

Without literature, the Reformed faith
cannot spread. *Rev. Emmanuel Singh |*
Interview with Rev. Emmanuel Singh (Part II)

World powers invest large sums of
money in order to be at the forefront of
space technology. Scientists use space
exploration as a means to prove
evolution, to deny that God is the
Creator and that the world was
formed by a "Big Bang."

Elisa Chew | Space Exploration

Our earthly labours form a
small segment in our life,
while the chief end of man
in life and in death is
to glorify God.

Samuel Wee | Our Earthly Labours

salt shakers
joel 3:16 matthew 5:16

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H E B R E W S 13:6

*The Lord is my helper,
and I will not fear what man
shall do unto me.*



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WELCOME TO THE 43RD ISSUE OF SALT SHAKERS!

Beloved Readers,

We come to the end of our consideration of the theme "Dare to Stand". In the past three issues, we have studied what it means to stand against the tide of godlessness, and to stand for the truth. We looked at biblical examples: the lives of Moses and Elijah (both of whom appear in this issue too) – as well as examples closer to home. Along the way, we also remembered several notable reformers – Luther, Guido de Bres and Calvin – and what they said regarding the truth, even at great personal cost.

What about us? Young people, this call to stand comes directly to you and me. We have also considered what it means to live antithetically; in our friendships, our vocations, in national service, and in our activities online. And surely, the list of areas in which we need to take a stand goes on and on – in every single aspect of our lives.

The call is incredibly difficult to heed. We are not yet called to resist unto blood in our land; to be economic outcasts who can no longer buy or sell. Yet even now the ungodly surround us, enticing us to be friends with them, to walk in their godless ways. The vain philosophies and wicked ideals of the world swamp us in social media and in school. The world develops new ways to sin ever so rapidly, ways that are ever so attractive to our flesh.

How shall we stand? It seems impossible! By standing up alone, it seems like we only present a bigger, more obvious target for the devil to shoot at. And shoot he does; strewn along the paths of life are countless bodies of those who lie slain by the wayside – targets of fiery, devilish arrows. Yet we stand, for God protects His children whom He loves. Though they may fall for a time, they shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth them by His hand such that they stand again, a shining light to the world. It is by His power alone, by the power of the cross, that we can stand boldly against these immense powers.

The call to stand is also incredibly urgent. All around us, we hear of wars, rumours of wars, earthquakes and many other signs of the Lord's return. Once-faithful churches everywhere are rapidly departing from the truth. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many grows cold. Young people, when the Lord returns, will He find faith on earth? Will He find faith in you and me?

Therefore, let us fervently encourage one another to walk courageously. Let us stand, for our Lord comes quickly! Difficult though it may seem, it will be more than worth it in the end. As John Calvin said: "the afflictions and vexations of the pious have little or nothing of bitterness, if compared with the boundless blessings of everlasting glory".

Beloved readers, dare to stand! And remember to pass the salt.

Pro Rege,
Lee Yang

LEST WE FORGET [III]

>>Aaron Lim



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A Fighting Church

The true church is a fighting church. She fights on behalf of the cause of Jesus Christ. She fights against all who would oppose Christ and His truth. She fights against all who oppose her Lover. She resists all other enticements that would draw her away from her Lover. Fighting faithfully, she enjoys the intimacy of her Lover's affection. Fighting faithfully, she is blessed by her Lover. Fighting faithfully, she has the hope that her fighting will not be in vain at the coming again of her Saviour.

Scripture makes plain that fighting for the truth is an essential attribute of a believer. Most of Old Testament history was characterised by warfare. Already in the garden of Eden, God had established warfare as an inherent part of the Christian's life (Gen. 3:15). Israel's entire history was marked by continual warfare against her enemies who sought to destroy her, and Christ who was in her bosom.

The New Testament applies Israel's warfare to the life of the believer. The Christian is called to "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called

and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12). He must "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). He must "put on the whole armour of God, that ye might be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). The confession of the apostle Paul shortly before his death, which ought to represent our own confession is this: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). Lifelong fighting characterises the believer.

The Reformed confessions also teach that fighting spiritual battles is an essential characteristic of the Reformed believer. One reason why believers are called Christians is that they must with a free and good conscience "fight against sin and Satan in this life".¹ Confessing that they have many infirmities, believers "fight against them through the Spirit, all the days of their life, continually taking their refuge in the blood, death, passion and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ".² At baptism, Reformed believers pray that God will equip their children so that they "manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil and his whole dominion".³

Reformed office bearers are especially called to fight for the cause of Christ and His truth. They are the watchmen on the walls of Zion, watching out for the enemy who seek to enter the sheepfold. Concerning these watchmen, God declares to the church: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make

mention of the Lord, keep not silence" (Isa. 62:6). It is quite remarkable that these watchmen are instructed not to hold their peace or to keep silent. They are to make mention of the Lord, not only in praising His name, but also in warning the people against the threats of the enemies.

Binding upon all Reformed office bearers is the Formula of Subscription, a liturgical form which "arose out of a desire to preserve unity in the church, which unity is based squarely on oneness in doctrine".⁴ The Formula "requires complete agreement with all the doctrines contained in the Reformed creeds".⁵ By signing the Formula upon their entrance into the offices, they promise "diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine (of the Reformed confessions), without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same, by our public preaching or writing". Moreover, they promise to "reject all errors that militate against this doctrine...and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors".⁶

Given to the ministers of the Word is the charge that they must be "refuting with the Holy Scriptures all schisms and heresies which are repugnant to the pure doctrine".⁷ Moreover, the

¹ The Heidelberg Catechism, LD 12, Q&A 32.

² The Belgic Confession, Article 29.

³ Prayer of Thanksgiving in the Reformed Form for the Administration of Baptism.

⁴ The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches, (Grandville: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 324.

⁵ The Confessions, 324.

⁶ The Formula of Subscription.

⁷ Form for the Ordination (or Installation) of Ministers of God's Word.

office of the professors of theology is to “expound the Holy Scriptures and to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors”.⁸ The professors are called to caution the students “in regard to the errors and heresies of the old, but especially of the new day”.⁹ By their preaching, teaching, and writing, they are constantly refuting false doctrines and heresies which seek to enter the church and corrupt the sheepfold.

The elders, moreover, are to see to it that “no strange doctrine be taught”.¹⁰ They are to “take heed that purity of doctrine and godliness of life be maintained in the church of God”. Moreover, “to ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation or warning, and of admonition, as well in the ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visiting”.¹¹

Upon the young believer making confession in the church is placed the calling to fight spiritually. He swears before God and His church that he is “resolved by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto; and to lead a new, godly life”.¹² An older form for public confession of faith phrases this calling more forcefully: “Do you promise, by the grace of God, to continue steadfastly in the profession of this doctrine and to live and die in accordance therewith?”¹³ The young people, with all their energy and zeal, are to be rejecting heresies repugnant to, that is, offensive to the doctrines that they have been taught. They are to live and die in accordance with the doctrines that they confess.

Lest We Forget History

In the last ten years since the split of the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore (ERCS), God has used important developments here to teach us important lessons. The history of the split in the ERCS is of tremendous importance to CERC. No member, and certainly no office bearer, ought to shy away from speaking about this significant history. This history must be told, and taught to the next generation of faithful believers in CERC.

In the last ten years, by God’s grace, CERC has grown in her love for God and has been reforming according to the truth concerning marriage, the sovereignty of God’s grace, and the unconditional, sovereign covenant between God and His people in Jesus Christ.

But when a church receives not the love of the truth by allowing false doctrines into her midst, God sends her a strong delusion, so that she believes a lie (2 Thess. 2:10-11). The English Standard Version translates the verse this way: “Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false”. Gradually, she believes more lies and adopts more false doctrines. In His wrath, God gives such a church which has lost her first love over to the lie, so that she is “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14). What results is a future generation that grows up without the knowledge of the truth. Gradually, this church loses more important and fundamental doctrines of Scripture. Loving the truth goes hand in hand with God’s blessing, just as losing the love of the truth goes hand in hand with God’s judgment.

No church becomes false or apostate overnight, even though she embraces false doctrines. Prof. David Engelsma accurately defines a false or apostate church as “a congregation or denomination that, while claiming to be the church of Christ and displaying an appearance of being a church, has so far departed from the truth of the gospel, and thus from Christ the head of the church, that it no longer is a manifestation of the body of Christ at all”.¹⁴ He further elaborates that “a church does not become a false church at once. Usually it is a process of gradual development from bad to worse until finally the church becomes false, or fully apostate”.¹⁵ When a believer finds himself in a church that is embracing new doctrines, it is absolutely important that he searches the Word diligently and compare those doctrines with the standard of Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

When a church or denomination realises the error of her ways, there is mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the cross. It is hoped that through these editorials, the churches which may be enticed by the false doctrines of common grace, the well-meant gospel offer, and the conditional covenant may flee from those falsehoods and see the glorious truths of Scripture once again. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are

⁸ Article 18, in The Church Order of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore.

⁹ Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology.

¹⁰ Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons.

¹¹ Article 55, in The Church Order of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore.

¹² Form for Public Confession of Faith.

¹³ Form for the Public Confession of Faith (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/nethlit.htm>).

¹⁴ David Engelsma, *Bound to Join: Letters on Church Membership*, (Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2010),

¹⁵ *Bound to Join*, 9.

deceitful” (Pro. 27:6). Jesus’ promise of reconciliation and fellowship comes to the erring church today, just as it did to the erring church of the Laodiceans: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:20-1).

The warning is also sharp to all the members of CERC. Love the truth, and sell it not. Be a faithful witness to the truth, and live faithfully in it. Teach the truth to your children and their generations. Only in that way will the truth be maintained and confessed in the hearts, mouths, and lives of our people.

Our fighting will not be vain. We fight with the absolute confidence in God’s

Word. We fight with the absolute confidence that no sacrifice is too great for the truth. This battle will be costly. But let us fight the good fight of faith, for henceforth there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness, not to us only but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim 4:7-8).

SCRIPTURE’S COVENANT YOUTH (VI): MOSES

>>Prof. Herman Hanko



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

An elder with whom I was speaking to said to me in the course of our conversation, “When young people come to the consistory to make confession of faith, all I want to know is whether they love Jesus and sincerely confess him as their own”. I was a little

taken aback by this and insisted that this was not enough. I told him that I wanted to know why a person wanted to make confession of faith “in this church”. I pointed out to him that if a prospective member wanted to make confession of faith and all he had to do was say that he believes in Christ, then he could make confession of faith in nearly any church around. He would be accepted anywhere on the basis of such a confession.

But, I added, I want to know why an individual wants to make confession of faith here, in this church, and not elsewhere. The applicant for membership in the church must answer this question: “Do you acknowledge the doctrine . . . taught here in this Christian church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?”

If one who is baptized as an adult also makes his confession of faith, he too must answer in the affirmative,

“Dost thou assent to all the articles of the Christian religion **as they are taught here in this Christian church according to the Word of God. . . ?**”

What Hebrews 11:25 calls Moses’ choice for the people of God is Moses’ confession of faith. It was more an action than a verbal confession, but the action showed clearly that in his heart he had made a decision concerning the burning question: To what people do you wish to join yourself? To Israel or to Egypt? That is, to the church or to the world? That is what confession of faith is all about: the church of Christ or the world? Where do I belong?

It is profitable to compare our confession of faith with that of Moses. We will compare the two by following the order of the questions that are asked of those who make confession of faith in the PRC and their sister churches.

Moses made his choice when he

“came to years”. The same is true of us. When we “come to years” we are mature adults, no longer dependent on others (parents, teachers, elders) to teach us what is true; we have reached the point in our lives when we are able to make our own decisions. So it was with Moses. He was older than us, but circumstances were different now than then. Moses was in the courts of Pharaoh for forty years and we do not know if he had any contact with the Israelites during those years. But he knew enough about both Israel and Egypt to make his choice.

Moses expressed his choice by “refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter”. He had to make his choice known in some way to those in the court of Pharaoh and to God’s people. He found what he thought was the ideal way to do this when he killed an Egyptian who was fighting with an Israelite. Our confession of faith is a vow that we publicly make before the church of Christ. Both are confessions of faith. Hebrews 11 tells us that very thing: By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter... Our confession is a confession of what we believe by faith and how we will be faithful to what we believe.

A vow is a promise before God to do something. We say, as it were, if we do not keep this vow we make, may God bring His wrath and judgment on us. It is my judgment that this vow is more important (as it was for Moses) than the vow I make at marriage and the vow I make when I bring my children to the church for baptism – although, of course, every vow is important.

Just as we do, Moses expressed the fact that he believed all that God had said in His word. Moses was the very

first to write part of the Bible, and so he knew the truth only through the tradition of a people who cherished it. The people of God had preserved that tradition through the flood, through the disruption of the people on earth at Babel, through the lives of the patriarchs, and during the four hundred years Israel was in Egypt. It was a miracle of the preservation of the truth through the traditions of God’s people.

At the heart of that tradition was God’s promise to His church to send the seed of the woman who would crush the head of Satan to deliver His people from death and hell.

So we confess our faith in the Scriptures; we confess that the Scriptures are true in all they teach, and that the Scriptures in their entirety give us a portrait of Jesus Christ as the only one through whom we have salvation from sin and death, and who will surely come to save us.

Moses was deeply conscious of the fact that the truth of Christ came to him by tradition. While it did not come in the form of written creeds, it did come to him as the one faith all the people of God confessed since creation and those revelations of God in creation. That tradition was constantly enriched by additional works of God: the gospel preached after the fall (Gen. 3:15), the murder of Abel because he looked to Christ when he sacrificed a lamb, the flood, the new creation after the flood, the division of the people at Babel, the call and obedience of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the miraculous birth of Isaac, and all the revelations of the truth given before Moses’ time and preserved through tradition.

So it is when we make confession of faith that we too confess the truth as held by our fathers since Pentecost and contained in our confessions. We confess that we believe that the truth is contained in the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene creeds, the Symbolum quicunque, sometimes called the Athanasian Creed, the Creed of Chalcedon, and the Three Forms of Unity.

It is at this point that the confession and vow which we make becomes very particular: we also confess that we believe the doctrine taught in “this Christian church” as the true and complete doctrine of salvation.

Moses made that his confession of faith when he cast his lot with Israel and was willing to suffer severe persecution for the sake of that truth. He turned his back with a shudder on all the treasures of Egypt.

Today it is somewhat different, for there are many, many churches, and among those are to be found churches in which there are also people of God and where the truth is still preserved in some measure. That part of our confession that speaks of the truth as taught in the church of which we are a member really makes us sit up and think.

To confess this means basically to confess that the church in which we make confession of faith teaches only the truth and teaches it in all its fullness and purity. This church (along with other churches who believe what we do) in which I make confession of faith is the true church of Christ and the purest manifestation of Christ’s body found in the world. One says, as it were, “I believe this church is the clearest and

purest manifestation of the body of Christ in the world, and I want to be faithful to what I confess in Article 28 of the Belgic Confession, namely that I must in obedience to Christ the head of the church, join myself to that church, even though the edict of princes oppose it. Other churches may have the truth in part, but the error(s) they hold will develop into worse errors.

That is what Moses confessed when he chose to cast his lot with the people of God.

Finally, he promised to be faithful to

that people and to reject the treasures and pleasures of Egypt. We can't have both, you know. It is always one or the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. The child of God who believes the truth taught in his Christian church must live an antithetical life. He must say NO to the world and YES to God's people.

Faithfulness! That is our confession! So faithful that if I err, I will submit to the government of the church. That too I vow before God. The church is my mother. When that church tells me I am wrong, I hear the church as

the word of Christ Himself to me. That mother feeds me with heavenly bread. That mother shelters me from the storms of life. I am taught by that mother all my days. And when I do wrong, that mother chastises me to teach me to be faithful.

I pray for the faithfulness of the church in which I confess my faith, because I want a true church for myself, my spouse, my children, my grandchildren and my great grandchildren until the Lord Himself returns.

ARE UNBELIEVERS IN GOD'S IMAGE? (I)

>>Rev. Angus Stewart



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Introduction

There is one thing in Scripture that the ungodly refer to as an "image" of God, but which is certainly not: that is idols (e.g., Ex. 20:4-6; Isa. 44:9-20; Rom. 1:23; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 35)!

There are four parties who are spoken of in Holy Writ as truly being in God's image. Here they are arranged in "chronological" order:

1. The Second Person of the Holy Trinity (cf. Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; Belgic Confession 10)
2. Pre-fall Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; Belgic Confession 14; Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 6; Canons III/IV:1)
3. The incarnate Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ (II Cor. 4:4)
4. All born again through the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 115)

Two of these four parties in God's image are divine: the eternal Son *simpliciter* and that same eternal Son when He became incarnate. The other two of these four parties are human beings: Adam and Eve before the fall, and those regenerated after the fall.

All individuals and churches that have any claim to be orthodox gladly acknowledge the truth of the above four identities regarding the image of God or *imago dei*. However, there is disagreement regarding the unregenerate: is unbelieving man in God's image? This is the most controversial question involved in the whole subject of the *imago dei*. It is also a very important issue, especially in our day, when the notion that everybody is in God's image is being used to promote common grace, women in church

office, homosexuality, the salvation of unconverted pagans, etc.

The thesis of this and subsequent articles is that unregenerate and unbelieving men, women and children are not in the image of God. In this and later instalments, Lord willing, we shall see that this is the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and the doctrine of the Reformed confessions.

The Nature of the Image of God

Let us begin by analysing the nature of the image of God. The Bible clearly describes God's image in His believing people as consisting of three things: knowledge, righteousness and true holiness.

The proof of this comes from two passages in Paul's epistles. Colossians 3:10 states, "[You] have put on the *new man*, which is renewed in *knowledge* after the *image* of him [i.e., God] that *created* him". Notice, first, that here we have a reference to the "image" of God. Second, these Christians at Colossae (and all believers) have been "created" in God's image in regeneration. Third, this image of God, in which we have been created through the new birth, includes "knowledge", the knowledge of God.

Our second Scripture is the parallel passage in Ephesians 4:24: "ye put on the *new man*, which after God is *created in righteousness and true holiness*". First, since Ephesians 4:24 refers to the "new man" which is "created" in God's "image" and Colossians 3:10 speaks of the "new man" which is "created" "after God", the phrases God's "image" and "after God" are equivalent. Second, our being "created" "after God" or in His "image" in regeneration includes

"righteousness" and "true holiness".

This use of Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 in defining the content of the image of God in His born again and believing people (and pre-fall Adam and Eve) as consisting of knowledge, righteousness and true holiness (all ethical, moral or spiritual virtues) is clearly biblical and widely recognised. It is also confessional (Belgic Confession 14; Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 6, 115; Canons III/IV:1; Westminster Confession 4:2; Westminster Larger Questions, Q. & A. 17, 75; Westminster Shorter Questions, Q. & A. 10, 35).

But what is the *imago dei* in which unbelievers are supposed to be? Unlike what we have just seen regarding the nature of the image of God in believers, there are no biblical text which specify the nature of the (alleged) divine image in the ungodly. Nor is there any solid exegesis of any biblical texts that prove the content of the (supposed) *imago dei* in the wicked.

Instead, the content of this alleged image of God in unbelievers is arbitrary. Typically, some or all of the following are mentioned: morality and rationality; spirituality and personality; possession of the "faculties" of memory and/or intellect and/or will and/or conscience; personhood, freedom, dignity, language, etc.

These things surely characterise man—whether believing or unbelieving—but there is no proof that these things are the content of the image of God. Those who maintain that the unregenerate are in the divine image can point to no scriptural testimony as to its content. On this subject, one searches their books and articles in vain for any

cogent exegesis of even a single biblical text.

The Number of the Image of God

Moving from the nature of the alleged *imago dei* in unbelievers, we come to the number of images of God in man. According to the theory that absolutely everyone is in the image of God, there are necessarily two images of God in man. First, there is the image of God *in the narrow sense*, as many of them put it, which consists, as we have seen, in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Second, they posit an image of God *in the broader sense*, which is the only *imago dei* in unbelievers.

In short, according to the view that we are here opposing, the number is *two*, for there are two images of God in man. To express their view more kindly, there are two *aspects* of the image of God in man.

Reader, which of these two images of God, do you think, is most talked about? Is it the manifestly scriptural truth that believers in Christ crucified and risen are in *the imago dei* (the image of God in the so-called narrow sense) or the idea that unbelievers are in *the imago dei* (the so-called image of God in the broader sense)?

What about the teaching of the liberal Protestant churches? Or the Roman Catholic Church? Undoubtedly, they lay great emphasis upon the notion that absolutely everybody is in the image of God. This notion is fundamental in their false doctrine and practice. Indeed, this idea is one of their main theological building blocks!

What about purportedly conservative

churches and organizations and people? My experience—and many others I know would say the same thing—is that in their pulpits, periodicals, books and witnessing they speak a lot more about the (alleged) image of God (broader sense) in all men head for head than the very clearly biblical teaching that those are in His image who are in fellowship with the Father through Jesus Christ and by His Holy Spirit.

Let us see how this applies to unbelievers and believers in this life. According to the theory that we are refuting, the unbeliever is in the *imago dei* (broader sense), so he has one image of God or one aspect of the image of God. The believer, however, is both in the *imago dei* in the broader sense and the *imago dei* in the narrow sense, so he

has two divine images or two aspects of the image of God.

But is there any Scripture for this idea of two images of God in His children? Are you aware of anywhere in the Bible that speaks of two divine images in us? Yet the theory that unbelievers are in the image of God necessarily entails two images of God in the regenerate.

We should also consider how this notion applies to the elect before and after their regeneration or conversion. “While we were yet sinners” (to echo Romans 5:8), we possessed one *imago dei*, the image of God in the so-called broader sense. After the Holy Spirit “quickened us together with Christ” (Eph. 2:5), we possess two images of God, both the divine image in the

broader sense and the divine image in the narrow sense, as they speak of them.

But is there any warrant in God’s Word for such a thing? A man being born with one image of God and then being born again and so possessing two images of God? Does Christ teach this in the gospel accounts? Is this found in the letters of Paul or Peter or John, or anywhere in Scripture? Yet these notions of two images of God in man, of unbelievers having one image and believers having two images, and of the elect possessing one divine image before their conversion and two divine images after their new birth, are required by the theory that we are opposing.

DARE TO STAND: BOLD AGAINST ASHERAH

>>Stephan Regnerus



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Greetings, fellow young adult Christian Singaporeans! I recall with fondness the brief time I spent in Singapore almost two years ago, and I was glad when recently the Salt Shakers committee asked if I could contribute to your magazine. I thank you for this opportunity to communicate with you and pray that, if God wills, this article and the magazine as a whole may be blessing to you.

The topic at hand is *biblical boldness*. My intention is to write several articles on boldness, so a lengthier section in this article will be devoted to a broad, biblical introduction to the subject. True boldness may be defined as *an unnatural confidence in the strength of*

Jesus that generally reveals itself in godly speech. Let us note several important aspects of this definition:

1. Boldness is not natural to fallen man.

- The natural man behaves like Peter, the close disciple of Jesus, who at the end of Jesus’ ministry “began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man” (Matt. 26:74).
- The person who has confidence in his money or athleticism or good looks must hear the admonition of Scripture, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

“True boldness may be defined as an unnatural confidence in the strength of Jesus that generally reveals itself in godly speech.”

- Because boldness is not natural to man, we must wait on the Lord for strength. Psalm 27:14 says, “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord”.

2. The source of boldness is the strength of Jesus Christ.

- Eph. 3:11-12 demonstrates that boldness is found in Jesus: “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him”.
- Satan and his demons might appear bold, daring even to enter the lair of the enemy. Job 1 tells us the devil marched into God’s presence and requested permission to persecute the upright Job. However, the devil is not truly bold, for his apparent bravery is motivated by abhorrence of Jesus, not love.
- In the New Testament, Jesus gives boldness to all saints through His poured-out Spirit. Peter, who had earlier denied Jesus three times, was suddenly bold to preach as he received the Spirit of Christ (Act. 2:14ff). The crowds marvelled at

such boldness: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Act. 4:13).

- The person who does not have the Spirit of Christ is not bold but frightened, even afraid of imaginary troubles. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Pro. 28:1).

3. As a general rule, boldness reveals itself in godly speech.

- “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word” (Act. 4:29).
- For more examples of boldness in speech, one might look up Act. 4:31, Eph. 6:19, and Phil. 1:14. There are more!
- There are exceptions. Joseph of Arimathea “went in boldly unto Pilate” to ask for the body of Jesus (Mark 15:43). But even here, the true character of Joseph’s boldness was not that he went into Pilate’s presence but the *message* Joseph delivered: “Give me Jesus”.
- Oftentimes, bold speech takes the form of *preaching*. Jesus preached with boldness: “For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes” (Matt. 7:29). The apostle Paul desired boldness in his preaching; “[Pray] for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel” (Eph. 6:19).

- At other times, bold speech takes the form of *prayer*. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).
- The devil hates godly speech, for “he is a liar, and the father of it”. He will use whatever means possible to prevent bold speech, for “he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth” (Jn. 8:44).

Now, let us look more closely at how we might be bold in an age of sexual immorality. To do this, we will look at a familiar Old Testament figure: Elijah, a powerful and Spirit-filled prophet (Lk. 1:17). Most of us have heard the story of Elijah on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18), where Elijah held a “competition” with the prophets of Baal. The rules of the competition were simple. Both Elijah and the false prophets were to prepare an altar, but neither side was to light a fire under the altar. Then, Elijah and the false prophets would each pray to their respective gods, and whichever god sent fire would be recognized as the true God.

“Oftentimes, bold speech takes the form of preaching.”

What is less commonly known about this account is that the 450 prophets of Baal were not the only false prophets who participated in the event on Mt. Carmel. Also present that day were “the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel’s table” (1 Kings 18:19). The “prophets of the groves” were those prophets who worshipped *Asherah*. Asherah was the goddess of sexual pleasure. Worship her, and she would fulfil the base desires of man’s heart in the way of sexual promiscuity, in adultery and whoredom and even same-sex relationships. Asherah’s followers were jealous for the goddess; she *alone* was to be worshipped. Her faithful adherents brought her images into the house of God (2 Kings 21:2-3 & 23:4), so that instead of worshipping the holy Jehovah God, Asherah alone would be worshipped!

In 2017, Asherah is not dead. And her followers have no less shame in worshipping her. From my experiences in America, I can testify that one does not have to look hard to find the goddess Asherah. She displays herself with the bright lights on the billboards and in the flashing images of TV programming and commercials. Asherah has become well-acquainted with social media, using Facebook and the “Featured Stories” of Snapchat to keep her followers faithful. Asherah’s worshippers are jealous that she alone be worshipped. To fulfil this desire, they have taken her into God’s house, and many churches now place their blessing on pre-marital intercourse, divorce and remarriage, and even homosexuality!

The prophet Elijah, in response to the widespread worship of Asherah (and Baal), was bold to confront the enemy. Ahab accused Elijah of troubling Israel, but Elijah replied with bold words to

“In 2017, Asherah is not dead. ”

wicked king: “I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father’s house!” The altars of the contest were set up, and the false prophets went first, praying to their god for fire to come down. When nothing happened, Elijah was not afraid to show their utter folly in worshipping a false god: “Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god, either he is talking...or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked!” (1 Kings 18:27). After several hours had passed by and no fire consumed the altar, it became evident to all who were watching that Asherah was not god, nor was Baal.

But who was the true God? And would that God be bold to demonstrate in front of the crowds of people that He was the God? Elijah, filled with the Spirit, went boldly unto the throne of grace and prayed for help in time of need. He prayed to God that He would “let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant...and that thou hast turned [the Israelites’] heart back again.” The faithful Lord heard Elijah’s bold request, and He sent fire from heaven, consuming the wood and stone and even the water in the trench surrounding the altar. The people responded with one voice, “The Lord, He is the God!”

Let us be like Elijah, emboldened by the Spirit to confront the immoral Asherah. When Asherah deceives the young man so that he thinks he can resist by his

own strength, let him be warned! “For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her” (Pro. 7:26). Like Elijah, we depend on God’s divine intervention to refute Asherah’s seductive advances. If Asherah has already broken down your defences and made you spiritually sick, even addicted, then “call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over [you], anointing [you] with oil in the name of the Lord” (Js 5:20). Asherah and her demons are no less progressive today than they were in Elijah’s day, but at the same time, Christ and His Spirit are no less powerful and faithful. Seek Christ’s strength in time of need, “so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6).

SPACE: THE WORLD BEYOND EARTH

>> Elisa Chew



Elisa Chew is a member of CERC.

Introduction

Around 50 years ago, the world was buzzing with excitement when the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of USA managed to send humans to the moon for the first time in 1969 in the Apollo 11, carrying astronauts Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin and Michael Collins. Since then, the world powers have been fixated on achieving greater space exploration feats; many more were sent to the moon and NASA has plans to use the moon as a base station for visits to Mars and possibly to the planets beyond. Dozens of spacecraft have been sent to Mars to map and study the planet's surface in preparation for sending astronauts to Mars. World leaders have poured billions of money into the renowned International Space Station (ISS), which is used as a space laboratory to help pave the way for further space exploration. SpaceX, one of the companies formed by entrepreneur Elon Musk, has been making headlines as the world's fastest growing provider of launch services. SpaceX's key goal is to develop reusable rockets and provide shuttle services between earth and space.

Other than in the news, the topic of space exploration is also prevalent in entertainment, especially in movies and science fiction or dystopian novels. Most of us would have heard of the movie E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial, in which an alien befriends a child on earth.

As Reformed Christians, it is important for us to question how we should view space exploration from a Reformed worldview. What does the Bible tell us about the galaxy? How should we as Reformed believers perceive space exploration? Is it wise to support or even participate in such research and feats? And to bring it even further, what should our view be on life beyond earth? In the following article, we will explore the answers from Scripture to these questions.

The Universe in the Bible

Before we start attempting to answer these questions, we should first consider what Scripture has to say about the universe. From the Bible, it is clear that God created the moon, the stars, the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 8:3). Without a doubt, God created the galaxy, asteroids, stars and planets. God makes the constellations and sets the stars in their place (Job 9:9). The purpose of God's creation is so that God's name is glorified and His majesty is shown forth. This is seen in Psalms 19:1 where David declares that the heavens show forth God's glory and the firmament is God's handiwork. Compared to God's creation of the heavens, man is so small and there is

nothing that we can boast of in the presence of His excellency (Ps. 8:1,4,9). This forms our basis as we discuss the questions, that God is the Creator and His Creation serves to glorify His name.

Reformed Perspective on Space Exploration

With all the advances in space exploration, should we support such research or take delight in the feats of space exploration? It would depend on our motives – whether it is for the purpose of (1) learning more about God's wondrous creation and giving all glory to him or (2) to glorify men and fuel men's pride. It is good to desire to learn more about God's creation. In fact, doing so would greatly humble us when we are put in awe at His perfect creation.

However, today, space exploration is largely conducted to glorify men. World powers invest large sums of money in order to be at the forefront of space technology.¹ Scientists use

“Compared to God's creation of the heavens, man is so small and there is nothing that we can boast of in the presence of His excellency”.

**“...may we meditate
on God’s might,
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in creation.”**

space exploration as a means to prove evolution², to deny that God is the Creator and that the world was formed by a “Big Bang”. Atheists worship science as their god as they seek to answer all the mysteries of creation without God and the Bible in their answers.

As we read and learn more about the planets, stars and moon beyond this earth that scientists of the world discover in the years to come, may God grant us the grace to give all glory to Him and leave none for men.

Life Beyond Earth

Is there anybody out there?

The Search for Extra-terrestrial Intelligence is commonly found in entertainment where movies and dramas show the possibilities of aliens and intelligent life beyond this earth. We have heard of astronomy, which is the study of stars. But have you heard of astro-biology? Scientists researching in astro-biology study life among the stars, the origins of life, evolution and the possibility of humans living beyond

earth. We know clearly from Scripture that God is the Creator, so that leaves no ambiguity regarding the origins of life and that there is no place for evolution for a Christian.

What about life beyond earth? What does Scripture say?

Nothing.

There is a deafening silence in the Bible with regards to life beyond earth.

Scripture teaches us that God created all the creatures and living things on the earth, He made man to dwell on the earth and gave him dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:28). Adam and Eve fell into sin on the earth and Christ took the form of a man on the earth. Christ will return to the earth and God will create a new heavens and earth.

There is nothing mentioned in Scripture about life beyond earth. If nothing is said, can we say that there is a possibility then? God tells us that His Word is perfect and necessary for our salvation (Ps. 19:7; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Hence, it is my opinion that since Scripture is silent on intelligent life apart from humans on earth, it is not possible for extra-terrestrial intelligent life to exist. God has revealed in Scripture what is necessary for our salvation and it is not our place to speculate about what God does not say. God will reveal more fully His works and ways when we dwell with Him in heaven and it is not our calling to spend our God-given time

and energy on pursuing intelligent life beyond earth.

So is there anybody out there?

Yes! God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is out there! That is all the comfort that we as God’s people need. Our God is omnipresent. He is in the heavens and in the earth and He dwells in us by His Holy Spirit every day and everywhere.

Conclusion

As we read and hear about more and more achievements of space exploration, may we be careful not to join in the pride of men. Instead, may we meditate on God’s might, giving praise to God for His perfect work in creation.

“The spacious heavens declare

The glory of our God,

The firmament displays

His handiwork abroad;

Day unto day proclaims His might,

And night His wisdom tells to night.”

- Psalter 37 (Psalms 19) -

¹ Russia’s 10 year (2016-2025) space program has a budget of \$20 billion while USA budgeted \$19.3 billion for NASA in 2016 alone. (Source: <https://arstechnica.com/science/2016/03/russian-space-program-to-match-nasas-annual-budget-over-the-next-decade/>)

² In an article describing NASA’s 50 years of space exploration, results from their satellites are said to have provided unprecedented detail on the origin of the universe and the evolution of the first stars and galaxies. NASA’s spacecraft also was described to reveal the secrets of cosmic evolution from the big bang to the present. (Source: https://www.nasa.gov/50th/50th_magazine/historyLetter.html)

MEDIA PIRACY: A DIRE TEMPTATION OF OUR DAY

>>Cornelius Boon



Cornelius Boon is a deacon in CERC.

Introduction

Piracy originally was used to describe something that happened at sea and involved the robbing of ships, but the word has taken on another meaning in today's context. Today, piracy is also used to refer to the unauthorised use or reproduction of another's work. For this article, we will be limiting the scope of our discussion to digital piracy, which basically refers to the illegal downloading and usage of games, software, videos, music, etc.

The Law

In order to identify digital piracy correctly, we must first understand what the law says is wrong. And what the law says is wrong will also play a part in what we consider as stealing. Singapore has in place a Copyright Act, which was revised in 2006. Whenever someone creates and expresses a piece of original work in a tangible form (such as in writing or recording), he enjoys copyright protection without the need for registration. An original work means that there is a degree

of independent effort that was put into the creation of that work. With copyright protection, the author of the work enjoys certain privileges such as deciding how to distribute, sell or use his work. The author may also choose to sell or give the copyright to another party.

Copyright infringement occurs when one or more of the copyright owner's rights are violated. This happens when someone copies or distributes all or part of the copyrighted work without permission from the owner. Note that even if it was never viewed or used, just by obtaining a copy of the work without permission constitutes an infringement.

The Problem

The problem today is that proof of infringement lies with the copyright owner. He has to show in court not only that he is the owner of the material, but also produce evidence that the other party has copied his work without permission. This is done to prevent a misuse of the law but the flipside is that this makes it a relatively hard and tedious process for copyright owners to protect their work. Most copyright owners feel that it is not worth their effort and there is also the risk of a public backlash as well.

This, combined with the advancement of the internet and technologies that make use of the internet, has made digital piracy so common today. The law cannot effectively regulate what the

general public practices. The chaotic and anonymous nature of the internet has made it such that it is practically impossible to put a stop to digital piracy.

But what does all of this that mean for the Christian? When society practices something that is at odds with the law, how is a Christian supposed to react? What are the principles that we should base our decisions on?

Lord's Day 42

Q. 110. *What doth God forbid in the eighth commandment?*

A. *God forbids not only those thefts, and robberies, which are punishable by the magistrate; but he comprehends under the name of theft all wicked tricks and devises, whereby we design to appropriate to ourselves the goods which belong to our neighbour: whether it be by force, or under the appearance of right, as by unjust weights, ells, measures, fraudulent merchandise, false coins, usury, or by any other way forbidden by God; as also all covetousness, all abuse and waste of his gifts.*

Q. 111. *But what doth God require in this commandment?*

A. *That I promote the advantage of my neighbour in every instance I can or may; and deal with him as I desire to be dealt with by others: further also that I faithfully labour, so that I may be able to relieve the needy.*

Lord's Day 42 in explaining the eighth commandment on stealing touches at the heart of our discussion and sets forth the principles that we should follow. In Q&A 110, the explanation given is that not only outright stealing is forbidden, but also all other forms where we short-change the neighbour. To put in the words used by the Heidelberg Catechism: *"whereby we design to appropriate to ourselves the goods which belong to our neighbour: whether it be by force, or under the appearance of right"*.

The Heidelberg Catechism was written in a time where the common form of stealing would be at the market, through the use of something like false weights or coins. Times have certainly changed since then. Today, there are much more sophisticated forms of stealing, some of which can even seem legitimate. Nevertheless, the principles that are laid forth in the Heidelberg Catechism still stand. Digital piracy is basically still stealing because we are using or viewing something without giving due compensation to the creator, thus short-changing the neighbour.

Technologies that enables Digital Piracy

We first need to be aware of some of the technologies that have made digital piracy so easy today. The underlining technology is the internet. The internet has allowed people to download illegal content easily with a high degree of anonymity.

But there are some specific uses of the internet that has enabled digital piracy to become so common. One such use is by something called BitTorrent. What BitTorrent does is to allow the easy sharing of content,

be it software, games, videos or music. All it takes is for one person to upload the pirated content and everyone who wants to download will share it with others as well. This P2P (Peer to Peer) technology that is used by BitTorrent requires those that download the content to automatically upload and share it with others. From a legal point of view, torrenting is against the law as one not only makes an illegal copy but also shares that copy with others. There are legitimate content that can be downloaded through BitTorrent but most of the content available is pirated.

Another way is through streaming which is used for videos and music. The content is generally hosted on a website where others are able to view. Once again there are content that can be viewed legitimately through steaming, but other content actually constitutes digital piracy when viewed. We will discuss more about this later in the article.

Software and Games

Digital piracy can take many forms. For software and games, that is a little more straightforward. Using a software or game without paying for it when it is supposed to be paid for is digital piracy. We are stealing from the developer of the software or game when we use their work without paying them. Of course there are those free software which can be used without paying but it is digital piracy if we deliberately find ways to use them for free when we know that it actually requires payment. It sounds very straightforward because it actually is! But because it is relatively easy to get a pirated copy and relatively hard to get caught, using pirated software and games becomes almost a norm today. Once again, we need a reminder that

just because everyone does it does not make it right. It is not right in the eyes of the law but more importantly, it is not right in the eyes of God.

Video Streaming

For the sake of simplicity, when videos are referred to in this article, it would also include all movies, TV shows and music. This article does not go into whether it is right for a Christian to consume such content in the first place and only focuses on whether it is digital piracy.

A video that is downloaded without the permission of the creator is digital piracy because we have obtained an unauthorised copy of the video. But when we stream a video, one might argue that we are not actually downloading the video and we are just watching it online. But actually, when we view pirated videos through streaming, our computer stores a temporary copy of it on the hard drive and this is illegal according to the law because we are still making an unauthorised copy of the video.

One of the one the most familiar platform that does streaming is YouTube. Content that is placed on YouTube is generally legal because YouTube actively removes pirated content. But there

"When society practices something that is at odds with the law, how is a Christian supposed to react?"

is bound to be some illegal content, which we must be careful of. Other streaming sites do not police what is uploaded as much as YouTube does and as a result, much more pirated content can be found.

There are legitimate ways to watch videos through streaming. Platforms that require a monthly fee to access paid content are one legitimate way. There are also creators that allow their videos to be watched for free so that they gain publicity or earn through advertisements. Some signs which can help us to identify illegal videos are when we realise that we are paying nothing to watch content that we know should be paid for, or if the video was not uploaded by the original creator.

The Difficulty

The problem is that sometimes it can be very tricky to differentiate between what is legal and illegal. One such example is something like though a software called Popcorn Time. What this software does is to allow one to watch all sorts of paid content for free. On the surface it mimics legal platforms that require a monthly fee, but it relies on P2P technology to offer the content for free. It is basically

torrenting, as was described earlier, but done in a very subtle way. When you watch the content, it is downloaded through P2P and stored in a secret folder on your hard drive. This content is automatically deleted on a system reboot.

Technology is constantly changing and the world is getting better at making something illegal seem legal. But when we consider what the Heidelberg Catechism says in QnA 111: “*That I promote the advantage of my neighbour in every instance I can or may*”, it helps us to see through their schemes. By using the software, game or video in such a way that the creator is not properly compensated, we are not promoting the advantage of our neighbour.

Because digital piracy is so common and could very well be considered to be a norm today, we have not really been forced to consider this issue carefully. We might also hesitate to consider this issue carefully as it could have deep implications on the activities we enjoy. It might even mean more trouble for us, as sometimes obtaining a legal copy could prove difficult or almost impossible, while an illegal copy is just a few clicks away. There are excuses that we might give, such as “I only want to try it out before buying”, or “everyone is doing it”, or “the company is already earning so much money”, or “if I like it after I use it, I will buy more” and others.

Christian Stewardship

We need to consider if what we do is pleasing to God, when we look at it in light of what the eighth commandment really means. The principle of Christian stewardship is that God owns everything. God has given to each person his share of earthly possessions

and our calling is to use them wisely and for the glory of God. Part of it is to be contented with what we have and not steal from our neighbour.

What we have discussed in this article is stealing. It does not matter if everyone does it and very few people are actually caught and punished. As long as it is against the law, it is stealing. And even if it is not against the law, as long as the neighbour is not properly compensated, it will still be wrong. The eighth commandment is very strict in its instruction. And one of the implications is that we are to consider the good of the neighbour and to deal with him in a way that we would wish to be dealt with if our positions were reversed.

Because of how quickly technology advances, it is impossible to discuss all the ways that digital piracy can take place. But by asking some simple questions such as:

1. Is it against the law?
2. Is the creator properly compensated?
3. Am I using it in a way that is beneficial to the creator?
4. Am I using it in a way that the creator intended?

We can accurately determine whether what we are doing is legitimate or is actually digital piracy. May God grant us the wisdom and the conviction to do what is pleasing to Him.

“And even if it is not against the law, as long as the neighbour is not properly compensated.”

INTERVIEW WITH REV. EMMANUEL SINGH (II)

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

Salt Shakers: Emmanuel, Could you tell us more about your work in Kolkata? What do you normally do with your time?

Rev. Singh: In Kolkata, I am very isolated. I am not (in) very good (standing) among the Christians there. I have resigned my position to be a part of the council (of churches) in Kolkata – the people think I am isolated and my group a cult because of the Reformed truth. I am not so popular (laughs) as I was before, not well-accepted by others. When I came out from the Brethren denomination (where I grew up in), they circulated a letter saying, “Emmanuel – he has become a Roman Catholic, because he believes in infant baptism. So Emmanuel should not be allowed to preach from the pulpit in any of the Brethren churches. They also stopped giving me the Lord’s supper. They said, “Emmanuel, you must repent, you have backslided”. Among the evangelicals, they said, “his doctrine is too robotic, because he believes God controls everything and man has no role in salvation”. All kinds of things – persecution within the church and outside of the church.

“In Kolkata, I am very isolated.”

So what I do now, I work at the personal level. I meet people. Sometimes I go on Facebook and try to send friend requests to other people in Kolkata, meet them, call them, ask them to join the church. So, reaching out to people using technology. Also by making friends. We hold Bible studies two days in the week at two different locations. The aim is to gather His people, as He provides, in His time, so that the work in Kolkata may become a church one day. So maybe there may be a Reformed Witness there one day too.

Salt Shakers: What can you tell us about your congregation in Kolkata?

Rev. Singh: There is a church, but not yet an organized church. Many people are coming to the Reformed faith. They are from different backgrounds. Some were previously charismatics – after they heard the Reformed gospel and asked questions, they are convinced and they are joining with us. There was this brother, he said, “I used to speak in tongues”. I asked him, “Do you

understand tongues?” He said, “No, I don’t understand”. I said, “What is the use of prayer? Bible says in 1 Corinthians 14 – pray with understanding. When we pray to the Lord, we must pray with understanding. If you don’t understand what you are saying, it is fake. So don’t believe in the mystical experience. Understand God and His written word”.

So the people, they are coming. But my next plan is to start teaching a pre-confession class. If there are other people that come from other denominations, they can join and learn the Reformed truth. But it is a process. It will take time. Because mission work is not easy. In Kolkata, there are many counterparts – Hinduism, Islam, within Christianity itself, different sects and denominations. So we have to be strong as we teach the people.

Another issue is that we don’t have much translation of Reformed literature. So we need to do some literature work that is relevant to the context. So I am planning to write

“...it is a process. It will take time. Because mission work is not easy.”

down some common questions and translate the answers for the people. For example, the question of “what is the tongue?” A lot of people came and asked these common questions and I answered them from the Bible. But is it also good for them to have something to take with them to read. I am also hoping to do some articles on TULIP. So there is a lot of work. Without literature, the Reformed faith cannot spread. That is my burden, to work on the Reformed literature in Bengali. Only the Heidelberg Catechism has been translated, only the simple questions without exposition.

Salt Shakers: What are some of the activities that you do to get people to hear the message?

Rev. Singh: Sometimes we do open air preaching, go distributing tracts. So far, we don't really have the literature. There will be two kinds of ministry. One is weekly going outside the metro station and distributing tracts and handouts, second is prayer

“...in the future there may also be a conference planned, where people from many denominations can gather and hear a pastor speak,”

meeting in houses or some hall, calling them to hear the gospel.

Salt Shakers: How can our churches grow closer together?

Rev. Singh: We are already close together. I think we need to work together for the literature. I am also thinking of developing small apps where I can stream the gospel messages. Because nowadays in Kolkata, even young men have android mobiles. I want to develop small apps where people can download the messages.

You know, the father of modern missions is William Carey. In his time, 200 years ago, he was the first man to come to India and translate the Bible into 14 languages. He used the latest technology in his time. He was the first man to bring the printer into India. So he used literature, and he used technology – the printing machine. So now I am a missionary, and being a missionary, I love William Carey – not his

doctrines, but the work he has done. He used the available technology to reach out to the people. We live in the 21st century; a lot of the technology can be used – tools to reach out to the people.

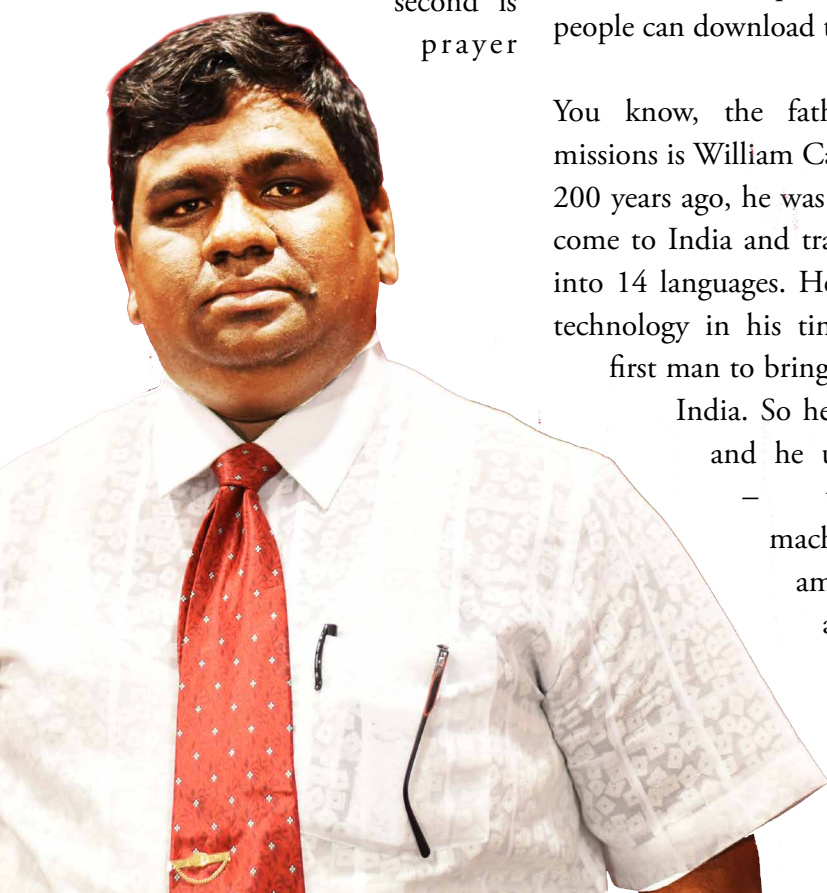
Salt Shakers: Another question. You know in December (2016), we are going to have a Bible camp for the youth? We also hear there is also a Bible camp planned in Kolkata. Will there be other such opportunities for our people to go to each others' activities?

Rev. Singh: Yes, in the future there may also be a conference planned, where people from many denominations can gather and hear a pastor speak, find a common place and invite others to attend. In Kolkata, you have to understand that the Reformed gospel has not reached the others. Whether Baptist or Pentecostal – on our Reformed map they are unreached. So we need to reach other people. Hindu, others – especially those living in the wrong area of the gospel – the Arminian faith. I hope to organise some meetings where pastor can preach.

Salt Shakers: A last question. Can you tell us more about your fellowship – like what are the people there like? Any prayer requests?

Rev. Singh: There are quite a few young people, also some older saints. There are some that come but have yet to recognise themselves as members. So many are coming, but it is a long process. Will they be faithful to the Reformed doctrine? That is the question, to me.

Salt Shakers: Emmanuel, thank you for the interview.



OUR EARTHLY LABOURS

>>Samuel Wee



Samuel Wee is a member of CERC.

“Our Earthly Labours” may have different meanings and be different to different people:

- To some it may just be to eat, to sleep and be merry.
- To others it be to work, more work, and more work for worldly gains.
- Yet, to many, it is a way to provide honestly for personal or family needs.

Also, it is a broad-based subject that covers every aspect of life from conception in a mother's womb, to a dying man on his deathbed.

Yes, a foetus in a mother's womb must labour to eat as the mother labours to provide for the needs of the baby's development. And so, in death, a man must labour to breathe out his last breath before his soul returns to God. But the subject in writing is about earthly labour that the Christian has been called to work in this world.

As Christ's disciples, we are called to be followers and imitators of Christ. With the eyes of faith, we look beyond the

earthly to find that earthly labours have their origin in the book of Genesis.

As the book of Genesis unfolds the work of God in creation, Genesis 2:15 gave us a glimpse of God's design for Adam. Adam was put in the garden of Eden. God's call to him was to dress it and be a good husbandman to keep it. We can say that it is the best form of earthly labour before it degenerated after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin.

Through God's call to Adam, it is implied that Adam must be disciplined and diligent to his calling, engage and be earnest in his actions, passionate and patient to the care of the garden, and take an interest to protect the beauty of God's creation.

Taking Genesis 2:15 as the basis that work is God's creation order for man, we may then say that work is God's call and will to man. It is used by God:

- to relate man to his Maker, thereby making him to be sensitive to his need of God.
- to regulate the life of man to service, thereby sanctifying his heart, soul and mind to a healthy and enriching life with God.
- for man to act in good faith in response to God's order, thereby acting as a salt and light at his or her workplace.

Though we are far from being in the beginning, the call of God is still the same to us as it was in the beginning. We are called to earthly labour, working

with our hands the thing which is good (Eph. 4:28a), for the provisions and maintenance of godly families, the nurturing of godly children, the needs of husband and wife, the needs of the church of Jesus Christ, and the needs of our neighbours.

Though it is not one of the most important in life, **earthly labour is of importance** to the Christian, and Eph. 4:28 reminds us that it must be anchored on the thing which is for our spiritual good and the good of our neighbours.

It is for the above that Genesis 2:15 also marked out a horizontal relationship where Adam is related to the physical surrounding of the garden of Eden, the tree of the garden that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the river, and Eve, the mother of all living, and he must labour to keep it for good.

While earthly labours are important, the Word of God also warns us against being lazy like the sluggard in Proverbs 20:4 & 6:6. There are also the warnings of dangers, that like the pitcher plant, earthly labours can also entrap, endanger and be stifling to the Christian life. It has the potential to discourage, to do damage, to intimidate and threaten the families, the husband and wife relationships, parent and child relationships, and the church.

That is because our earthly labours are tied to monetary gains, and the more time and effort we put in, the more we stand to gain. Also, it is often subjected to labour under the ungodly,

in an unfriendly environment that is characterised by greed, pride, and many other unchristian behaviours. More so, it takes place in this world that is like Sodom and Gomorrah. And, many of us have bosses, superiors, and colleagues who just want to prosper in the world, and increase in their riches (Ps. 73:12). They do not care about life with God, and they do not share the Christian perspectives and call to earthly labours.

It is here that we often ask, **so what should we do** with all the challenges, pains, hardships, trials and tribulations, testing moments, that could pile up on us from our earthly labours? The Word of God has much to speak to us. As early as it was in the beginning, Adam must begin each day of earthly labour with a lively exercise of faith in godly fear, hope and love towards the LORD his God. He must look to see the creation of God, and be intimate with the power, the sovereignty and the wisdom of God, to find strength, patience, peace and hope to meet the needs of his earthly labours. Adam

must also walk and talk with God to find friendship and fellowship with his Maker, to know God's thoughts and ways, and to feel the heartbeat of God when he is physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually drained because of his earthly labours.

So, what does all the aforesaid mean for us? In short, we need to know that the just shall live by faith (Hab. 2:4b) and faith is in the triune God. Our faith must be built up through a lively and rigorous exercise in pursuit of God, of prayers, in the reading and study of God's Word, in doing good works with God's approval, and even in our calling to earthly labours.

So, each morning as we prepare to go for earthly labours, we must also be mindful to take on our three-fold Christian calling to be a prophet, priest and king. We must remind ourselves that we are representatives of Him who is our chief Prophet, Priest, and King. We must work as citizens of the kingdom of God, and if we must speak,

or to intercede, or to rule over, or to be subject to the higher powers, we do so in the likeness of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Finally, what is the purpose our earthly labours?

Our earthly labours form a small segment in our life, while the chief end of man in life and in death is to glorify God.

We may then conclude that our earthly labours must glorify God (not a shallow kind, nor with lip service). We need to be sincere, to be submissive, to surrender all to Him, to be faithful in serving our Christian calling, doing so with complete dependence upon God to provide us, to protect us from the snares of earthly labours, to instruct and direct us in the path of righteousness even for His name's sake. May the LORD our God helps us.

To God be the glory. Amen.

TOLERATE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF?

>>Pastor Andrew Lanning



Pastor Andrew Lanning is the minister of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church, Singapore.

The Great Commandment, According to Popular Thought: Tolerate!

In the popular thinking of our day, tolerance is the supreme virtue. The great commandment for society has become: Tolerate thy neighbour as thyself. Especially in Singapore, with its blend of many different cultures and religions, tolerance is seen as essential for the functioning of society. Thus, through our system of public holidays, through the schools' commemoration of Racial Harmony

Day, and through the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, tolerance is not only promoted, but legislated, as we are continually reminded of the need for harmony in our multicultural society. Summarizing this sentiment, the Straits Times reported: "Harmony between different races and religions is a fundamental principle for Singapore, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong noted on Racial Harmony Day on Thursday (July 21). In a Facebook post, PM Lee wrote that Singaporeans should celebrate their diversity, and share one

“The great commandment for society has become: Tolerate thy neighbour as thyself.”

another’s customs and cultures” (Nair 2016).

But what does it mean to tolerate others? If tolerance simply means acknowledging that there are different religions and cultures among people, all is well. If tolerance simply means allowing others the legal right to practice their religion, all is well. The child of God can tolerate other religions in this sense, while at the same time vigorously exposing and opposing those religions as unbiblical and false. However, today’s popular notion of tolerance is that we must not only acknowledge that other beliefs exist, but accept other beliefs as equally valid, and even embrace other beliefs as equally good. Merriam-Webster defines tolerance according to this idea of acceptance: “willingness to accept feelings, habits, or beliefs that are different from your own.” About this meaning of tolerance, D. A. Carson writes, “To accept that a different or opposing position exists and deserves the right to exist is one thing; to accept the position itself means that one is no longer opposing it. The new tolerance suggests that actually accepting another’s position means believing that position to be true, or at least as true as your own” (Carson 2012, p. 3).

The contemporary idea of tolerance is closely related to the postmodern age in which we live. There are many terms to describe the thinking of our age: postmodernism, relativism, multiculturalism; but all of these terms basically mean that there is no absolute Truth, no absolute standard of right and wrong. Each individual decides for himself what is true and what is moral, and his truth and morality are just as valid as his neighbour’s; what is true for one might not be true for another. We can see how the contemporary idea of tolerance fits within this postmodernism. If there is no overarching Truth, then we must accept and embrace everyone’s truth as equally valid and good.

Such postmodern ideas of tolerance are incompatible with Christianity, because Christianity is absolute. There is one absolute standard of Truth: God’s Word. There is one absolute standard of right and wrong: God’s law. There is one absolute way to salvation: Jesus Christ. There is one absolute calling: believe in Jesus Christ and be saved, or perish in unbelief. In being faithful to Jesus Christ and His truth, Christianity is not tolerant, and cannot be tolerant, according to the postmodern definition of tolerance.

“Such postmodern ideas of tolerance are incompatible with Christianity..”

Therefore, the contemporary idea of tolerance has serious consequences for the church. When tolerance is the great commandment, judging becomes the unforgiveable sin. We are told that it is morally wrong to condemn the beliefs or practices of others. The spiritual leaders of the world lecture us about the evils of such judgment. The Dalai Lama is quoted as saying: “What is love? Love is the absence of judgment”. Mother Teresa is credited as saying, “If you judge people, you have no time to love them”. Indeed, Christians who judge others are now subject to legal penalties in some parts of the world. In recent years in the West, Christian bakers who judge homosexuality to be sin on biblical grounds have been actively persecuted through heavy fines for their refusal to bake wedding cakes for homosexual “weddings”. Everything under the sun is tolerated, except Christian intolerance for sin and the lie.

The Great Commandment, According to Jesus: Love!

How shall we as covenant youth respond to these ideas of tolerance? Our response must begin with a correct understanding of our calling toward our neighbour. The great commandment, as spoken by Jesus, is not, Tolerate; but, Love! “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40). Love is the new commandment, the defining characteristic of a Christian, the identifying mark of one who follows the Lord. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as

I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (Jn. 13:34, 35).

Now that we know our calling is to love our neighbour, we must understand what it means to love him. Love is an affection for the neighbour that desires the neighbour’s good. Love is not merely a passing sentimentality, but a real interest in the neighbour and a real concern for his welfare. True love has such a deep interest in the neighbour’s welfare that it is willing to sacrifice itself to see the neighbour’s needs met. Love puts everyone else first, and itself last. Read Paul’s description of charity, or love, in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, which emphasises the selfless, sacrificial nature of love.

Our love for the neighbour is rooted in God’s love for us. God chose us from eternity in love (Eph. 1:4, 5). God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die upon the cross for our sins (Jn. 3:16). God establishes His covenant of love and friendship with us (Ps. 25:14). God finally brings us home to heaven to live in joyful love with Him forever (Ps. 16:11, Rev. 21:3). As God loved us and gave His only begotten Son, so we are to love our neighbour. Or, as Jesus

“Our love for the neighbour is rooted in God’s love for us.”

put it, “As I have loved you . . . love one another” (Jn. 13:34).

With this understanding of love, we can now see our calling toward the neighbour. Our calling is to love him, even when it means that we must oppose his lies, sin, and unbelief. We speak the truth in love over against his lies (Eph. 4:15), not to destroy him, but out of love, for the truth sets us free (Jn. 8:32). We reprove his sin, even through rebuke (Lk. 17:3), not to destroy him, but out of love, for repentance leads to everlasting life (Act. 11:18). We call him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, out of love, for in Christ alone is salvation (Act. 4:12). We pray for him, recognizing that God alone can call him out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

Tolerance, as the world defines it, is one of the most hateful things we could do to our neighbour. If the neighbour is ensnared in lies, shall we accept his lies and leave him so entangled? If he is bound in sin, shall we accept his evil and leave him in such bondage? If he is blinded in unbelief, shall we approve, and leave him to be cast out? Loving the neighbour means we cannot possibly tolerate the mortal danger he is in, that we cannot stand silently by while he is

destroyed. Love compels us to seek his highest good: salvation in Jesus Christ.

In the popular thinking of our day, tolerance is the supreme virtue. The great commandment for society has become: Tolerate thy neighbour as thyself. As children of God, let us be renewed in our minds so that we are not deceived by the thinking of the world. Let us seek our neighbour’s good as we heed the true commandment of our Lord: Love thy neighbour as thyself.

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“If the neighbour is ensnared in lies, shall we accept his lies and leave him so entangled?”

THE GOOD STEWARD

>>Ivan Chew



Ivan Chew is a member of CERC.

What is your view on money?

Is it good or bad?

Is it something to be desired or to flee from?

What should we use money for?

I think money is good. Because money is a tool developed through man's wisdom, and like any other tool created by man, such as the computer, hammer or knife, the wisdom to develop these tools comes from God. The Bible not only teaches that these tools are good, it also teaches us how to use them! We read in 1 Tim 4:4-5 that "...every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused...if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer".

We are highly dependent upon this tool in our daily lives! Without money, how many of us would be able to provide for our bodily necessities? If you lose your income, would you be able to grow rice, make bread or raise chickens to provide for your daily needs?

However, despite the importance of

money, we must remember that it is but a tool. It is more important to emphasize that it is God who provides. And God may provide for our needs even without money! God provided for his people in the wilderness by smiting a rock and causing water to gush out, overflowing the streams (Ps. 78:20 and Ex. 17:6). He provided meat for Elijah through a raven while he was hiding by the brook Cherith (1 King. 4).

"...Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matt. 6:25).

When we realise that money is but an earthly tool, and the provision of our needs ultimately comes from God, one will realise that the relentless pursuit of money does not profit one's salvation. Instead, the Bible clearly warns against that (1 Tim 6:10). And the warning is well placed, as the secular world has been very successful in portraying material wealth as happiness which is worth working very hard for and even glorifying this as the "pursuit of happiness".

In the relentless pursuit of affluence, men have come up with new structures, institutes and innovations. One such notable development is the field of enhancing fertility. The first major point in one's career is usually in the early 30s. Hence, working women would be at a huge disadvantage if they were to have children in their 20s, as that would include the necessary time and effort sacrificed to raise a child.

The solution was a medical procedure to freeze one's eggs. Through such a method, women would be free! Free to pursue their careers, no longer limited by a biological clock should they desire a child. Once they are satisfied with their status on the corporate ladder, they can then thaw their frozen eggs, have them fertilised and transplanted back in their womb. With this new means of fertility, couples or single women may choose to postpone the setting up of a family, sacrificing all the time of their young adult life on something perceived to be more important than anything else, their careers.

The continuous effort and sacrifice made to achieve wealth is materialism. Materialism is a great evil, for it is a denial of God and of His sovereignty. It is the worship and service of mammon. Do not be deceived by the materialism of this world for it does not bring happiness, and such a covetous pursuit is sinful and brings only strict condemnation (Matt. 19:24). True happiness requires a life with God (Ps. 1:2, 119:2, Matt. 4:4).

How does God distribute this tool to His people? Certainly not through

unlawful means that will break His commandments. Neither through legally abiding methods that contradict the teachings of the Bible. One "creative" example of such a method is the development and commercialization of synthetic substances that replicate the effects of addictive drugs created by scientists (Gray, 2014). These are newly created substances that can be sold legally as they are not banned by

legislation. But each sale results in the harm of the neighbour and his family.

God instead provides money to us through an honest day's work (2 Thes 3:10-12).

How should money be used? The use of this tool is governed by the "Principles of Stewardship", which are:

- (1) *God is the absolute owner of all things* (Ps. 24:1 and Hag. 2:8),
- (2) *God gave us things that we may use for a time* (Job 1:21),
- (3) *Gifts should be used in the way the Lord prescribes and*
- (4) *We remain accountable for the use of the gifts.*

How specifically does God prescribe the use of the money given to us? The Bible only explicitly gives instruction on one's use of money:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these

things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

God requires us to make His kingdom the first priority, giving cheerfully and liberally to the church, seminary, the poor and to the Christian schools. It is a blessing for us to give (Acts 20:35)! Remember that this requirement is by no means easy to fulfil, as the demands of these two passages of scripture defy our very nature. Our depravity is self-centred and self-seeking (Ps. 51:5). *What we wish to do, is to give the minimum 10%, and to keep the remaining 90% for ourselves.* To fulfil the calling to use money in the God-prescribed manner requires constant attention and prayer.

As a conclusion to this article, let us meditate on Proverbs 30:8-9, which would best articulate the attitude that a Christian should have towards money.

"Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

I also leave with you statements to ponder upon and discuss their validity:

Statement 1: "Luxury brands serve only to fulfil the vanity of men. Making purchases of such goods only serve to fuel the pride of men by being a symbol of their wealth, affluence and power."

Statement 2: "The church is to do its best to lift its members from poverty. What love would it be to enjoy affluence while watching another member of the church toil in poverty?"

Statement 3: "Spiritual callings of the Bible should dictate our actions even when it defies worldly prudence (E.g. Speaking up for the truth even if it brings persecution). So the family should also obey God's calling first to multiply even if financial prudence is against having more children."

REMEMBERING 500 YEARS OF THE 1517 REFORMATION

JOHN CALVIN' QUOTE:

"Adore with astonishment the secret counsel of God, through which, those which seemed good to Him are elected, and the other rejected!"

Source: <https://standardbearer.rfpa.org/articles/calvins-doctrine-predestination-1>

CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS (II): DIVISION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT CHURCH

>>Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma



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We concluded our last article explaining the difference between the church as the body of Christ and the church institute. The church as the body of Christ is made up of only those God had chosen to eternal life in Christ. It is made up of only believers who are united to Christ by a true and living faith. The church institute, on the other hand, contains both believers and unbelievers. Not all the children born to believing parents are elect. Not all believe. Likewise, others who are not truly believers join the church for various carnal reasons. Jesus addresses this in His parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13.

Because of this harsh reality, the carnal, unbelieving seed in the church institute can multiply and eventually attempt to control the course of the church. Error is taught and/or worldly-mindedness characterizes the life of many of her members. Then unbelievers create strife and division in the church while the believers struggle to maintain the truth in doctrine and walk. Division is never pretty! It divides families and friends.

It creates suspicion, animosity and incessant quarrelling. The church no longer is a place of peace and joy. This is why the church is always admonished to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). But when error creeps into the church in doctrine or walk and the church becomes divided over these matters it inevitably leads to a split. When this occurs new denominations are created.

The multiplication of denominations is not new. It did not begin with the Reformation of the 1500s as some accuse. It began already in the Old Testament when the kingdom of Israel separated itself from the tribe of Judah and the house of David forming its own institute. We want to examine this event because it teaches us much about the formation of denominations.

The congregation of Israel was assembled together at Shechem. At the head of Israel stood a man named Jeroboam. Jeroboam had been a powerful man in the kingdom of Solomon. We learn in 1 Kings 11:28 that Jeroboam was a man of valour and was industrious. Because of his ability, Solomon made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph, that is, over the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Jeroboam, therefore, was a man of great influence over the northern tribes of Israel. But all this changed when Solomon learned that the prophet Ahijah had informed Jeroboam that God was going to make him king over ten tribes in punishment for Solomon's sin. Solomon then sought

to kill him and Jeroboam fled to Egypt.

But Solomon was now dead and Rehoboam his son had gone to Shechem in order that all of Israel might coronate him as the next king. Jeroboam now stood before Rehoboam and placed the demands of the ten northern tribes before him. "Lighten the taxes and we will serve you! If not, we will secede." Three days later Rehoboam in his foolishness refused to give in to the demands of the northern tribes. Instead, he made the taxes heavier and threatened an even more severe punishment on those who did not pay.

This prompted the first division in the church. We read the response of the northern tribes through the mouth of Jeroboam to Rehoboam's action in I Kings 12:16, "So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have

"The church institute, on the other hand, contains both believers and unbelievers..."

we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents". Jeroboam soon was chosen king over these ten tribes just as Ahijah had prophesied. Since then the house of Israel was divided: bitterness and hatred, division and strife, even war. So great was the division that took place.

There are two reasons the Bible reveals for this division.

The first reason was apostasy. Jeroboam and the ten tribes used as a pretence the lowering of taxes. But this was only an excuse to separate from Judah – one that would make them appear as if they were justified in rebelling against Rehoboam. The real reason for separation is found in the verse we just quoted. "What portion have we in David! Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse!" No? Really? No portion or inheritance in David? Surely, the people of Israel (and especially Jeroboam) knew the promise of Jacob years earlier to Judah his son in Genesis 49:10: , "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be". Indeed, God had appointed David as the heir of Judah's tribe to receive this blessing of God. We read of God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:16, "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever". To forsake the house of David was to forsake the Christ that would come out of his line. It was to forsake the Shiloh. The ten tribes turned away from the only possible way of salvation from sin found in the coming Messiah.

Further, the ten tribes forsook the

temple in Jerusalem, the place of God's abode where alone the proper worship of Jehovah could be found. Instead, Jeroboam built two temples furnished with golden calves in Dan and in Bethel. The citizens of the northern kingdom from this point on worshiped Jehovah by means of these images – a sin from which this kingdom never departed. The ten northern tribes, the kingdom of Israel left Judah because she had become apostate! And as time went on, though she was still called by God's name, she departed deeper and deeper into error and sin.

The second reason for this separation, however, was divine. God willed it. Yes, God willed the split that took place in His Old Testament church at this time. We know He willed it, first of all, because God told Solomon He was going to do it as punishment for Solomon's sin of marrying heathen wives and worshiping their gods together with them. We know God willed it, in the second place because He sent the prophet Ahijah to Jeroboam and informed Jeroboam that he would be the next king over the ten northern tribes. We know that God desired this division in the Old Testament church, in the third place, because when Rehoboam raised a massive army to force the ten tribes to return, God sent the prophet Shemaiah to speak with him. The word of God through Shemaiah is recorded in 1 Kings 12:24, "Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me".

Why did God will such a horrible split to take place in His Old Testament church? Because of the apostasy that had enveloped the northern tribes. They no longer had their sights set on

the coming Messiah who alone could deliver from sin. This was not true of everyone in the ten tribes, of course. Even in the wicked days of Ahab there were still in Israel 7,000 that did not bow the knee to Baal. There were even a few yet in Israel who at the time of Hezekiah heard the call to come and worship Jehovah in Jerusalem in the temple. But the church institute now embodied in the kingdom of Israel (the ten tribes) had embraced error and steadily declined until God took this church away into captivity never to return. Judah needed to be preserved from this apostasy.

One other matter we learn from this history. God did not want His true church (Judah) to instigate peace or join hands with the false church (Israel). Several generations later Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined in league together with Ahab of Israel by means of an arranged marriage between his son and Ahab's daughter. He and Ahab then went out to battle Syria together. In that battle Ahab was slain and Jehoshaphat barely escaped. After Jehoshaphat returned from that battle he was visited by the prophet Hanani who spoke this word of God in 2 Chronicles 19:2, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD". God had separated the apostate church from His faithful church. When an attempt was made to make peace while overlooking the differences, God was angry!

We will return to this matter in our next article to learn what this history teaches us about God's purpose for division among denominations.



News from the Churches

Singapore

On 2 April, CERC rejoiced with Lee Yang and Joanna upon the baptism of their infant son, Isaiah. On 14 April, CERC was yet again blessed with the birth of another covenant child, Leah Tan, daughter of Ywee Ern and Hui Li.

From 21-23 April (Friday to Sunday), Rev. Andy Lanning, together with Elder Leong Fai Chong, Brother Ishu and Brother Suan Kiat attended the first CERC (Fellowship) Kolkata Church Camp (CERCK) together with 37 attendees from India. The theme of the camp was "The Church", based on 1 Timothy 3:15. The camp included five speeches, three Q & A sessions, and one sermon at the worship service on Sunday. Currently, Session is working towards organizing CERCK as an instituted church and will begin laying out a more specific timeline for organization.

We rejoice with Daniel and Isa, who were joined in the bond of marriage on 27 May. We pray that God will use their union to reflect Christ and His church.

United States

As Prof. Russell Dykstra's retirement process has begun, the Protestant Reformed Seminary is now seeking a new professor to take over his work. The Protestant Reformed Churches formed a trio of ministers consisting of Rev. Garry Eriks (Hudsonville PRC), Rev. Doug Kuiper (Edgerton PRC), and Rev. Andy Lanning (CERC Singapore). On 14 June, Rev. Kuiper was called by the PRC Synod to consider taking up this work. Rev. Kuiper has three weeks to consider this call.

Philippines

A group of young adults have formed a group called the Reformed Discussion Table to discuss Reformed doctrines that are of interest to them. On 27 May, Rev. Kleyn was asked to speak on Common Grace. For more details, visit the Kleyns' blog: www.kleynsphilippines.blogspot.sg



Baptism of Isaiah Chua,
infant son of Lee Yang and Joanna



Joel Drnek, Emily Lanning and Liz Van Drunen
on the boat ride to Pulau Ubin



The Lanning and Drnek cousins at Gardens by the Bay



Attendees of the inaugural Kolkata Church Camp,
including Rev. Lanning, Eld. Leong, & Bros. Ishu & Suan Kiat



Celebrating Mariana Kennedy's birthday in Singapore



CERC sports & fellowship outing at Labrador Park

Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church

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

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