



Advances and setbacks

**The Greens
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The mysterious ways of God

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Defense of the faith

As I have shared many times in my newsletters, the Costa Rican evangelical church in general has been quite opposed to historic Christianity in general, and Reformed theology in particular. Pentecostalism and later Neo-pentecostalism has influenced a great majority of churches, even some that in the past were somewhat traditional (Baptist, Methodist, Biblical churches). So we Reformed churches have just plodded along preaching, teaching, and awaiting the Lord's time for things to change. At times I despaired of ever seeing improvement!

But then things started to happen. Little by little we Reformed folks were invited to speak at more and more pastors' associations. We have been able to take special speakers to various events. And more and more evangelical leaders have attended our own courses and conferences. It was so gradual, we hardly noticed what was happening. But then two weeks ago I was hit over the head!

The president of the principle pastors' association of San José invited me to speak on "Why I am a calvinist" !!! They are inviting an arminian and a calvinist to discuss the differences (something unthinkable before). And even more unthinkable (to me!) was that I would be invited! Of course, I gladly accepted, and I look forward to sharing the glories of the

Gospel as understood by our Reformed confessions. Many have an erroneous view of Calvinism, and I pray that my time with the pastors will be very profitable. But I want to ask for **prayer**. I am scheduled to speak around the middle of October.

CLIR team: Nathan Sanabria

In the coming newsletters I will be writing about the people who work with us. Nathan has been a member of our church since a young boy, and is now 18. He spent some years in our Christian High school, and has worked part time at the CLIR print shop for several years.

Because of good grades he was awarded a full scholarship at the prestigious University of Costa Rica to study network systems. But after a semester Nathan came to me with a "problem". He didn't want to work on computers! He wants to teach and preach the bible!

It wasn't easy informing his parents because the whole family had worked hard towards this scholarship, but Nathan is currently enrolled in our Bible college, taking Hebrew, a course on the Canon, and is back at work with us in CLIR! He makes our church look good because he gets the highest grades of all in our Bible college!

Praise the Lord with us for Nathan's desire to serve God in the church, and pray that God will equip him and make possible Nathan's desire to serve the cause of the Gospel in Costa Rica.



Opportunities and struggles

Conference on biblical worship

Weak theology will produce aberrations in practice. Aberrations in practice in turn contribute to more bad theology. Many evangelical churches (even some Reformed ones!) have absorbed music and liturgies that overemphasize the sentimental, the individual vs. the Church as community, and contribute to what some have called the “feminization” of the Church.

Pastor Orlando García comes out of a radical Pentecostal background. But God has been leading him for many years to read the history of the Church, as well as good theology. Some years ago we met, and he began attending our conferences and courses, and Reforming his church! Today he has virtually completed a full transformation of the congregation. It hasn't been without cost, however, and at one point 35 members left the congregation, disgruntled over the changes.

Pastor García has invited me to give a full day's conference on biblical principles of worship. I've written a small booklet exploring the implications of “covenant” for worship. We believe that we are a covenant people, God is a covenanting God, and our Sunday worship is a sacred, covenant meeting between our Sovereign and His people according to God's measures. These truths give the Sunday worship service a depth and significance that many churches ignore. So the conference has been opened up to the public, and the church is putting on the lunch and coffee breaks.

For the conference I will be offering not only biblical material, but we will also analyze common “worship songs” that present severe problems for public worship. Please **pray** that God will use this opportunity to help other pastors, and that they won't feel offended, but rather encouraged by Scripture.



Pastor Orlando García and his wife Lily

Discouragement

We live and serve in a fallen world, with personal weaknesses and differences. My wife and I have also seen how the Devil sometimes waits for just the right opportunity, and over virtually nothing is able to create huge conflicts. At present our church community is facing a few of these challenges, with various people disgruntled or discouraged. There are marriages that need encouragement as well. As is often the case, some do not want to follow plain Scriptural direction for resolving differences.

Please **pray** that God will overrule through His Word and Spirit, giving us the needed wisdom, and not permitting Satan to work his venom among us!