



salt shakers

joel 3:16 matthew 5:16

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"Noah (Movie) is a profane dramatization of holy men of God by unholy men" Noah by Pastor Daniel Holstege

"Adhering to true doctrine is only possible by the grace of God." Confession of faith by Aaron

"There is always the temptation to feel proud when you hear the praise of others" Psalter App by Cornelius



CONTENTS

Psalms 23: 6
 Noah: Not a Movie to Watch
 Using the Gift of Technology to Serve Our God
 Psalter App
 What is Reformed? (Part III)
 A Christian's Perspective on Travelling

03-05 The Importance of the Creeds for Christian Youth 16-17
 05-08 Public Confession of Faith (Part III) 18-19
 08-10 Lessons from the History of the Beloved Church of Jesus Christ Now Among Us 20-22
 11-12 Lowliness in our Friendships 23-25
 12-13 Compassion for Sinners 25
 14-15 Public Schools 26
 News from the Churches 27



WELCOME TO MARCH 2014 ISSUE OF SALT SHAKERS!

Something new that we are starting from this issue onwards is a tiny section called "Word of the Issue". It is a carefully selected word that we explain in detail together with interesting translations in other relevant languages. Pay attention to this section, and you will learn new things about many words in no time! In which article is the "Word of the Issue" found? Look for it!

As the Salt Shakers Committee, we would like to thank God for Huiyi's faithful service in the work of this publication. She has recently left Singapore to study overseas for a period of time. We pray for our LORD's blessings and keeping hand to be upon her.

May God bless your reading, and remember to pass the Salt!

Christ regardless, paul

SPOT THIS!

WORD OF THE DAY

Sanctification 圣化 (Shèng huà)

Origin: First known use in English was in the 14th century. Comes from the Latin word sanctus which means 'holy' and facere which means 'to make.' (Reference: Dictionary.com)

Greek: ἁγιασμός

Transliteration: hagianmos

Pronunciation: hä-gē-äs-mo's

Do you know? ἁγιασμός is translated as sanctification 5 times and as holiness 5 times in the New Testament

Thayer's Greek Lexicon:

- 1) Consecration, purification
- 2) The effect of consecration: sanctification of heart and life

Definition: It is that work of God whereby we are delivered from the domination and pollution of sin and transformed according to the image of Christ. (Source: Essentials of Reformed Doctrine by Herman Hoeksema)

PSALM 23 : VERSE 6

>> Paul Liu



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

Psalm 23

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Introduction

Previously, we saw the beautiful picture of God's providence in our lives—not just that, the really unbelievable detail is that God does it in the midst of our enemies! How incredible that those terrible enemies who lust after our destruction should watch painfully as their efforts to destroy us actually serve our good and the good of God's people (Gen 50:20, Rom 8:28)! What a comfort to trust and rest in a sovereign God! Even more than that, our LORD anoints us, and that holds such special meaning for us! To be chosen and loved in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is more than life to us (Psa 63:3); we are blessed, and blessed forever, we have joy overflowing and abundant life with God.

And so we arrive at the last verse of this wonderful Psalm. So many comforts have already been packed into this little Psalm that we may be surprised that there could be something left to be said! But don't be surprised... indeed, there IS something very important in this last verse that makes everything come together in a beautiful conclusion... =) well, read on to find out what it is!

SURELY...

There comes a time when a sheep has seen and heard enough, and has gathered enough confidence to make a bold statement. That sheep who normally stutters and is usually found glancing around with uncertain looks, takes a step forward, clears his throat, and knows that—this is IT. He can imagine the ridicule he might get from those sheep of other shepherds;

he knows they will tumble in vicious laughter as he speaks... but ALL that he has seen in his life and ALL that he has said about Shepherd previously leads him to speak with nothing other than certainty.

As a little sheep, you too will one day speak with an assured confidence. It will seem the most natural thing, because as Shepherd puts faith in your heart and leads and talks to you along the way, you cannot help but realize some unchangeable truths about Him! May you in that day be willing and ready to clear your throat, look everyone in the eye, and say, "SURELY..."

?!?!?!?

Looking back at this Psalm, we have seen many things about Shepherd and many things about us, His sheep: all about what He does for us, how He is always there for us, taking care and providing for us... Some sheep might be tempted to say, "Ah... wonderful knowledge... So, yes, let's just keep following Shepherd alright? Isn't that what Psalm 23 is about?"

And when this sheep finally decides to say "SURELY...", he continues matter-of-factly, "SHEPHERD WILL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE..." WHAT?!?! You can almost imagine everyone else saying, "Hold on there..... Did you mix something up?"

"Follow" is shepherd-sheep speak, isn't it? And after reading through everything that has been said, aren't we excited to say, "Surely, I shall follow Shepherd all the days of my life"? Oh no, it is right about this time that you should re-read this Psalm. This Psalm is not about us—yes, we feature in

“What good is living forever if it isn't in Shepherd's arms? The ultimate end MUST be a perfection of the fellowship and communion between Shepherd and us.”

it—it is about our dear Shepherd! It is about His work, His goodness, and His mercy toward us. Some sheep of other shepherds may object, “No, no, no, shepherd doesn't follow us... don't you see, as we follow shepherd, good stuff like dollar notes and coins, good health, and multi-coloured coats of wool will follow after us, and overwhelm us!”

That is a serious objection that we must deal with carefully. Is it true that if we follow Shepherd, great riches and success, much health and physical comforts will necessarily follow? Goodness and mercy are NOT things in themselves—I cannot give you a packet of goodness, or a scoop of mercy, but they speak of the Giver and His heart. A candy given by a father to his child is goodness, but a candy given by a kidnapper to a child reeks of evil. We can see that the idea of “goodness” is all about who the giver is rather than what is being given. If you follow till here, then we understand that “goodness and mercy” must firstly, and crucially, refer to Shepherd! For what good can there be outside of Him (Psa 16:2, Psa 34:8, Psa 73:1); and what other mercy is there outside of the forgiveness of our sins (Eph 2:4-5)?

“Shepherd shall follow me!”

Though it sounds unexpected, this is really nothing different from what the whole Psalm has been saying if we have understood it correctly. If anything, we little sheep have lost all confidence in ourselves and have put all our trust in

our dear Shepherd (Pro 3:5-6). We have long lost count of how many times Shepherd has mercifully rescued us, and gathered us back to Himself, after we have foolishly wandered far away from Him (Isa 53:6)! Why would any of us then conclude with an assured voice that “I shall follow Shepherd all my days!”? Oh no, we would much rather say, “Shepherd shall follow me all my days!” And we KNOW this—FOR SURE; why, then, won't we say it?

When you have been led by enemies into an unknown land, dealt with unfairly and persecuted for being sheep, and finally thrown into a fiery furnace to suffer and die for it—Who follows you there? (Dan 3:23-25) When you think you follow Jesus bravely, but end up being the worst possible follower by denying Him thrice—Whose merciful words of conviction of sin comes to you? (Matt 26:69-75) When you decide to go your own way, and end up in a fishy mess—Who follows who? (Jon 1:17) When you are fearful to follow and would much rather close your eyes and hide—Who appears? (John 20:19-20) Without a doubt, Shepherd must be following us! But of course, we ARE the apple of His eye (Zec 2:8), His own precious sheep, His Covenant bride—how shall He EVER forsake us? He will NEVER forsake us (Deu 31:6).

Yes, surely, Shepherd shall follow me—that is my only hope of reaching Home: Not that I follow Him, but that He follows me; not that I found Him, but that He has found me; not that I loved Him, but that He loved me (1 John 4:10). And that is my comfort at all times: in my weakness, in my sins, in my tragedies, in my trials, and even in my straying. God will follow me and bring me back again, and again, and again (Matt 18:12, Jer 3:14, 2 Tim 2:13). This comfort is the only reason we little sheep can muster strength in our frail legs to take baby

steps towards Shepherd. Oh yes, this is the only way we can follow Shepherd. (Canons of Dort, 5th Head)

Home

In this last phrase, Shepherd reminds us about our journey as sheep. We aren't on a mission to be supreme physical specimens of sheep, neither are we trying to grab and collect as many souvenirs as we can fit into our woollen pockets. We are actually going on a journey to dwell with Shepherd forever. Some sheep get confused and think that their journey has a great end because they get eternal life... WAAITT A MINUTE... The best thing about the end of the journey is that I get to live on and on and on? What good is that if Shepherd isn't around? What good is living forever if it isn't in Shepherd's arms? The ultimate end MUST be a perfection of the fellowship and communion between Shepherd and us. As we saw earlier in Psalm 63:3, we would much rather have God's love than life itself and so eternal life would only mean anything if it is eternal life with God.

And this life with God DOES start now; it is life with Shepherd; it is life with our LORD. What is this life of fellowship and communion with Shepherd called? It is the Covenant friendship that we have with God in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Eze 36:28). Walking with Shepherd makes us very, VERY, happy sheep (Psa 16:11); always joyful and singing “The LORD is Shepherd; I shall not want!” (Psa 23:1) Shepherd loves us, protects us, and fellowships with us NOT because He has undertaken a job to bring us to Heaven (John 10:13)—after which we have to figure out the next step for ourselves; He does it because He is our loving Shepherd forever, and now is the expression of what an eternal Shepherd would do for His beloved sheep living on this earth.

One day, we will reach the blessed dwelling and glorious house of the LORD; a place we affectionately

call Home. Then, we shall enjoy perfect communion and life with our Shepherd—the one who gave Himself for our sakes and the one who loves us without fail (Rom 8:35-39). That has been our constant longing, that is our

sure hope, and that will be our infinite enjoyment.

Do you know of any lost and weary sheep? Remind them that Shepherd follows them, and that Home isn't

far away. Nudge them along the way with these reminders and cause them to be strengthened (Isaiah 35)... We are joyful, singing sheep... because Shepherd is leading us on. =)

Noah: Not a Movie for Christians to Watch

>> Pastor Daniel Holstege



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"I don't think it's a very religious story. I think it's a great fable that's part of so many different religions and spiritual practices. I just think it's a great story that's never been on film." It's about environmental apocalypse which is the biggest theme, for me, right now for what's going on on this planet. So I think it's got these big, big themes that connect with us. Noah was the first environmentalist."

~ Darren Aronofsky, director of the Biblical film, *Noah*.

Beloved youths, Darren Aronofsky's *Noah*, due to be released in March, is not a movie for us Bible-believing, truth-loving, God-honouring disciples of Christ to watch, either for entertainment, or for education, or for evangelistic outreach—nor is any Hollywood drama depicting sacred Biblical history, for that matter. I hope to convince you of that in this article.

My focus in this article is on "religious drama." More specifically, my focus is the dramatic depiction of events in sacred Biblical history, which seems to be rather trendy in Hollywood as of late with the 2004 movie *The Passion of the Christ* and now the 2014 movie *Noah*.

But first, let me clarify my topic. I am not addressing the matter of drama itself. The question of whether or not drama itself is sinful, and whether or not the Christian may ever watch any drama, is not my topic in this article. That broader topic would demand a whole article or series of articles all by itself. But let me just say, whether or not we condemn drama itself as sinful, we must admit that almost all drama today, at the theatre and on the television, is morally filthy and we must not watch it. Almost all drama involves the *acting out* of horrible sins. Most even involves the repeated *committing* of actual sins such as blasphemy of the name of God and sexual sins with actors or actresses who are not one's real spouse. But perhaps worst of all, most drama involves the outright *glorifying* of sin. Sins against all the commandments are exalted and promoted, sometimes subtly, sometimes blatantly. Evil is portrayed as good, and good as evil. Lies are preached as truth, and truth is condemned as a lie. This is clear: the makers of drama, producers and actors, commit and promote all that

is abominable to our God in their dramas. Therefore this too is clear: if we watch and enjoy such things, we partake in their sins, as Paul writes: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which do such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom 1:32). By watching we lead ourselves into temptation to commit the very things we see on the screen. Not least of all, we become desensitised to the horror of sin. Beloved youths, I beseech you to follow the example of David who wrote: "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me" (Psa 101:3).

But as I said, my focus in this article is on "religious drama" with particular emphasis on the movie *Noah* that is soon to be released. I contend that this too is something we should not watch. Many, if not most, Christians will disagree with this statement. Many watch these Biblical films and sing their praises. Many view them as evidence of a common grace of God producing good works among the unregenerate which we may enjoy. Many churches show them in their Sunday services, use them as tools of education in their schools and colleges, and even for evangelistic outreach. Some raise concerns about certain wrong aspects or emphases in these

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films. But they rarely conclude that we ought not to watch them. I do make that contention.

I hope to convince you not to watch Aronofsky's *Noah*, and by implication other Biblical movies of the past or in the future. Let me give some reasons not to watch *Noah*.

1. *Noah* is produced by an unbeliever with a secular agenda.

Noah is a Hollywood film. Hollywood is not Christian, but in fact anti-Christian. Hollywood is the lair of the devil. Hollywood is the heart of the wicked world. Therefore, we must be exceedingly wary of everything that comes out of Hollywood, “for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 Jn 2:16). Noah was not even produced by a nominal Christian, as some Biblical films have been, but by a thoroughly secular Jewish man named Darren Aronofsky. He did not produce Noah to teach the sacred history of the Flood as a real event of the past, or to refute the claims of evolutionism. Quite the contrary! He made it to earn lots of money by entertaining millions and to push a secular agenda. Therefore, he did not bother to tell the Biblical

story faithfully, but he made use of extra-Biblical writings and extravagant “creative license” and incurred the curse of God: “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book” (Rev 22:18). Aronofsky has seized this significant event in sacred Biblical history with unholy hands. He does not even believe that it ever took place. He is quoted as having said, “I don't think it's a very religious story. I think it's a great fable that's part of so many different religions and spiritual practices. I just think it's a great story that's never been on film.” Unlike Noah, who was a hero of faith (Heb 11:7) and preacher of righteousness (2 Pet 2:5), Aronofsky is an unbeliever and false prophet.

Noah was produced in part to push a secular agenda on the Christian community. Aronofsky is a secular environmentalist. That is to say, he worships the creature more than the Creator (Rom 1:25). He has been fascinated with Noah since he was a child, but views him as “the first environmentalist”. He said about the history of the Flood, “It's about environmental apocalypse which is the biggest theme, for me, right now for what's going on on this planet. So I think it's got these big, big themes that connect with us. Noah was the first environmentalist.” Aronofsky thinks much of mankind is evil, not because of its hatred of God, but because of its abuse of the environment. He portrays this in the movie as the great sin of mankind for which God destroyed the world with the Flood. We are told that he goes wild in his fanatic promotion of this agenda. He twists Noah into a man-hating, animal-loving figure who becomes psychotic while on the ark and plans to kill off his whole family because it would be best for the world if mankind were eliminated. As some critics of the movie have already said, Noah is portrayed as an animal-rights activist and environmentalist wacko, not unlike Aronofsky himself.

We ought not to support this agenda by watching the movie. We ought not to think that we can watch it “with discernment” and be unaffected by the twisting of Scripture and the forceful preaching of a false gospel which is no gospel. High-budget films like this one make use of powerful tools, special effects and emotionally manipulative music, to get their message across. We must listen to the warning of our Lord: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit” (Matt. 7:15-17). Aronofsky is a corrupt tree. Beware!

2. *Noah* is a profane dramatization of holy men of God by unholy men.

Noah is a profaning of the sacred. I admit that it is a hard question whether we may watch the dramatization of fictitious people, and of acts of piety, by fellow Christians. But it ought not to be a hard question whether we may watch the dramatization of real men of God, in Scripture no less, and of their acts of piety, by men of the world! I cannot watch that. My conscience cries out against it.

Just think. Noah was one of the greatest men of God in Biblical history. He was not perfect, of course, as became evident in his drunkenness after the Flood. But he was a man who “found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen 6:8). He was one with whom Jehovah established His everlasting covenant of grace (6:18, 9:8-17). He was one in whose heart God worked strong faith so that he “being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb 11:7). He and his family were the only ones left of the Seed of the Woman in those days, and they valiantly lived in

the midst of that crooked and perverse generation as the people of the living God over against the world. Noah is in heaven now in his soul and we will join him soon. He was an outstanding man of God.

Now think. Would you dare to pretend that you are Noah and to act out his faith, his piety, and his preaching? Maybe you would. Maybe a child would do that on a small scale. Maybe a catechism or school teacher would do that on a small scale to bring the story alive for the children. But would you dare to watch an unbeliever doing it? Oh, some will say that Russell Crowe, who plays Noah in the movie, is a Christian because he talked about getting baptized a few years ago. Some might say that Anthony Hopkins, who plays Methuselah, also found God while fighting alcoholism. But this is absurd. No, Russell Crowe, Anthony Hopkins, and the others in *Noah* are men and women of the world. These people are acting out *sacred Biblical history*? *Russell Crowe* is Noah? *Anthony Hopkins* is Methuselah? This is a mockery of the faith and piety of the holy men of God whom they are pretending to be. It is a profaning of the sacred work of Jehovah God in the lives of these men. As one of our ministers once wrote about acting out the holy life of anyone, "To pray, repent of sin, love your wife, or any other calling of God, is too serious to pretend, aside from any good motive. For *entertainment*, it is blasphemous."

Add this. If you watch the movie, from that moment on you will have the image of these ungodly actors burned into your mind. When you open your Bible and read Genesis 6-9, the image of Russell Crowe with long, shaggy hair and a beard will leap into your mind, as if *he* is Noah! When you talk about the man with the longest lifespan in all the Bible, the image of Anthony Hopkins living in a cave will come to mind, as if *he* is Methuselah! That is no small objection to watching the movie.

3. *Noah* is not the way God wants us to be taught the Holy Scriptures.

Noah is a motion picture. It involves images. There is nothing wrong with making images, or even motion pictures. Our Heidelberg Catechism clarifies that when it says that creatures "may be represented" (LD 35). We do not condemn art. We do not condemn the making of images of creatures. We celebrate good art! We seek to glorify our God through it! But God condemns the making of images as a means of worshipping Him. That is the second commandment: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Ex. 20:4-5). Therefore, as our Catechism teaches us, we must "in no wise represent God by images, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word" (LD 35). That is why the 2004 movie *The Passion of the Christ* was so objectionable. It was image worship. Christ is God. To make an image of Christ is to make an image of God. This too is why we must not watch *Noah*. Note well: If God *is* brought into this film, it is a sin! If the voice of God speaks to Noah in a dream, for example, that voice is an image of God, a representation of His voice, and that is blasphemous. On the other hand, if God is **not** brought into this film, that too is a sin, a gross distortion of the true history in which God has the central role.

But there is more. God does not want us to be taught the history of Holy Scripture by means of images and movies. This is the same old controversy about icons. The Reformers rejected the Roman Catholic use of icons, or images, as a means of teaching the people. Our Catechism asks the question, "But may not images be tolerated in the churches as books to the laity? No; for we must not pretend to be wiser than God, who will have His people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of His Word" (LD 35). We may add: God

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But there is more. God does not want us to be taught the history of Holy Scripture by means of images and movies. This is the same old controversy about icons.”

will not have us taught by speaking images, actors and actresses on the movie screen. God will have us to be taught by the lively preaching of His Word. To the Greeks living in Paul's day the preaching of the cross of Christ was foolishness. They wanted oratory and drama, philosophy and theatre! But Paul assured the Corinthians that "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18). And he added: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1 Cor 1:21-25).

Maybe you reply that you still plan to go to church and hear the preaching on Sunday. You do not plan to put aside the preaching in order to learn about Noah through this movie. But that misses the point. God *will* not have us taught about Him by images.

God forbids it. God has commanded us in His Word how we are to worship Him and learn about Him. His way is not visual, but verbal. He wants us not to learn from images, but from words.

In conclusion, I encourage you, beloved youths, to think hard about this matter. Movie-watching is a widespread problem in the churches today. Too many Christians watch movies, and I fear that they do so with little or no discretion. The temptation is very strong. I feel it too. But we must remember that we are pilgrims and strangers in this earth. We must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but reprove them. We must walk as children of Light. We must not set our affection on things of the earth. We must do everything that we do to the glory of God. I pray that we might be given grace not to indulge in this worldly entertainment.

Further Readings:

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“*Movies—Not a Question*” By Prof. Dykstra Russell J, Standard Bearer, 15/12/2004.

“**The Christian And Movies**” By Prof. Hanko, Standard Bearer, 1/3/1972

“*Renewing the Battle: Drama, Television, and Movies*” By Prof Gritters, Standard Bearer, 1/4/1993

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-<http://godawa.com/movieblog/darren-aronofskys-noah-environmentalist-wacko/>

- <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/darren-aronofsky-paramount-spar-noah-648777>

- <http://h.tanalepy.net/?p=2568>

- “The Christian and Entertainment,” 1999., Rev. Dale Kuiper

- “The Christian and the Film Arts,” Prof. Herman Hanko

USING THE GIFT OF TECHNOLOGY TO SERVE OUR GOD

Mr. John Van Baren



Mr. John Van Baren is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Michigan, USA. He is married to Valerie and is blessed with 4 married children and 8 grandchildren. He has served as a deacon, an elder and a school board member. He has visited Singapore about 10 times and has been to Myanmar thrice.

Technology

(from Greek τέχνη, techne, “art, skill, cunning of hand”; and -λογία, -logia) is the making, modification, usage, and knowledge of tools, machines, techniques, crafts, systems, and methods of organisation, in order to solve a problem, improve a pre-existing solution to a problem, achieve a goal, handle an applied input/output relation or perform a specific function. The term can either be applied generally or to specific areas: examples include *construction technology*, *medical technology*, and *information technology*.

- *Wikipedia* definition

History of Technology

When was technology first mentioned in Scripture? Shortly after Creation, Genesis chapter 4 records for us:

20 And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle.

21 And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.

22 And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubalcain was Naamah.

God created the world in a way that man could invent devices to change life. And, by the 4th generation after Adam, musical instruments and metallurgy were introduced. The development of technology underscores the wonder of the created world. God put 118 elements in the creation, and then enabled man to "discover" how to use them in the history of time. It is all in His plan. It is amazing to see how man has been given the skills to harness the technology buried in the creation. Most of this development is used in the service of sin.

We can see how some discovered technology is used for the spread of the Gospel. I think of inventions which have changed the world. Consider the printing press. This invention started the Reformation. With it, the Bible was put in the hands of the common man.

"Gutenberg, a goldsmith by profession, developed a printing system by both adapting existing technologies and making inventions of his own. The printing press displaced earlier methods of printing and led to the first assembly line-style mass production of books. A single Renaissance printing press could produce 3,600 pages per workday. Books of bestselling authors such as Luther and Erasmus were sold by the hundreds of thousands in their lifetime."

- Wikipedia

Today, the world believes in technology. This is the means by which they can build a sustainable future. Man believes he must intervene with God's creation, to make sure it lasts forever. They are not given saving faith—the faith necessary to understand that

“Easily. Freely. Privately. Without detection. The devil with this powerful tool is making fast work of the development of sin. We all can see this happening.”

the world is framed by the Word of God, and continues to be under His direction. Hebrews 11:2: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." An interesting debate between an evolutionist and a creationist was recently held at the Creation Museum in the USA. (See <http://debatelive.org/> - Bill Nye and Ken Ham) This, of course, is a debate that will never have a "winner" because you either have the gift of faith to understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, and can understand a six day creation, or you do not have this faith, and cannot understand it. Of note, I felt, was that the evolutionist believed that technology was the answer to all the problems in the world, and that Christians with their belief in a six day creation were getting in the way of technology development. He felt it necessary to get everyone on the same belief system of evolution, in order to develop technology and save this world.

The discussion of this article focuses on "information technology".

Dangers of Technology

One of the big dangers of technology is that the devil has very powerful tools at his disposal. We all know just how easy it is to get content of every sort on the web. Quickly. Easily. Freely. Privately. Without detection. The devil with this powerful tool is making fast work of

the development of sin. We all can see this happening. Did I say "Privately" and "Without detection"? Not really. As we have been taught, God is omniscient and omnipresent. All our actions will be reviewed. Jude 1:15 "To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Do not forget this as you surf. Remember what the devil told Eve, "Try it, you'll like it". And, today the devil continues pressing this message with ease. Scripture commands in Isaiah 52:11, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." Think about this when you consider texting an inappropriate picture privately to a friend. And, remember that it may end up somewhere you never intended. Once on the web, never erased. More on this below.

There is so much technology out there! It really takes a big effort to comprehend it. Some "get it" quickly, and for others it takes more effort. But, at whatever level your technology comprehension exists, there is so much available in this day and age that it can sap up all your time. Implementing and maintaining all this stuff takes time. And, the use of it takes time. Remember this when you find yourself spending more time on the web social networking than you spend studying and learning to expand your spiritual life.

Social networking is a big thing today. Doesn't everyone have a Facebook? One goal of Facebook is to see how many "friends" you can have. This will lead to some interesting problems, as we "friend" unbelievers. These friends will have less than desirable picture links, all with you as a "friend". Remember: 2 Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?

and what communion hath light with darkness?” God illustrated this way back in the Old Testament with the myriad of do not commandments. Remember this one: Deuteronomy 22:10 “Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.” So, ask yourself as you create your social network, and friend people: “Does he/she fit the kind of friends we should keep?”

Here is another thing to consider when using most e-mail and cloud storage on the web. Everything ever posted or stored on the web can never be erased. I saw this on a billboard years ago, and have thought about it often. I was reminded of this recently with my Dropbox account. I had posted a number of pictures. Then, deleted them. Months later, I needed access again. But the pictures were on my computer at home. Guess I would have to wait. Or maybe not! I put them in Dropbox. Sure enough, I simply looked at the deleted items, and there was the folder with all the pictures in it. Still there, after a long time. Convenient for me but, at the same time a bit concerning, especially when the whole world was told by Snowden (USA defector) that some governments (like the USA) can, and do, sift through all this information.

Use of Technology to spread the Gospel

Consider how God’s plan to spread the Gospel is using technology. A multitude of web sites for an amazing collection of religious writings. And, audio/video too, as SermonAudio does quite well. And, remember, the world will not end until everyone has heard the Gospel. Matthew 24:14 “And

this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” One can conclude the end must be near.

An interesting “spread the Gospel” technology story took place at our company probably close to ten years ago now. When it was fairly expensive to store files online, we kept the Reformed Witness Hour audio files stored on our company server. One morning, we tried to log on to the web, and everything was very sluggish. The first solution is always the same: reboot the computer. We did this, and the web responded normally. Fixed. The next morning, same thing occurred. Sluggish web activity. This time, Phil looked at what was happening. A certain user was downloading 200 files from the RWH. Phil knew the internet address of the user. A quick lookup showed it was registered to a government facility in North Korea! We have no idea who this user might be, but he is out there, somewhere, and we assume he (or she) was attracted to our reformed viewpoint of the Bible.

The use of technology has made the world much smaller by making communication so cheap and easy. Most of the young readers of this magazine have no idea that calling internationally was unheard of 20 years ago. It would cost in the neighborhood of \$10 USD a minute to call from the USA to Singapore—hard to even imagine. Today, we all Skype around the world literally free. And, e-mailing, texting, and blogging make communication so easy. These communication techniques are used

by our missionaries extensively. Even in places where communication is difficult, making Skype unreliable, there are tools like Voxer that work surprisingly well. This is how the Hope Church Myanmar Committee corresponds with Myanmar. And, as I understand, the Protestant Reformed Foreign Mission Committee meets weekly with the ministers in the Philippines via Skype.

Look at the resources available on the web. There are so many good ones. You can get a start of good Reformed sites from the <http://www.prca.org/links/misc-blogs-sites> site. Also, look at your own web site for a collection of Reformed writings: <http://www.cerc.org.sg/tractsessays.htm> And, if English is not your best language, check out the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church web site: <http://www.cprf.co.uk/languages.htm>. Likely the world’s largest collection of Reformed literature in languages other than English. Ten years ago, all this was practically non-existent.

It is interesting to watch technology develop. It is God who permits it to develop. Natural man sees technology as the means to make this world last forever. As Christians, we do not put our trust in technology. We rely on the Bible as our handbook and guide for life. The Bible explains that our purpose on earth is to glorify God. So, we use technology to spread the Gospel, to learn and grow in our understanding of our station and calling in the world. May God’s name be praised and honoured on our account in all of our life. Remember Lord’s Day 47, “Hallowed be Thy name”.

“ So, we use technology to spread the Gospel, to learn and grow in our understanding of our station and calling in the world. ”

PSALTER APP

>> Cornelius Boon



“*Cornelius Boon* is a confessing young adult in CERC. He serves actively in the committee for Covenant Keepers and Covenant Keepers (Senior), the youth ministry in CERC.”

On your Android device, go to <http://tinyurl.com/PsalterApp> and when prompted, use “Google Play” to complete the action. Blessed singing!

Introduction

I was asked to write a short article on my phone app (application) and the objective of this article is to show how God led and used me to create this app. Although I might describe what I did to create this app, in actual fact, it was God who used me and directed and paved the way for me to create it. Whatever I did was part of His counsel and may all glory go to Him.

What does it do?

The Psalter App is a simple app which allows you to view the psalter lyrics on your mobile phone without needing an internet connection. An additional feature that was added last year was to include the Psalms as well. By pressing the Psalms/Psalter button, it switches between the corresponding Psalter and Psalm. Currently, the app is only available on android phones and it can be downloaded through the “Google Play Store”.

How was it made?

I’m not very sure what I’m supposed to say in this portion; it might be a little technical and boring, but I’ll try to keep it as simple as possible! =) The Psalter App is a native app (meaning that it is developed for use only on a particular platform, which in this case would be “Android”). It is coded in Java, using the Eclipse IDE. Using an analogy, if the app were a cake, then Java would be the ingredients like the flour, eggs, butter, etc. And Eclipse would be the tools used to make that cake like the bowls, mixer, oven, etc.

The lyrics for the Psalter, were taken from the PRCA website with their consent and after formatting the content, they were added into the app. The verses for the Psalms were easier to get because the Bible is now so readily available online. I took the verses from e-Sword (which is another amazing program), and added them to the app after formatting as well. One of the difficulties faced was trying to match the correct Psalm to the Psalter and also to check if a Psalter has been selected beforehand. Because let’s say if Psalter 2 is selected, pressing the Psalm/Psalter button would bring you to Psalm 1. But pressing that button again would have to bring you back to Psalter 2 again, instead of Psalter 1.

In order to upload it to the “Google Play Store”, I signed up for a Google developer account and then uploaded the .apk file. Getting the signed .apk file (a signed file is like an authenticated file, so that Google knows it’s genuine) was relatively simple as Eclipse provided the tools to ensure that. The harder part was getting all the screenshots

and the icon for the app, because Google requires you to take have all these uploaded before they will release the app on the “Google Play Store”. Furthermore, their requirements for the screenshots are very strict, with exact size constrains (that is also the reason why I did not update the screenshots after the first time).

Finally, all of these were only possible by the grace of God, who provided me with the opportunity and means to do so; more will be said in the next section.

Why did you make it?

Looking back, there were quite a few factors and reasons which contributed to me making this app. I’ll try to describe the background and my thoughts at that time, but I can’t say for certain which factor finally led me to create this app. One thing certain is that it was all by the grace of God.

In the past, when the youths gathered for outings and wanted to sing from the Psalter, we had to bring the Psalter—or the mini-Psalter—along with us and many of us ended up not bringing them (I was one of them). We could also use our phones to access the PRCA website for the lyrics, but that was usually slow and required a good internet connection. There was the offline PDF version as well as the Word Document of the Psalter, but both were also slow to load and hard to use. It was around that time that I started to think how useful it would be if I could just access all the lyrics easily on my phone. By the grace of God, He led me to see the need.

And God was the one who provided

me the opportunity and means as well. By His grace, I was admitted a place in university to study computer engineering and that led me to be interested in programming. Over the course of my studies, I learnt about computers and programming and that provided a good foundation. However, it still did not teach me “Android” programming directly. It was only in my final year, when I did my FYP (Final Year Project) which was related to learning on “Android”, that God give me this opportunity. When I was doing my FYP, I was required to read up and learn how to program on the “Android” platform. The more I read, the more I realised that I could make an app that would benefit not only myself, but also others who love to sing the Psalter.

So this was the way in which God led me to create this app. But having said all these, I would also like to highlight the old man of sin and pride that is

always within us. I had to constantly ask myself about the reason for creating this app. Was it because I wanted the praise of others? Was it to bring recognition to myself? Was it to boast that I had a skill which others did not? I pray that it is not any of these reasons, because everything that we do should further the glory of God. There is always the temptation to feel proud when you hear the praise of others, and this small bit of pride that starts to swell within me must be stomped on hard. We have to constantly remember and direct all praise and glory to God. For it is only by the grace and power of God that we are able to accomplish anything. All our skills and talents are given by Him for His use and there is no room for us to boast in ourselves.

Other Technologies

All things must serve God, and that includes technology as well. There are my other ways that technology

can serve God. For example, the Limerick Reformed Fellowship has an app which allows you to access audio and video sermons, and get announcements, catechism lessons, and other resources. The PRCA website also has a ton of information, from Creeds to Catechism resources to sermons. The Standard Bearer by the PRCA publishes their articles online and provides e-book versions of the magazine if you subscribe to them. Even older technologies can and must be used for the glory of God. For the youths, do you remember what ERP is? Yes, Everyday Requires Prayer! SMS can and must be used to encourage each other as well.

In addition to the above, there are many other ways technology can be used to serve God! May we continue to think of more ways that we can use technology to serve God and to remind one another not to use it wrongly, for our own benefit. Soli Deo Gloria!

WHAT IS REFORMED? PART III

>> Prof. Hanko



Prof. Hanko is a retired professor of the Protestant Reformed Theological School. His present work consists of preaching at Hope Protestant Reformed Church, writing for the Salt Shakers magazine, writing in a forum for the young people in Singapore, and writing new books. He has visited Singapore on many occasions and is like a grandfather to all the youths here.

In the last issue of *Salt Shakers*, I went a little off the track of speaking of Reformed worship. I talked instead about the fact that every man, woman and child that has ever lived knows that he must worship the one true God—and only Him. I apologise for that and for this new article that basically deals with the same thing. I do this because in our discussion of worship, it is important to understand that all men **must** worship something or someone. God created man with an innate sense of dependence on some being greater than himself. While he knows deep down in his heart that the worship of

God is his calling, for he knows that the one higher than himself is the one true God, in his sin and rebellion he worships idols, or heroes, or money, or a beautiful and strong physique, or whatever. He does this deliberately and in rebellion against God.

He knows, too, what true worship of God is. This is Paul's clear teaching in Romans 1:18ff. It is one of those texts that I repeatedly called to my students' attention when I was teaching in the Seminary. It leaves man without excuse when he is guilty of worshipping God in a sinful way. He knows better, but he hates God and devises his own ways

of worshipping.

There are people in the United States who want to erase every reference to religion from public life. They hate all religion with a passion. Let me tell you a story out of my own pastoral experience to illustrate what I am saying.

I was visiting a parishioner who was in the hospital. He was in a semi-private room; that is, a room with two patients in it. In the other bed was a man who, I would guess, was in his early forties – fairly young. He had a very severe heart attack, had nearly died, and was living—the doctor said—on a powder keg.

While I was reading and explaining Scripture to my parishioner, this man was cursing and swearing at me. The sum of what he was saying was something like this: “Get out of here, you * preacher with your * rot and stupid * nonsense!” I tried to continue my ministry with my parishioner, but found it impossible. I was puzzled: How could a man who had stood on the edge of the grave use such vile and blasphemous words?

So I walked over to his bed and began talking to him in a quiet but earnest and intense way. I did not rebuke him directly, but I talked of God’s infinite holiness and perfect righteousness. I talked of what these attributes of God were and of how they made the dreadful punishment of sin necessary. He cursed me and sneeringly tried to drive me from his bedside with his blasphemies. But I persisted.

Suddenly, without warning, he began to cry. He did not cry silently by shedding a few tears; he shook with deep sobs and his whole body was wracked with his anguish. I quit talking and was frightened that he would have another heart attack. I had just made up my mind to get a nurse, when he got a hold of himself and stopped sobbing. I stood silent, waiting for what would happen, hoping that he would cry out

for mercy from God. But he didn’t. He looked at me and said (and these words are a precise quote, for his words were indelibly seared on my soul), “You got your way, didn’t you. Will you get out of here now?”

He cursed God, but deep in his soul he was terrified at the certainty that he would be judged for his sin by a righteous God. But he did not repent.

That taught me a lesson I will never forget.

—

As I pointed out earlier, the most important rule in all of Scripture is the rule for worship which Jesus laid down in John 4:24: “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship *him* must worship him in spirit and in truth.” That is the text I want to discuss with you.

The occasion for this instruction of Jesus is His conversation with the Samaritan woman. There is a lovely quote from a sermon on the Samaritan woman by Ephraim the Syrian, who lived sometime in the fourth century. The quote goes like this:

“Jesus came to the fountain as a hunter... He threw a grain before one pigeon, that He might catch the whole flock... At the beginning of the conversation, He did not make Himself known to her... But first she caught sight of a thirsty man, then a Jew, then a Rabbi, afterwards a prophet, last of all – the Messiah. She tried to get the better of the thirsty man, she showed her dislike of the Jew, she heckled the Rabbi, she was swept off her feet by the prophet, and she adored the Christ.”

When in the course of the conversation between Jesus and this elect Samaritan woman, Jesus pointed out to her that he knew she was an adulteress, she, quite understandably, tried to change the subject. So she brought up a disagreement that had often been argued concerning the proper place of worshipping God, whether in the temple in Jerusalem or in the temple on Mount Gerazim. The Jews

worshiped in the temple in Jerusalem; the Samaritans worshipped in the temple on Mount Gerazim.

Jesus permitted her to change the subject and He answered her question. He told her that the temple in Jerusalem was the proper place to worship God, because “salvation is of the Jews,” not the Samaritans.

But that was true in the old dispensation before the Lord himself came to earth. Even the temple in Jerusalem was only a type and figure of Jesus’ body (See John 2 and Jesus’ cleansing of the temple).

And so Jesus tells her that it won’t be long—after the Lord’s ministry was finished, after his death on the cross, after his resurrection from the dead, after his ascension into heaven, after Pentecost when the Lord sent his Spirit into the church—before it would not make any difference where men worshipped. They could worship in a barn, in a cave, in the open field, in the basement, in prison—anywhere, for God is a Spirit and the place makes no difference at all; only that those who worship Him, “worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

We will examine this text more closely in the next issue.

“

They could worship in a barn, in a cave, in the open field, in the basement, in prison—anywhere, for God is a Spirit and the place makes no difference at all; only that those who worship Him, “worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

”

A Christian's Perspective on Travelling

>> Daniel Tang



Daniel Tang is a confessing young adult in CERC.

My friend, why do you travel?

Traveling is undeniably a favourite pastime of many Singaporeans. We love jetting off to some distant land, be it for a two-day getaway or a two-week vacation. We are always on the lookout for new places to visit, always waiting for that budget airline fare deal. But have you ever thought about why exactly you travel?

If you were at the airport, and walked up to some random vacationers waiting for their flights to ask them that question, you might hear a couple of different responses. One might say, "Because I can! I've got a good job, my investments are paying off, it's now time for me to take some well-deserved breaks and see the world. I've already walked the streets of Paris, climbed the Great Wall of China, surfed the waves of Bondi, experienced the glitz of Hollywood, and now, I'm off to Milan to get myself clothes of the latest fashion."

Another might tell you, "Travel opens my eyes to the world. Visiting places makes me learn about different cultures. It gives me new insights into the meaning of life. It teaches me new ideas. So now, I'm no longer trapped in narrow-minded thinking like my

untraveled countrymen."

The next person you walk up to is ticking off his bucket list of famous places to visit. A day of thrills in the world's largest theme park? Check. A visit to the filming site of that latest blockbuster movie? Check. A look at the birthplace of his favourite Korean pop star? Check. And now, he is off again to yet another of his dream destinations.

Let us pause for a moment to think. Do any of the reasons above sound like what we have been telling ourselves? Is this why we travel?

It is certainly not wrong to travel. While the Bible does not mention anything on people in those days going on vacation, we do know that in Biblical times people travelled for business or to visit friends and relatives. And while the Bible does not specifically state so, it would be possible that those who travelled would have done some sightseeing around where they visited, just like we do today. Moreover, God has put in man the ability to invent tools that aid our travel: high-speed trains, airplanes, cruise ships, etc. God has also blessed many of us with the financial ability to take a vacation at least once in a few years, if not more often. But as Christians, our motivation for travel ought to be far, far different from that of the world. Let us look at some considerations a Christian ought to have when he travels.

Every traveller looks forward to seeing "the scenery" in the land he travels to. Like us, the world, too, looks in awe at the beautiful landscapes when they travel. But we do more than merely

admire and take pictures. We recognise what every snow-capped mountain, every bright flower, every colourful bird, every magnificent sunset we see, is doing. The creation is singing of God, the maker of heaven and earth! Psalm 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." Psalm 148 also speaks of Creation singing praise to God who created them. In fact, even unbelievers know that the creation speaks of God, and when they do not believe, they are left without excuse for their unbelief (Romans 1:20). When we as God's people look upon that beautiful creation, we too must give God all praise and glory for the work He has done in creation. At the same time, we realize that while this creation looks beautiful to us, it is in fact tainted with sin and no longer perfect ever since the Fall. And yet in this imperfect creation we can see a little of the beauty, glory and majesty of God. We look forward to the day of Christ's return, when the new heavens and the new earth will come in perfect beauty and holiness, and we will glorify God perfectly and praise Him forever.

In the course of your travel you will likely learn of some of the history of the place you are visiting. For a Christian, history is more than just the story of the past. Break up the word history into two: His story – God's story! As we travel through foreign lands and discover their history, we see a few recurring themes. The pages of every nation's history are stained red with the blood of many wars. Economic difficulty, poverty and famine have plagued every nation time and again. Disease and death have

“Will returning on that late-night Saturday flight affect my ability to be attentive in church the next day? If so, perhaps I should consider if there are alternative flights that will allow me to get home earlier.”

swept, and continue to sweep, over the world. These are not unfortunate events that governments and the United Nations need to work harder to prevent. These wars, famines and diseases are the consequence of sin, spelled out in Genesis 3:17,19 “... cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life...in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground...” We also see how God works in history to graciously preserve a people for Himself and gather the Church. These wars, famines, and diseases are written in the whole counsel of God and executed by our ascended Lord Jesus Christ. This work of love, as symbolised by the four horses of Revelation 6, is to prevent the antichristian kingdom from coming, till the last elect has been gathered. Time and time again Satan tries to destroy the Church: from ancient times through Pharaoh, in Jesus’ time through Herod, during the early days of the New Testament church through the Roman Empire, in the Middle ages through the Roman Catholic Church, and in the modern times through false philosophy. Yet while the white horse runs gathering the elect, the red, black and pale horses bring war, economic inequality and death to the world, so that the world is for a time unable to

unite, that the Church may be preserved till the last elect is gathered. So as you walk through another museum in the course of your travels, remember that everything that happened in the past happened for one purpose: that the Church might be gathered, and in this way God might be glorified.

Perhaps the most important consideration while travelling is being in the house of God on the Sabbath day. With vacation days in limited supply once one enters the workforce, it is indeed tempting to use the opportunity of a long weekend to go on vacation, so as to take a longer trip while using up less vacation leave. But what about remembering the Sabbath day? The fourth commandment requires us not only to cease from our earthly labours, but also to “diligently frequent the church of God to hear His word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 38, Q&A 103). This means first of all that we ought not to plan trips that stretch over Sunday if that affects our ability to be in the house of God. In addition, let us be mindful that preparing to worship God on the Sabbath begins the night before. Will returning on that late-night Saturday flight affect my ability to be attentive in church the next day? If so, perhaps I should consider if there are alternative flights that will allow me to get home earlier. That being said, the author recognizes that it is not always possible to avoid being away from home on the Lord’s Day, especially on a longer trip. If circumstances of the trip are such that we cannot return for the worship on Sunday, we should endeavour to find a Reformed church in the area of travel and be there for worship. If there are none, consider a sound fundamental church, or attend the service back home via the Internet.

And here is where considering a visit to places where fellow Reformed brethren of like persuasion are found becomes

attractive. There, you can not only have your vacation, but also be in the Lord’s house on the Sabbath day to worship Him. There is also the opportunity to build friendships and enjoy the fellowship among saints in other countries, just as the words of Psalm 133:1 speak, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” The Philippines, just a short flight away from Singapore, is home not only to sandy beaches and clear blue waters, but also the Berean PRC and First Reformed Church of Bulacan. In Europe, after you admire the Alps, shop in Paris and savour the history of London, take a trip to the Limerick Reformed Fellowship in Ireland or the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland. If visiting the U.S., Protestant Reformed congregations can be found not only in Michigan, but also in California, Washington, Wisconsin, Iowa, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania. Whether you like the mountains, plains, beaches or forest, there will be something there for you to enjoy. And to *Salt Shakers* readers in other parts of the world, if you are looking for a place to vacation (especially in winter), look no further than our sunny island of Singapore!

So, my friend, why do you travel?

“If circumstances of the trip are such that we cannot return for the worship on Sunday, we should endeavour to find a Reformed church in the area of travel and be there for worship.”

The Importance of the Creeds for Christian Youth

>> Pastor Angus Stewart



Pastor Angus Stewart is a minister of the Word at Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland (www.cprc.co.uk).

There are various ways of explaining and underscoring the importance of the Reformed creeds, especially as regards the youth. One way is to consider what happens all too often to people (particularly young adults) who develop some interest in Christian things but know little or nothing of the great doctrines and confessions of the Reformation.

Through the influence of peers and the teaching at many Christian youth events, which chime with man's natural inclinations, young creedless converts may be led into Arminian thinking that salvation comes according to man's free will and that evangelism is little more than presenting four spiritual laws.

Many narrate their personal story along these lines: "Along came a friend who raved about some little book that 'took seriously' Scripture's message on the end times or who gave me a copy of a Scofield Reference Bible. Soon I was hooked on dispensationalism, with its literalistic reading of the Old Testament prophets (contrary to their

New Testament interpretation) and sensationalistic, science-fiction views of the book of Revelation. I became a 'prophecy expert' and spent my time guessing the identity of the two witnesses of Revelation 11, wondering if the Antichrist will be a Jew or not, and juggling the number 666 in all sorts of ways."

Along with a dispensationalist view of the future, the young convert often is led to embrace a charismatic view of the present, such that the miraculous signs wrought by Christ and His apostles and prophets in the first century are available now to Spirit-filled people in the twenty-first century. The "healings" performed by big-name televangelists or upon people in other cities and lands; the gibberish gabbled by poor, deceived people; bold assertions by fools or confidence tricksters—all these things are passed off as special works of the Spirit, contemporary manifestations of biblical miracles, tongues and words of wisdom, respectively.

A warmed over "Christian" version of modern, trendy pop culture—bands, lead singers, gigs, etc.—is passed off as "worship." Feelings are aroused; other young (and not so young) people seem to be enjoying themselves; "God's presence" is said by many to be experienced in their midst. Knowing little about the Scriptural and confessional Reformed faith, many are swept away into "will worship" (Col 2:23).

In this context, baptistic ideas and independentism frequently flourish. "Where does the New Testament expressly state in so many words that the infants of believers should be baptised?" "Baptism is an ordinance signifying our act of faith!" "Where are denominations in the Bible? Or creeds? Or theological seminaries? Surely these things are merely part of 'the traditions of the elders!'"

Though the situation varies somewhat between countries and from place to place, sadly, much of evangelicalism around the world is Arminian in its view of salvation, dispensationalist in eschatology, charismatic or Pentecostal in its view of miracles and worship, and baptist and independent in ecclesiology. Or at least many, if not all, of these traits are dominant.

Many professed believers, especially those brought up in non-Christian homes and converted as young adults and who do not know the riches of the Reformed faith, are carried away, to a greater or lesser extent, by the multitude into some or all of the above, thinking all the while that that is biblical Christianity! Only later do some discover that these are Anabaptist ideas and not those of Scripture and the Reformation at all!

A lot of people—myself included—could have saved themselves a lot of trouble had they been brought up on solid creedal Christianity or introduced to the Reformed faith early in their

spiritual life. Some eventually end up disillusioned with the shallowness and frothiness of modern evangelicalism, wondering if that is all that there is. Others get badly burnt, taking years to recover.

The dominant evangelical culture is high on emotions and man-centred fads, and low on doctrine, with much of the little that is taught being false. At best, it ignores the Reformed creeds; often it attacks them. Its devotees are left like a weather vane or a flag on Mount Everest “carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14). Its people are wide open to the ideas of some popular preacher or trendy book (like *The Shack*) or the latest fad that merely apes the world (like political correctness, women office-bearers, social justice, false ecumenism, etc.).

Readers who have been brought up in solid Reformed homes have a lot for which to thank the sovereign God! In this way, you have been kept from a lot of heartache!

Creedal Christianity and Christian Youth

Let us now turn from the increasingly broad way of modern creedless evangelicalism to the old paths of the confessional Reformed faith. Yes, this way is castigated by many as narrow, but it is a good way that provides rest for the soul and leads to Life.

The “Number 1” and central objection to creeds is that they are unbiblical. But this Anabaptist position misunderstands the written Word of God and its role. The first thing for which God-breathed Scripture is “profitable” is “doctrine” (2 Tim 3:16). Note that the Bible itself is not doctrine, for it is “profitable for doctrine”. The true church faithfully

draws its doctrine from the inerrant and supremely authoritative Scriptures (rightly interpreted) and systematises it, according to the will of God and by His Holy Spirit.

The creeds are crucial for young adults (and others) in joining and remaining in a faithful church for all three of the distinguishing marks of a true church are directly linked to the creeds. The creeds set forth (1) the pure doctrine of the Gospel, (2) the right understanding of the sacraments which the church administers and (3) the standard for church discipline in doctrine and life (Belgic Confession 29). How many, including young people, are members of a church for wrong, man-centred reasons: family, friends, etc. Others neglect instituted churches altogether.

Moreover, how are heretics identified and disciplined without the creeds? People point to the Bible. Well and good! But what does the Bible teach? What do the office-bearers and members confess as Scriptural doctrine? No one knows for sure! Various people in the church world define it differently, and it changes in peoples’ minds over time. How could a heresy charge be framed with such soft and mushy boundaries? Church discipline goes out the window and the third mark of the church is lost!

Biblical and Reformed doctrine summed in the creeds—honestly maintained!—not only shapes the church’s membership and discipline but also its preaching (so that, for example, the minister is kept from riding his hobby horse and towing the congregation along), as well as its catechising and Bible studies and, hence, its missions and sister church relations.

The young believer is helped by the creeds, not only in understanding and experiencing the church’s apostolicity and holiness (e.g. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Days 32-52), but also its catholicity and unity, and that not only with churches around the world today but also with faithful creedal churches over the centuries. After all, the creeds to which we subscribe are called the Three Forms of Unity.

Turning to something even more obviously practical and immensely personal for young adults, the creeds (and the Reformed faith they summarise) help in courtship and marriage. If Scripture requires of church members that “all speak the same things”, being “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” so that there are “no divisions” (1 Cor 1:10), how much more ought this be the case with that person with whom you are contemplating becoming “one flesh,” that is, “one body” and “one spirit” (1 Cor 6:16-17)?

“Can two walk together except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3). How then can a man and a woman walk together in marriage (usually for decades) until death them do part, except they be agreed? This involves living together; eating, drinking and sleeping together; praying and worshipping together; engaging in church life together; training children together; working their way through hardships together; confessing their sins against each other; etc. Thus, young Reformed adults must date and marry only those with whom they are doctrinally united—united in the creeds. Both must be able to confess the same truth with “I believe” before they can say “I do.”

Public Confession of Faith (III)

>> Aaron Lim



Aaron Lim is a confessing young adult in CERC. He has been studying in the Protestant Reformed Seminary since August 2013.

“Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule.” Belgic Confession Article 7

2. Have you resolved by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto; and to lead a new, godly life?

Having identified the source of true doctrine in the first question, the form for public confession of faith proceeds to establish the young person’s duty with respect to doctrine. Having identified true doctrine in the Scriptures, the ecumenical and Reformed creeds, and the church’s teachings, the second question asks whether the young person will adhere to this doctrine.

To adhere to doctrine is to cleave firmly to it. It is like the young man and woman who cleave to each other in marriage. They become inseparable. Scripture speaks of two cleaving to each other and becoming one flesh in marriage (Gen 2:24). The young

person making confession of faith cleaves to doctrine because it concerns right knowledge of who his God is. True doctrine is true knowledge of God. The young person’s faith is first of all a “certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word” (Heidelberg Catechism LD 7, Q21). He cleaves to this certain knowledge of God because he is convicted that what God reveals of Himself in Scripture is true.

The duty to adhere to doctrine implies the duty to “reject all heresies repugnant thereto”. Heresies are repugnant to true doctrine. That means that they are offensive to true doctrine, and therefore to every believer who loves true doctrine. Heresies are false doctrines. They are lies about God, His being, His works, and all that He has revealed in His Word. Heresies and false doctrines have their source in the devil, who seeks to corrupt the truth and spread lies about God.

Just as the young man is offended by lies about his wife, so is the believer offended by lies about his God. The believer who loves God and His truth with all his heart is kindled to a holy anger and jealousy when the truth comes under attack. Calvin spoke of the fact that a dog will bark when its master is attacked, and how much more the believer ought to defend his Master. Silence in the face of lies about his God is not tolerable. Therefore the believing child of God rejects heresies with all his heart. With the church of

old, he confesses: “we reject with all our hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule” (Belgic Confession Article 7). He will not tolerate heresy.

Rejecting heresies with one’s heart means that it is rooted in a deep spiritual conviction. The Reformed young believer is not merely rejecting them to win an intellectual argument. Nor is he rejecting them merely to prove that his doctrine is correct. But his rejection arises out of a deep love for God’s truth and its purity. He is reminded of Jesus’ words: “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (Jn 14:23). The Reformed young person hates the enemies of God who lie about Him and is provoked to the same spirit as the Psalmist: *“Do I not hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred: I count them my enemies”* (Ps 139:21-22).

The duty to adhere to true doctrine and reject heresies does not only belong to the individual believer. It also belongs to the calling of the church. The church on earth is the church militant. She is fighting an intense, spiritual warfare so long as she exists on earth. The devil and the world rage against her with all kinds of heresies. Those heresies attempt to lure her away from her faithful Husband, Jesus Christ. Embracing heresies, the church departs away from the truth, and soon becomes thoroughly apostate in her doctrine, worship, and life. But

as the Bride of Jesus Christ, the faithful church adheres to sound doctrine. She cleaves to true doctrine by the grace of her faithful Husband. Cleaving to sound doctrine, she is preserved in the midst of this wicked world.

Adhering to doctrine and rejecting all heresies go hand in hand. One cannot truly adhere to true doctrine without repudiating false doctrine. The Canons of Dordt, another one of our confessions, make this connection explicit. Included in each of the five headings is a detailed list of errors that are repudiated by the Synod of Dordt. The Synod identified those who were spreading false doctrine and sharply condemned their teachings on the basis of Scripture. The Synod was very bold in some of its statements. It did not shy away from condemning error for fear of criticism. The glory of God and the purity of His truth were the Synod's chief goals.

This particular question in the form takes aim at the great number of professing Christians and churches in our day who take doctrine lightly. Many claim to be Christians but do not have a high esteem for doctrine. They criticise doctrine as cold, abstract statements that are irrelevant to the Christian's life. Those who are doctrinal are criticised for being harsh and unloving. The church that insists on doctrine and doctrinal distinctions is rebuked for being judgmental.

During the controversy over divorce and remarriage, many in the churches were clamouring for peace and unity. A new idea that was promoted was that of acquiescence. By acquiescence is meant a silent consent or a tacit approval without protest. If one were to view divorce and remarriage as adulterous, he could nevertheless

acquiesce with the doctrine of the church that endorsed divorced and remarriage. He would be permitted to remain as a member of the church with all its privileges, so long as he promised not to militate against the church's position. He could even be an office-bearer if he acquiesced.

The faithful Reformed believer rejects the very idea of acquiescing with false doctrine. He will not consent to false doctrine, no matter what the cost. He has promised to adhere to true doctrine, and from that promise he will not depart. He has promised to reject all heresies repugnant to true doctrine. It is his sacred duty.

Acquiescence with false doctrine is nothing more than a wicked compromise. The Reformed believer who compromises the truth by tolerating false doctrine makes peace with the devil. That sets him on a slippery slope. Compromise on one doctrine invariably leads to compromises on other doctrines. The whole body of truth is gradually

“The church on earth is the church militant. She is fighting an intense, spiritual warfare so long as she exists on earth. The devil and the world rage against her with all kinds of heresies.”

corrupted, and that sets the compromising believer and church on the sure and steady road to apostasy.

For refusing to acquiesce with false doctrine, many were compelled to leave. They were compelled to leave for the truth's sake. God's truth and His glory were far more important than any sacrifices they had to make. They were determined to adhere to true doctrine, and to reject any false doctrine repugnant to it.

Adhering to true doctrine is only possible by the grace of God. By nature we love heresies and hate true doctrine. The Reformed fathers were mindful that adhering to true doctrine is only possible by God's grace. His grace works powerfully in the hearts of His people, so that they cleave to and maintain His truth steadfastly. His grace enables them to reject heresies and false doctrines that are offensive to sound doctrine. His grace enables them to bear whatever persecution comes their way joyfully, for they know that it is their privilege to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Faithful adherence to doctrine will lead to a new, godly life. The Reformed fathers who penned this question down were keenly aware of the relationship between doctrine and life. Doctrine and life are inseparable. An error in doctrine always leads to an error in one's walk before God. Conversely, faithful adherence to true doctrine is the only way through which the fruit of a new, godly life is produced. The rejection of unbiblical divorce and remarriage, for example, is the only way through which godly, lifelong, covenant marriages are maintained in the church of Jesus Christ. Doctrine and life go together.

Adhering to doctrine is a lifelong affair. As long as the young person lives in this world, he adheres to the doctrine that he confesses. This vow that he makes before God and the church is permanent. It endures so long as he continues his earthly sojourn.

The vow to adhere to sound doctrine and to reject all heresies is contrary to the age of tolerance that we live in. Most of the church world has given up the Sword and tolerates all kinds of false doctrines. Christianity is reduced to a little more than being nice and

loving to everyone.

The church needs more than nice men and women today. The church needs members who will “adhere to this doctrine”, and “reject all heresies repugnant thereto”.

Lessons from the History of the Beloved Church of Jesus Christ Now Among Us (IV)

>> Pastor Arie den Hartog



Pastor Arie den Hartog is a minister of the Word at Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan. He previously served as a missionary to the ERCS for ten years.

The history of God’s church in the world is a history of His wonderful work through Jesus Christ by His Spirit. The crucified and risen Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour is now exalted at the right hand of God the Father in Heaven. He is the Lord of the nations, ruling with sovereign and almighty power as the Son of God over the history of the nations of the world. The chief work which the exalted Lord Jesus Christ does in the history of the world is the gathering, defending, and preserving of His church. She is made up of His elect people, chosen by Him in love from before the foundation of the world. The book of Ephesians is one of the greatest books of the Bible

from which we can learn the doctrine of the church of Jesus Christ. Read the first four verses of Ephesians chapter one in connection with what I have just written above concerning the church of Jesus Christ. Read also verses seventeen to twenty-three of this same chapter. Let me quote the amazing conclusion of this chapter: “And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”

The history of the true church of Jesus Christ has many glorious and joyous events. These events are the mighty and wonderful works of the Lord Jesus Christ in gathering and defending His church.

Because this history takes place in a world of sin that is under the curse of sin, there are also sad events that take place. Even those who are used for the gathering and the work of His Church are themselves sinful and still imperfect. This will remain true all the way up to the time when the Church is delivered out of this sinful world, her members are finally made perfect, and the Church of Jesus Christ is glorified in heaven.

Some of the events that take place in the history of the Church are so deeply sorrowful that we wonder why God, who so loves His Church and who is always sovereign, even allows them to happen. There are mysteries involved in this. However, we know from the Word of God that God loves His Church from everlasting to everlasting. He will never forsake her. He uses even the trials and sad events that take place in her history for her ultimate good and salvation.

The history of the Church of Jesus Christ is also centrally about the preservation of the truth of the Gospel in her midst. God has given the glorious truth of the Gospel to His Church to know, confess, proclaim, and defend in the world. The members of the Church, by the grace of God, are made glorious in their valiant efforts to proclaim and defend the glorious truth of her Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has given to His Church the truth of the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. It is by the power of the preaching of the Gospel that the Holy Spirit, working in the hearts of the elect of God, calls them out of darkness into the marvellous

light of God to show forth the glorious praises of God. After God has brought His elect unto salvation through faith and repentance in Christ, the Lord Himself, by His Spirit, joins His elect to His church. He does not leave them alone. God is pleased not only to save millions of individuals all over the world, He is pleased to form them into His church in order that they together might worship and praise Him in the world to glorify Him. Every believer saved by grace is solemnly obligated to join himself or herself to a true manifestation of the Church on earth. He may not live alone or separate himself from the true church. This is disobedience to the Lord and very detrimental to the spiritual welfare of God's people and, we might add, also to their children—should God's people, in the providence of God, be married and given children.

According to His Covenant purpose, God is pleased to continue His Church in the world in the line of the generations of believers. This is a wonder of God's way of working that particularly reveals His sovereign grace. Every believer, and especially those who are married and receive children in marriage, must be concerned about being members of a true church, not only for themselves, but also for the future welfare of their children. The Covenant children of believers must be catechised by the church so that they grow strong in the knowledge of the truth, and are brought to maturity to be faithful and steadfast members of the church. They are, according to God's Covenant purpose, to be prepared to be the succeeding generation of the church.

The most glorious and faithful members of the church of Jesus Christ are those who know and maintain

the truth of the Gospel. They live by this truth in their daily lives. They are ready to make all kinds of sacrifices and endure all kinds of hardships for the sake of the church of Jesus Christ and the truth of the Gospel that the Lord has given to her. Those who are faithful to the Lord count not even their own life dear to them. They are ready to stand for the truth even if that means martyrdom for them personally. The martyrs of the church will have a great and glorious eternal reward in Heaven. Even when God does not call us to be martyrs for the church and the truth of the Gospel, the members of the church must be faithful to the Lord and His blessed and glorious Truth at all costs.

Not all who are at one time members of the church will remain her members and continue to be faithful to her and the precious Truth that must be maintained by her. Sadly, there are those who were once members of the church who for various sinful reasons left her and returned to the world. I just preached a sermon yesterday, in the church I am pastor of, from 2 Timothy 2. In chapter 1 and verse 15, Paul makes this sorrowful note, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." This statement Paul makes after exhorting the members of the church, as he often does in his letters, to hold fast to sound doctrine and to be faithful to the church of Jesus Christ among us.

The inspired Apostle John has this to say concerning those who forsake the truth after they once seemed to embrace it. "They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." 1 John 2:19.

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 God is pleased not only to save millions of individuals all over the world, He is pleased to form them into His church in order that they together might worship and praise Him
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...
 I have written a very lengthy introduction to this chapter of recounting the history of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore. I hope that this lengthy introduction will help you to have greater understanding of the last two chapters of this history which I still intend to finish.

A new era of development took place in this history and several wonderful developments took place. At her organisation, ERCS was established on the basis of the great Reformed creeds together called the Three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt. This was of great significance in the history of ERCS. The Reformed Creeds represent the historic Reformed Faith of the past. It was the hope and prayer that ERCS should continue to

build on this foundation in years to come, and that she would be strong in the truth of God and remain faithful to the glorious heritage she had received. ERCS had, by the grace of God, the potential of being a centre for Reformed Faith in the whole surrounding area where she was planted.

The ERCS now had two congregations, the newer one being Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church. God gave two new pastors to the ERCS: brother Jai Mahtani and, a few years later, brother Cheah Fook Meng. Both of these brethren received their training in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. Not only was this significant for ERCS, it was also a great joy for the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

The ERCS became busy with the work of missions in foreign countries like Malaysia and Myanmar. This work was begun under the leadership of a number of brethren who gave themselves to this work and made great sacrifices to perform this work. Pastor Lau Chin Kwee was active in this work also. Though this work involved many struggles and difficulties, this work was blessed. Work was done among many peoples and especially two denominations in Myanmar.

Because there were now two congregations in the ERCS, discussion arose about the wisdom and advantages of forming into a denomination.

Over these years, the Lord continued to bless the two congregations in many wonderful ways. He continued to add to the church those whom He saved. In addition, there were many marriages in the churches. God gave children to newly established homes. Besides baptism of those newly added

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Over these years, the Lord continued to bless the two congregations in many wonderful ways.”

to the church, there were also infant baptisms that took place frequently in ERCS. New families and Christian homes were being established—a very exciting thing in a Reformed church. Many were soon concerned about the instruction of Covenant children and raising them in the fear of the Lord.

During these years, Pastor den Hartog and His family returned to take a call again in a church in the USA. For a while it seemed as though ERCS could continue without the presence of a Pastor from the USA and this was also the desire of the PRCA.

However, because of developments in ERCS over time, it was considered wise to call another Pastor from the PRCA to help the young growing church in Singapore. This call was answered in 1991 by Pastor Jason Kortering and his wife Jeanne. The next chapter of this history could perhaps be better written by Pastor Kortering. However, I will do my best to write it, if need be, with consultation from Pastor Kortering. It was indeed the joy both of ERCS and the PRCA to have Pastor and Mrs Kortering in Singapore. The hope and prayer was that through their presence, the relationship between ERCS and the PRCA would grow richer and the bond between these denominations would become stronger.

The next era of this history would, among other things, be greatly influenced by the presence of Pastor and Mrs Kortering in Singapore. They

would give more than eleven years of their lives to the cause of the church in ERCS, making many personal sacrifices and giving a great deal of wisdom and guidance to the future of the beloved church in Singapore. During this era, more exciting developments would take place. The two congregations would be formed into a denomination. The church order of Dordt would be adopted to guide the ecclesiastical affairs of the new denomination. Official sister church relationships would be established between the ERCS and the PRCA. FERC would be able to purchase land and build a beautiful building of her own to hold her worship services and many church activities.

During this era, much work also was done to continue the work of missions in Malaysia, Myanmar and India. In connection with the desire to continue to be faithful to the Lord in the work of missions, there was exciting foundational work done for establishing a theological training school for ministerial students both from Singapore and possibly from other countries, as the Lord in His providence might send. The school was named ARTS (Asia Reformed Theological School). All of these things were very exciting developments. Many brethren worked hard personally and in committees related to the work to accomplish these aspects of church life.

My article is already very long. I will continue the story in the next instalment. In the next chapter, there would be both joys and exciting developments as well as sorrow, disappointment, and trials. God leads His Church. Christ the exalted Lord preserves her in the world for His own glory and praise.

Lowliness in our Friendships

>> Christine Ong



Christine Ong is a confessing young adult in CERC. She helps to edit articles for the Salt Shakers periodically.

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”
Philippians 2:3

“In approaching person A, be careful not to hurt person A’s self-esteem.” We may have heard, or said, something similar recently. Modern psychology defines self-esteem as how good one feels about himself – how much his self-worth is. It is usually in comparison with others, such as ‘I feel better about myself if I know that I am better than someone else in this aspect’. It promotes good self-esteem as a motivator to do better; be a better person and thus have better relationships. In the same way, bad self-esteem is blamed for poor behaviour.

How should we interpret self-esteem in relation to Phil 2:3? How does the world’s and the Christian’s view of lowliness differ? What does the Bible say about lowliness and its blessings? How can we practise lowliness in our friendships? These are the three questions I shall endeavour to answer.

1) How does the world’s and the Christian’s view of lowliness differ?

Paul wrote to the church in Philippi while in Rome, imprisoned for preaching the Gospel. He wanted to encourage the church that his imprisonment and suffering was for the “furtherance of the Gospel” (Phil 1:12) and not hindrance as one might expect; he wanted to exhort them to Christian duties. One of these duties was to be lowly-minded and esteem others better than themselves. To be lowly-minded is to be humble or meek, as a result of proper evaluation of self in relation to God, and others.

In relation to God, the Christian’s view of self-worth goes far back in time: to the first man created in the Garden of Eden. When Adam disobeyed God’s command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he died (Gen 2:17). Physically he was still alive, but spiritually his nature became totally corrupt and depraved. In Adam, the organic head of the human race, all of mankind died spiritually (Rom 5:12). There is none righteous and none that does good (Rom 3:10, 12). In other words, man’s self-worth is negative! However, the world, especially since it holds to evolution (the survival of the fittest), views man as a higher life form than other creatures, and does not believe that man is inherently sinful and incapable of doing good. Thus the (incorrect) conclusion, based on man’s standards, that one’s self-worth can be positive.

Another change arises from Jesus’ death on the cross which imputed righteousness to His people. Then, the Christian’s negative self-worth became a positive Christ-worth. Without any of the Christian’s merit and only of grace, God granted him “perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ” (Lord’s Day 23 of Heidelberg Catechism). But the world, righteous in their own eyes, rejects their need for a Saviour and His righteousness (Matt 9:1-14).

In relation to others, the Christian is aware that he is a sinner just like everyone else, that all his worth is Christ-worth. He echoes Paul’s words, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim 1:15), and “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more” (1 Cor 9:19).

Like the Philippians, we are exhorted to be charitable in our judgments of others, being quick to observe our own imperfections and unworthiness instead. How vastly different this is from boosting self-esteem by emphasising the good in self, vaunting self relative to others and seeking praise and honour from man, i.e. vainglory!

2) What does the Bible say about lowliness and its blessings?

Our sinful natures are not humble, but proud and selfish. How then do we become humble? Through the process

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Modern psychology defines self-esteem as how good one feels about himself – how much his self-worth is.”

of sanctification – when true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Spirit, regenerates and makes him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin (Belgic Confession Article 24).

When God speaks to us in His Word, we grow in our knowledge of Him, the Sovereign God. We read, hear of, and experience His Creation, and like the Psalmist, we are humbled. “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psa 8:3-4) We also learn of man’s fall and God’s work in salvation from start to finish, from eternity and in time. In response, we give all glory to God alone, seeking none for ourselves.

The Holy Spirit works meekness in us. Just as a branch bears the fruit of the tree that it is joined to, we as in-grafted branches to Christ the vine bring forth fruit (John 15:5). Meekness is one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit of Christ (Gal 2:22-23). Scripture identifies Moses as meek. When his siblings, Aaron and Miriam, challenged his authority, he did not rebut them because he was “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num 12:3). Yet previously, when God’s honour was at stake, when

the Israelites worshipped the golden calf, he was zealous in righting the wrong. Christ Himself is the epitome of meekness. He, “being in the form of God...made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men... humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:5-8). This shows us also that meekness is active, and stems from obeying God and not our sinful inclinations to pride.

While we are freed from the bondage of sin, we are still imperfect. We have an old man of sin in us, warring with the new man which is after God (Rom 7:17-25). All our best works are stained with sin. Thus our inability to avoid sin gives us “constant matter for humiliation before God and flying for refuge to Christ crucified” (Canons of Dort, Head 5 Article 2).

Being lowly-minded is difficult, and we often forget to be that. Yet, the Bible promises us that we will be blessed when we are lowly. With the lowly is wisdom and honour (Pro 11:2b, 29:23). The LORD lifts up the meek (Psa 147:6a); God who is high and lofty, who inhabits eternity and whose name is Holy, says that He dwells in the “high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15). Some of these promises are fulfilled in this life—God gives grace to the humble (1 Pet 5:5b). Others are fulfilled in the life to come - the meek shall inherit the earth and delight themselves in the abundance of peace (Psa 37:11). How humbling it is, that God should bless us for the humility which He has given in the first place!

The Bible also tells us how God treats

the proud. In brief, He resists them, shall cut off...the tongue that speaketh proud things, and destroys the house of the proud (1 Pet 5:5a, Psa 12:3, Prov 15:25).

3) How can we practise lowliness in our friendships?

Having seen how the world’s view of lowliness differs from the Christian’s and how we can become humble despite our sinful natures, how can we practise meekness in our friendships? For the purpose of this article, ‘friendships’ refer to relationships we have with others, whether or not they share the same faith.

While non-exhaustive, I view that there are two broad areas where the threat to humility in friendships is real today – social media, and dressing.

According to a New York Times columnist, Frank Bruni, “humility has little place in the realm of social media, which is governed by a look-at-me ethos, by listen-to-me-come-ons, by me, me, me”. Some examples of social media are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. While I am not against using such media, and am a user myself, we need to be conscious of our frequency of usage, motives when posting on such platforms, and the content we produce. There is a time for everything: does the amount of time I spend posting updates eat into time meant for other things, for example, time to serve others including my friends? Does what I post bring glory to God? Does it show love for God and/or my neighbour? Or is it a means to show off, focus attention on myself, and/or buy into the philosophies of the world e.g. materialism (accumulation of material things) or hedonism (devotion to pursuit of pleasure and self-gratification)? If I am commenting

on someone's post, is it to edify or tear the person down?

Our dressing reflects how we see ourselves by nature, how we see the salvation God has given us, and how we live it out in every area of our lives. When we are clothed with humility (1 Pet 5:5), we see ourselves as spiritually naked and truly know the shame of our sins and sinful nature. We will think of others when we dress, not seeking their approval or by following fashions, but being concerned, especially when going to church to worship, that we dress in a way that shows reverence for God and respect and consideration for others. We do not focus on the outward adorning but the hidden man

of the heart. Women should ornament themselves with a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Pet 3:4).

We can also demonstrate lowliness in friendships in specific circumstances. For example, when we receive a compliment about something we have done, we can thank the person and give all glory to God instead of taking any credit. When we have wronged our friend, we should hasten to admit it, apologise and humbly ask for forgiveness. When we are wronged, we should be ready to forgive, knowing how much God has forgiven us. When the honour of God's name is at stake, we do not shy away because we are

overly concerned about what others may think of us. Yet while standing for the Truth and God's glory, we must discard any holier-than-thou attitude, being firm and meek in restoring those who are under the lie (Gal 6:1). We welcome newcomers to church, instead of leaving them to fend for themselves because we selfishly prefer to stick with people we are comfortable with.

"In approaching person A, we ought to have lowliness of mind, and esteem person A better than ourselves." May we be deterred from any wrong view of ourselves, in relation to God and our fellow men, and be encouraged to greater lowliness in our friendships!

COMPASSION FOR SINNERS

>> Brother Paul Goh



Paul Goh is a confessing member of CERC.

Puked on pigs' husks, time to return to father's house.

What would I say? What would I confess?

Ah this! I would confess sins committed.

I am your son no longer. Your slave I gladly be.

Compassionate father, daily looks out for me.

Hoping I be on pathway home.

But again and again, he goes home

Empty-handed and disappointed.

Then, one day, father saw a lone figure.

Could he be... my son? No, it can't be.

Straining his eyes—the lone figure becomes larger and larger.

Yes, it's him! Ran to him, embraced him and kissed him.

His servants ordered he, kill the fatted calf.

Put the ring on his finger.

Put on him the best robes because

My son, once dead, but now, alive!

Our Heavenly Father is like this father.

With eyes of compassion, looking for sinful sons to return.

Forgiving us our sins of waywardness. Cleansing us by Christ's lifeblood.

And has accepted us forever. Alleluia!

O God's compassion for sinners—our only hope.

Public Schools

>> Wong Noelene



Noelene Wong is a confessing young adult in CERC.

The LORD has brought most of us into public schools. We would even say that it is typical of us to be in them since Nursery level. This is all in His providence alone. But before we meditate on this truth, we must first consider the spiritual condition of our public schools. What do you like, or not like, about your schools?

Will you like your school if you knew that the devil has tainted education in public schools? Frankly, God has been ripped off of the centre of education. He is no longer the reason, the focus and the One whom we ought to study. Men "...changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator..." (Rom 1:25). Because the public schools reject God as the basis and the purpose of instruction, they can only teach the Lie. Even though all of the facts may be correct, whenever your teacher teaches that $X \times Y = XY$, or the electronic configuration of carbon is 2.4, without showing how these facts relate to God, they are actually teaching the Lie. Prof Hanko expounded, in his pamphlet entitled 'Principles of Education', that 'these 'facts' remain bare 'facts' until they are developed in connection with

the truth of the Word of God. They are not "Truth" until they are put into the total framework of Scripture; every fact must be based upon, incorporated into, permeated with, and explained in the light of the truth of God in Holy Writ. Scripture is the foundation, the basic structure, the pulse beat, the life blood of all knowledge.' Therefore, if God is not glorified through the education you are receiving, will you still like your school?

In public schools, teachers always remind us, 'Study for yourself, for your future! The higher your grades, the more successful you will be in life!' However, we learn in Colossians 3:23 that "...whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;" Do you notice the difference in what we are taught in school and in God's Word? They are the opposite of each other! What about being taught to 'be friendly to all and to tolerate sin?' Or 'you are good and capable, you can do it', 'authorities can be ignored', 'do what you think is right', and 'you are the author of your life'? Surely those are familiar to you. Those philosophies taught are man-centered, contrary to God's Word, and thus, rob God's rightful glory away from Him. Do you like what is being taught?

In Singapore, schools emphasize a lot on holistic development. This requires excelling academically and in our co-curricular activities (CCAs). As such, on top of the heavy workload for school subjects or modules, there are CCAs to attend. It is not uncommon

to spend almost 10 hours on CCAs each week. Hence, you may feel like a robot at times; going to school, then CCA, and coming home in the evening to complete your homework—and the cycle repeats every day. It is exhausting. Everything is like a mad rush. With that, are you able to meditate upon God's law day and night (Psalm 1:2)? How often are our minds filled with God and not the cares of this world? What about praying without ceasing? (1 Thess 5:17) Can you do your daily devotions properly? Calculate the ratio of your time spent on school to the time spent with God; what is the answer? And when was the last time you did not do your homework on Sunday? I know you are fully aware of what God expects of you in His Word. Do you still like your schools now?

Has your perception of public schools changed? You might hate public schools, or feel very neutral about it. But the fact remains that we as Christians must think critically and test all things by the standard of God's Word, including the education system we are in.

You may now wonder: "Why then did God put me in a public school if it is so rotten?" or, "But public schools still aren't that bad!" Whatever it is, do discuss it with your fellow siblings in Christ! Come back to read the next article to find out what our proper perspective of public schools should be, and how to overcome the struggles faced in public schools. Till then, keep 1 Peter 5:8 and Romans 11:33-36 in your heart.



News from the Churches

SINGAPORE

The Christian Literature Ministry (CLM) recently released the third set of devotions on the Belgic Confession by various PRCA ministers, covering Articles 10-12 on the doctrines of the Godhead and creation. We thank God for this daily devotional that is made available to us that we might be edified by it.

The CLM is planning to publish Prof Hanko's forum letters to the youth. They are also working on compiling articles for children readers from Little Lights and Our Guide.

The Mission Committee is currently planning for a gospel meeting on Good Friday, 18th April 2014. Pray that God will give them wisdom in the planning process.

USA

The Reformed Witness Hour has now expanded their broadcasting to New York City, NY, for the first time.

Since February, Pastor R. Kleyn of Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA, has been preaching a radio series of messages on Job and the sovereignty of God in his suffering. Pray that God will grant him wisdom to deliver the messages and bless the hearers that they may be edified by these messages.

PHILIPPINES

On 9th April 2014, Lord willing, the consistories of the Berean Protestant Reformed Church and the First Reformed Church of Bulacan will hold a meeting for the organisation of a Classis of Protestant Reformed churches in the Philippines. We rejoice in this evidence of the Lord's blessing on the mission work.

Berean PRC Worship Location: This past February, after meeting for close to eleven years in the PCC Building in Cubao, the Berean PRC has begun worshipping in their newly acquired building in Mayamot, Antipolo City. Thank God for His provision of this new worship location.

IRELAND

There is an upcoming British Reformed Fellowship family conference to be held in Scotland from 26th July to 2nd August. Profs. Engelsma and Hanko will be speaking on the vital subject of "Be Ye Holy: The Reformed Truth of Sanctification". For further information, please see the conference website (<http://brfconference.weebly.com>) or contact Cyndi Kalsbeek (1-616-724-4290; ckalsbeek@yahoo.com) or Kristin Crossett (prinskr@gmail.com). Pray for the two speakers that they may be well-equipped to deliver God's word.

INDIA

We thank God that Prof. Gritters, Lori Gritters (wife), Elder Deane Wassink and Donna Wassink (wife) were able to meet up with the saints at the Reformed Christian Church of Vellore, India earlier this year, after 56 hours of travelling. Apart from preaching and leading Bible studies during the 12 day trip, Prof. Gritters led a three day conference. Some of the lectures he delivered include The Church, The Offices of the Church, and The Office of Believers. The lectures were often followed with lively discussions amongst the attendees. The conference was well attended by 25-30 individuals each day. The delegates also sponsored an old-fashioned American picnic for the saints in Vellore and all present had a blessed time of fellowship.

We thank God for the fruitful work and the faith of the saints in Vellore. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless the PRCA's evangelistic work in India.



CK/CKS Combined Anniversary



CK/CKS January Outing at South Ridges



Chinese New Year visitations at various homes



CERC youth visiting Bernadette who is from the Berean Protestant Church in the Philippines



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Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church

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

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

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

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