

PELITA METHODIST

VOLUME 44, NO. 3
MARCH 2018



PP 3233/01/2013 (031518)



LENT -

Recovering the
Attitude of Gratitude

Moment



Christian Federation of Malaysia representatives at the World Interfaith Harmony Week commemoration & celebration Dinner at Putrajaya on 27 February 2018 organized by the Government.

Advertise with Pelita

Organisations and individuals are welcome to advertise in Pelita Methodist. Businesses, Churches, Conferences, events, personal greetings/messages can be considered. A discount of one issue is given for a year's advertisement. Please enquire at the Pelita office for more details.

	B/W	Colour
Full Page	RM 600	RM 1,000
Half Page	RM 300	RM 600
Quarter Page	RM 150	RM 400

Subscribe to Pelita

Pelita Methodist is published monthly, 12 issues per year.

Malaysia: RM30.00 per year inclusive of postage.

Overseas: USD 30.00 per year, USD 50.00 for 2 years inclusive of Air Mail.

For enquiries and subscription:

E-mail: pelitamethodist@gmail.com

Tel: 603-7954 1811



**"A Church After
God's Own Heart
in Turbulent Times"**

Contents

Pg. 04

Lent — Recovering the Attitude of Gratitude

By Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik

Pg. 06

COE News

'Old Boy' Azman Hashim's name etched in stone at MBS Sentul

Pg. 07

TRAC News

Arminianism and Calvinism: Debated Scriptural Passages (Part 2)

Pg. 11

Advertisement

Asia Gateway Residential Training 2018

Isaiah 53:1-12

(NIV Version)

- 1 Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been
revealed?
- 2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should
desire him.
- 3 He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low
esteem.
- 4 Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
- 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on
him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
- 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
- 7 He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
- 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken
away.
Yet who of his generation protested?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was
punished.
- 9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.
- 10 Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and
cause him to suffer,
and though the Lord makes his life an
offering for sin,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
and the will of the Lord will prosper in his
hand.
- 11 After he has suffered,
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will
justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities.
- 12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the
great,
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto death,
and was numbered with the transgressors.
For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

LENT – Recovering the Attitude of Gratitude

The contrast of the *season of Lent* is brought into sharp relief when Ash Wednesday [the first day of Lent] fell on 13 February, two days just before the Chinese Lunar New Year this year.

This is because Lent is a spiritually rich liturgical tradition whereby the key practices of prayer, fasting and acts of charity [alms giving] undergird the observance of this season. During this season of Lent, Christians renew their focus on God as their first love [Rev 2:4] and experience Him in a deeper way through self-denial and by intentionally practising being “saved *for* good works”.

Lent is a preparatory season for Easter: to recognise and acknowledge in a fresh way our need for repentance and our depravity apart from God [Col 2:13-14]; to draw closer to God – as we prepare our hearts to celebrate Easter with a renewed sense of joy and amazement! The observance of Lent is an essential for it reminds us that our Lord’s victory and glory of Easter lies on the foundation of the Cross at Golgotha.

All too often, it is too easy for believers to get caught up in the anticipation of the joy and celebration of Easter; without prior experiential cognizance and truly listening to “dying to self” – of Christ’s journey to his death in Jerusalem [see Phil 2:6-8]. Just as there will be no glory of the resurrection of Easter without the sacrifice on the Cross, so observing the preparation of Lent is essential to the joy of Easter.

The Spirit of Entitlement and the Attitude of Gratitude

As we journey through the forty days of Lent [ending on 29 March, without counting the Sundays] one of the attitudes that we need to put to death is the *spirit of entitlement*. *Just like at the onset of Spring, the farmer removes the unwanted roots left behind from Winter, and begins to sow good seeds in anticipation of harvest; so in Lent we too remove the weed that chokes – the spirit of entitlement, and sow the good seed of gratitude.*

One of the principal reasons we fail to hear the words “thank you” in our culture is because we expect things “to come to us”, to be done for us; in fact, we feel we are owed more. The spirit of entitlement makes the prodigal son demand of the father – “Give me”, and the elder son claiming – “You never give me” [Luke 15:12, 29]; it is the fertile soil from which ingratitude, discontentment, dissatisfaction and disaffection grow readily and plentifully!

The antidote to the spirit of entitlement is *gratitude* – an

attitude that recognises and acknowledges a benefit, its worth and its source; it “is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others” [Cicero]. We now live in a very advanced era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, enthralled with the fusion of digital revolution with other technologies. We live in a culture driven increasingly by artificial intelligence that gives us drones, self-driving cars, virtual assistants, etc – *blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres* [Klaus Schwab]. In such a world that increases and feeds our expectations and demands – without gratitude, we are prone to losing our sense of wonder for our Creator and His created order.

Gratitude elevates worth; without it we mislay and lose our sense of value. When we appreciate the waitress who serves long hours and difficult customers behind the fast food counter, we elevate her value. When teenagers remain defiant and disagreeable toward their parents, without expressing thanks – they devalue their parents’ role in their lives. A spirit of entitlement and ingratitude will lead to the hardening of the heart and loss of sensitivity towards others. If this malaise continues long enough – we become grumpy old people that no one enjoys!

A Gratitude Project – The Methodist Thanksgiving Memorial Chapel

A “**gratitude project**” that the General Conference Executive Council [on 26 January 2018] has adopted is the *Methodist Thanksgiving Memorial Chapel* [MTMC] in the newly constructed Wesley Methodist School Penang International [WMSPI] that will start operations in September 2018.

Building the MTMC as the “House of the Lord” will be the primary and sole responsibility of our Methodist Church in Malaysia Family. The MTMC is part of the RM 55 million newly built Wesley Methodist School Penang International [WMSPI] complex.

The *MTMC will be the principal sacred space that captures the purpose and identity of our latest private mission school. The Methodist Church in Malaysia is grateful to God for the countless Methodist missionaries and educators since our inception some 133 years ago. We are grateful for the many generations of fine teachers who had served in our schools and who shared the conviction held by Nelson Mandela [a Methodist boarding school graduate who was mentored by Methodist preachers and educators, and formed a bond with a Methodist chaplain while in prison] who said

–“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”.

The target sum to be raised for the MTMC alone is RM 2.5 million.

We shall raise this sum from our own Annual Conferences [the Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference has already given RM 300,000], local Methodist Churches, agencies [such as the MW, MSF etc], Methodist schools and church members.

God’s people called Methodists in Malaysia can make their personal contributions to the MTMC in gratitude for the various blessings received from God’s hand, thanking Him for our church, our life, our marriage and family, for God’s faithfulness as we celebrate anniversaries, for acknowledging significant events such as our health/healing, education, answered prayers etc. We can also give out of gratitude in memory of loved ones such as our beloved parents and others whom we treasure. Anyone, young or old, in big or small amounts, can be grateful and generous towards God, our unfailing Provider.

As we journey through Lent this year, may the Holy Spirit continue to *work in us to will and to act according to God’s good purpose. May we “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling”* [Phil 2:12-13] with gratitude and thanksgiving - gratefully appreciating afresh the abundant

grace of our beloved Saviour’s work at Golgotha, and nailing the “spirit of entitlement” on the cross.

May we have a holy Lent that leads to a truly joyous Easter.

Bishop Ong Hwai Teik

*Contributions and gifts for the Methodist Thanksgiving Methodist Chapel specifically indicated for “MTMC”, can be sent to:

**The MTMC Project,
69 Jalan 5/31,
46000 Petaling Jaya,
Selangor Darul Ehsan;**

cheques can be made out to
“AEC of the Methodist Church in Malaysia” .

Contacts:
Mr Khor Hong Yin [COE Executive Director]
– **012 3645310**

or

Ms Jenny Qua [COE Private Education Director]
– **012 6940684**

Devotion

The Cross

The cross is a picture of violence, yet the key to peace;
a picture of suffering, yet the key to healing;
a picture of death, yet the key to life.

(David Watson)

IN WORD: Think of how ridiculous it sounds: The only reason we can know God and go to heaven is because a radical teacher was executed two thousand years ago. Does that make any sense at all? Not on the surface, especially when we consider what a cross meant. It was the ancient version of an electric chair or a gas chamber, only much slower and more painful in accomplishing its purpose. The idea that we can have life only because a long-ago troublemaker made enough trouble to get Himself killed simply doesn’t compute. It seems absolutely absurd.

But God has frequently worked in seemingly absurd ways, hasn’t He? He once told a man to build an enormous boat in the middle of dry, elevated land. He once ordered a very old father to sacrifice his long-awaited son, even though the sacrifice would wipe out every vestige of an ironclad promise. He picked an old exile to deliver a people from the world’s most powerful nation, a young shepherd boy to defeat an enormous

One Year at the Cross Devotional by Chris Tiegreen

giant, and a small army to defeat a vast coalition using nothing more than praise songs. If we were looking for a conventional deity to impress us only with lightning bolts and a thundering voice, we picked the wrong God. Our Father usually prefers to demonstrate His power in unlikely ways.

That’s because He has inside information that we don’t have. We had no idea that we needed a holy sacrifice to die in our place. We didn’t know the enormity of the transaction that went on behind the scenes of the Cross. We didn’t know the dead Savior would rise again. We only learned by revelation that something so absurd as His death could result in something so amazing as our life.

IN DEED: Never distance yourself from the foolishness of the Cross—or from the foolishness of the Christian faith in general. To the world it looks absurd, but to us it’s the most powerful force in the universe. Unbelievers will one day be ashamed of the things they have laughed at, and we will one day be grateful for looking like fools. Always choose the foolishness of God over the wisdom of the world.

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18

DEVOTION

‘Old boy’ Azman Hashim’s name etched in stone at MBS Sentul

PETALING JAYA: To honour one of its famous alumni, the main administration building at SMK (L) Methodist Sentul (MBS Sentul) has been named after banker and philanthropist Tan Sri Azman Hashim.

Bangunan Azman Hashim is in recognition of his contributions to make education accessible to everyone.

Methodist Council of Education (MCOE) chairman Bishop Dr Ong Hwai Teik, who is also the Episcopal Head of the Methodist Church in Malaysia, paid tribute to Azman for his “exceptional altruism and sense of responsibility”.

He said Azman’s RM10mil donation through Yayasan Azman Hashim, a non-profit charitable institution he founded to support nation-building through education, would “transform the lives of many”.

Azman, who is also chairman of Yayasan AmGroup, said he felt indebted to MBS Sentul, the school where he received his early education.

“I would not have been where I am today without its dedicated teachers. The first Methodist school was set up in Malaysia some 130 years ago.

“Today, we have the MCOE helping to promote and coordinate the development of both government-assisted Methodist schools as well as private schools and colleges, numbering about 80 in total,” he said during a ceremony at the school yesterday.

Also present were MBS Sentul (Secondary) board chairman Datuk Dr Ron Tan, MBS Sentul (Primary) board chairman Steven Niles Lee, and representatives from the Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory Education Department.

Article is taken from The Star dated 31/01/18.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/01/31/old-boy-azman-hashims-name-etched-in-stone-at-mbs-sentul/>



Arminianism and Calvinism: Debated Scriptural Passages (Part 2)

By Rev. Dr. Andrew Tan and Mr. David Tan

Introduction

This is the second in a series of four articles written to assist Methodist members to be aware of their own doctrinal position which is Arminian. In the first article, we explained how the “Young, Restless, and Reformed” movement has brought Calvinism back onto the theological center-stage, and raises challenges to our Arminian beliefs. We also discussed issues of God’s sovereignty, human free will, and the problem of evil and unbelievers. In this article, we will examine some of the key Scriptural passages in this debate. We hope that this series of articles will help us not only to understand our doctrinal position and the Scriptures that support it but also to see it as credible, and be able to articulate and defend it.

Theology and Scripture

Neither Calvinism nor Arminianism is directly laid out in the Scripture. If they were, it is unlikely that the debate over these two ideas would have persisted in mainstream Christianity for over 400 years. However, both theological systems are rooted in Scripture and attempt to synthesize and organize what Scripture has to teach on salvation into a systematic soteriology (theology of salvation). Therefore, both theological systems are derived from Scriptural passages that their adherents believe speak clearly on certain aspects of salvation and build upon it using logical arguments and derivation to develop a coherent and complete story. This story must then be tested against the Scripture as a whole, to ensure that we have not inadvertently contradicted Scripture in our attempt to understand and explain it.

Calvinists and Arminians alike believe that the Bible is God-breathed, and therefore authoritative, reliable, and consistent. We are not pitting one section of the Bible against another or trying to accumulate more proof-texts than the other side. Rather, our theology should be consistent with all of Scripture. Where apparent inconsistencies appear, we need to correct our theologies and/or improve our understanding of the Scriptures. In salvation, Calvinists believe that the Scriptures clearly teach predestination and election in a way that necessitates Calvinism and precludes Arminian theology. We will examine some passages from Romans and Ephesians that are commonly quoted to advocate Calvinism. On the other hand, Arminians believe that the Scriptures teach that the offer of salvation is available to all (universal offer of salvation) and that the Scriptures warn that falling away from the faith is a real possibility. Both ideas are incompatible with Calvinistic theology.

It is not possible in the scope of this article to be exhaustive in the Scriptures relating to these subjects or even to go into great detail about the passages that we will examine. Arminian and Calvinist theologians alike will have variations on or even outright departures from the exegetical examples we provide here as examples of how these two groups approach these passages. Nonetheless, we believe that surveying these four topics and the Scriptures presented here will introduce the reader to the Scriptural framework of this debate.

Predestination

A central idea in Calvinistic theology is that God has predetermined which individuals will be saved – and, consequently, who will not be saved. Two main passages used in defense of this view are **Romans 8** and **Ephesians 1**, which talk about predestination.

Romans 8 is a discussion of how we become children of God through the gift of the Holy Spirit that dwells in us. Verse 29 is the key verse for understanding predestination:

“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”

Calvinists believe that foreknowledge and predestination in this verse are practically synonymous. They argue that foreknowledge is not merely intellectual but implies choice and love. Throughout the Scriptures, knowledge is not merely about information, but implies relationship (e.g. **Matthew 7:23**, “*I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*”). Therefore, a Calvinist understanding of the verse might read like this (italics ours):

“For those God foreknew *that he would call to be his own* he also predestined to be *saved, and therefore* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”

Arminians have a variety of views on the exact nature of God’s foreknowledge, but all agree that this foreknowledge is derived from future events and does not cause them to be. Or, to phrase it another way, if I were to choose between X and Y, God knows my choice in advance but does not determine what my choice would be.

In addition to the different understanding of foreknowledge, Arminians have a differing understanding of predestination in this passage. Predestination here is not predetermining individuals to salvation. Rather, for those God foreknows will accept His offer of salvation, he has created a special destiny – to be conformed to and thus share in the image of Christ. An Arminian understanding of **Romans 8:29** might look like this (italics ours):

“For those God foreknew *would love him and answer his call and be saved* he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son (*so that we who were made in God’s image, having being saved, will have that image restored*), that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”

Both readings are plausible. The correct reading depends greatly on what “foreknowledge” means, as well as the larger context of Romans. We do not have the space here to properly explore the former but will return to the latter further on in this article when we discuss Romans 9.

Another important passage regarding the topic of predestination is **Ephesians 1**. At first glance, this passage seems to clearly support the Calvinist view, with verses 4-5 reading:

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.”

Calvinists understand these verses as God choosing individuals for salvation even before the creation of this world. God’s choice of these individuals is entirely dependent on God’s “pleasure and will.” In this view, predestination of individuals is part of God’s overarching plan, as seen in verse 11, “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.”

Arminians contend however, that the Calvinist interpretation misses an important point: the central issue that Paul is discussing in his letter to the Ephesians is reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles through Christ to form the Church. In this view, a careful reading of the subject matter and Paul’s use of the pronouns “us,” “we,” and “you” show that he is not discussing the salvation of individuals, but God’s plan to unite both Jew and Gentile in the Church.

The theme of reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles is spelled out in Chapters 2 and 3. In these passages, Paul repeatedly uses the word “you,” to refer to Gentiles (e.g. 2:11, “Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands).” He describes how Gentiles were excluded from Israel, and how Jesus has torn down these walls so that “through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus,” (3:6). It is because of this, that “you” (the Gentile believers) “must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking,” (4:17).

Paul’s discussion of Jewish and Gentile believers actually begins in Chapter 1, and is apparent when close attention is paid to the use of the pronouns in verses 11-13.

“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,”

Here, “we” clearly refers to Jewish Christians, who “were the first to put [their] hope in Christ.” In contrast, “you” refers to the Gentile believers receiving Paul’s letter, who “also were included in Christ” later from a chronologically perspective. In both cases, the pronouns clearly refer to corporate groups rather than individuals. Arminians believe that in verses 4-5, Paul, anticipating the theme of Jew and Gentile, is emphasizing God’s choice of the Church, predestining both Jews and Gentiles to “adoption to sonship”. In this reading, the “us” of verse 4 refers not to individual Christians but rather to the corporate body of the Church. So the predestination that Paul is talking about here is not about individual salvation. Rather, just as God had chosen Israel in the past to be His people, God has now chosen the Church, ending the divide between Jews and Gentiles and bringing both into the family of God.

Some might ask, at this juncture, why God’s choice of groups rather than individuals matters for understanding salvation. We point back

toward the history of Israel. While God chose the people of Israel to be His people, many individuals within Israel did not receive the benefits of God’s promises due to their disobedience and their rejection of God. On the other hand, there are accounts of persons such as Rahab and Ruth who began their lives outside of God’s chosen people, but who entered into this group by faith and thus received the blessings God had promised to Israel.

Election

In the Ephesians passage above, we have already started to move from the subject of predestination to the subject of election. In our modern context, we associate elections with voting and democracy. The meaning of the word election, however, is simply to choose. For Calvinists, predestination and election are almost synonyms, both referring to God’s choice of those individuals who will be saved. Arminians contend that the object of predestination is context-specific (as discussed above) and election in the Scripture refers to purpose and service, not to salvation. Indeed, the Scriptures contain various references of how God has chosen some foreign nation and their king to accomplish a particular purpose (e.g. Cyrus of the Persians, Isaiah 45:1). Surely God’s choice of Cyrus has nothing to do with salvation.

The most noteworthy passage on election is **Romans 9-11**, a passage that has been the subject of extensive exegesis on both sides. Among contemporary Biblical scholars, John Piper and Ben Witherington are particularly well-known for their analysis of these chapters in defense of the Calvinist and Arminian perspectives respectively. The following is a very brief treatment of a complex and intertwined passage.

Before we get into the details of this passage, we have to begin by asking, what is **Romans 9-11** – and Romans as a whole – about? The answer that Calvinists (and others) give, is that Romans is about justification by grace alone through faith alone. Calvinists go on to assert that in this context of salvation, Romans 9 clearly teaches that God is in meticulous control of all aspects of salvation including how we respond.

Calvinists point toward multiple passages in this section to support their belief that God elects people to salvation. They show the example of God’s choice of Isaac over Ishmael and God’s choice of Jacob over Esau from before their birth (9:7-13); the example of God’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, resulting in Pharaoh refusing to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt (9:14-18); and the inability of the people of Israel to recognize their Messiah (11:7-10). Perhaps the section that seems to most clearly support the Calvinist position is Chapter 9, verses 19-23:

One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?” But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?

What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory – even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

Arminians agree that justification by grace alone through faith alone is an important theme in the book of Romans. If this was all Paul was discussing – if Paul was explaining the process of salvation apart from any other context – the Calvinists would be correct in their assessment of Romans 9-11. However, we (the writers) see the status of the people of Israel as the particular context in which Paul discusses the topic of justification. This has important implications for understanding **Romans 9-11**.

Throughout Romans, and in Romans 9-11 in particular, Paul tackles the problem of God's apparent rejection of Israel as His chosen people, an important question as most of the Jewish people had rejected the Church. This brings up the question of whether God is righteous and faithful – if God had not fulfilled His promises to Israel, will He now fulfill His promises to the Church? To answer this question, Paul examines how God has dealt with Israel in the past, makes the case that God has not indeed abandoned His people, Israel, and affirms that ultimately when the full number of Gentiles have come in “all Israel will be saved” (11:26).

If we accept this framework (that Paul is discussing the position of Israel as God's chosen people), a different understanding of Romans 9-11 begins to emerge. Israel's status as God's chosen people is not an end in itself, but for Israel to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth (Genesis 12:3), according to God's promise to Abraham. Indeed, the Jews understood themselves to be keepers and instructors of the truth (Romans 2:19-21). Paul establishes that God has the right to choose whoever He will to fulfill His promise and Israel's purpose, and that this reaches its fulfillment in the person of Jesus (10:4). Even in the problem that Paul tackles – Israel's transgression and failure to recognize the Messiah – Gentiles were being blessed and grafted into God's people (11:11-12), fulfilling Israel's purpose!

Paul demonstrates that God has been faithful to His promises to Israel – upholding the integrity of God, and the reliability of all His promises.

With this in mind, God's choices described in **Romans 9-11** are not consignment of the individuals discussed to salvation or to reprobation, but rather God's choosing them to accomplish specific purposes regarding Israel. God's rejection of Esau as the heir to Abraham's promise is not the same thing as God predestining Esau to hell. The emphasis in **Romans 9** regarding Pharaoh is not eternal condemnation but the display of God's power. And, the discussion of the pottery in verses 19-21 is not about “salvation” or “eternal destruction” but has to do with “special purposes” and “common-use.” Furthermore, in verses 22-23, God's patience with “objects of His wrath” is not God postponing the punishment of those He has already condemned to eternal destruction, as is often claimed by Calvinists. Rather, in **Ephesians 2:3**, Paul makes clear that we believers were ourselves once “objects of wrath;” God's patience with these “objects of wrath” is that they might become “objects of mercy” instead.

In his argument in **Romans 9-11**, Paul is explaining the role of Israel as God's chosen people and how this is still true in spite of the welcoming in of the Gentiles and the turning away of most of the people of Israel. In the analogy of the olive tree in Chapter 11, there is continuity between Israel and the Gentiles – the tree is not replaced, but rather, branches are grafted in. And in this very passage there are conditions for breaking off and for grafting in the branches: unbelief and faith respectively (vs. 19) – which contradicts the Calvinistic

idea that there are no conditions to receiving the benefits of salvation. It is consistent, however, with the Arminian view that while the offer of salvation is made unconditionally, the benefits of this gracious offer are only effective when received through faith alone (which God graciously enables, but does not force).

Universal Offer Of Salvation

Arminians believe that there are themes in the Scriptures that Calvinism fails to properly account for. We very briefly address two here: the universal offer of salvation, and warnings against falling away from the faith.

Arminians do not believe that everyone will be saved, but that the offer of salvation is genuinely available to all. Throughout the Scriptures, “all,” “the world,” and “everyone” are repeatedly used to describe who Christ died for and who God desires to be saved (**John 1:29, John 3:16, John 12:32, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, Hebrews 2:9, 2 Peter 3:8-9, 1 John 2:1-2**, etc.). This stands in contradiction to the belief, widely-held by Calvinists, that although the cross would be sufficient to save all, God only offers salvation to some, a doctrine called “limited atonement.” This is a necessary doctrine for Calvinists, as they believe that God's offer of salvation is always effectual: those whom God calls are unable to reject His call. Since it is evident that there are non-believers, the Calvinist must believe that God does not call everyone.

Some Calvinists have tried to explain these passages by acknowledging that God does indeed desire that all would be saved, but that God has a higher and better desire (usually God's glory) that must take precedence. Some Calvinists have also appealed to mystery to explain how God can simultaneously offer salvation to all and effectively limit it to some. Still other Calvinists say that all people receive some benefit from Jesus' death (so Jesus did indeed die for all), but not all are offered salvation through His death. We find that these attempts to reconcile the language of the universal offer of salvation within these texts with the Calvinistic doctrine of limited atonement require stretching the understanding of the texts to the breaking point.

One passage that Calvinists have used to justify the idea of limited atonement is **Romans 5:12-21**, where verse 17 reads, “For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!” and verse 19 states, “through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” The Calvinists claim that this and other passages (**Matthew 20:28, Matthew 26:28, John 10:15, Ephesians 5:25**) show that only some receive the benefit of Jesus' death, and thus Jesus only died for some.

Arminians have no problems with the first part of the claim – only those who receive God's gift of righteousness benefit from Christ's death and resurrection! However, nothing in these passages indicate that the offer of salvation is not made to all. The assertion that Jesus died for a particular group of people (“the many”) does not mean that Jesus died for only that group of people (e.g. 1 Timothy 4:10, That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.”). On the contrary, if Jesus' death is greater than Adam's trespass (vs. 15-16), it would follow that His death must have some universal effect. Indeed, verse 18 states that “one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.” The

Calvinist assertion that the limited beneficiaries of Jesus' death proves the limited offer of salvation only makes sense if one accepts the Calvinistic premise that God's offer of salvation cannot be rejected. This is a premise that Arminians do not share.

Warnings Against Falling Away

Most Arminians believe that the Scriptures teach that falling away from salvation is possible and clear warnings to guard against this are not merely hypothetical. Calvinists, on the other hand, assert that it is not possible for a believer to lose their salvation as this would be a human rejection of God's effectual call.

In our earlier discussion of Romans, we have already noted that in chapter 11:19, branches were broken off because of unbelief, which would suggest that falling away from the faith is a possibility. There are other passages with more direct warnings, such as Jesus' parable of the vine in **John 15:1-17**, where if "you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned." (v. 6), and passages with examples of people who have "made a shipwreck of their faith" (**1 Timothy 1:18-20**). These are not isolated passages; warnings on the subject are numerous with **1 Corinthians 8:11; 9:11-12, Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:12; 6:4-6; 10:26-29, James 5:19-20**, and more discussing apostasy.

With all these Scriptural passages on falling away from the faith, what is the Calvinist rebuttal? There are two main Calvinist arguments. The first is that those who appear to have left the faith were never true Christians to begin with. **1 John 2:19** states "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us." There are a few ways to interpret this verse, but even if we take it to mean that this group were false Christians rather than genuine Christians who have left the faith, Arminians would argue that this passage refers to a particular group of church-leavers, and should not automatically be generalized to all cases.

The second major Calvinist argument appeals to passages such as **Romans 8:38-39**, which states, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Other similar passages include **John 10:28-29, Ephesians 4:30**, and **Jude 24**. These are important passages, and Arminians point toward these verses to show that we can be assured of our salvation, and that God is more than capable of safeguarding us. Still, we have to find a way to reconcile these teachings with the warnings against apostasy. The Calvinist view is that the warnings against apostasy are merely hypothetical or are warnings to those who are part of the church but are not truly elect – warnings that these non-elect would be unable to heed. Arminians think that a better way to hold these passages together is found in Jesus' parable of the vine and branches – that so long as we remain in Christ and Christ remains in us, we are secure. Apostasy in the Arminian view is not something that happens accidentally, or through carelessness but by a deliberate choice (or series of choices) to leave the protection and security that God offers.

Of Making Exegesis there is No End, and Much Study Wearies the Body (cf. Ecclesiastes 12:12)

If you have made it to the end of the article, thank you for walking

through all this exegesis with us! As we stated at the beginning, however, we have merely scratched the surface. Wiser and more learned people on both sides of the issue have studied and written in much more depth than we have, and still the debate persists. What then can and should we take away from this study?

Let us begin by stating what we don't expect to accomplish here. We do not expect to settle the 400 hundred year old debate on Arminian and Calvinistic theology. We do not expect to convince Calvinists who have already studied the topic in depth and come to their conclusions – though we do hope that any Calvinist readers seeing this sort of Arminian exegesis for the first time will take a deeper look with an open mind.

We stated at the beginning of this article that we hope that this series of articles will help us in the Methodist Church, to understand our doctrinal position and the Scriptures that support it. We hope that those who are challenged by Calvinists on their beliefs will see Arminian theology as credible, and be able to articulate and defend it – not that we want to promote dissension and antagonism over this issue, but we wish our members to be confident in what they believe. We hope that the work we have done shows that the Arminian position is Biblically-based and comes out of a reverence for Scripture. Our Calvinist brothers and sisters may believe we have an incorrect understanding of the Scriptures, but we hope they recognize that we, like them, are attempting to be faithful to God's Word. And, if you as a reader are introduced to this debate as a result of our writings and find yourself in the Calvinist camp after studying the Scriptures – we gently (maybe vigorously!) disagree with you, but are thankful that you have found the task of studying God's Word deeply worthwhile.

Our major exegetical work for this series of articles, incomplete as it is, ends here. In the following article, we will discuss common misunderstandings about Arminian theology. Some readers have inquired about references for further reading. That will come in the fourth and final article of the series, entitled, "Where Do We Go From Here?"

Printed with permission from TRAC

Asia Gateway Residential Training 2018

Module 1: June 4-8

Module 1

Mission of God in the Bible

This module aims:

- to explore the theme of evangelistic mission in the Old Testament
- to understand the meta-narrative of the Old Testament and how that intersects with mission
- to understand the plan and purpose of God from the beginning for mission
- to encourage interaction, the exchange of viewpoints and ideas
- to be strengthened in our commitment from scripture for mission to the nations
- to survey the theme of mission in the New Testament, with particular attention to the Gospels, Acts and selected letters of Paul
- to understand the plan and purpose of God in the New Testament, paying particular attention to the inclusion of the Gentiles
- to examine how the early church deals with conflicts and issues pertaining to the inclusion of Gentiles in God's mission
- to explore how we could be strengthened in our commitment for mission to the nations




Dr Peter Lau

Peter Lau is a trained medical practitioner who holds an MDiv from Sydney Missionary and Bible College, and a PhD from Sydney University. Since 2010 he has been lecturing at Malaysia Theological Seminary. He has written books on Ruth, Ezekiel and Psalms. He is married to Kathryn and they have three children.



Rev Dr Lim Kar Yong

Kar Yong is a property valuer by training. He pursued theological studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and University of Wales. Presently the Director of Post Graduate Studies and New Testament Lecturer at Malaysia Theological Seminary.

Asia Gateway Training | venue: Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (STM)

T: 03 2714 5325 / 016 6482768 E: asiagatewaymissions@gmail.com W: asiagatewaytraining.net

In partnership with:



Asia CMS



Interserve

SIM
Serving In Mission



Asia Gateway Residential Training 2018

Module 2: June 11-17

Module 2

Gospel, Culture and Integral Mission



In this module we will reflect on culture, what it is, how to understand other cultures, how to communicate the Gospel in different cultures, and how to live and work in a cross-cultural situation. We will ask how the Gospel and culture relate and ask ourselves how we can recognise God at work in other cultures. We will also reflect on how the Gospel relates to the poor and the marginalized (mostly in an urban setting). How should we live and work in a context of economic disparity, building capacity, dignifying and empowering each other, and building community?

This module will include an exposure trip to OA Ministry or Migrant Ministry



Berdine van den Toren

Berdine grew up in a small rural village in the Netherlands. Together with her husband and children, she moved to the Central African Republic, where they lived and served for eight years at the Bangui Evangelical School for Theology, for French speaking Africa.

Having moved to Oxford, United Kingdom, Berdine joined CMS and worked as the Mission Education advisor. Now, living in the Netherlands again, she has become a CMS Mission Partner, to support Missiological and Theological Education in Africa and Asia. Berdine has been Asia Gateway lecturer in 'Gospel and Culture' for the past 4 years.

The impact of her teaching and mentoring on Asia Gateway students has been greatly appreciated consistently for the 4 years.

***Berdine will also be our Senior Resident Trainer for 2018, overseeing the programme as well as mentoring the trainees.

Asia Gateway Training | venue: Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (STM)

T: 03 2714 5325 / 016 6482768 E: asiagatewaymissions@gmail.com W: asiagatewaytraining.net

In partnership with:



Asia Gateway Residential Training 2018

Module 3: June 18-23

Module 3

The Gospel in a Multi-religious Context

All the major religions in the world see its beginning and roots in Asia. All have claims from their own revered scriptures which guides humanity on all aspects of life from birth, death and the attainment of eternity. Negating these religious belief systems and presenting Christ as the only way has become offensive. The challenge before us is can this offensive dimension be removed altogether? The danger of a relative perspective of religion like many post modernists propose or universalising of religion does harm to the Christian gospel. As theologians and practitioners each generation is on a quest to be honest to the Gospel and also its context. This class is all about finding a way forward.



Course Objectives

- to analyse how pluralism is understood within the Church
- to understand our context that demands to see divergent ways of understanding God
- to explore some important Asian Theologians who have tried to narrow the divide
- to positively respond to opposing views in Christian Practice
- to work towards an authentic way to see pluralism in each context

This module will include an exposure trip to a Buddhist Temple



Rev Dr Joseph Deva Komar

Joseph Deva Komar a pastor with the Methodist Church working amongst the diaspora Indians in Malaysia for the last 35 years. Presently doubling up as a lecturer at Malaysia Theological Seminary specializing in Missiology and Pastoral Theology.

Asia Gateway Training | venue: Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (STM)

T: 03 2714 5325 / 016 6482768 E: asiagatewaymissions@gmail.com W: asiagatewaytraining.net

In partnership with:



Asia Gateway Residential Training 2018

Module 4: June 25-29



Module 4

Crucial Issues in Asian Mission

The module will examine the church's mission through a study of:

- (1) crucial issues in Asian mission and
- (2) theological and sociological themes and approaches arising from Asian contexts.

Attention will be given to issues such as how Asian contexts shape the church's mission, Christian encounter, contextualisation, religious pluralism, poverty, Asian leadership and partnership.

The aims of the course are:

- to provide tools for analysing complex mission issues and
- to design appropriate training for leadership in the local church

This module will include an exposure trip to a Hindu Temple

CWK

Dr Cheong Weng Kit

Weng Kit serves at a seminary in Southeast Asia as a fulltime lecturer in missiology and intercultural Studies.

He served in various church planting ministries in Southeast Asia in the 1980s-90s and in international student and migrant ministries in the U.S. in the 2000s. He has degrees in chemistry and education, an MDiv and ThM in missiology and a PhD in Intercultural Studies.

He researches and writes on Asian Pentecostalism, work, money and mission, globalisation and world religions, and has written/edited three books and published over 30 articles on the Trinity, Pentecostalism, mission and world religions, globalisation and urban missiology.

Asia Gateway Training | venue: Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (STM)

T: 03 2714 5325 / 016 6482768 E: asiagatewaymissions@gmail.com W: asiagatewaytraining.net

In partnership with:



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE... TRANSFORMING LIVES

BECOME AN



STUDENT

Since the pioneering spirit of early missionaries in Malaysia in 1891,

Methodist Education has shaped the lives of thousands of students for 125 years. Our Wesley Methodist Schools (WMS) tradition gives the school a special character, that stands apart from other school models: the WMS tradition of Christian values, service to the community and all-round quality education. Wesley Methodist School has become a name synonymous for producing the **A.C.E.** student, children who are **Academically excellent**, trained in **Character** values and pursue **Extra-curricular** achievements. This philosophy lies at the heart of our mission to help our students reach their full potential.

Wesley Methodist School (Private)

offers the National curriculum – Dual Language programme (DLP) leading to SPM while the **Wesley Methodist School (International)** offers the British Cambridge curriculum leading to the internationally recognised Cambridge I.G.C.S.E. We pride ourselves on operating schools of “**Education with Mission, Excellence and Compassion**”, our students embracing these four Core Values:

- **God-centredness**
- **Respect for Life**
- **Integrity**
- **Excellence with Humility**

For more info, log on to Wesley Methodist School Group website www.wms.edu.my or call the following tel. nos.

Wesley Methodist School (International), offering Cambridge IGCSE			Wesley Methodist School (Private), offering Dual Language Programme (DLP)			
Kuala Lumpur 03 4041 6470	Ipoh 05 2545 122	Penang 012 3611 400	Klang 03 3371 8852	Seremban 06 7620 068	Melaka 06 2849 025	Bdr Seri Coalfields, Sg Buloh 03 7956 5310

METHODIST COUNCIL OF EDUCATION | www.wms.edu.my

67 Jalan 5/31, 46000 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia | T • 603 7956 5310 | E • info@mcoe.edu.my



WESLEY METHODIST SCHOOL (PRIVATE)



WESLEY METHODIST SCHOOL (INTERNATIONAL)



METHODIST COLLEGE KUALA LUMPUR

Celebrating 35 Years of Academic Excellence



Apply now
with your
SPM / IGCSE
results



Engaging Learning Environment



Academic Facilities



Wholesome Campus Life

Merit Scholarship 2018*

(based on SPM & IGCSE results only)

American Degree Transfer Program, Cambridge A Level & Australian Matriculation

8A* (for IGCSE students only)	: 100%
9A+/A & above (must include 7A+)	: 100%
8A+/A & above (must include 6A+)	: 75%
8A+/A & above	: 50%
6A+/A & above	: 25%
5A+/A/A- & above	: 15%

Certified Accounting Technician & Diploma in Early Childhood Education

8A+/A & above	: 100%
7A+/A & above	: 75%
6A+/A/A- & above	: 50%
5A+/A/A- & above	: 25%
3A+/A/A- & above	: 15%

- Also available :
- Student Leader & Achievement Award
 - Special Scholarships
 - Financial Aid

Courses Offered

AMERICAN DEGREE TRANSFER PROGRAM

KPT/JPS(A4447)03/19

January, April & August

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

KPT/JPS(A5668)12/19

April & August

CAMBRIDGE A LEVEL

KPT/JPS(A9308)07/23

January, March & July

AUSTRALIAN MATRICULATION

KPT/JPS(A9207)07/23

January & August

ACCOUNTING (ACCA)

KPT/JPS(A9696)01/19, KPT/JPS(A1206)06/22

CAT: January, March & July

ACCA: January & July

DIPLOMA IN SOCIAL WORK

KPT/JPS(A8500)09/21

April



Off Jalan Tun Sambanthan 4, Brickfields
50470 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tel (General): (603) 2274 1851
(Marketing): (603) 2274 6711
Email: ask@mckl.edu.my
www.mckl.edu.my

*All scholarships are on tuition fees only. T&C apply.