm in our doctrines and confessions, even if the church has to stand alone. This is crucial for the sake of the salvation of God’s seed. If we fail to do so, we will be susceptible to the wiles of the devil (2 Thess 2:10, 11).

Personally, I struggle with this all the time. Having had the calling of being in public schools all my life, I have had to stand alone against people who choose to forsake the truth and who try to lure me away from the Reformed faith. It is a tough battle, but I trust that God will give us the strength to make it through – the strength to fight the good fight of faith on this earth. (2 Tim 4:7)

Let us be faithful to the calling that God has so graciously given us and guard His Truth with all our hearts!

Introducing the Belgic Confession

>> Rev. Angus Stewart

The Belgic Confession is a great Reformed creed that amply repays the time and effort spent in reading and studying it. In this essay, I will introduce the Belgic Confession by making six key points about it which will constitute good reasons for considering its rich teaching in subsequent articles.

1. This year, 2011, is the Belgic Confession's 450th anniversary.

There were literally dozens of creeds and confessions written between the beginning of the Protestant Reformation (1517) and the Westminster Assembly (1640s), but not all of them are still going strong to this day. However, the Belgic Confession is one of about ten to twenty of them that still are influential, living confessions in the churches. One year after it was written in French, the Belgic Confession was translated into Dutch. Soon thereafter, it was translated into German and Latin, and later into other languages. Today, the Belgic Confession is used on all continents of the world.

2. The Belgic Confession (1561) is the least well-known of our Three Forms of Unity; the others being the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) and the Canons of Dordt (1618-1619).

Notwithstanding, there are at least two particular characteristics of the Belgic Confession which ought to be noted. First, it is very personal. Its articles typically begin, "We believe ..." or "We confess ..." or, as with its first article, "We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth ..." Second, it is also systematic. It begins with the truth about God and Scripture (articles 1-11); then it moves to creation, providence, man and the fall (12-15); next comes Jesus Christ as the manifestation of God's grace and mercy (16-21), several key elements in our salvation (22-26) and a superb treatment of the church,

including its marks, government, offices, discipline and sacraments (27-35), before concluding with articles on the magistrates (36) and the last judgement (37). In other words, the Belgic Confession is arranged, more or less, in the order of a systematic theology: God (theology), man (anthropology), Christ (Christology), salvation (soteriology), church (ecclesiology) and last times (eschatology).

3. The Belgic Confession was written, as its title indicates, in what we now call Belgium.

In the modern period, Belgium was a very Roman Catholic country. Today however, with the promotion of humanism, it is a very secular country. Brussels, the headquarters of the European Union, is in Belgium. Euthanasia was legalized in 2002 in Belgium; homosexual marriage was legalized in 2003 in Belgium.

Notwithstanding, Belgium has a significant place in Reformed history. The first two Reformation martyrs were from Belgium: Henry Voes, who was just 24-years old, and John Esch. They were executed in Brussels (the capital city of Belgium as we now know it) on 1 July, 1523. Voes and Esch were monks in an Augustinian monastery in which the writings of Martin Luther became popular. These two men went out and preached the gospel of righteousness by faith alone and were martyred for the Word of God. Luther wrote a little song about these first two Reformation martyrs. The third Reformation martyr, Lambert Thorn, was also probably from Brussels in Belgium.

A famous English Reformer was also executed in Belgium. William Tyndale was martyred there in 1536 and Tyndale's Bible translation was very influential in our Authorized Version of 1611. Tyndale was burned at the stake in Vilvoorde near the castle where he

had been imprisoned, a few miles to the north of Brussels.

Belgium was once filled with Protestant cities. Brussels itself was once a Protestant city. The civil magistrates of Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent also declared for the Reformation. Dunkirk, now in France and famous for the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force in World War II, was Protestant. Ypres, an important battle site in World War I, was Reformed as was Tournai, also known as Doornik.

However, the Holy Roman Emperors, Charles V and Philip II, persecuted and slaughtered tens of thousands of Protestants in Belgium. Some of those who survived fled west into England or east to Germany; others moved north into (what eventually became) the Netherlands. Some of the Roman Catholics in the Netherlands moved south, so the Netherlands ended up mostly Protestant and Belgium became mostly Roman Catholic, because the Protestants who remained were either killed or forced to embrace Romanism.

During the Reformation, there were more Protestants slain in the Lowlands or Low Countries (roughly equivalent to today's Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) than any other part of Europe. In fact, some have reckoned that there were more Protestants killed in the Lowlands than there were Christians martyred in the early church by the Roman Empire.

4. The Belgic Confession is a martyr's creed. A few years after he wrote the Belgic Confession, Guido de Brès was tried before the Spanish Inquisition, received the death penalty and was martyred by hanging in Valenciennes (1522-31 May, 1567).

The spirit of martyrdom even marks the Belgic Confession itself. Article 37 on "The Last Judgement" contains these

lines:

But on the contrary, the faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honour; and the Son of God will confess their names before God His Father and His elect angels; all tears shall be wiped from their eyes; and their cause, which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates as heretical and impious, will then be known to be the cause of the Son of God. And for a gracious reward, the Lord will cause them to possess such a glory as never entered into the heart of man to conceive. Therefore we expect that great day with a most ardent desire, to the end that we may fully enjoy the promises of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

This was the “cause” which the Holy Roman Emperors, Charles V and Philip II, the bloody Duke of Alva and Margaret of Parma (Philip II’s sister) sought to stamp out and overthrow. But this cause, “which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates as heretical and impious” and for which de Brès and many Reformed believers in the Low Countries died, will on the last day “be known to be the cause of the Son of God” who will graciously reward His “faithful and elect [who] shall be crowned with glory and honour.” It is our cause too!

5. Our Belgic Confession was explicitly approved by John Calvin, Theodore Beza (Calvin’s successor in Geneva) and the church at Geneva.

Guido de Brès spent five years in England where Martin Micronius, Martin Bucer, and John a Lasco were his fellow Reformed workers. He also spent some time learning the Reformed faith in Switzerland. He was trained in Lausanne under Beza and then he went for a year to Geneva, where he attended the lectures of John Calvin. We also have a record of a letter from Calvin to de Brès. As well as studying under Calvin for a year and corresponding with Calvin, we know that de Brès owned at least some of Calvin’s books - works by Calvin were in de Brès’ library which the civil authorities in Tournai discovered in a garden shed and burned. The ties between Guido de Brès and Calvin were very strong.

Also the order, content and wording of Belgic Confession (1561) is modelled

after that in the French Confession, and the French Confession was drafted in 1559 by John Calvin for the French Reformed churches. So not only was our Belgic Confession written by a man who studied at Geneva for a year, corresponded with Calvin and read Calvin’s books but also it was based on a confession which Calvin drafted! No wonder one can sense the flavour of Calvin in the Belgic Confession!

Further, John Calvin had written about the Belgic Confession in a letter to someone either in or from the Lowlands. In that letter, John Calvin stated: “In your confessional statement [i.e., the Belgic Confession] we have not noticed anything which does not agree with the holy oracles of God and the orthodox faith. Therefore, we willingly approve the summary of doctrine contained in it.” What a high endorsement from the Genevan Reformer! He “willingly approves” the Belgic Confession, not finding in it “anything which does not agree with the holy oracles of God and the orthodox faith.” Interestingly, Calvin’s letter does not use the first person singular, “I,” but the first person plural, “we.” As Nicolaas Gootjes observes, “Calvin wrote this letter in the name of the brothers of Geneva and throughout used the ‘we’ form.” Gootjes continues, “As Calvin wrote his advice on behalf of the ministers of Geneva, his letter means an official stamp of approval from the entire minister’s council of Geneva on the Belgic Confession.”

Later, it was decided to send the Belgic Confession to Geneva to be printed on a larger scale. There were many Reformed publishers in Geneva in those days, especially because of the demand for Calvin’s transcribed sermons and his other theological works. These and other books were then disseminated throughout Europe. But the Reformed Christians in the Lowlands not only appreciated the quality printers in Geneva; they wanted the Belgic Confession printed in the capital of Reformed Christendom with the theological imprimatur of Theodore Beza, Calvin’s successor, and the Genevan consistory! Sure enough, in 1566, two years after Calvin’s death, the Belgic Confession was printed in Geneva with the approval of Beza and the venerable company of Genevan pastors.

6. The Belgic Confession is the most antithetical Reformed creed against the Anabaptists out of all the dozens of confessions and catechisms written in the Reformation era. All the Protestant creeds, of course, directly and indirectly opposes Romanism and other false systems of doctrine, but the Belgic Confession is the one which criticises the Anabaptists the most. It refers to the Anabaptists by name some three times, while many other times it refutes their tenets without naming them.

The Belgic Confession is the Reformed creed which is most opposed to the Anabaptists because there were a lot of Anabaptists in the Lowlands, far more, for instance, than in France. Also, one of the leading Anabaptists, Menno Simon (1496-1561), after whom the Mennonites are named, was from the Low Countries.

Second, the Roman Catholics accused the Reformed party of being Anabaptists. Still fresh in public memory were two major Anabaptist revolts which resulted in wholesale slaughter: the Peasants’ War mostly in the southern, western and central areas of what is now Germany (1524-1525) and the Münster Rebellion in north-western Germany (1534-1535). The Anabaptist radicals took over the city of Münster, led by the two Johns, John of Haarlem and John of Leiden. They burned all books except the Bible and called Münster the “New Jerusalem.” Soon over 1,000 adults were rebaptized. On Easter Sunday in April 1534, John of Haarlem, who had prophesied that God’s judgement would come on the wicked that day, made a sally with only thirty followers, believing that he was a second Gideon, but he was killed with his entire band. John of Leiden was subsequently installed as an absolute ruler and the successor of King David! He legalized polygamy and took sixteen wives, justifying his actions with visions from heaven. The Münster Anabaptists also practised community of goods, which meant, of course, that John of Leiden became very rich. Anyone who would not submit to the new regime was put to death by the sword. But soon John of Leiden also was dead. Huge forces of Roman Catholics surrounded the city and eventually took it back. Thus, to be accused as an Anabaptist at that time was to be viewed as a revolutionary and a nut case, and the Reformed

saints in the Lowlands, understandably, did not want to be lumped with them. Therefore, in the Belgic Confession, Guido de Brès is effectively saying, “No, we disagree with Anabaptist views; we are not Anabaptists at all; we oppose the Anabaptists as much as Rome does and even more so.”

Of course, not all Anabaptists were as crazy as those of Münster. There were various bodies of Anabaptists in Switzerland, Germany, the Lowlands, etc. There were different groups at different places at different times and they differed in their theological views to some degree and so a certain amount of care is needed in representing their teaching.

Some of the Anabaptists believed in a very radical form of world flight. This can be seen in the beliefs of modern Anabaptists such as the Amish and the Hutterites. Traditional Anabaptist belief is that it is sinful to take an oath or make a vow (or, as they would put it, oaths are not part of the perfection that is in Christ). This creates problems over church membership vows or wedding vows or oaths in a court of law—issues involving church, family and state. Further, the vast majority of Anabaptists (especially after those two horrendous rebellions mentioned earlier) were pacifists and they believed that it was wrong to be in an army or to fight for the state. Yet when John the Baptist was asked by soldiers what bearing “fruits worthy of repentance” would mean for them, he replied, “Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:14). The Lord’s forerunner did not say, “Oh, you can’t be a believer and a soldier. You must quit the military.” Being a soldier is a lawful calling for a Christian, but the Anabaptists denied this and forbade their members the office of civil magistrate.

The world flight idea has led some Anabaptists to the notion that modern technology is evil. The Amish, for example, drive around in buggies (horses and carts), not cars. Electricity, computers and the internet are of the “world.” This idea of keeping oneself physically separate from various material things (which are morally neutral in themselves) runs contrary to I Timothy 4:4-5: “For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused,

if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” This suspicion of material/physical things led some Anabaptists around the time of the Belgic Confession to a heretical view of the Lord Jesus Christ’s human nature and especially its origin. We will discuss this in our subsequent study of Belgic Confession 18.

What are some of the other traits of the Anabaptists? They had a wrong ecclesiology, with erroneous ideas on church offices, church government and church discipline. Thus, for example, the Anabaptist view of the “ban” differs from the Reformed teaching on excommunication and serves their divisive idea of a “pure church.” Of course, the Anabaptists were baptistic. This is the origin and meaning of their name: they were rebaptizers. Those who were baptized as infants had to be baptized again. The mode of baptism came to be seen by the Anabaptists as only immersion, by which they meant total immersion in water and total emersion out of water.

Many Anabaptists also believe in direct revelations from God; they are pentecostals or charismatics and not cessationists. Some Anabaptists taught soul sleep. The Münster rebellion arose out of millennial notions of a literal kingdom on earth. This false eschatology is a pointer to the Anabaptist hermeneutic of literalism, especially a literalistic interpretation of Old Testament prophecy and the book of Revelation. This stands in opposition to the Reformed hermeneutic of Scripture explaining Scripture, with its corollary of the New Testament interpreting the Old Testament. Moreover, Bible interpretation is to be within the (orthodox) tradition of the church and in keeping with the ecumenical and Reformed creeds. The Anabaptists, however, sought church “restoration” (not reformation), believing that it had gone badly astray upon the death of the apostles and especially through gaining approval from the Roman Empire in the days of Constantine the Great.

In all my research, I have not found a single Anabaptist who held to the doctrines of sovereign grace; they all clung to the heresy of free will, that fallen man is not totally depraved but retains a certain ability to choose

God and the good, and so they all opposed sovereign predestination and irresistible grace. Flowing from this, it is easy to see why the Anabaptists did not glory in the gospel of justification by faith alone, unlike the Protestants. This failure to appreciate the significance of gracious justification is related to their legalist and world flight notions.

The importance of studying the Belgic Confession today

The beliefs of the Anabaptists are prevalent in today’s church world: immersionist baptistic teachings, the teaching that Man has a free-will and that God loves everyone and wants to save everyone, the holding to a literalistic hermeneutic and an erroneous ecclesiology, charismatic practices, millennialist teachings.

Currently, most professing Christians and churches that are not Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox or liberal Protestant are not really Protestant (though they might go under this name) but are Anabaptist (though they may not even have heard of them)! Are not most contemporary evangelicals non-creedal, with very little interest in sound doctrine? Do not most of them hold all or most of the following views: Arminian free-willism and free-offerism, charismaticism, baptist immersionism, literalistic dispensationalism? These doctrines are not in the line of the Reformation but in the line of Anabaptism!

At the Reformation, broadly speaking, there were three groups: the Romanists, the Protestants and the Anabaptists. The Reformers said, “Rome on the right is wrong and the Anabaptists on the left are wrong.” Some of the Reformers, like Zwingli, even said that the Anabaptists with their charismatic and Arminian views, their disregard for the history of the church and its government, their world flight, etc., were worse than the Romanists! In the twenty-first century, most of non-liberal Protestantism and most who would call themselves evangelicals are actually Anabaptist!

We, on the other hand, need to grow in the Reformed faith over against the prevalent Anabaptist ideas of both the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries. Our Belgic Confession is thus particularly relevant today and merits a greater and deeper study into its truths.

I consider it a privilege and am thankful that I can write this series of articles for Salt Shakers on the Church Order which CERC adopted recently. I write as one whom the Lord has taught some things while I was in the committee drafting the document and in the Session deliberating it.

>> Deacon Chan Chee Seng

Overview of THE CHURCH ORDER (I)

I am thankful to God that CERC has finally adopted a Church Order. Article 1 puts it in no uncertain terms that the Church Order is for the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ. Professor Herman Hanko had previously instructed us through a series of talks on the principles of the Church Order which also covered the offices in the church. I hope to pick up from there and highlight the peculiarities which were adapted for our situation in CERC and also highlight some areas of concern.

I said 'adapted for our situation' because the CERC Church Order which we have adopted was adapted from that of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The committee took special care to consult references and endeavoured to preserve the wisdom and intent of the early church fathers.

Let us delve into the first article which would refresh our minds regarding some necessities.

Article 1 tells us that the Church Order is for the maintenance of good order in the Church. The last article of the document, Article 86 (which is about making changes to the Church Order), repeats this purpose and adds that alterations, if done, must be for the profit of the Church. This is one principle I want to bring out at the start and this cannot be over emphasised. I will remind us often in this article that the profit, or benefit, of the church must be the sole reason for adhering to the Church Order, and this same principle applies to all the articles and the performance of all our duties in the Office of Believers. Every article in the Church Order is there for the benefit of the Church and, when we do it, we also do what the Church Order says because we love the body of Christ and desire her benefit. If there are certain articles which we do not like, for the sake of the church we should submit to its rule. The

only reason why we may request to make a change is when we are convinced that these articles will harm the church if it remains as it is. This must be done in an orderly manner. There will be more about this later.

Another important thing that needs to be mentioned before we can move on is this: Trust is paramount for this document to do its work. It is not possible for the Church Order to deal with every conceivable situation. I would rather say that it is not necessary for it to be that way because Christ is the King in the church. We all know this well. What needs a little more understanding is how the special Offices of Elders and Deacons are related to the Office of Believers. Knowing this will help us understand why that trust between the Elders, Deacons and members of the Church is possible and necessary in the implementation of the Church Order. Without this trust, the Church Order cannot work.

The undisputable fact about this trust between the Office of Believers and the special Offices is this: the most important office in the Church, of which Christ is the head, is the Office of Believers. Logically, without believers, there is no need for the special Offices. I assume that the believers, or members of the church, elected their Elders and Deacons into the offices because they trusted these men. But this is not the main reason why we can trust the men in these special offices.

The real reason why this trust is necessary, possible and obligatory is because it is Christ who wants the believers to appoint these men to the special Offices to serve believers and rule over them. It is Christ who gave these men to the Church. They are gifts from God to the Church. Scripture gives us the qualifications to look for in these men. Christ would have believers

identify and elect them to rule over and to submit to them. Therefore, not submitting to them is not submitting to the authority that Christ has appointed over the Church.

I hope to write about the responsibilities and calling of the members of the Church as they are expressed or implied in the Church Order. That of the Elders and Deacons have been taught by Professor Hanko in his speeches I do not want to repeat them here unless necessity dictates.

The Church Order devotes Articles 3 to 20 to the Minister of the Word and preaching. That is significant. God gathers and defends His Church in this world by the preaching of His Word. Pure preaching is one of the marks of the true church. These are important enough reasons to devote a significant part of the Church Order to the preaching ministry. Also because of those important reasons, members in their Office of Believers must actively play their role in this ministry.

Article 3 was necessary in those early days of the Reformed Churches when there were Romish monks and priests who made their way to the Reformed Churches' pulpits by their eloquence and fair manners. This Article showed that the early church fathers knew that had to be stopped. However, the threat today is not from Romish monks or priests, but from Elders within reformed churches who wink at false doctrines and who invite ministers from different denominations to their pulpits. For those Elders, ecclesiastical unity has priority over doctrinal purity. Doctrines which are contrary are to be tolerated because the Reformed community is already so small, so they say. Doctrines that are contrary to the confessions are now renamed as sensitive issues or differences. Furthermore, doctrines are categorised into practical doctrines and

theological doctrines (as though there is such a thing as impractical doctrine). The importance of a doctrine is now determined by whether it is considered a salvation or non-salvation issue. This is so today because doctrines are treated in isolation instead of a collective whole; and because doctrines are so inter-twined together, the denial of one doctrine will lead to the denial of another. With this tolerant attitude towards “sensitive issues”, ministers from different denominations are given access to each other’s pulpits, disregarding confessional differences. Preachers who are invited are supposed to teach practical Christian living without touching on sensitive issues or being doctrinal. This is not only a strange proposition, but it is in opposition to what the Apostle Paul wrote to Titus that he must teach sound doctrine so that God’s people will live as Christians ought to.

When we make our confession of faith, we say that we are convinced that what is taught in this Christian church, including our distinctives, is the true and complete doctrine of salvation. We must oppose, instead of allow, teachings that are not true and unscriptural. We must not allow ourselves to join with others to promote what we know is against our confessions, and to join them in frivolously sweeping under the carpet that which is taught in this church. (Matt 5:13)

There is an unwritten code that invited preachers do not bring up “sensitive” issues. God forbids such compromises. God will spew out of His mouth the church that is neither hot nor cold. The onus is on the Elders, not the invited preacher, to ensure that the Church preaches the pure doctrine of the Gospel. The solution to invite ministers from other denominations to preach and conduct the sacraments is a very tempting one when there is no Pastor in the church. The Elders must take a firm stand even in such difficult situations. In such circumstances, the Elders should read sermons or prepare to bring a word of edification rather than officially exposing the sheep of Christ in the church to false doctrines. Even if the invited preacher does not breathe a word of “sensitive issues”, the fact remains that the church is sending a message to its members that it is alright to compromise the faith of her

fathers by inviting these men because of the current difficult circumstances. Members of the church must exercise their Office of Believers and bring their objection against such compromises to their Elders.

Article 3, which we are discussing now, allows only those who are “lawfully called” to use the pulpit. Article 4 tells us what the lawful call consists of; but here, in Article 3, our concern is that none who have not been thus called may be allowed to preach. Positively, when Article 3 is read in conjunction with Article 4, it means that only those who have been properly qualified and ordained to the Office, because they agree with the confessions of the church, may preach. None, not even the Consistory, has the authority to contravene this Article which has its basis directly from the Word of God. Our church may not allow a Minister from another denomination to preach in our pulpit unless these denominations are in agreement with our confessions. In fact, if the denomination is in agreement with our confessions in word and deed, our Church Order (Article 85) requires of us to seek a relationship with such a denomination.

Here are just two of more passages of Scripture forbidding such compromises and they summarise the relationship between the believer and those who propagate their doctrines that oppose the church:

Rom 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

2Th 3:14-15 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Notice Scripture says, avoid them and have no company with these, that he may be ashamed. Today, churches invite such men inside in the name of unity and needs. Take note that it is a sin to bring contrary doctrines into the fold.

The responsibility of the members of the church does not end when they have elected their office bearers into office. God’s people in the church are Prophets, Priests and Kings and they exercise their office of Prophet

through the ministers, their office of King through the elders and their office of Priest through the deacons. If men who hold to doctrines which contravene our confessions are allowed to preach or teach in our Church, the Believer is as guilty as his Elders because he rules the church through his Elders. The members of the church therefore have the responsibility to maintain the purity of the gospel by calling this to the attention of their Elders.

Article 4 then tells us what the lawful call consists of. It is, namely, the election, examination in doctrine and life, approbation by members of the church and ordination. Article 4 is concerned about the orderly process of calling a man to be a minister. I realise that I have to spend a little more space on this. I feel the need to do so because this is one area that is often misunderstood by members who have a duty to look out for men among them and to elect them to the office. When members of the church bring into the office unqualified men, the church suffers.

The Reformed Churches have always insisted on men who have been systematically educated in doctrine. Where this is not possible as we have seen in the history of the churches, where persecution made this almost impossible, the church order allows men with “exceptional gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, common sense and discretion as also gifts of public address” (Article 8). Notice the Article 8 use the word “exceptional”, indicating that it is something that is not only a “must-have” but it must be there in a great degree. This does not mean that those who are educated do not need to be of such qualities, but it certainly means that this is what the believers should look for in the candidate and their minister. Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3 also give us these qualifications in different words. Members of the church often have this popular notion that a certain degree of slackness in some of these qualifications should be permitted. No one is perfect, so they say, and if we adhere strictly to these qualifications, we will not have any who will qualify. The minister must be qualified according to God’s standard. These men are supposed to be filled with the Holy Ghost and these characteristics are an indication of it.

These qualifications ought not to be discounted for “practical” reasons.

One more thing needs to be highlighted in Article 4. This is regarding the additional decision which has been added to Article 4. It reads as follows:

E. Examination

1. In the absence of major assemblies or a local theological school, the Consistory may seek the help of the Synod of the approved seminary to examine and declare the same the candidates eligible for the ministry (praeparatoir). Thereafter, the Consistory shall conduct the peremptoir examination.

This decision means we will have to approve a seminary where our future candidates can get an approved training. It also means that after the training, they will be examined by the Synod of the churches which runs the seminary.

This decision is necessary and good. Our church fathers in Article 19 of our Church Order saw the need to train men for the ministry and required of us to exert ourselves that we may have students to be trained for the ministry of the Word. But CERC does not yet have its own theological school or a major assembly to conduct the examination. God has also given us a sizeable group of young people who are zealous for the Word. It is our responsibility to make every effort to encourage them to consider the ministry of the Word. And since we are already in the final stage of our development to have a sisterly relation with the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, it makes sense that those who are considering the ministry of the Word in CERC should want to study at the Protestant Reformed Seminary, whether at his own expense or supported by the church. After their successful training, the Consistory shall request the Synod of the PRC to

examine the candidate and to declare his suitability for the ministry based on his knowledge of the Reformed truth as summarised in our confessions. Thereafter, the Consistory of CERC will examine him for his suitability to serve in this local church.

Another reason why it is good to ask the PRC Synod to examine our candidate, in the absence of our own higher assemblies, is that a sister relationship means we will allow the ministers to serve in each other's churches. It is only right that the churches in common should examine our candidate so that we may call each other's available ministers with confidence. If the Lord is pleased to give us more than we need, it would be my delight to see our men serving as ministers in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

That is about all the space I should use this time. I will continue in another issue, the Lord willing.



Purity in Dating

>> Deacon Chan Chee Seng and Sis Angela Lee



It seems like it was not too long ago that we were changing our children's diapers and now some of them are dating or thinking about it. This is an exciting time for our young people. If I may picture dating as an exciting journey in which our children travel towards marriage, we can say that the way is not new or uncharted. (Ecclesiastes 1:9 ... and there is no new thing under the sun) Although we cannot chart every turn our children will take, it is our duty as parents to warn them that there are some turns or doors along the way which they must never enter. The Bible does lay down principles that we must teach our children so that they will have a safe and enjoyable journey. Dating is a gift of God and the journey can and ought to be savoured and enjoyed. As parents, we have gone through it; but our young ones have to travel that way on their own. They will experience and enjoy the journey when they take heed to the doctrine they have been taught.

I am encouraged that our children are aware that in this journey, there are both joys and dangers. They are seeking biblical advice on maintaining physical and emotional purity in dating. With this in mind, our article is written from a Reformed Christian perspective. Many things we do in life have lifelong consequences. It is also true that what we do while dating has lifelong consequences too.

Stating the obvious

Naturally, when planning for a journey, one of the things we must do is plan for contingencies or things that can go wrong. Also, we will try to figure out some preventive measures so that those incidents do not spoil our journey. Parents will probably remind their driving children not to speed, not to take unnecessary risks, and not to go to quiet streets.

Our children have heard them since young: no petting, do not go to some dark corner of the park, observe your night curfew, and the list can go on. Basically, the advice is this: do not do things that will put yourself or your date in a situation where you will tempt or cause one another to sin. These are true and necessary words of caution. I do not think that anyone, not even our children, really has any disagreements with such advice. I think our children understand that sex is a gift of God within marriage and that pre-marital sex is sin. Ezekiel 16:32 'But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!' This verse defines adultery as sex with someone other than the spouse. Another verse, which we read every Lord's day, is Exodus 20:14 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'. Sex outside marriage is without question sin.

Emotional Purity

I am aware that there are those who use the term emotional purity to teach the disapproval of romance before engagement. They want the young people to keep each other at arm's length physically as well as emotionally. To them, if you are emotionally attached to someone of the opposite sex, you have given them a piece of your heart and your future husband or wife will have less than the whole of you. This means that you are impure. I think this is an extreme view.

I do not agree that the Lord wants our young people to keep each other at arm's length and not have romance until they are ready to be engaged. Dating is a romantic time. There is nothing wrong with loving the other person and being emotionally attached. Love always involves emotional attachment. There is no logical, much less biblical, justification to treat emotion like an object that can be reduced. Let me illustrate this a little. The Lord commands us to love one another in church. Is it true that when I love those who are closer to me, I have less love left in me for others? We may have less time to spend with others, but I certainly can love more than just those near me. Romance and emotional attachment when dating is not a sin. What can turn a good romantic relationship sour is not emotional attachment, but sinful actions and thoughts. Our actions and thoughts are what we have to always be mindful of, even in our daily interaction with others, not only when dating.

I would prefer to use the term 'pure conscience' because the term 'emotional purity' has been hijacked to mean something that is erroneous. The Apostle Paul, when testifying before the Governor Felix, said "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." (Act 24:16) The Apostle, in his word and action, was careful not to offend God and not to hurt the people around him. He kept a pure conscience before God and man. In all our dealings, we should keep a pure conscience. This applies also to what couple may and may not do when dating.

It is true that in our day of sexual looseness in the world, romance is often associated with sex and lust. But,

we must not conclude that it is sin for the Christian to have romance and fall in love. That would amount to saying that just because the world loves and strives for money, it is sinful for the Christian to earn and own money. The Christian is a new creature in Jesus Christ. He is in this world but not of this world. Romance and falling in love are things God gives to us. With a new heart we are able to use these things with a pure conscience towards God and man.

The world views sexual sins as an accepted norm and it is the 'old fashioned' who insist on physical purity and a pure conscience during dating. The temptation our children face are not just the temptation of the flesh but also pressure from their peers and worldly philosophies that greet them in books, on the screen and on the internet. When it comes to sexual morality, the Christian couple must make a stand and insist on purity. By insisting on purity, they can keep a pure conscience before God and man.

Physical Purity

What if a young man asks me, How far may I go physically? May I kiss her goodnight? May I hold her hand or put my hand around her waist? I am sure you know that I am using these examples only to show how legalistic things can be. But, giving rules does not produce purity and in many situations, it makes the forbidden more desirable and often creates unnecessary legalism. More questions will be asked. There will be no end to such legalistic questioning. We have a glaring example of that in the Pharisees. You have probably heard the story about how it never crosses the mind of the little kid to touch the cookie jar until you tell him not to? Suddenly, the cookie is so desirable. Laying rules only make the forbidden more desirable.

But, what does the Bible say? Of course the bible does not tell us explicitly whether to hold her hand or not. But this is what it says, "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom 14:23). What it means is this: if you believe it is sin, avoid it. Apply this principle when dating.

When the Bible speaks of fornication and adultery, we think immediately of the physical act. Physical purity or avoiding sexual sin in dating is more than just not doing the physical act of sex. The Bible speaks of the lust of the flesh and also the lust of the eyes. Our Lord Jesus Christ said in Matthew 5:28, 'But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' Adultery is not just a physical act. When we lust after each other with our eyes or in our thoughts when dating, we sin. Hopefully we can see by now that petting is a sin even before the act of it. It is the lust that precedes the act. Watch what comes from the heart. Sin starts in the heart. This is what the Lord said in Matthew 15:19, 'For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies'.

This body is not our own to do whatever we like with it. It is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1Cor 6:19). 'If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' (1Cor 3:17) The Apostle Paul tells us that just as God does not allow anyone to defile His temple, so He will not allow us to defile our bodies, or that of our date. We defile our own body, and that of our date, when, before marriage, we touch one another to arouse each other sexually. Our mind is part of the temple. Our thoughts can defile our body and our date's. We often forget that we sin in our heads more often than with our actions. Sins like hatred and lust are not visible to others but they are sins in the sight of God. We have to be careful of the lust in the thoughts and intents when dating.

It is sin to do things to satisfy or arouse the sexual desires when dating. It is wrong to do things against the conscience; to do things which make us feel guilty. Often, not always, emotional problems are the result of a guilty conscience. Having a pure conscience is doing the right thing, knowing that it pleases the Lord.

Having spoken so far of the need to keep a pure conscience, it is also necessary to assure our children that we understand that we are in this body of sin and that there will always be this struggle against sin and temptation. The Apostle Paul tells us about this

struggle. “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom 7:19). But be careful not to use this struggle as an excuse to sin. These words mean that we are, ‘... not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (Rom 12:3). It means that we have to humbly and soberly depend on the grace of God to do ‘the good that I would’, knowing that it is God Himself who enable us to will and do that which is good.

Starting right

Dating is a journey which can be enjoyable, but sin during dating can ruin that journey and leave a trail of physical injuries and emotional baggage that can last a lifetime. It is worth the time to consider some preventive measures to be taken before our children embark on this wonderful journey.

It is paramount in dating to start right. By this, I mean that our young people must insist on dating one who is a God fearing Christian. The words “must insist” is deliberately used here as this is the starting point where future bliss or future trouble starts. Some say love is blind, but I beg to differ. If dating is a journey that leads to marriage, then starting the journey with a blindfold or a wrong idea that love is blind is really asking for a lifetime of trouble. I agree that there is the wonderful feeling of emotional upheaval, and the butterflies in the stomach, that can make it difficult for us to think straight. But, be sure to date with our brain as much as the heart. I am sure the girl will appreciate that her potential husband is a cool headed guy rather than one who just falls head over heels for her. I am also quite sure that the guy will appreciate that the potential wife that God will give him has the cool head to be his help in life.

When the Apostle Paul tells the women to marry ‘only in the Lord’ (1Cor 7:39), I believe he meant more than marrying a church goer. This person must be a diligent Christian showing willingness to obey the word of God by his walk. In order to be obedient to the Word, he must show keen interest in the word. It is almost impossible to obey something you have no interest in.

If the person whom you date and later marry ‘only in the Lord’ is a diligent Christian, he will love you as he loves the Lord. If she is a diligent Christian, she will reverence her date in the Lord and it is a good indication that she will also reverence her husband. If he loves her in the Lord when dating, it is an indication that he will love her in the Lord when married.

Starting right does not close tight the doors of sin in dating, but it makes the doors harder to open. When two Christians who are determined to honour the Lord date, they are willing to honour one another in the Lord. They honour their bodies mutually because of their mutual love for the Lord. They will help one another in their Christian walk, keeping physical purity and a pure conscience. They will also help one another by not putting themselves in a position that would stumble each other. 1John 2:10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

I am not advocating that the one you date must be sinless. A godly man in this life is not a sinless man. Read the confession of the Apostle Paul, a godly man, in Romans 7:14-25. Hear his cry to God in verse 24, ‘O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ God called King David a man after His own heart; but even David was not infallible. We cannot expect our date to be sinless, but we can expect him to be one who has sound doctrine in his head. That sound doctrine will find its expression in his godly walk, being an example of good works (Titus 2:1 & 2:7).

It is only right that we keep physical purity and a pure conscience when dating for there are resulting benefits too. The couple set themselves as examples for the younger youths. When they see that the older youths are dating only those who walk godly in Christ, they will be encouraged not only to date those who are godly, but more importantly they know they need to be godly in their walk as well.

The other benefit is this. Sometimes, after dating for a while, we may have to agree that it is not the Lord’s will to marry each other. Having kept ourselves pure physically and having a pure conscience towards one another, we can face each other as brothers and

sisters in the Lord without any guilt or embarrassment after the break up.

God is our God and the God of our children. He continues His covenant in our children and their children when they marry only in the Lord. When we say marry ‘only in the Lord’, physical purity and a pure conscience are definitely implied. How can we do anything ‘only in the Lord’ in sin? Maintaining physical purity and a pure conscience are the Lord’s demands for those He loves. Those who love the Lord love to keep His commandments; they also love to keep physical purity and a pure conscience when dating.

“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.” Deuteronomy 10:12

ATHANASIUS: TOO YOUNG?

>> Bro Joshua D. Engelsma

As you recall, young people, in our last article we looked at the work of God in the life of the young minister Timothy. We saw how God worked mightily in and through Timothy at a young age. He shouldered the work we would have expected a more seasoned minister to carry. Especially noteworthy were these words of Paul to Timothy: “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers...” (1 Tim. 4:12a).

In this article we examine the wonderful work of God in the life of another young hero of faith: Athanasius. Like Timothy before him, Athanasius was used by God to do outstanding things while still very young. Like Timothy (and us), he was not too young to do the work of the Lord. Athanasius was born in the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria, Egypt between the years AD 296-298. At the time, Alexandria boasted itself as one of the most outstanding centres of learning in the Roman world. It was in the prestigious schools of this city that Athanasius was educated. He received a top-notch education which prepared him for the work God had in store for him to do.

I think it is worth mentioning the importance of education. Young people, education is absolutely important. Not just any education, but solid, Reformed, Christian education, either from a faithful Christian school or by way of diligent and God-fearing parents who painstakingly educate their children in obedience to God. We must not overlook the fact that God used Athanasius’ education to equip him for the work which he would soon take up. God also uses our education to prepare and equip so that we might one day take up our place as the leaders of the church.

It appears that either Athanasius was born to Christian parents and instructed by them in the faith or he himself became a Christian at a very young age. There is a story told that supposedly young Athanasius was caught by Alexander, archbishop of Alexandria, performing an imitation baptism on some of his friends. Rather than punishing the zealous boy, Alexander took a liking to him and educated him further in the truth. Whether this baptism story is true or not is uncertain. What we do know for sure is that Athanasius’ outstanding education and firm grounding in the Word of God undoubtedly caught the eye of archbishop Alexander. Young Athanasius became Alexander’s personal secretary and later was made a deacon in the Alexandrian church. In 318, he wrote his first major work, *Against the Heathen*, while only about twenty or twenty-two years of age. He may have been young, yet he was actively involved in the defence and edification of the church. Imagine that! Here was a young man barely out of his teens, working as a top assistant to the highest ranking church official in one of the largest and most prominent cities in the Roman Empire!

It was during the time that Athanasius served as secretary to Bishop Alexander that a controversy arose in the church of Alexandria, a controversy that would sweep across the Empire and divide the church. The source of this great whirlwind was a man by the name of Arius. Arius was a priest in the city of Alexandria. Beginning around the year 319, this man began to publicly preach and teach his own views on the divinity of Jesus Christ. He taught that the Son was not eternal like the Father; rather, the Son was a created being like men and beasts. Arius’ catchphrase was: “There was a time when he was not.” This meant that the Son was not co-eternal or co-equal with the Father. He was subordinate to the Father. The implication of Arius’ teaching was two-fold: a denial of the Trinity, and a denial of the full divinity of Christ. By arguing that there was a time when the Son did not exist, Arius was essentially saying that there was a time when the Trinity did not exist. There would only have been a Father. But even that name is wrong, because God cannot be a Father without a Son. So, all that Arius’ imagination envisioned was a singular Deity. That is, until the Son was created. But the Son that Arius conceived of was not fully God. He was not the same as the Father; He was not of the same essence. He did not partake fully of the divine.

To the Reformed reader this all seems absurd. “Arius is in Wonderland,” you might say. “How could these ideas ever pose a threat?” The truth of the matter is, however, that the teachings of Arius were a major threat. At that time in history the church had no official creed that clearly set forth and explained the Biblical doctrine of the divinity of Christ and the relationship of Christ to God. The church had no official stance, so people like Arius believed whatever they wanted. Such people were heavily influenced by the pagan philosophy of the Greeks, especially Plato’s views on subordination. Arius embraced this subordinationism and took it even farther than anyone else had done before him.

As soon as it became clear what Arius was trying to teach, he was officially condemned by an Egyptian Synod headed by Bishop Alexander and young Athanasius. The year was 321. Notice again the youthfulness of Athanasius. He was only about twenty-five years old when he took part in the condemnation of Arius’ heresies. He knew the Bible. He knew the truth and boldly defended it.

The official condemnation of Arius and his teachings did not mark the end of the struggle. In fact, it marked the beginning. Arius’ poisonous views, though condemned, spread like wildfire, and he soon had legions of followers willing to take up his cause. Arianism became so popular and the church was so thoroughly divided that the Roman emperor Constantine decided to step in to preserve the unity of his empire. He called together a council of church officials at the city of Nicea in 325. Bishop Alexander was invited to the Council of Nicea since he was a top-ranking church official and involved in the conflict

from the start. Along with him went his personal secretary, Athanasius. The twenty-nine year old man did not intend to take part in the discussion. He went only to assist the aged Alexander. Yet, Athanasius quickly became involved in the proceedings of the Council, and he was soon looked to for leadership by the other more seasoned delegates. This smart, eloquent, wise young man entered the Council as a relative unknown and left as the unquestioned champion of the orthodox faith. He was not even thirty!

What was it that Athanasius and the Council of Nicea decided? After much debate, the Council wrote a creed that opposed Arianism and set forth the Biblical truth concerning the proper relationship of Christ to God. The Nicene Creed declares that Christ is “the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all the worlds, God of God; Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made, being of one essence with the Father...” Jesus Christ is the Son of God, not a mere creature. He is begotten, not made. He is of one essence with the Father. He is eternal, infinite, uncreated. He is fully God.

The Council of Nicea set forth unequivocally the orthodox faith, for which we give hearty thanks to God. This did not, however, put an end to the controversy. There were many Arians who continued to infiltrate the ranks of the church and tried to undermine the confession of the Council. They tried by many slippery schemes to spread their heresy among the Christians.

After the death of Alexander in AD 328, Athanasius was made bishop of Alexandria at the ripe old age of thirty-two. Athanasius used this position to try to root out this Arian weed from the church. However, he was forced to flee the city no less than five times because of the opposition and persecution of the Arian-sympathizers. He often stood alone against these enemies of the truth, which is why he received the title Athanasius contra mundum – Athanasius against the world.

Athanasius did not live to see the final victory over the Arian heresy. He died in 373, and the Arians were not finally defeated until the Council of Constantinople in 381. By God’s grace, this man continued to fight even when all seemed lost. He fought like a lion, giving all he had for the cause of Christ from the time he was a teenager until he died at the age of seventy-seven. Often he seemed to be fighting alone, with no one to stand beside him. Still, he never gave in. He “count[ed] all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus [his] Lord” (Phil. 3:8a).

Athanasius is an example to us, young people. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord is going to cost us the praise of this world. Defending the truth means we will be hated by those whom we once counted friends. Are we ready for this? Are we willing to stand alone, like Athanasius? Fear not, young people. Although times are even now becoming difficult, rest assured that the same God Who strengthened Athanasius is the same God Who will strengthen our weak knees. By his grace we will stand, Protestant Reformed young people contra mundum.

Prayer & Thanksgiving

1. Salt Shaker’s rejoices with Berean PRCP on their 5th anniversary! We are happy to hear of God’s sustaining providence to them in the past 5 years. We thank God that we are united in the faith and we greatly marvel at the wonders of God’s grace and faithfulness to His churches. May God continue to bless the congregation and establish the work of your hands.
2. Pray for Gethsemane Bible Study Group as they study into the Book of James using the study notes by Pastor Cornelius Hanks. Pray that the Spirit of Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, will lead the group unto spiritual sanctification, edification and maturity in the Christian faith.
3. Pray for Deacon Daniel Ong as he has to read up, make preparations and facilitate in the Bible study. Pray for members of the group that they may study to show themselves approved of God, rightly dividing the word of truth and be doers of the Word.
5. Pray for brother Samuel, sister Jane and their two teenage daughters, that they may all grow in grace and in the knowledge of God and may their life be adorned with the beauty of holiness and fruit of the Spirit.
6. Pray for the families in this Bible study group, that they may cherish the families our Lord God have established – that husbands may love their wives, wives submit to their husbands, parents bring up their God given children in the fear and love of God, and children obey their parents in the Lord.
7. Pray for the young people in this Bible Study Group that they may also find time and make efforts to join in the bible study discussions and fellowship with the parents.
8. Thank God for the fellowship of the saints and brethren serving in different ministries and praise God for the past 24 years, and for the formation of Bible Study Groups to cater to the needs of the people.
10. Pray for the preservation of different ministries and for the youth to seek their calling in the church.
11. Thank God for preserving, upholding and gathering His people in CERC, especially those who are old, weak and sick.
12. Pray for Professor Herman Hanks and his wife; that God will bless them abundantly with good health as they stay in Singapore and that God may use them mightily to edify the saints in CERC.
13. Pray also for the Vacation Bible School and Covenant Keepers/Covenant Keepers Senior Camp that God will lead the youths and their friends to come to hear and be enriched by the preaching of His Word.



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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Every writer is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions are welcome at: cksaltshakers@gmail.com

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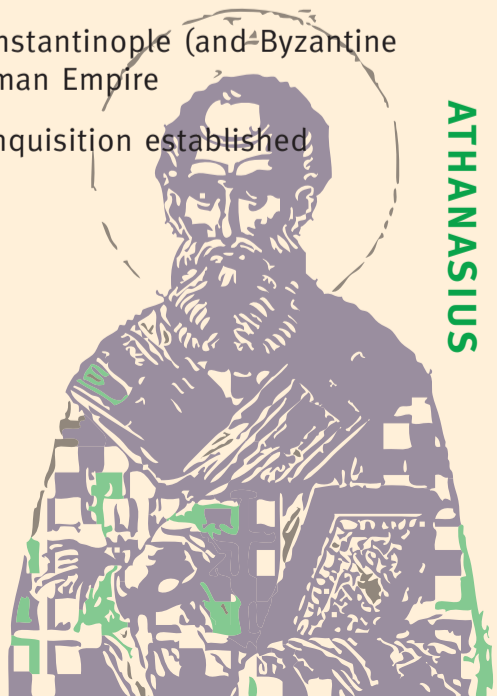
HISTORY OF THE CHURCH:

Portraits of the Faithful Saints and Contending for the Faith. Both youths and adults are strongly encouraged to read these two books, as they are filled with a wealth of knowledge concerning those who, by God's grace, have shaped the church into what it is, and others, who, by their weaknesses and faults, have introduced false doctrines into the church. In fact, it is best if this timeline is read along with those two books, as the books give much more details both on the person as well as the corresponding context in history.

This timeline is primarily to help us, as present-day Protestants, remember and learn from our church fathers from the time after the Apostles all the way till now. It records some of the important events that happened both in the Church and in the world. The timeline also has two categories: the 'Reformers,' and the 'Heretics'. Most, if not all, of the information in the timeline is derived from Professor Herman Hanko's two books, encouraged to read these two books, as they are filled with a wealth of knowledge concerning those who, by God's grace, have shaped the church into what it is, and others, who, by their weaknesses and faults, have introduced false doctrines into the church. In fact, it is best if this timeline is read along with those two books, as the books give much more details both on the person as well as the corresponding context in history.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN HISTORY & THE CHURCH

- 100 AD** **100:** Death of Apostle John
- 250 AD**
- 285:** Splitting of Roman Empire into East and West
- 300 AD**
- 306-337:** Constantine the Great's reign over Roman Empire
- 313:** Edict of Milan issued
- 325:** Council of Nicea
- 330 AD**
- 376-444:** Cyril, 24th Pope of Alexandria
- 381:** Council of Constantinople
- 393-394:** Synods of Hippo & Carthage approves canon of scriptures
- 400 AD**
- 410:** Sack of Rome by Visigoths
- 428:** Nestorius made Patriarch of Constantinople
- 431:** Council of Ephesus condemn Nestorianism and Pelaginism
- 450 AD**
- 451:** Council of Chalcedon
- 476:** Fall of Rome
- 500 AD**
- 529:** Synod of Orange
- 700 AD**
- 732:** Battle of Tours
- 768-814:** Reign of Charlemagne
- 800 AD**
- 800:** Charlemagne crowned the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire
- 1050 AD**
- 1054:** East-West Schism (splitting of Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church)
- 1096:** Reign of Charlemagne
- 1100 AD**
- 1121:** Synod of Soissons condemn Abelard's heresy of Antitrinitarian
- 1141:** Abelard tried by Synod of Sens against heretical view concerning the inspiration of Scripture
- 1145-1153:** Second Crusade
- c.1184-1230s:** Medieval Inquisition
- 1200 AD**
- 1202-04:** Fourth Crusade
- 1215:** Transubstantion made an official doctrine by Fourth Council of the Lateran
- 1309-77:** Tavnion Papacy (Babylonian captivity of the church)
- 1347-50:** Bubonic plague ('Black Death') in Europe
- 1378-1417:** Papal Schism
- 1400 AD**
- 1414-1418:** Council of Constance
- 1450:** Guttenberg's movable-type printing press invented
- 1453:** Fall of Constantinople (and Byzantine Empire) to Ottoman Empire
- 1478:** Spanish Inquisition established

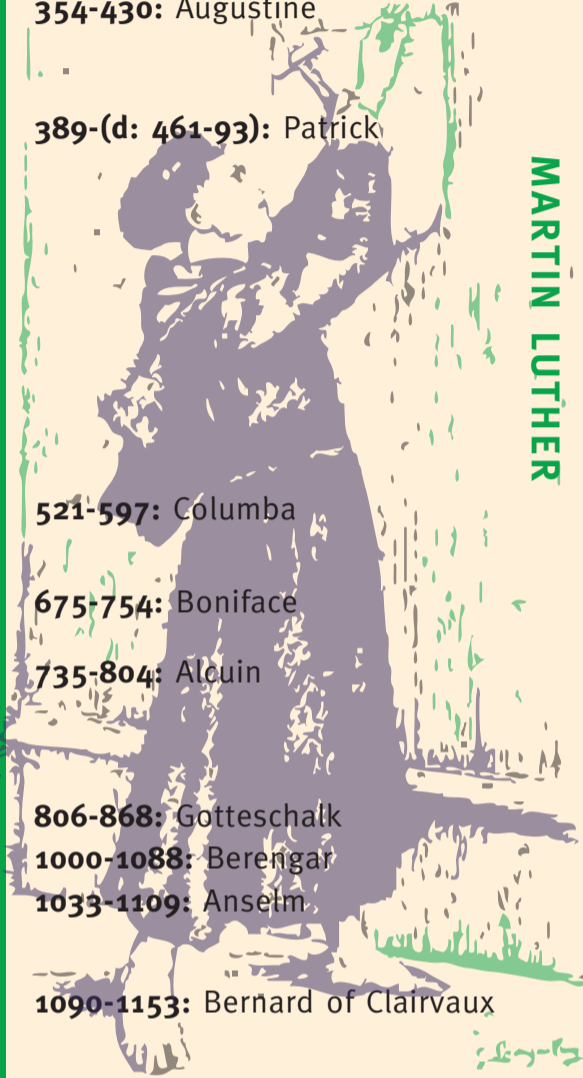


ATHANASIUS

- 69-154:** Polycarp
- 100-165:** Justin Martyr
- (b:145-160)-(d:220-240):** Tertullian
- 251-356:** Anthony
- 296-373:** Athanasius

354-430: Augustine

389-(d: 461-93): Patrick



MARTIN LUTHER

521-597: Columba

675-754: Boniface

735-804: Alcuin

806-868: Gotteschalk

1000-1088: Berengar

1033-1109: Anselm

1090-1153: Bernard of Clairvaux

1140-1218: Bernard of Clairvaux

1182-1226: Francis of Assisi

1373-1415: John Hus

1463-1525: Frederick the Wise
(1475-1490)-1555: Hugh Latimer
1483-1546: Martin Luther

1489-1556: Thomas Crammer
1489-1565: William Farel
1490-1536: William Tyndale
1491-1551: Martin Bucer

1499-1562: Peter Vermigli

1504-1575: Heinrich Bullinger
1505-1570: John Knox

110-160: Marcion
185-254: Montanus
250-336: Arius

310-390: Apollinaris

354-(d: 420-40): Pelagius
360-(d: 435-48): Cassianus
380-429: Celestius

Early 400s-450: Nestorius

410-490: Faustus

540-604: Pope Gregory I
 (Pontificate: 590-604)

776-856: Rabanus

800-865: Radbertus

1005-1089: Lanfranc

1079-1142: Abelard

1160-1216: Pope Innocent III
 (Pontificate 1198-1216)

1380-1471: Thomas à Kempis

1466/69-1536: Desiderius Erasmus

1481-1541: Andrew Carlstadt

1490-1525: Thomas Münzer

1494-1566: John Agricola

1496-1562: Menno Simons

1497-1560: Phillip Melanchthon

JOHN WYCLIFFE



HERETICS

1500 AD

This timeline also has some quotes from the reformers. The intention of these quotes is not so much to praise these men for their ability or courage, but rather to show more specifically how God worked in their hearts to have them be the men that we know them as. In conclusion, let us read a verse that was quoted in *Contending for the Faith*. The verse, from Jude 3, says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." May we, as Jude exhorts, 'contend for the faith,' not for our glory, but for God's. Soli Deo gloria!

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN HISTORY & THE CHURCH

1509-1547: Reign of Henry VIII of England
1516-55: Reign of Charles V over the Holy Roman Empire
1517, Oct 31: Luther posts his Ninety-Five Theses in Wittenberg
1521: Diet of Worms
1522: Inquisition brought to Lowlands by Charles V
1524-26: *Deutscher Bauernkrieg* (German Peasants' War)
1525: Tyndale's English translation of N.T.

1534: England separates from the Roman Catholic church
1542-1603: Reign of Mary, Queen of Scots
1545-1563: Council of Trent
1547-1553: Reign of Edward VI of England
1553-1558: Reign of Queen Mary I of England
1559: Final edition of Calvin's *Institutes*
1561: Belgic Confession
1563: Heidelberg Catechism
1571: Synod of Emden (Formation of the Dutch Reformed Church)
1572: St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of Huguenots
1577: Formula of Concord for Lutherans
1578-1603: Reign of James VI of Scotland

1598: Edict of Nantes
1611: Authorized King James Bible published
1618-1619: Synod of Dordrecht
1638: Second National League and Covenant
1643-52: Westminster Assembly
1647: Westminster Confession and Catechisms

1700s-1800s: Beginning of the Age of Enlightenment
1789-1799: French Revolution

1834: Secession (*De Afscheiding*)
1857: Christian Reformed Church (CRC) founded

1886: *De Doleantie* by Abraham Kuyper

1914-1918: World War I
1925: Protestant Reformed Churches of America (PRCA) founded
1939-1945: World War II



HENDRIK DECOCK

1509-1564: John Calvin
1515-1576: Fredrick the Pious
1519-1605: Theodore Beza
1522-1567: Guido de Bres

1531-1588: Peter Datheen
1533-1583: William the First ('the Silent')
1534-1583: Zacharias Ursinus
1536-1587: Casper Olevianus
1545-1622: Andrew Meville

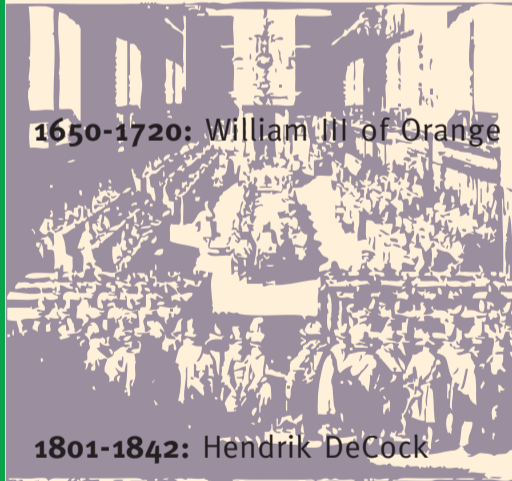
1563-1641: Franciscus Gomarus

1576-1633: William Ames

1583-1646: Alexander Henderson
1589-1676: Gijsbertus Voetius

1600-1660: Bernard of Clairvaux

1628-1688: John Bunyan



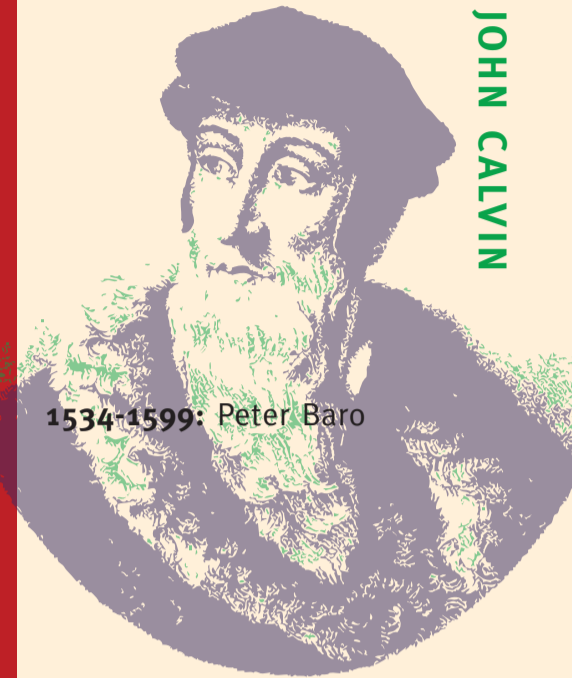
1650-1720: William III of Orange

1801-1842: Hendrik DeCock

1837-1920: Abraham Kuyper

1886-1965: Herman Hoeksama
1891-1962: George M. Ophoff

1509-1535: John of Leiden
1509/1511-1553: Michael Servetus
?-1584 : Jerome Bolsc



JOHN CALVIN

1534-1599: Peter Baro

1560-1609: Jacobus Arminius

1576-1641: John Davenant

1579-1625: John Cameron

1596-1664: Moïse Amyraut

1676-1732: Thomas Boston

1703-91: John Wesley
1707-88: Charles Wesley

1792-1875: Charles Finney

1809-82: Charles Darwin
1833-99: Robert B. Ingersoll

1861-1918: Walter Rauschenbusch
1873-1929: Charles Fox Parham

REFORMERS

SYNOD OF DORDT

HERETICS

'PEOPLE DON'T EARN GOD'S APPROVAL OR RECEIVE LIFE AND SALVATION BECAUSE OF ANYTHING THEY'VE DONE. RATHER, THE ONLY REASON THEY RECEIVE LIFE AND SALVATION IS BECAUSE OF GOD'S KINDNESS THROUGH CHRIST. THERE IS NO OTHER WAY. MANY CHRISTIANS ARE TIRED OF HEARING THIS TEACHING OVER AND OVER. THEY THINK THAT THEY LEARNED IT ALL LONG AGO. HOWEVER, THEY BARELY UNDERSTAND HOW IMPORTANT IT REALLY IS. IF IT CONTINUES TO BE TAUGHT AS TRUTH, THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WILL REMAIN UNITED AND PURE – FREE FROM DECAY. THIS TRUTH ALONE MAKES AND SUSTAINS CHRISTIANITY.
 -LUTHER