

"... the desire to bring up our children in the fear of the Lord with the utmost of our power must always be in us."

Sister Jean Lim - Covenant Instruction Commanded by God

"Should the Lord give to us a husband and children, are we of the mind that we will devote ourselves to our husband and Covenant home?"

Anthea Liu - What to Look For in a Boyfriend: A "Checklist" For Your Heart Part I

"If a man truly desires to be a servant in the church, he must busy himself with the Word of God..."

Elder Wong Chee Choong - The Office of Elder Part II: The Challenges and Struggles that Elders Face



salt shakers
joel 3:16 matthew 5:16

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Home, Sweet Home

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Dear readers, welcome to the 32nd Issue of Salt Shakers!

As you might have noticed, we missed an editor's note in the last issue because space was given to our out-going Salt Shaker's Chairman for his last editorial. Josiah will be leaving us for some other commitments in church, and by God's grace, He has provided for us a new Chairman in Lee Yang. And, to start off just as Josiah ended, Lee Yang will be writing the editorial for this issue. We covet your prayers as the committee goes through some changes in personnel; may God continue to strengthen us to do His work, and keep us humble in the knowledge that having done all, we remain but unprofitable servants.

It has been an eventful past couple of months, both within the Church, and without. An important event worth mentioning would be the passing away of Singapore's founding father, Mr Lee Kuan Yew. He was indeed a great man with much worldly wisdom, and Singapore owes much of her wealth and success to his leadership. However, as God's Word says in Proverbs 22:2, "the rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all." There is no one too great, too powerful, or too rich to die. Like the poorest man, they all meet their maker when He requires their lives at the appointed time. Is a great man's death of any worth? Is there anything great about a great man's death? Truth be told, the only great deaths are of those who are saved by the blood of Jesus. They are great because the LORD almighty views their deaths as "precious". Is there a better judge of value than God Himself? Psalm 116:15 tells us plainly, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." What a comfort to be found in Jesus; what a blessing that death is but a passage into eternal life and communion with our Lord! May we be quickened in our service as we look forward to that precious day.

Within the Church, we have had the opportunity to hear of and be involved in God's work outside of Singapore, especially in Kolkata, India, which is the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal. CERC sent a delegation to meet with Emmanuel Singh, and we praise God for their wonderful and encouraging findings. Do read more about this under "News from the Churches", and remember to pray for the Bride of Christ, wherever she may be manifest in this world!

Blessed reading, and remember to pass the Salt!

Christ regardless
paul

THE WORD OF GOD STANDS FOREVER

>> Chua Lee Yang



Lee Yang is a confessing young adult in CERC and is the Chairman of Salt Shakers.

Dear beloved Salt Shakers readers,

We live in times of great change and upheaval. Change is what characterises our brief stay and sojourn upon this earth. Like the grass, we flourish and grow up; in the evening we are cut down, and wither.

Our world, too, changes, often faster than we can keep up with. We make new friends, or gradually distance from old ones. We enter into new relationships, or say goodbye to loved ones. We move houses, and change jobs and schools. Regimes and rulers change. Generations of believers come and go.

The Salt Shakers committee, too, undergoes change! We thank God for the years of faithful service in Salt Shakers by Yangzhi, Huiqi, and Josiah, who have moved on to serve in other areas, having nurtured the magazine from its conception to where it is today.

But the LORD, who has been our dwelling place in all generations, changes not. A thousand years are to

Him but one day, and as a brief watch in the night. He is Jehovah, the I AM THAT I AM, the only constant in this ever-changing world. So is His Word, every letter as unchangeable, unbreakable and everlasting as God is. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word stands forever.

As Reformed Christians, this is of tremendous comfort and importance to us. The Scriptures are our steadfast anchor, the mooring that weathers all storms. When worldly philosophies and theories change, God's Word does not. When churches and friends are blown about by every wind of doctrine, God's Word comforts us and brings us to seek the old paths.

Furthermore, dear readers, believe not every spirit, but try them against the one and entire truth of Scripture. There is no truth to be found, not in schools, literature and theory, or anything in this universe, except that which is found in the Word of God, breathed by the very Spirit of Truth that dwells in the hearts of all believers. Try every spirit, for each one can only ever be of two persuasions—the Truth, or the Lie. There is no middle ground. Except the spirits be with Scripture fully agreed, they are born of their father the devil.

Because the Truth is of God, it changes not. It is trustworthy and useful as a guide for Salt Shakers' work, our Confessions, and our lives, indeed, the only guide and absolute authority. As

Reformed Christians, we must insist on the Truth, holding on to it for dear life, buying it, and selling it not. The Truth is not convenient or popular. Often it puts us in the firing line of harsh criticism. But it is our only lifeline, and to let it go is to be lost in the drowning waves of apostasy.

But if that were not enough reason in itself to hold on, there's more! Living in the Truth and light of Scripture is like living in a lifeboat, tossed amid the cruel sea of the world that rages against the sides of the boat, with accusations of intolerance and bigotry washing over the sealed windows. Sometimes we open a window to look outside and we get wet. But in the lifeboat there is life. And if anything could be better than that, there is comfort, peace and true joy to be found there too, where all the promises of God in Jesus Christ are yea and Amen. It is like finding out that not only is the lifeboat dry and afloat, but it also has a bed, warm blankets, good music and best of all, fellowship with God.

And we can be sure that it always will be that way, for God never changes. His Word is unbreakable and stands forever. The promises of God are forever, and fulfilling. And when our work on earth is done, and our voyage in the boat is complete, we can be sure that that boat too, will carry the generations that follow us.

Let us as readers and writers of Salt Shakers ever seek to dwell in the

Truth, and be not frightened of the winds of change that rage about us. Let us study the Word together and

love it. Our time here is fleeting. The work of Salt Shakers lasts only as long as the Lord grants grace and permits

its voice to be heard. But the Word of God stands forever.

What is Reformed? Reformed Worship Part IX - Preaching and Listening

>> Prof. Hanko



Prof Hanko is a retired professor of the Protestant Reformed Theological School. His present work consists of preaching at Hope Protestant Reformed Church, writing for the Salt Shakers magazine, writing in a forum for the young people in Singapore, and writing new books.

True Reformed worship is difficult. It is difficult chiefly because we are so earthly that anything heavenly is very difficult for us. Worship must be “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). This is true of all worship. It is especially true of listening to the preacher. We are, after all, listening to Christ.

I call this “Reformed Worship”. I do so because the worship of which I am speaking is hardly ever practised in the church world today. In some churches, everyone and anyone “preaches”. I saw a sign once on the property of a Reformed church that told of the times of worship, the name of the church, and other information. After the heading “Preacher”, the sign said, “The Whole Congregation”.

This is not Reformed. Evangelists who travel the world bringing about “revivals” claim to preach, but they are not preachers. They are sent by an organisation and not by the church itself.

Further, those who ought to be preaching by expounding the Scriptures and bringing God’s Word to God’s people, talk about every subject under the sun except what the Word of God teaches. Clever themes, catchy titles, and discussions on moral issues or social problems are the subject of their sermons—but one never hears the Scriptures. Forgotten are Paul’s ringing words: “We preach Christ crucified!” (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Preaching, God’s primary means of grace, is done by a man called and ordained by Christ, through the church who comes with the gospel of Christ crucified. That is Reformed preaching.

Reformed listening takes place only where there is Reformed preaching. Listening to a man speak is not worship. No matter how gifted he is in explaining Scripture; no matter how dramatic his oratory may be; no matter how captivating his voice may be; listening to such a man is not listening to preaching.

The preaching of the gospel is very powerful. It would not seem so to anyone who does not understand preaching. Outwardly, preaching is, after all, only a man talking. But the difference is that the man who speaks has been called by Christ through the church to be an ambassador of Christ, to speak in His name, and to preach with Christ’s authority. Preaching is so powerful that for one who preaches, it is sometimes scary. Preaching has more power than an atomic bomb, and it does things an atomic bomb cannot do. When a man preaches, he unleashes a power so great that it exceeds that of a devastating earthquake. A cyclone, tornado, or typhoon can leave miles of wreckage and an army of dead people behind it, but preaching makes these natural disasters look like the pop of a small firecracker.

Preaching comes to a congregation and is indeed what Paul calls in Romans 1:16, “the **power** of God unto salvation.” It rescues a person from “this present evil world” and sets him safely on the shores of heaven. It changes a murderer to one who gives alms to the poor. It turns a whore into the bride of Christ. It makes a blasphemer sing Psalms. It brings the most powerful people on earth to their

knees in humble prayer. It is like a bolt of lightning from heaven that strikes a man and makes him completely different from what he was. It makes a superstitious idol-worshipper into a worshipper of God and Christ. What earthly power can do this?

Preaching protects a person from the vicious attacks of Satan and his black demons. Preaching makes a brave and strong warrior out of a timid maiden. Preaching gives to a child the ability to lisp a prayer, "Lord, bless this food, for Jesus' sake, Amen." Preaching wipes away tears from the eyes of a young widow. It gives peace of heart in turmoil and storm. It brings serenity in the hospital and joy at the moment of death. It holds a sinner from self-destruction; and it keeps him safely all the days of his life.

Preaching even tells us the road we must walk if we are on our way to heaven. It is a torch in our hand when everything around us is so dark that we cannot find the way. It is "a lamp unto our feet and a light upon our path" (Psalm 119:105). When we stray from the path, or get lost in the thick underbrush of a dense forest, or get hopelessly stuck in a swamp of quicksand, preaching rescues us and shows us how to get back on the right road.

But preaching is all this and much more when we listen as we ought. There is something about preaching that is mysterious.

I already said, in an earlier issue of *Salt Shakers*, that wherever the gospel is preached the Holy Spirit is also busy at work. He does not work apart from the preaching; but He also always works where the Word of God is preached.

The Spirit works all these wonderful things that I mentioned only to those who listen properly. This is how the Spirit works. He first of all turns our attention to what the preacher is saying. We hear that with the ears on the side of our heads and with our minds. But, having done that, the Spirit also reminds us that Christ is speaking to each one of us—personally. For the moment, it is not important that we are reminded that the Spirit is also speaking to our fellow saints. That is, of course, true. We do realise sometimes that Christ is addressing the whole congregation. But in remembering this fact, we often hear what the minister says, and we say to ourselves, "I hope so-and-so is here this morning. I hope so-and-so is listening. So-and-so needs to hear this." No, not that. We listen to what Christ has to say to me, to me, personally. He wants me to pay attention. He has something that I need to hear. And so it is that the Spirit, in making us aware that Christ is speaking to each one of us, makes that preached word reflected (I do not know another better word to use) in our consciousness.

And here is where the miracle takes place. We come to church in the awareness of all the circumstances of our life. We come to church worn out by a hectic week of work. We come after returning exhausted from a strenuous trip—for pleasure or for our jobs. We come aware of our responsibilities in our homes, our church, our jobs, and our calling towards those whom we meet in our daily life. We come burdened with sorrow, for we have lost one we love dearly. We come angry at a brother or sister whom we feel has been unkind to us. We come dissatisfied with our

lot in life. We come burdened by sin, for we have said some cruel things; or have been disobedient to our parents; or have drunk deeply of wicked pleasure; or are bothered by failures to do what we know we are supposed to do; or...

Let me use an illustration, a very personal one. I have gone to church dragging my feet, because I have just finished a week which was splattered with sin. The burden of sin is heavy, heavy to the point where I even wonder whether I am worthy to worship: how can God receive me into His presence? I have no right to be there; I am too wicked; I did the same things again that I promised the Lord I would never do. I slump in my seat and can hardly sing the doxology, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow..."

But then I hear the minister: "Beloved congregation in our Lord, Jesus Christ." Christ is talking and addressing me. He tells me I am his beloved. Is it true? Can it be? Christ's beloved?

And then, "Grace, mercy and peace be unto you..." He is blessing me. I heard Christ's voice. He is speaking to me words of blessing! It is almost too good to be true. Christ blesses me!

And then, as the Spirit seals Christ's Word, which I have just heard spoken to me, to me his child; rest and peace fill my heart. "Praise God ye servants of the Lord, praise, praise his name with one accord..." Ah, yes. Praise the Lord.

And then the preaching comes. Christ speaks. He says to me: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He is calling me to come to him. He is

promising me rest from this terrible weariness. I will go to him.

That is the Spirit. That is how He works. Sometimes He shows me the right way to walk, the way that is pleasing to Him: “Seek those things that are above, and not the things of the earth”; “Lay up for yourself treasures

in heaven...” Sometimes He is angry with me and speaks angrily telling me in no uncertain terms to repent of my indifference, my pre-occupation with this world’s riches. Sometime He urges me to help my brother in trouble. Oh, so many things belong to my life in the world. The Word speaks to them

all; the Spirit impresses the Word on my consciousness.

Christ is speaking to me. I heard him. I know it is to me. It fits my life. It is my Lord who teaches me the way I should go.

That is Reformed listening.

The Office of Elder Part II: The Challenges and Struggles that Elders Face

>> Elder Wong Chee Choong

Wong Chee Choong is an elder in CERC. He is married to Wan Teng and their family is blessed with four daughters.

In this second article in the series on the office of Elder, we look at the challenges and struggles that Elders in church face, specifically in CERC’s context, and how men in the church should prepare for and prayerfully desire the office of Elder and be encouraged to consider this ministry. I must qualify that the content written is based on my own experience and opinion, and should not be read as CERC’s official position.

If we have read the first article of this series, we would have noticed that Elders have an importance place in the life of the church. They have a difficult task. They must rule the congregation so that the souls of God’s people are cared for (Hebrews 13:17). This work is a challenge both for a newly ordained Elder and a seasoned Elder re-installed into the office. Some Elders may hold senior positions of

authority in their secular jobs. Should they rule over the congregation with similar management style as in the secular office? The answer is “No”. First, the sole authority and power to rule in the church belongs to Christ. He is the Head of the church. His Word is binding upon the office-bearers and members of the church alike. Everything must be brought into subjection and obedience to His will or there will be no order. Furthermore, Christ has purchased His own with His blood and has delivered them from the guilt and dominion of sin in order that they might live to the praise of His grace and serve Him without fear in righteousness and holiness all the days of their life (Luke 1:75). Such is the order of the church; to bring this to manifestation, Christ has ordained Elders therein whom He mandates to maintain this order. Their responsibility is to see to it that the church becomes manifest in the world as the holy people of God.

Second, an Elder has a limitation in his authority to rule the congregation.

He may not “lord over the church” (1 Peter 5:3). He has no right to impose himself and his own personal ambitions upon the congregation. Rather, he is called to be the servant of Christ, humble and with an attitude of a shepherd tending after his flock. His task is to maintain and enforce the rule of Christ in the church. He may not be a man-pleaser, and might even expect the displeasure of many as he faithfully administers the will of His Lord. The Elder that does this rules well. To do this implies that the Elder is the administrator of the Word, for it is through the Word that Christ speaks and rules. As such, the Elder must know the Word and thoroughly understand it; only then is he able to direct the congregation in the way of the truth in which they are called to walk. He must demand this of the church in such a way that she feels the fulfilment of the word of Christ which He spoke to the seventy when He said, “He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth

Him that sent me” (Luke 10:16). Consequently, the rule of the Elders means having the unpleasant task of disciplining those members who are disobedient unto the gospel of Christ. This task is unpleasant only to the flesh. When the Elder views his calling in the light of God’s Word, he finds it neither difficult nor unpleasant to put out of the kingdom of God that which does not belong within and reveals itself as such. In this line of duty, the Elder must also understand that he has no authority to inflict physical punishment but bears only the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God; and therefore, it is spiritual discipline that he must administer upon the evil doer. In the final analysis, it is again Christ Himself Who does this through His office-bearers.

Third, Elders are also called to take oversight of the minister. Since he is a member of the congregation, his life, his walk, and the duties of his office are subject to the rule of the Elders (Hebrews 13:7,17). The Elders are to see to it that the minister preaches and administers the sacraments faithfully according to Scripture, the confessions, and the Church Order; and that includes catechetical instruction too. The Elders must make sure that no heresy is preached or taught in the church. They must see to it that the minister diligently and faithfully expounds the sacred Scriptures as it applies to the life and needs of God’s people. Preaching must edify, or build up, God’s people. If this is to happen, the congregation must be warned against the false doctrines which abound in our day. They must be instructed in the truth of Scripture, so that growing in the knowledge of the truth; they grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God’s people

must be exhorted to holiness so that they grow in sanctification to the glory of God. The Elders are also called to see to it that the minister faithfully performs the other aspects of his office, for example, visiting of the sick and taking part in family visitations. Finally, the Elders must be certain that the minister in his daily living reveals himself to be a “worthy example” to the people of God. The minister will be a worthy example if he is devoted as much as possible to the exercise of his office.

Fourth, the Elders have a responsibility as pointed out in Article 23 of the Church Order, that *“they ... exhort others in respect to the Christian religion”*, i.e. referring to church extension work or local evangelism. Because this is a vital aspect of the work of the local church, it is a duty as part of their supervision of the church. The Elders must be active in this work, and must promote and participate in this work.

There are struggles Elders face in the course of Christ’s work among His people in church due to the weariness of the flesh, the physical infirmities of the body as we age, and the stress of secular work competing for time especially when there are tight demands, tremendous pressures, and many overtime hours needed. All these affect their service as Elders. This is made especially difficult if the Elder has to serve for long consecutive terms when there are no replacements. Despite these struggles, we thank God for His grace and providential care to sustain the Elders through many years as they continue in their calling. We covet your prayers that the Lord may raise up men who desire to serve in the church as elders and servants of Christ.

How do we encourage men to prepare and pray for the office, or to consider the ministry? No doubt an emphasis is placed on the minister’s preparation because of the life-time call, the bulk of the work, and the nature of preaching. But neglecting the preparation for office of Elder is not proper (that includes the office of Deacon too), because the office of an Elder is difficult and is critically important for the life of the congregation. In some churches, an additional pastor is not always desirable but the church needs more, and well-qualified, Elders to help with the work, especially if the congregation gets larger by God’s grace.

A partial solution may be found in 1 Timothy 3:1, *“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of the bishop, he desireth a good work.”* This implies that a man should desire to serve in the church as an Elder and a servant of Christ. With that view in mind, he can prepare himself for work in the office. It is not necessary that he waits until he is elected to the office before he begins to prepare for the work. If he desires the office, he ought to begin preparing himself before the face of God. Even if the Lord never calls him to the office, the study will be of great spiritual benefit for him.

How does he prepare? If a man truly desires to be a servant in the church, he must busy himself with the Word of God, taking into account especially the spiritual principles needed for the office. He can prepare for and take an active part in leading a bible study group, volunteer to teach in Covenant Instruction with the view to discover his gifts and qualifications. An aptitude to teach is an important qualification of Elders. An opportune

place to begin is in the home God has given him; being a godly example of leadership in his family and instructing his children. *“For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?”* (1 Timothy 3:5). Such things can only be for the good of the church. A strong, active, and capable Session will, by the grace of God, build a strong church.

Weak and ill-equipped Elders will tend to weaken the flock. Its spiritual health depends, to a large degree, on the faithfulness of its office-bearers.

The office of Elder is given as a gift to us by the Lord of the church so that we can experience His rule over us. May we, in whatever relation to the office we find ourselves, thank our Father for His care over us through

the office-bearers. He gave them to us “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13).

The Call to Pray for All

>> Brother Andrew Tan



Andrew Tan is a member of CERC. He is the husband of Wee Kheng and their family is blessed with three children.

Our beloved Salt Shaker’s Committee has asked for this article with the purpose of reminding readers to pray for all men and for those in authority so that we may live quiet and peaceable lives. This article is also especially asked for in view of the recent passing away of our nation’s founding leader, Mr Lee Kuan Yew. However, this article is not about him, although I will make mention of him for contrast in the article proper.

We Thank God for our Earthly Rulers (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

At the State Funeral held in honour

of the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew on March 29th 2015, Singapore’s Prime Minister—who is also the son of Lee Kuan Yew—had stated in his eulogy to the world that Lee Kuan Yew was not a Christian. There was also no record of the late Lee Kuan Yew having confessed the Christian faith privately or publicly. Sadly, we have to resign ourselves to the strong possibility that he did not know nor embrace the “Reformed Truths” that we do. In retrospect, we would have wished that the late Lee Kuan Yew had looked to Christ as his Redeemer during his earthly life. With much respect and love, we have grieved with the family of our late Lee Kuan Yew; even as we earnestly love our family and friends who die without ever confessing Christ as their Lord.

By most accounts of those who had known him, the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew had lived an upright life and had even established a very high standard of moral code, for both himself and his family. While religion might not have been a belief in a deity or gods

insofar as he was concerned, Mr Lee Kuan Yew could have adopted and implemented religious knowledge somewhat philosophically and as a way of life—particularly for Singaporeans. His intellectual quest for knowledge in world philosophies, coupled with his well-endowed conscience enabled him to define how he ought to view the world around him and how he and his people ought to interact within this world. It is likely that equipped with the world’s knowledge and wisdom, he had established an exceedingly high moral code, by the world’s standards, in governing a nation of peoples with diverse religious beliefs and races with very different cultures and traditions. All these have led Lee Kuan Yew to achieve a Singapore that is successful and prosperous in the eyes of the world.

Whether the much respected and loved Mr Lee Kuan Yew might have known Jehovah God or not, it is clear that our Lord God indeed has ordained him to lead Singapore. Mr Lee has made Singapore what she is

today, only (but only) because of the grace and love that our Lord God Jehovah has for His Church, especially manifest in Singapore and the region.

The Wisdom of God's Word Revealed through Lee Kuan Yew's Rule

The wicked can never obey or please God even if they try to mimic the wisdom of God and even if they outwardly “prosper” and enjoy the benefits of their actions (Hebrews 11:6). In fact, such “successes” of the wicked only serve to show that our God is the wisest One, who knows Man perfectly and completely as his sovereign Creator, and so His Word is full of truth and wisdom that is good for Man. Such people, who have a form of godliness but deny God's power, are called reprobate concerning the faith” (2 Timothy 3:5,8).

Having known and lived through Lee Kuan Yew's era of leadership and government, we can see many instances of the wisdom of God revealed through the decisions and positive outcomes of Mr Lee's rule. I shall list a few of his work achievements that show the truth and wisdom of God's Word. Lee Kuan Yew had taken over power as the elected head of government by submitting to the rule of law, even in the defeating of his political opponents (Titus 1:8). While he might have been *the* Prime Minister, he had adopted and ruled through ‘collective leadership’ to formulate policies, achieve consensus, and subsequently implemented them in order to lead and move the people forward (Proverbs 15:22). He had elevated their way of life to standards that were higher than before Singapore had gained independence: from ‘attap’ or zinc roofed kampungs (or villages in Malay) to public brick and mortar

housing that continue to appreciate in value even till present day (Galatians 6:10, 1 Timothy 5:8). In the eyes of the world, Lee Kuan Yew had led by his own life's example and of his family (Acts 23:9, Acts 26:31). He was dead against corruption, and had unashamedly testified, yet never on a public platform, he and his family's high moral principles and frugality. Lee Kuan Yew never did it alone; he did not want to have the power to lead and govern unless he had the effective mandate of his people (1 King 12:1).

Yes, all of the above may well be also a tribute to our founding leader of Singapore, in that he had built and delivered a ‘physical kingdom’ that satisfies and enriches the physical and material well-being of Singapore and her people. Yet, I am sure you will agree that, seen from the spiritual perspective, we have it better with our Lord Jesus Christ, who already has that Kingdom for us to inherit. It is not about the physical, but the spiritual Kingdom.

As Singaporeans, we may have done well under the late Lee Kuan Yew's leadership. We have achieved with him a ‘world class’ kingdom that is probably ‘first’ in most areas of a nation's development. If the late Lee Kuan Yew and his people can build Singapore from a third-world to a first-world country in one generation, can we as Reformed Christians, under the leadership of our Commander-in-Chief, Lord Jesus Christ, do better with our spiritual kingdom for eternity? Have our churches been doing well? I urge patience in answering, especially if our answer is likely to be in the affirmative. Let us look at the referenced text, 1 Timothy 2:1-4 that calls us “to make supplications,

prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, for all men, kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”.

Who Really Rules Over Us?

First, let us agree as to who really rules over us, as citizens of the world. While we may have difficulty heeding the call to pray for all, especially when those in power are evil and even unbelieving, it is clear from the referenced text that we *are* to do these things nonetheless. It may even be confounding if we cannot relate to even ‘good ones’ ruling over us when they do not know us from the time of our birth till death. So, why does God want us to pray for them? How does praying for those in authority result in us being able to lead good and peaceable lives, especially when it is further reasoned in 1 Timothy 2 that it is “good and acceptable to our Saviour”?

Difficult to accept or not, all of us who *know* God cannot deny that the answers are plain to see in the light of God's word. First, those who rule over us are ordained by God to their respective vocations—whether they be kings, prime ministers, presidents, etc. Our God is sovereign over all. Do remember that it is only by the ordained Will of our Lord God that they are elevated to levels in status, class, or even “superior bloodline” far higher than ours. Similarly, Jesus Christ was ordained as a lowly subject that was hated and hunted down by the Roman government, even when he was still a mere babe in arms!

The Gospel That Convicts Us To Know Him Also Moves Those In Authority To Fulfil The Same

In Romans 13, we are reminded that

the “powers that be” are ordained of God. The Gospel that saved us also moved the world and those in authority to fulfil that same Gospel. When we pray for the world and those in authority, we are actually submitting petitions to God for them. When we can bring ourselves ‘down to our knees’ (humbly, that is) and pray for all, we must also be praying for ourselves—in case we begin to think we can adopt that ‘holier than thou’ attitude of the heart. Therefore, let us guard our hearts, as we read Mark 11:25, “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses”. I believe that last highlighted text will ‘quieten our hearts’ in submission to His call for us to pray for all men.

When we pray, we begin to manifest our Christian love (charity) toward them. We will even be able to love them according to our relation to them—obedience to their policies and submission to them however they may treat us. But know this also: when we make intercessions for them, we are in effect acknowledging and submitting to His Lordship. Readers will recall from the Bible that many great men of God have been martyred—and will continue to be—in the hands of evil kings and rulers (Acts 22:20). Yet, none of them had neither resisted nor denounced the lordship of God Jehovah (Revelations 2:13).

Let us look to Christ for our example. When the unbelieving Jews, and the religious elite were calling for Christ to be put to death, our Lord Jesus Christ had already known and submitted to His Father’s will that he would die and resurrect for the sins of His elect. His Father calls for His Son,

the Christ, to declare to the world that He is the only begotten Son of God. He is God. Christ may not back out of this one. In preparing to be sacrificed for His elect, our Lord Jesus Christ had even passed up that opportunity to own and rule “all the kingdoms” of the world when offered to Him by the devil. In the flesh, He did not succumb to the devil’s offer of compromise, but instead had reminded the devil to “worship *His* Lord God” (Matthew 4:8-10). He had prayed and humbled himself before them (Luke 23:34). He did not resist when arrested, nor brush away the ridicule by his own kind—the Jews (Matthew 5:38-40). Finally, Christ even surrendered to them to die by crucifixion despite the fact that the authority could find no wrong in Him.

If Christ had resisted, He was not only resisting the authority of that day, but more in a more deadly way (no pun intended), the Will and Work of our Heavenly Father. If Christ had ‘taken on’ the Roman governor of that day, then the Gospel would have been ‘reduced to dust’, even before it was allowed to begin to take its place in eternity; no, nothing could thwart the eternal conclusion of that life-giving redemptive work of His Cross and resurrection—friendship with God that we have the privilege and undeserved honour to receive, for eternity!

Some may wrongly think that it is easier to pray for ‘good men’ in authority. We know that the Bible teaches us that there is no such thing as ‘good men’, much less any in authority. From God’s and the elects’ perspectives, we are all depraved men who stand before Him in

judgment. Hence, the Bible does not discriminate the outwardly good from bad as Matthew 19:16-17 affirms. Even Singapore’s history clearly proves to us that Lee Kuan Yew is at best a controversial political figure. He was both loved and hated by different peoples and at different times. So we ought to pray for those in authority without respect of persons.

God answered the prayers of His people through the just and peaceful rule of Mr Lee Kuan Yew. But though he might have delivered us one of the “best kingdoms of the world”, it is still far, far, short of our God Jehovah delivering His. Lee Kuan Yew’s Singapore is nothing to be compared with Christ’s kingdom. Let us settle in our spiritual hearts that our Heavenly Father has, through His Son Covenanted to us that spiritual kingdom: a reconciled and perfect relationship with our Heavenly Father, His Son, and Spirit; not to mention heavenly mansions that are being prepared for His elect (John 14:2-4, 1 Peter 1:3-5). This will and must happen when Christ returns for His Bride. Praise the Lord!

Our Praying For His Church Also Means Serving, In Preparation For Christ’s Return

Let us now turn to praying for His church, as the “all” in 1 Timothy 2 must include the elect and our churches. If it may take a while for us to warm up to praying for the world, including those in authority, I trust that we may now be easier persuaded when we consider praying for fellow saints and office bearers in the glorious and living church of Jesus Christ. Our prayers and, therefore, the beginnings of service must firstly be to His Church, is it not? Is it not easier to

pray for the church than for the world outside?

1 Peter 4:17-18 tells us, “Judgment must begin at the house of God”. We must move to a deeper understanding of what it means to pray for the church. We can only pray for those in church, if there is a genuine love for them (in Christ). We can only pray, if we can confess our faults to those whom we pray for and with (James 5:15-17). Praying, interceding, and supplicating with them are the beginnings in our building up of each other spiritually and coming together and serving one another for the sake of His church. (1 Corinthians 7:5).

As Reformed Christians, we know all too well that in worshipping God in truth and spirit, we must also not neglect praying—and with that, living and serving one another—in all godliness and honesty. However, though we are those who have been shown infinite mercy, some of us may still have apathy (in the flesh), when it comes to praying and caring for the Church. Let us be reminded of that ‘thorn in the flesh’ that the Apostle Paul had testified of for us to learn from (2 Corinthians 12, particularly verses 6 and 7) and guard ourselves in order that our apathy may not displease our heavenly Father.

While church members must pray for others and their leaders, the leaders should also pray for their peers and church members. Servant-Leaders: while it may be difficult to ‘turn your other cheek’ when a peer or member imperfectly brings up a problem or becomes one himself, it is certainly not right to ‘look the other way’ and not pray for him when he ought to be counselled or admonished if he has transgressed against God’s Word

“ How then can we begin to pray for the world, if we cannot even earnestly pray for our own people and our own families? ”

and Church. Fellow saints: while it may be difficult to submit to a fellow saint/leader who counsels us in their own weaknesses, it is certainly wrong to not pray for him and even disregard his God-appointed office, or in the case of a leader, his rule over us. Despite the earthly church being very weak in the flesh, and in spite of many failed attempts at praying for one another, we must persevere. Every time we fall, we must pick ourselves up to pray and serve again and again. Despite repeated offences committed against each other, we must humble ourselves to forgive one another as many times as possible, and then some more (Matthew 18:21-22). Beloved Singaporean saints, this is one aspect in our life’s testimony that we must restrain ourselves from being ‘*kiasu*’ (‘afraid to lose’ in Hokkien dialect). Let us be prepared to ‘lose out’ in our forgiving, even when there is no explicit apology coming our way. Let us humbly ‘come in second’, even if one has to get ahead by falsely accusing us; but yet never remaining silent when it comes to meekly offering God’s truths to them.

If we cannot even love our beloved office bearers and fellow saints (even as imperfect and loathsome they may appear to us), how then can we begin to reach out to the ‘remnant

few’ out there and show to peoples of the world that redeeming love of Christ? How then can we begin to pray for the world, if we cannot even earnestly pray for our own people and our own families? I therefore call your attention to 1 Timothy 2 once again. We must pray for all men, beginning with those within, in order that we may “lead a quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty”. Once again, we do this for the sake of God and His church.

Let Us Pray For All—Within And Outside The Church

In praying for our church and churches from other denominations, we must be constrained by that same Spirit to want to sacrifice what God has blessed us with—our name, reputation, homes, hard-earned resources, etc.—for His sake and people of the same household of faith. When we are called to pray for the world and her leaders, we are also called to conduct our spiritual battles with word and deed that reflect Christian charity and encouragement; certainly not with hatred, physical violence, or even a seemingly ‘cold shoulder’ that shows indifference to a fellow-man’s well-being. Remember, we are the “salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13) and the “light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).

“...we must pray for those who have yet confessed that Christ is Lord, but are still in the world.”

As such, when praying for our church and sister churches, we must pray—and therefore physically and mentally exhaust ourselves (2 Corinthians 12:15)—so that our churches may continue to come to an ever clearer and sharper knowledge and understanding of the Truth, and also a deeper conviction of the Truth (Colossians 2). Further, we must also pray and therefore spare no effort or resources (through our various outreach ministries) for churches in other denominations to be rooted and established in His Word (Colossians 2:6-7), thereby humbly and meekly facilitating the discernment of ‘gaps and errors’ of doctrines and Christian malpractices that they embrace. In so doing, we pray in Christian love and hope that these churches may come to realise that there is a deeper and wider knowledge of the Gospel that is ready to be learnt and heard from the pulpit. We may not deny them that ‘fellowship in Christ’ (1 John 1:6-8) and that Gospel, especially when they have confessed publicly that Christ is Lord. We must help these churches to edify and worship God in truth and spirit; and in helping them, we ourselves are assured of our own salvation in the Lord.

Last, we must pray for those who have yet confessed that Christ is Lord, but are still in the world (Mark 16:15). We pray that by the grace of God, they may repent of and forsake their sins, and be led to acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Let Us Pray Holily For All, Without Hypocritical Forms And Godliness

Outward expression of Christian love, in their purest and most earnest forms, must begin in our Covenant homes and local churches. Together with God Almighty, we are witnesses one to another to be holy and honest in our love and prayer for each other, even as “a father to his children” (1 Thessalonians 2:9-11). Otherwise, we will be no different from the Pharisees and Sadducees. During the ministry of Christ, they were considered ‘first class’ in their display of hypocritical forms of godliness (all art and no heart) in their own synagogues. At the risk of sounding like a Pharisee, we must be careful ‘not to be like them’.

Addressed particularly to our beloved Singaporean saints: we must be so constrained by the Spirit not to come up ‘first’ (again, but this time as ‘first class’ hypocrites) in the world. If we as gatekeepers of His church ever lose our “godliness and honesty” (1 Timothy 2:1), then these Pharisees and Sadducees might actually lose to us in terms of ‘false, hypocritical posturing’ (Matthew 5:20), considering we have the great benefit of witnessing God’s grace in two millennia of New Testament church history.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let us look to our Lord Jesus Christ who has already led in admonishing us. In Revelations 3:19,

His word reminds us yet again, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” His church needs every single member and leader to man their posts if she is to fulfil her calling and deliver. Be mindful that while we may respect goodly, and even great, men of the world—as in our founding leader the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew—we may not call ourselves Reformed Christians and yet still allow ourselves to be lukewarm and lackadaisical in our service to the church. We may not declare ourselves as ‘the elect’, if we are not moved to want to serve even the least saint in our church with a pure, contrite heart (Luke 15:6-8).

To quote the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew, “This is not a game. This is about our lives, our families, our homes... our country.” More so for Christ’s Church: This is not about the world, or uniting the world’s peoples to achieve world peace. This is about *His* Church. This is about our spiritual lives, and the kingdom that Christ has built and preserved for His elect. It is about edification and sanctification of our lives, our families’, and the salvation of our children’s children. It is about preaching the Gospel of Christ and opening our doors to welcome the remnant few who yet remain outside. It is about readying our church for His glorious return, even as we are already assured in 1 Timothy 2:5-6 that Christ who gave himself a ransom for all (elect), will be testified in due time.

So, let us (especially my family and I earnestly pray for all men—for kings and all those in authority, beginning with our church—for His sake. Amen.

Materialism: Worshipping Stuff

>> Bernice Lim



Bernice Lim is a confessing young adult in CERC.

What does materialism mean, and what is it to you? Well, materialism is the placing of materials, earthly possessions and physical comfort above our spiritual lives. Ever wondered about how materialism can pose such great dangers to a child of God? The world we live in is a dreadfully materialistic one. This is seen from the influences we get from our neighbours at school or at work. We are often tempted when we see people who are constantly trying to follow the latest trends by buying clothes that their pop idols clothe themselves with or bags that are worth thousands just to prove that these things are worthwhile to

pursue. To prevent materialism from creeping into our hearts, we must first realise what it is and be careful that we do not seek and covet after what the world does.

Do the wealth and possessions we have on earth truly belong to us? We know in our hearts that it is an absolute “No!” Here are some of the verses taken from Scripture to teach us that. The Lord says, “... for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof” (Psalm 50:12). Also, “... Thine, O LORD, *is* the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth *is thine*; thine *is* the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.” (1 Chronicles 29:11). We are not the owners of our possessions!

But some may say, “God has blessed us with a lot of wealth and thus, we should be able to do as we please.” Wait a minute, are we trying to say that because He has given us much, we are able to justify our actions of

spending money at will and on things that will not last for eternity? That is exactly how a materialistic man thinks and behaves! He becomes selfish and greedy, constantly thinking of ways and means to fulfil his lusts. Did not God say in Matthew 6:19-21, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” We must take heed to what God says here. Do not let the world or old man of sin take over your hearts and minds! Look forward to your eternal home where our loving Father lives and there you must build up your treasures. Do not let materialism rule in your heart, for it is a denial of God’s sovereignty. It takes away all the honour and glory that is due to His name! We as totally depraved men may not use our sinful nature as an excuse to sin, but rather strive to do what the new man in us will do, which is to spend our God-given money wisely.

Do you remember lessons on contentment? Let us look at what the Bible says about it together. First, Philippians 4:11 states, “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.” What the Apostle Paul writes here reminds us of Job. Can we still remain contented

“ Look forward to your eternal home where our loving Father lives and there you must build up your treasures. ”

“ We are wonderfully blessed as it is; whether we have much or little, worldly goods should never be our priority; God must be the only ruler in our hearts. ”

even when God takes away everything like what He did to Job? Can we still praise His name and give the highest glory to Him? Second of all, 1 Timothy 6:6-7 states, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, and *it is* certain we can carry nothing out.” Are we able to bring that which we possess with us to Heaven? Certainly not!

Now that we have a better understanding of what materialism is, how then do we guard against it? Do we want to continue feeding our wicked desires for worldly goods or do we want to honour and obey God by fleeing far away from them? If your answer is the latter, let’s look at what we can do. Materialism causes us to lose our interest in spiritual things and the organic life of the Church. Instead of being involved in church activities, doing our daily devotions, and spending time meditating (Psalm 1:2) on His word that will help us grow spiritually closer to God, we go in the opposite direction. We must not serve and satisfy our lusts for material goods, but rather, take heed to what Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:2, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow...” If there be any one around you that are struggling with this, let us encourage

one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, bearing the burdens of one another, and together take up our cross and follow Christ’s footsteps! Here are some examples where the Bible talks about encouraging one another: 1 Thessalonians 5:11, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, “Two *are* better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is* alone when he falleth; for *he hath* not another to help him up.” And here are some passages you can look up on your own: Hebrews 10:24, Galatians 6:2, and Colossians 3:16. Be on the lookout for your friends, watching for signs of materialism evolving amongst you. After all, don’t we want to spur each other on in this spiritual journey to heaven?

Like many others, I have to constantly fight against my old man of sin, praying for strength and grace to flee from materialism. Looking back, I remember the toughest period for me was when I was studying in a public school from age 14-16. It was extremely difficult to flee from wealth and material goods that were so pleasing to the flesh and I found myself giving in to those temptations almost

right away. However, God pricked my conscience and slowly brought me back to realising how dangerous it was being in that position! We are accountable to God in every aspect, be it our time or money. When Christ comes to judge one day, can we say that we have been a good testimony for Him?

It is so easy to lose that battle because Satan is lurking everywhere, seizing each and every opportunity he has to make us fall—and fall hard. However, we do have the comfort and assurance that we are sheltered under the shadow of God’s wings (Psalm 17:8, 91:4). We can trust in our heavenly Father to bring us back to the right path whenever we err. Furthermore, don’t we have the promise that He will not give us more than what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13)? Look to Him, my friends; do not think that we are better for it is often the case that we rely on our own strength. We are wonderfully blessed as it is; whether we have much or little, worldly goods should never be our priority; God must be the only ruler in our hearts. Let us pray for one another, that we may lay up our treasures in heaven and not on earth.

Speaking the Truth in Love

>> Brother Ishu Mahtani



Ishu Mahtani is a confessing member in CERC.

Every believer has the calling to evangelize. The commandment is given to each one of us according to God's Word. More importantly, His Word reminds us that when we speak, we are to speak the truth as pleasing God and not man.

1 Thessalonians 2:4 says, "But as we were **allowed of God** to be put in trust with **the gospel**, even so we **speak**; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."

So whether we have the desire to bring the Word to Buddhists or to those who believe in other religions, we must have the conviction to bring them the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. No watered down gospel will be worth bringing to anyone. If we do, God's judgement will be upon us for hiding His truth and for being a false witness of Christ.

If we are to be good witnesses for Christ, we must first remember that we need to be equipped with the truths of the gospel. No doubt, this means having the basic truths at our finger tips. For fruitful evangelism, it

may also be good to know a bit about the background of the person with whom you are sharing the gospel with. This will enable you to know how you should go about conveying your message to that person.

An important bit of background would be the kind of upbringing one has. That person may be part of a Buddhist family and may have been brought up knowing only about Buddhism. But that person may not necessarily be a Buddhist at heart. Oftentimes, the younger generation seek for answers to life beyond what they have been brought up with. Hence, there may be open doors for us to bring them the gospel.

Sometimes, we may meet Buddhists who are very into Buddhism—staunch Buddhists. We must surely know upfront that speaking to such persons will be very challenging. In this case, in order for us to be able to speak more effectively with them, it is definitely good to know more about what they truly believe in. Having a listening ear is very, very, important when doing evangelism. We must show that we are able to understand what the person is trying to say to us. During this time, an opportunity may arise for us to ask the person a question or two about his or her beliefs.

Let us therefore consider for a moment what Buddhism is all about. Some of you may be from a Buddhist background, and so this should not be anything new. However, for the

sake of sharing in this article, I will highlight some important points about Buddhism.

Buddhism is "a way of living", that encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs, and practices largely based on the teachings attributed to Gautama Buddha, commonly known as the Buddha. He is also called "the awakened one". He is recognised by Buddhists as an awakened or enlightened teacher who shared his insights to help human beings end their suffering through the elimination of man's wicked way of life. The ultimate goal of Buddhism is the attainment of the sublime state of Nirvana. Nirvana refers to breaking away from the cycle of rebirth, and the proper understanding of the "Four Noble Truths". They all relate to the word "Dukka" which means suffering, anxiety, or stress. If one is able to practice something called the Noble Eightfold Path, one is able to learn how to behave decently, patiently, and obtain peace.

Dukkha is commonly explained according to three categories:

The obvious physical and mental suffering associated with birth, growing old, illness, and dying.

The anxiety or stress of trying to hold on to things that are constantly changing.

A basic dissatisfaction concerning all forms of existence, because all forms of life are changing, impermanent, and without any inner core or substance.

Buddhists believe in “karma”. This means that one has to do good in order to obtain the breaking away from the cycle of rebirth. They constantly look for ways and means to do good, in order to be saved.

Buddhists also look for enlightenment through meditation. Through meditation, they seek to free themselves from the daily sorrows, troubles, and challenges in their lives.

Now then, how shall we evangelise to the Buddhists? Now that we know what they practice and believe in, we should have a clearer idea of what to share with them. We know that they too, like us, struggle and look for open doors to find a way out from daily struggles and sufferings. We also know that they are looking for a better life, not being satisfied with their lives in one way or another.

Most importantly, we know from God’s Word that all this is because of man’s sinful nature. Being fallen creatures, man will face all the temptations to look for a better life any way they can. We know that the Word of God teaches us that man cannot save himself. Man is not able to achieve anything through any form of good works. No amount of meditation on worldly thoughts and ideas is able to save man from his sinful nature. We

know that man has only one physical life to live—contrary to the idea of rebirth that the heathen believe in.

Let us consider some verses which we can perhaps share with Buddhists. In Psalm 14:3, we read, “They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, **not one.**” We can share with them that God’s Word clearly shows us that man cannot find any good in himself. As sinners, we are all condemned to hell.

We can share with them about the fall of man in Genesis 3. Since the fall of man, he is a fallen creature, and hence has to die and continues to live his life in sin and spiritual death. Man has no other hope in life but to seek God in His Son Jesus Christ. A man is saved when he is given grace to sincerely seek the Lord and confess Him as his Saviour. No outward form of religion can save. It has to be an inner conviction, from the heart, body, soul and mind. The sinner must repent of his sins, forsake them, and confess all these sincerely and truthfully. For God is the judge, and He sees through man.

Let us also share this verse with those who seek to lay up treasures on earth: Matthew 6:19 reads, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where

thieves break through and steal”. Let us share with those who believe they can earn a good living or live healthy lives by their works or by earthly ways that we will one day leave everything behind when we die. Rather, lay up treasures in heaven. That means giving ourselves up for God and serving him in this life. Let us do all these, keeping in mind our calling to give all glory to God alone.

As a child of God, we must share the gospel with humility and meekness. We may not try to bring the Word with harshness or with forcefulness. We are called to bring the Word as doves. In James 3:13, we read, “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with **meekness** of wisdom.”

Finally, brothers and sisters in Christ, may you be encouraged with this verse. 1 Peter 3:15 reads, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with **meekness** and fear”. Let us be prayerful in all that we do, knowing that our God knows the desires of our hearts. Let us put all our faith and trust in Him as we do the work of evangelism. To God be the power, glory, and dominion, forever and ever. Amen.

“ As a child of God, we must share the gospel with humility and meekness. We may not try to bring the Word with harshness or with forcefulness. We are called to bring the Word as doves. ”

Investigating Missions in Kolkata

>> Pastor Lanning



Pastor Andy Lanning is a Minister of the Word at Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church, Singapore. He is married to Stephanie and they are blessed with five children.

CERC's India Delegation Report

From 19-25 March 2015, a delegation of Elder Leong and Pastor Lanning, along with Brother Ishu Mahtani, visited Emmanuel Singh in Kolkata, India. The delegation's main purpose was to investigate and evaluate the work being done in Kolkata and the surrounding villages, with a view to advising CERC's Session about the possibility of overseeing the work. After seeing the field first-hand, we are convinced that God is gathering his people in Kolkata and the surrounding villages, and that God has opened a door for CERC to speak the good news of the gospel in India. We present to readers of *Salt Shakers* this brief report with the prayer that it will encourage us all to pray for and heartily support the work of missions in Kolkata.

Most of our time was spent in Kolkata, the main city in the Indian state of West Bengal where Emmanuel and Sonali live, and where the main group of 15-20 people meets for worship each Lord's Day. We also visited the farming village of Pachua Khali, a journey of a little more than two hours from Kolkata by car, where Emmanuel conducts a Bible study with a group of 20+ each month. We did not have time to visit Moyna, another farming village about three hours from Kolkata, where Emmanuel conducts a Bible study with a group of 30+ each month.

Fellowship and Work

Most of our time was spent with Emmanuel and Sonali, who graciously hosted us in their home during our stay. We grew quite close to this brother and sister in Christ, sharing meals, devotions, and fellowship together. They demonstrated beautiful Christian hospitality, which we will not soon forget.

The main activity of the delegation was a two-day seminar on Bible doctrine. Around forty people, hailing from Kolkata, Moyna, and Pachua Khali, gathered at a retreat centre in Kolkata. The language of the people is Bengali, so all of speeches and sermons had to be translated as they were delivered. The translation was handled by Abhijit, one of the men from Kolkata who has been joining some of the weekly Skype sessions between Emmanuel and CERC's India Committee.

Overall, the response to the instruction was positive. The doctrines that we taught are basic to a correct understanding of the Bible and the Reformed faith, so it was good to see the seminar attendees receiving the instruction gladly. We were conscious of grounding all of our teaching in Scripture, and of trying to give careful, serious, biblical answers to their questions. The attendees responded very well to such Bible-based instruction.

Perhaps the most encouraging response was the flurry of questions

and discussions that the instruction provoked. Although only one QA session had been scheduled, we ended up having three additional impromptu QA sessions. In these QA sessions, the attendees wanted answers from the Bible, which we were very pleased to hear. Their questions and discussions continued beyond the lecture hall and into the tea breaks and evening fellowship. Their questions also showed a spiritual sensitivity and depth, and a healthy desire to wrestle with the truth as they receive it. Their thirst for the knowledge of God and his works was very encouraging.

Decision

For the past year and a half, Session

has been investigating the possibility of overseeing Emmanuel's work in Kolkata. The delegation's visit to the field was the final bit of investigation that Session had planned in order to gather enough information to make a decision. Therefore, at its meeting on 6 April 2015, Session unanimously voted to oversee Emmanuel's work in and around Kolkata, and in this way to do mission work in India.

We rejoice in God's goodness to his people both in Singapore and India. We urge you to remember Emmanuel and the saints in West Bengal in your prayers, and to pray for wisdom for CERC's Session and congregation as we begin the great task of overseeing this mission work in Kolkata.

We conclude with one of the grounds that Session used in its decision to take on this work. May this ground encourage us as we wait upon the Lord, who builds his church. Our Lord gave His church the commission, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19). The investigation has not revealed any impossible obstacles to our work in Kolkata, but instead strengthened our conviction that God would have us labour there. Therefore, it is apparent that, in Kolkata, the Lord has "opened unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ" (Colossians 4:3) and we "assuredly gather that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them" (Acts 16:10).

Covenant Instruction Commanded by God

>> Sister Jean Lim



Jean Lim is a confessing member in CERC. She is wife to Deacon Lim Seow Thong and their family is blessed with two children.

Let us begin the article by first defining God's Covenant. God's Covenant is an everlasting friendship which God singly and uniquely establishes with His elect people. God also saves His people in the line of generations and has many of His children in the families of believers (Gen 17:7). He does that by way of Covenant Instruction. Covenant Instruction is to teach—both by instruction and by our godly living—our next generation about God and to know God in their daily earthly lives.

In CERC today, Covenant Instruction is given only at home (through family devotions and fellowship in the family) and in church (in the

form of preaching, catechism and church fellowship). We do not have a Christian School which provides the education of academic subjects with Biblical perspectives. Because of this, our children who are placed in secular schools receive an education that is NOT based on the truth of God. By God's grace, CERC has set up a school board and society to look into setting up a Reformed Christian School to provide Christian Education. The Christian school as an extension of the home, together with the church are the means that God uses to provide Covenant Instruction to our children in all aspects of their lives (Deuteronomy 6). It is so important that a failure to bring up our children

When did we last share with our children how God has worked repentance in our hearts through His lively Word?

in the way of the Covenant results in dreadful consequences. The family of Eli is a clear example to us (1 Samuel 2:27-36).

In the keeping of God's Covenant, God commands us as parents to rear all our children in His fear and to teach them His Truth to the utmost of our power (Form of Administration of Baptism; Deuteronomy 6).

In this article, I shall focus mainly on Covenant Instruction with respect to the home and education.

What does God command in our Covenant Instruction?

Responsibility lies with the Covenant parents

In Deuteronomy 6 and many other parts of Scripture such as Proverbs and Psalms, God specifically commands parents to be responsible for the training of His children. Family devotions, a God-given means of Covenant Instruction, must not be missed for the reasons that we are too tired, too busy, or not in the mood. Family devotions are a joyful time of worshipping God as a Covenant family. It is a time to thank and praise God for His grace in giving us salvation from our sins; it is also a time to seek God's forgiveness for our weaknesses and to ask for help and strength to fight against our spiritual enemies; it is a time to encourage

our children to acknowledge God in all our endeavours, knowing that without God's blessing, all our labours are vanity (Psalm 127). It is a time to learn lessons from the past and teach our children how to take heed of these lessons as we, too, have the same sinful nature as the saints of old.

Parents should not take this calling lightly because it is through this way that our Covenant God bestows His spiritual blessings upon our family and our children. As parents, we naturally pay a lot of attention to make sure our children are well-fed for their physical health—and we proudly acknowledge that this is our responsibility. But, we tend to forget the even more important responsibility of feeding them spiritual food for their spiritual health. Luke 9:25 reminds us that there is no profit if we have the whole world but are cast away because of the deprivation of spiritual food in our lives.

The responsibility of parents to teach our Covenant children is also the reason for fathers in the church to want to be a member of the School Society and/or School Board to support Christian Education. This is an effective and relevant extension of Covenant Instruction at home where the education is based on the Word of God. Even though parents may not be qualified teachers in the Christian

school, they are still responsible to make sure their children and grandchildren are receiving proper Covenant education from their teachers.

The Basis of Instruction Material

The material of our instruction has to be based on God's precepts in relation to every sphere of life. This means we have to live according to the will of God, and we have to teach our children those same precepts for every sphere of life. Currently, our Covenant children who are in secular schools receive an education which does not teach the school subjects in the light of Scriptures. They spend many hours in secular schools learning the world's doctrines and beliefs. As a result, their thinking and reasoning are influenced by secular principles which do not shine any spiritual light in their paths of life (Psalm 36:9).

Some may think that this problem can be solved by sending our children to local Christian schools. This will not solve the problem for two reasons. First, most teachers in the present Christian schools are non-Christians. Second, these Christian schools receive support from the government and hence, they are obliged to use the national curriculum which is secular and void of God's precepts.

Therefore one of the criteria for our

own Christian School to provide Christian Education is it must have total control over its curriculum and the running of the school. All these are to be done according to the Word of God and His precepts.

Frequency and extent of Covenant Instruction

In Deuteronomy 6:7, our Covenant God commands us that Covenant Instruction has to be always (constant) and everywhere. With our children spending long hours in school for lessons and other activities, and even doing homework and having “compulsory” tuition classes later on, they hardly have any time and strength left to enjoy and hence benefit from family devotions. There is also little time left for communication between parents and children.

Can we recall when was the last time we told our children a wonderful thing about God? When did we last share with our children how God has worked repentance in our hearts through His lively Word? Do we teach them to thank God in their disappointments? When did we last point out to them that they were angry with God in their hearts instead of trusting in His promises? Do we teach them to see how the knowledge they receive from school may deviate from Holy Scripture and how they would need to bring into captivity every knowledge and thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)? Do we show them that the Word of our God is true and living in every part of our lives?

Our source of wisdom and strength for Covenant Instruction

We may think that there is nothing we can do since we do not have our own

Christian School. Our circumstances may make us think that though the current way of education departs from God’s way, it seems to be the only way for us. But, do not give up, because God does not give us His commandment and then leave us hopeless and helpless. Therefore, acknowledge God in all our ways and He shall direct our paths (Proverbs 3:6). Pray to God earnestly and tell Him all your desires and inabilities, and I believe our faithful Father who has entrusted His elect children to our care will show us our hidden fears and weaknesses, and help us to overcome them.

For my family, the Lord has given us the way of home-schooling our children so that we can carry out Christian Education in a family setting. He will also, in His providence, lead and guide your family so that you may be steadfast in fulfilling your calling as Covenant parents. Only continue to seek His guidance and do not submit to the circumstances.

The decision to home-school was not a straightforward one as my husband and I had many reservations about our academic capability to teach, the needs of our teenage children, and their future. Where will home-schooling lead them to? Will they be able to get into a university and get a ‘good’ job? The fear of just having a local Primary School Certificate (for my son) and a Secondary School Certificate (for my daughter) other than any locally recognised certificates often held us back to the comfort zone we had. Also, we wondered if our children would become too protected if they were home-schooled for so many years. Could they survive in this world? We must thank God

for preserving us through His truth. Matthew 6:33, Psalm 37:25, and many of God’s promises in the Bible caused our hearts to rest in Him and strengthened us to go on with this decision for the glory of His name. We see that our children need time and an undivided heart to learn His truth and His presence in their lives. We desire our children to be rooted in God’s truth for only the love for His truth can set their hearts free (Psalm 19:7-13) and make them strong and resilient in their lives (Psalm 119:28). We trust that we can commit their futures into the hand of our Almighty and sovereign God. Our eyes must be single on God alone so that our entire body will be full of light (Matthew 6:22). As we fix our eyes on serving Him through home-schooling, we pray that in His mercy and grace, He will cause our children to grow in godliness and nurture servants’ hearts in them.

Our gracious Lord has proven Himself faithful in all these years of home-schooling. My children have admitted that their greatest challenge is being disciplined. It was a great struggle in the beginning, but the Lord has worked in their hearts to know that it is Him who put them in this circumstance and His strength is made perfect in their weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:9). They have learnt to depend on Him daily and to study for His glory alone.

The Lord, in His providence, may not have given every family the option of home-schooling their Covenant children. But the desire to bring up our children in the fear of the Lord with the utmost of our power must always be in us. Fix our eyes on Him and do not let the lies of the devil

deceive us and cast fears in our hearts. We must not fix our eyes on our children's academic results nor their wordly position, but fix our hearts and minds upon training up our children in the way they should go and when they are old, they will not depart

from it. Children are God's reward to us (Psalm 127:3) and they, by God's grace, are the arrows in our quiver. These arrows in the hand of a mighty man serve his safety and advantage. Our children, as our arrows, are a

good gift and a great support and defence to a family, and most of all to the church of Christ. May we be faithful to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for the His name's sake and out of our gratitude for the salvation He has purchased for us.

Understanding the World Around Us: The Pope

>> Brother Paul Goh



Paul Goh is a confessing member of CERC.

Ever since Pope Francis took office, there has been an unusual buzz around him. The Roman Catholics at large have been hailing him the most popular pontiff since the time of Pope John Paul II. Furthermore, he has been making headlines on a weekly basis over his sensational one-liners that give hope to divorced and remarried Catholics that they are welcome to the communion table of the Lord, and consequently, effect great round-about up-turn to the engraved-in-stone dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church. In short, Pope Francis is a revolutionary! The purpose of this article is to help Christians to have a Biblical and Reformed perspective of Pope Francis' actions. Thus, first, we will examine the key dogmas that are causing the Christian world to sit up

and take notice, and second, we will test them on the anvil of the Reformed viewpoint which rests firmly on the Word of God. Finally, let us hear a timely and relevant response to this phenomenon.

The Pope on a Mission

Let us understand the Pope of the hour. Concerning the Pope's pedigree, it is indeed unprecedented that Pope Francis I, is the first Latin American Pope, and indeed the first Pope not from Europe. He was formerly Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires. He has set out to change the direction of the Roman Catholic Church. He laments that the Church has been cold and pastorally insufficient to those who felt that they have been left out by the church. And thus, as Pope, his recurring refrain has been that the church needs to reach out pastorally to the divorced and civilly remarried. It is crucial that we bear this in mind as we seek to understand him and give him a fair hearing.

The Pope's One-Liners

At best, the utterances of Pope Francis are one-off and off-the cuff

statements. They do not represent his rock-solid dogmas. There are reasons for believing this: by his statements, as he has embarrassed the church and has had to apologise for them. Furthermore, he has often said that when the dust has settled, he is after all, "a son of the church". This means that as a son of the church, he is committed to the dogmas previously declared by the church to be the true teaching of the church. And as a defender of the church, he will defend her dogmas with his dear life, just like his immediate predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI.

First, "divorced persons should be allowed to come to the table of the Lord." Although, such persons are barred from the Table of the Lord in the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope gave a glimmer of hope that they could, after all, partake at the Lord's Table. And in this context, he said that the church, after all, needs to reach out pastorally to the divorced and legally remarried. Some suggested that he may allow the church to set aside or reject church discipline in order to receive divorced persons for Communion.

Christ, the head of the Church does not allow divorced persons especially those who have been divorced unlawfully according to the Word of God. Those who divorced unlawfully are barred from the Table of the Lord because they have sinned against the clear teaching of the Scriptures.

Allowing them to partake the table could desecrate the Holy Supper of the Lord, thus making the Holy table of the Lord unholy.

Second, on the origin of the world. Pope Francis says, “Creation as it is explained in Genesis, puts us at risk of imagining God as a magician, but that is not so.” Referring to the Big Bang Theory, he said, “the theory imagines the origin of the world, and is not contradictory to the divine act of creating, but rather requires it.” And finally, he says that “evolution in nature is not inconsistent with the notion of creation” as the theory requires the initial creation of beings that are capable of evolving. In other words, according to Pope Francis, creation makes evolution necessary. In short, his view is that of Theistic Evolution—that God created this world (he will not deny that) but he took more than six days to make it happen as we must not perceive God as a magician. However shocking that may be, Pope Francis is not saying anything new in the context of the Roman Catholic Church. He was simply reiterating positions established by some who have gone before him. In his 1950 encyclical *Humani Generis*, the very conservative Pius XII declared evolution and Christianity were compatible so long as God is viewed as the animating power behind the process. And significantly, at that time, Pope Pius XII stated that “the soul is created by God, but the physical body could come from pre-existing matter”. That

is, God created this world through the process of evolution. This is consistent with what Pope John Paul II said in 1996.

Our Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church has declared very clearly in Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” And the Genesis account goes on to state very clearly that God created this world in six solar days, thus destroying the view that the belief in creation of this world necessitates the long process of evolution.

Third, the final controversial quote from Pope Francis is, “Who am I to judge a gay person?” Pope Francis reported, “A person once asked me, in a provocative manner, if I approved of homosexuality. I replied with another question: ‘Tell me: when God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?’ We must always consider the person.”

Christ, the Head of the Church always beats with a heart of love for any repentant sinner, whether gay, homosexual, or otherwise, for he came to die for such, like the repentant thief on the cross. But Christ will burn with unquenchable fire the unrepentant and those who glory in their sins—like those inhabitants of Sodom of Gomorrah.

Will the false teachings of Pope Francis or the Roman Catholic Church be a threat to the true church of Jesus Christ? First, I say it will not, in as far as the true church cleaves fast and believes steadfastly in Jesus Christ and His Word. Second, Christ, the Head of the Church, will preserve His Church, for whom He came to die for, and thus, none of His elect will go lost.

“

May Luke 12:32
give strength to
every fainting
heart, “Fear not,
little flock; for it
is your Father’s
good pleasure
to give you the
kingdom.”

”

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A BOYFRIEND: “CHECKLIST FOR YOUR HEART” (I)

>> Anthea Liu



Anthea Liu is a confessing adult in CERC and is married to Paul, Editor of Salt Shakers. She also serves as one of Salt Shakers’ designers.

There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid. Proverbs 30:18,19

Love is a many-splendoured thing! When we ponder the ways in which God brings man and wife together and fills their hearts with love for each other, it leaves us in wonderment and thankfulness for this beautiful creation and gift. As young ladies, many of us desire to marry and find someone to love and be loved in return. This

is a natural and godly desire as God instituted marriage and also tells us: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen 2:18). As we pray for God to provide and wait upon Him, some of us may be wondering what qualities we should look for in a fellow brother-in-Christ or may be already contemplating entering into a relationship. Before we fall head over heels into working out a “checklist” with the “must-haves” to look for, it will certainly do us good to look at our own hearts and minds first.

Romans 12:2 says, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Often, the world paints a romanticised and superficial picture of love. It frequently speaks of love as an emotion that makes you feel like you are “walking on cloud nine” or “dizzy with love”; and there is the notion that having a boyfriend will “complete you” and make you very

happy. This worldliness can creep into our minds and hearts and cause us to long for a boyfriend for all the wrong reasons—such as wanting to experience these warm fuzzy feelings, or having someone who can make us happy and prove our worth. There are also worldly ideas and expectations we are exposed to through the pervasive media and entertainment, and even friends who may unknowingly influence us. Sounds clichéd, but it is not difficult for us ladies to believe that the man is supposed to pamper us, shower us with gifts, romance us, and always be the one to give in.

However, as Christians, we should date with a view towards marriage and this means having a desire to glorify God even during our dating/courtship. When we see dating as an opportunity to honour God and grow in grace, and not in terms of pursuing romance and meeting our emotional needs, it will help our relationship become spiritually edifying for both parties. The love we have to give each other is also founded on Christ’s love for us, which is sacrificial and selfless. It is not about what I want and how he can fulfil my needs, but what I can give and how I can serve. No doubt, being in a relationship brings happiness, but only God can satisfy us and we must find our joy, contentment, and identity in Him. In this way, we will not use our boyfriends as emotional crutches since we tend to be emotional creatures whose hearts can be easily swayed. Remember to

“

...“walking on cloud nine” or “dizzy with love”; and there is the notion that having a boyfriend will “complete you” and make you very happy...

”

guard it from false worldly perceptions and attitudes. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)

We should also consider if we are spiritually mature and ready for a committed relationship that may eventually lead to marriage. What is the state of our spiritual life? Do we love God, His Word, and His Church? Are we praying and seeking the Lord’s guidance in every area of our life? Dating someone begins a relationship in which we can bear a great influence on one another. It is also easy to get caught up in the thrill and first rushes of new love and forget about God. Even then, as we are all sinful creatures, conflicts and struggles may arise during dating, and these will have to be handled in a godly and matured manner. If we are not ready and rush headlong into a relationship, we may end up getting terribly hurt or our dating conduct may not be pleasing to God. Thus, it is important to be walking right with God and growing in His knowledge and love so that we can be a godly influence to our boyfriends and be able to put God first in our relationship.

As we wait for God’s timing, let us also use this time of youth and singlehood God has given us to build up our spiritual life and cultivate virtues

and traits that would serve God and our time in courtship well. “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.” (1 Timothy 2:9-10) Are we concerned about our looks and what we wear more than adorning ourselves with good works? Look for ways in which you can be a blessing to the people around you and ask God to give you grace and strength to do good to them. “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” (Proverbs 31:26) Are we increasing in our knowledge and understanding of God and do we desire to know Him more? May we also strive to be a kind and loving woman that fears the Lord. “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.” (Proverbs 31:30)

If we start off the right way, we will grow to become more godly and loving in dating. These are just some guiding principles we can consider in order to prepare ourselves, as some of us may find ourselves dating in the near future; but hopefully, they will also help us serve God in whatever season we may be in. The patterns

we establish in dating continue into marriage. Therefore, the foundations for a healthy and godly marriage begin while we are dating. But, we cannot expect to date in a godly fashion if we do not consider what being a godly wife entails. Should the Lord give to us a husband and children, are we of the mind that we will devote ourselves to our husband and Covenant home? This requires a life of loving service, and the same applies to a life married to the Lord—should that be God’s plan for us. The old man is still in us, and so we ought to pray for God to mould us into women with incorruptible hearts and a meek and quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:4) so that when the time comes for us to enter into courtship, we are then able to please and honour God in and through it. That said, we should not put the married state on a pedestal and regard it better than a single life called by God. May we meditate on what God’s Word says about being godly women as that is our high calling, whether we are single, dating, or married. In the second instalment of this article, we shall consider what to look for in a boyfriend.

Reference: Holding Hands, Holding Hearts: Recovering a Biblical View of Christian Dating, Sharon L. Phillips and Richard D. Phillips



Dating someone begins a relationship in which we can bear a great influence on one another. It is also easy to get caught up in the thrill and first rushes of new love and forget about God.



The Joy of Living an Antithetical Life

>> Isaac Chan



Isaac Chan is a confessing young adult in CERC.

Proverbs 2:20-22: "That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it."

Introduction

When the *Salt Shakers* Committee first approached me to write an article on "The Joys of Living an Antithetical Life", the topic gave me pause. The reason was simple: the lives of Christians, both in the past and today, are not always smooth-sailing and without great troubles. The Christian is not promised health and wealth. Instead, Church history is littered—gloriously—with the blood and sweat of our church fathers, of wars and persecutions, and of martyrs who died to defend the faith. Christians, especially those who professed true and living faith, did not live easy lives. And yet, as Christians, our calling is to rejoice in the Lord, to delight in Him, and to trust in Him for all things! Isn't this bizarre?

As many good articles go, we must begin with some definitions that will help in our discussion. What is joy? For me, it is God-given contentment in life and comfort in death. Perhaps more striking is the idea that this is the only real and desirable joy. When we think of "joy", we think of some bubbly little girl and perhaps of someone leaping and shouting in the air. But the comfort that we receive is so much more firm, fulfilling, and enduring than our 'regular' daily joys. We shall develop more of this idea later on.

The antithesis is a fundamental aspect of a Reformed Christian's worldview, which is based on God's Word. The term "antithetical life" should be familiar to most readers, so I will not go into too much detail. Simply, it is living a life that says "NO" to the sinful world and standing with God in opposition to all He rejects in His Word. This is the opposite of what society has inculcated in us. Indeed, there is great pressure for us to conform and blend in. Thus, there may be some who would believe that living an antithetical life is an obstruction to attaining joy.

The Promised Blessedness

There is a blessedness promised to those who walk in the paths of God, trust in Him, and are upright in His sight. But as mentioned previously, this is not an obvious blessing to the world.

The basis for the antithetical life can be traced back to God's declaration to the devil in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Enmity is hatred, hostility, and conflict. And because Satan is turning the world against God's kingdom, we can expect the world to treat us, as followers of Christ, with hostility and distaste. In Matthew 24, Jesus Himself had warned of persecution when He said, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." The Apostle Paul, too, warned of "perilous times" (2 Timothy 3:1). So while we might not experience such strong persecution today, we should expect it, because it is God Himself who puts us in opposition to the devil and the world. This is not something the world will see as a blessing, for this is not desirable from the world's perspective. But to the Christian, we can find joy in living the antithetical life for several reasons.

First, this is the life that God has prepared for His people. You could say that the Christian, in choosing to follow Christ and to live the antithetical life, has chosen a life of persecution and enmity with the world. Remember Jesus' word in John 15:20: "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me,

they will also persecute you.” In saying so, Christ is also telling His disciples that He has seen the future of His people; He has determined all things. Almighty God, who upholds and governs heaven, earth, and creatures, such that all things—affliction, health, or riches—come, not by chance, but by His fatherly hand (H.C. LD 10), is in full control. How can we, then, who have taken up the cross, now heave it off out of fear?

Second, God has promised that He will not leave us or forsake us. What God has sovereignly decreed for His people, He also guides them through it and constantly cares for them throughout. He controls all things and He works them all for our good. He does not abandon us in our time of need, but instead gives grace and strength to bear the burdens that we face. His grace is sufficient for us. ALL these are His promises to His people in His Word. What a comfort! What a joy! To have God Himself as our guide and protector! This is not a joy that the world can comprehend, but this joy fills the Christian with an absolute certainty even while being jostled, spat on, and mocked by the world.

I have often wondered, with amazement and dread, at the words found at the beginning of our Belgic Confession, namely, that the Reformed believers would “offer their backs to stripes, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to fire, rather than deny the truth of God’s Word.” These Christian fathers lived the antithetical life by defending the truth they believed in, often with their very lives. Their words and deeds in themselves were a testimony to the faithfulness of God. They, too, must have been persuaded, like the Apostle

Paul, that neither death, nor life... nothing could separate them—nor us—from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39). May this wondrous love infuse our souls even as we walk on this earth as pilgrims!

We, as pilgrims, are not alone...

However, living an antithetical life does not just reap spiritual benefits, but tangible, earthly ones as well. Many of us will be able to attest to the sweetness of the Christian fellowship that we enjoy in the church. Such fellowship is borne out of love for one another and of our desire to see our brother’s/sister’s good. It is a love that encourages, edifies, and promotes growth in our spiritual lives, so that we in turn can better understand Christ’s love for us. The antithetical life means wanting to be closer to your Christian friends and further away from your worldly friends. God has given us godly brothers and sisters in the Lord so that we do not stand alone in the battle against the world.

We would also be familiar with how being a ‘city’ on a hill can make us stick out like a sore thumb. I was wondering to myself one day if Jews were ostracised in the past because of the way they dressed and their strange customs (Google ‘Haredi Jew’). Is there a parallel? Perhaps. We are (and should be) strange to the world in many ways. We are the ones that avoid going to the movies and that are *always* busy on Sundays (baffling to some!). We’re strangely quiet and seem to fall asleep before eating. We have strange worldviews about the pleasures of the flesh. We are narrow-minded—for believing in a book written thousands of years ago, or for not believing in the theory of evolution... There are a thousand reasons and more

why Christians would be ostracised and treated differently. But on the bright side, our behaviour draws like-minded Christians to us because of Christ’s light that shines in us. Godly classmates and colleagues, even those in a foreign land, recognise one another because of their antithetical walk! And if from their company we are able to find joy in our Christian walk, then praise be to God!

And so doing, we glorify God...

Finally, by living antithetically, we fulfil our duty. That is, we please and honour our heavenly Father. And we do so out of thankfulness for His love and His sacrifice. Just as we are happy when our loved ones are happy, so we should also be joyful when our walk with God glorifies Him, and be saddened when we stray from His path.

I hope this article has made you think of the joys of leading the antithetical life. As with many good articles, this one will end with a quote from the Psalter.

*Thy favor be imparted
To godly men, O Lord;
Bless all that are pure-hearted,
The good with good reward.
(Psalter 355, stanza 2)*



News from the Churches

NEWS FROM SINGAPORE

CERC's India Delegation Report

CERC Session presented a report on the recent visit to Kolkata made by delegates Pastor Andrew Lanning and Elder Leong Fai Chong. The main activity held during the delegation was the Seminar of Bible Doctrines, with topics on God's sovereignty, the covenant and the Heidelberg Catechism. This seminar was well attended by people from Kolkata and neighbouring villages.

It is apparent that God has opened a door for CERC to do mission work in Kolkata and oversee our contact Emmanuel's work there. This is a cause for great thanksgiving! Pray for the work privately, with our families, and in the congregation. Pray that the Lord will build His house in India. Only God can - it is His work. And pray that we as a congregation will be a good help to the people there.

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

BAPTISMS

With praise to our great God of salvation, we rejoice with Angela Ng and June Ho who were baptised on 12 April 2015. We rejoice also with the family of Melvin and Vivian Tang, whose infant son Jonam received infant baptism on 17 May 2015.

A Prayer...

"O Almighty and eternal God, thou, who hast according to thy severe judgment punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world with the flood, and hast according to thy great mercy saved and protected believing Noah and his family; thou, who hast drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, and hast led thy people Israel through the midst of the Sea upon dry ground, by which baptism is signified -- we beseech thee, that thou wilt be pleased of thine infinite mercy, graciously to look upon this person, and incorporate him by thy Holy Spirit into thy Son Jesus Christ, that he may be buried with him into his death, and be raised with him in newness of life; that he may daily follow him, joyfully bearing his cross, and cleave unto him in true faith, firm hope, and ardent love;

that he may with a comfortable sense of thy favor, leave this life, which is nothing but a continual death, and at the last day, may appear without terror before the judgment seat of Christ thy Son, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee and the Holy Ghost, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen."

Taken from the Form for the Administration of Baptism.

NEWS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

On April 2 2015- Good Friday, Doon PRC extended a call to Pastor Nathan Decker to be the missionary to the Philippines to replace Pastor Smit.

Lord willing, in June,

1) The next Classis meeting of the PRC in the Philippines will be held on Friday, June 12 and will be hosted by the *Protestant Reformed Church in Bulacan*.

2) A delegation of Doon and the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) will be visiting the mission field in the Philippines. The delegation will consist of Pastor Allen Brummel (representing the FMC) and Mr. Jim Regnerus (representing Doon PRC), along with their wives.



Angela and June receiving their baptism certificates



CK Outing, a time of baseball and fellowship



A group conference in Kolkata where Pastor Lanning, Elder Leong and Brother Ishu attended



Bible study in Kolkata



We rejoice with baby Jonam's baptism

We are planning to include a new rubric into future SS issues! Readers will have the opportunity to write in their questions on doctrine and Christian living which may be answered in this rubric. We would like to invite SS readers to note down such questions and email them to cksaltshakers@gmail.com. Thank you!

Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church

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

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

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

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