

The Standard Bearer

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The Wonder of the Burning Bush

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

Exodus 3:1-6

The children of Israel at this time were nearing the end of their four-hundred-year bondage in Egypt. They were approaching the time of

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their deliverance. God was preparing them for that deliverance through the oppression of the Pharaoh who knew not Joseph, even up to the present time. They were now crying to Jehovah for deliverance because the bondage and oppression had become unbearable.

"And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel and God had respect unto them" (Ex. 2:24, 25). God answered their cry in that, while He was preparing them for deliverance, He was also preparing the deliverer. This was Moses, who was born in their midst and who was schooled in the courts of Pharaoh and then fled to Midian.

In Midian, Moses dwelt with Jethro, also called Reuel, who was a God-fearing man, a priest of God. He was a descendant of Abraham by Keturah. Moses took care of his sheep and married his daughter, Zipporah.

At the present time we find him leading the flocks to the backside of the desert to Horeb. Here God called His chosen deliverer from behind the flocks of Jethro, first of all appearing to him in a remarkable wonder, that of the burning bush that was not consumed. It is to this wonder that our attention is drawn.

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Various interpretations have been given to this burning bush. For a proper understanding of this wonder there are four elements that must be distinguished. These are the bush itself, the fire, the speech from the midst of the fire, and the fact that the bush was not consumed. What Moses saw was a spiked, gnarled, thorny acacia tree, the only thing of significant size in the wilderness. The bush represents the people of God as they are being afflicted (v. 7). That the bush is not consumed is in harmony with Malachi 3:6: "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

The bush pictures Israel as a thing of no significance, as a thorny bush in the wilderness, not a cedar of Lebanon but a bush that is easily consumed by fire, completely helpless over it. God's people at this time were in the fire of tribulation. The fire represents Egypt and its fiery oppression. As an iron furnace Egypt was threatening to consume and destroy Israel.

The fire also represents the holy presence of God Himself. Our God is a consuming fire. The flame of fire is God's holy presence, which sets the bush on fire. To harmonize these two ideas we must see that it is always God that is afflicting His people. He may use means, like Egypt, the world, the power of darkness, and the seed of the serpent. All the affliction comes in the sovereign purpose and at the discretion of Jehovah. This is one of the elements of the promise in Genesis 3:15 (that there would be enmity). This is also seen in Genesis 15:13: "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years."

The historical application of this relationship is that Egypt was oppressing Israel, acting as rational, moral, responsible creatures, out of a motive of hatred. Ultimately, however, it was the sovereign, covenant God using Egypt as the furnace. It was also prophetic of Israel later. There would be affliction in the desert (plagues, serpents); affliction in the land of Canaan, where there would be famines and pestilences; affliction at the hand of the Assyrians and Babylonians; and carnal Israel. The great lesson of this revelation to Moses and for all the church is that when God's people are afflicted it is the covenant God who casts them into the furnace of tribulation. This in the narrower sense.

In the wider sense, this is characteristic of God's grace throughout. God loves His people from eternity with a predestinating, determining love. He ordained that they should be His covenant people among whom He would dwell. But the people of God are by nature corrupt, dead in trespasses and sin, born in communion with a world that is under wrath and condemnation, enemies of God, working for the devil. The result when the holy God comes into covenant contact with His sinful people is that the bush (His people) burns, set afire by God's holy anger. As a refiner's fire it must burn until all the corruption is burned away. Surely, it would seem, Israel shall be consumed.


The wonder is that the bush and Israel (His people) are not consumed. That bush, burning with a terrible flame, should have been reduced to ashes immediately. From a spiritual, ethical point of view the same may be said of God's people. When the fire of God burns, and when the flames of tribulation are kindled, there is, humanly speaking, no hope, for there is no good in us. If the fire of God's indignation must burn until all that is of sin and corruption is burned away, it must be necessary that Israel, God's people, be consumed. There is no reason why they should not be, for they are no better than the Egyptians.

But they are not consumed, because of the fact that the covenant Jehovah is in the midst of the bush. So He identifies Himself in verse 6. He is the same covenant God who chose His people, to dwell among them, the same God who promised to establish His everlasting covenant with them. Because His promise is sure and unchangeable He has made provision for their being able to pass through the fire of His holiness unscathed. That provision is none other than the Angel of Jehovah (v. 2). He is God's messenger, through whom God dwells among His people. He appears often in the history of the old dispensation (to Abram, to Hagar, to Jacob). He is the angel of God's presence (Peniel—"I have seen God face to face"). He is the Old Testament prefiguration of Christ, the Son of God come in the flesh, identifying Himself and uniting Himself with that burning bush. In and through Him God reveals Himself as preserving His people in the very midst of the fire, so that they are not consumed.

God anointed Christ to be Head of the elect, so that He might take upon Himself their sins and bear God's

wrath. At the cross, all the waves of God's wrath go over Him. At the cross, you see the fullest realization of the awesome spectacle of the burning bush (4th cross word). Yet He is not consumed, for He is the Son of God, who appears out of the flames in the glory of perfect righteousness. He is in the bush, in His people, with His righteousness, grace, and Spirit. Therefore, all that is of the bush by nature may burn away, but that which is of

Christ is imperishable. Thus it is with Israel typically and by promise. Thus it is with the entire church in reality. Thus it is finally, in the last fire, the fire in which all else burns. In it the church shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

The help and hope of God's people are not in themselves. Only in the Angel of Jehovah is the surety that they shall not perish. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

Prepare Your Children for Persecution

It's the way of wisdom for Christian parents to prepare themselves and their children for persecution, and now more than ever. I believe it becomes clearer each year, if not each month, that the church will soon become the object of terrible oppression. I'll explain why, shortly.

It is our Lord *Jesus'* wisdom to prepare our children for persecution. His regular instruction included forewarning of persecution: the people of God should expect to be betrayed, afflicted, hated of all nations, and killed. Jesus called it "tribulation" in Matthew 24. The church has called it The Great Tribulation. Jesus' apostles repeated His teachings about persecution as they wrote their letters. Paul warned of "perilous days coming." Peter cautioned the saints not to "think it strange" when the fiery trial comes

upon them. And the last book of the Bible puts it in language few can forget.

Of course you believe the imminent persecution, unless you are not amillennialist. But even we amillennialists can allow ourselves to be lulled to sleep by the good times the church enjoys now (at least in the West). Then, although our catechism books teach it and our theology maintains it, our *hearts* forget that this tribulation may be just around the corner. And that mistake sounds a great deal like the foolish virgins—a good parable to read with our children—because though the foolish virgins' theology was right, they just got tired of waiting and fell asleep. Which is the reason for this editorial, and should be the occasion for regular sermons on eschatology. We so easily forget. Really, we don't *like* to remember. So we play the ostrich.

The likelihood is high that if we do not see persecution ourselves, certainly our children or grandchildren are in for the time of their lives. Which is the other, and primary, reason I write this editorial. Our children and grandchildren. The church's covenant generations.



The editorial title does not say, "Scare the children about the impending persecution." Of course we are not to scare them. But I wonder how many of us, in our desire to shelter them from terrors, take any opportunities at all to teach them that persecution is in store for believers, that all who "live godly shall suffer persecution." If we have been lax, now would be a good time to renew our efforts, even as grandparents.



What makes me urge us to prepare our children is the barrage of news lately that shows an *acceleration* in the open promotion of godlessness and, paralleling that, the bold intolerance of Christian testimony to godliness. Wickedness (really “the Wicked One”) has an agenda, and Christians should understand that. As soon as the “prince of the power of the air” has some momentum in promoting his wickedness, he will accelerate his work in “the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2; which answers the oft-asked question whether the devil really has any interest in unbelievers. He “works” in them, energizing them in their wickedness). There is a too-flippant use of the expression “all hell broke loose.” Now is an appropriate time to use it. The gates of hell are opening to assault the church in a real and terrible way.

I see the promotion of homosexuality as a major element in the devil’s preparation to persecute the church. On the one hand, there is the open promotion of it by sports figures and television stars coming out. On the other, one can hardly keep up with the news in Europe and North America of each new assault on those who stand against homosexuality. The Duck Dynasty fiasco will soon be forgotten, as have the wedding photographer who declined to work for a homosexual couple, and the baker who declined to bake for a homosexual wedding celebration. Now that you think of it, the list includes Chick-fil-A, the ESPN news commentator Craig James, the bed-and-breakfast owner, the florist, the T-shirt company, and more. Incidents like these are happening with increasing regularity. Anyone

who speaks out against homosexuality is ostracized, publicly castigated, even demonized. And how’s that for a devilish coup? To “demonize” Christians! Business owners who contribute to causes supporting traditional marriage will be boycotted by an organized and aggressive campaign of cultural intimidation, as the maker of a world-famous pasta found out recently. CEOs will be forced out of their seven-figure jobs when the pro-homosexual movement digs up old campaign donations to pro-marriage causes. Blatant lies will be concocted and the object of attack will be “Google bombed” until the lies are believed. No weapon is too malicious to attack those who oppose homosexuality.

The true church is the real target. The gates of hell want to destroy her.

The environment the church lives in has changed so much just in the last 10 years that if I were pastor in Byron Center, MI, PRC today, I truly wonder whether the evangelism committee would dare to promote a special service like the one we promoted over 20 years ago on the biblical testimony on homosexuality. Already then we asked ourselves whether the broad advertising of the sermon would draw hostile reaction. And today...well, ask yourself what might be the response.

And what makes things exponentially worse for the true church is that the church herself begins now to approve homosexuality. When the civil government (and what the government does is worthy of an article all by itself) makes laws to sanction homosexuality and outlaws all opposition of it as “hate-speech,” the nominal church aids and abets her. The “woman” truly sits upon the

“beast” (Rev. 17). Many old main-line churches have long endorsed homosexuality. Now, the Roman Catholic Church, long opposed to it—at least officially—is softening its stance through the carefully-worded statements of the new pope. But the statements are so clear that a prominent magazine of the GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, and Transgendered) community named Pope Francis their “Person of the Year” for his comment, “If someone is gay and seeks the Lord with good will, who am I to judge?” The number of Christian para-church organizations like World Vision, which recently approved hiring homosexuals in legal marriages, is on the increase.

As more and more voices join the chorus in favor of “toleration,” the space for Christians to live in will become smaller. Increasingly, business-owners will be required to compromise (and the SB invites any business-owners to testify of their struggles in this regard). Christian schools, important as they are in the church’s welfare, are certainly in the cross hairs of the Devil. Already there are laws in Canada—stronger than in the USA—that make preachers cautious about what they may say concerning homosexuality, for fear that they may be silenced by the law. Soon Christians who are willing to testify of their faith will all be labeled “enemies of the human race,” as a United States Supreme Court Justice recently declared them to be.

Let him who runs, read. Read. Just read of these things. Then, let Scripture urge upon you, “Let him that reads, *prepare*.”



One prepares for the persecution

to come not so much by talking about it—although that’s certainly part of it—as by training to *endure* it. And because persecution will be the taking from us of one earthly comfort after another until finally our earthly existence is denied us, we must train to endure death. We must be the company of those who “loved not their lives unto the *death*” (Rev. 12:11).

Let me suggest some ways.

First, mortify the old man

This seems pretty basic, but the basics are where we always ought to start. Dying to myself. Crucifying my own desires in order to live to Christ. We live daily in “sincere sorrow of heart that we have provoked God by our sins.” Increasingly we “hate and flee from” sin (Lord’s Day 33). The reason Scripture calls this “mortification” of our old man is that to do this feels like dying. And it really feels like dying because it is dying—the putting down, more and more, of my old self. Have I learned this? Have my children?

Second, quicken the new man

That is, promote more and more the life of Christ in us. The Catechism defines this as living in “a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works.”

There is also a good reason Scripture and our confessions define this life as the “quickenings” of the new man. Christ in me *comes to life* more and more. Listen to a

good sermon on Lord’s Day 33 to fill out your understanding of this, but the third step is really part of this:

Third, love Christ and His cause more than anything else in all the world

There is nothing else worthy of your love in all the world, but there are certainly a thousand things that compete for your love. So when we learn to love Him more than everything else, then when the wicked world gives me a choice either to deny Christ or lose “everything,” life included, I have long ago made my decision. By God’s grace I will carry it out. That’s preparation for persecution. Love Christ more than everything.

Fourth, learn to abhor (with both humility and requisite boldness) all that dishonors God and His cause.

Teaching this to our children takes great care, especially because we must learn first (*daily*) to abhor *ourselves* and repent in dust and ashes because of who we are by nature. If we fail here, we train up our children to be the perfect Pharisees.

But with both humility and boldness we can speak to our children about the enemies of God, pointing out carefully to them what doctrines and what practices dishonor Him and undermine His cause. We abhor them.




Let’s exercise ourselves and our children “unto godliness” (I Tim. 4:7,

8), and train them to “endure hardships” as good soldiers of Jesus Christ (II Tim. 2:3).

The practical outworking of this calling is the stuff of good, Christian parenting, which, if done over the course of a lifetime, is the good and necessary preparation of our children for persecution—for death. Death. Hard to imagine, but real.

Very practically, I must teach them, as I teach myself, that just because I *may* have or enjoy something does not mean I *ought* to. All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. Learning to say no to legitimate enjoyments for the sake of a higher cause—God’s covenant—is not easy for me. It’s even more difficult for me to teach my children. For the sake of God’s cause, I will do that, and tell my children why. God’s way with *me*, daily, is to deny me much of what He has the ability to give me. He could give me wealth, but usually does not; He could give me health, but often withholds it; he could give me ease and mostly pleasure, but this isn’t normally His way of wisdom and love for me. So children learn tribulation, to prepare them for the greater tribulation.

We may be strong intellectually and theologically. How strong are we in this regard? Persecution comes. *Can* we endure that cross? For the sake of the joy and glory to come?

I can think of other texts to start with for a Sunday afternoon discussion with our children, but how about this one: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). 

Man's Depravity: Total

In a recent post at *Reformed Reader*, Rev. Shane Lems, former United Reformed Churches church planter, and now Orthodox Presbyterian Church minister, reminds his readers of the importance of the proper definition of total depravity: "C. S. Lewis misunderstood this. He got it wrong. He wasn't really a theologian—much less a Reformed theologian—so we can charitably disagree and use this occasion to remember the right definition of total depravity."¹

Reformed Reader is Rev. Lems' blog dedicated to commenting on various books that he is reading. In this particular post Rev. Lems responds to popular Christian writer C. S. Lewis' disavowal of the Calvinist and Reformed doctrine of total depravity in his book *The Problem of Pain*. Lewis wrote, "I disbelieve that doctrine, partly on the logical ground that if our depravity were total we should not know ourselves to be depraved, and partly because experience shows us much goodness in human nature."

According to Rev. Lems, C. S. Lewis "got it wrong." He thought he was rejecting total depravity when in fact he was rejecting an aberrant form of that doctrine called "absolute depravity" ascribed to unnamed "hyper-Calvinists":

What he is reacting against is not *total* depravity, but *absolute* depravity. While hyper-Calvinists may teach some form of absolute depravity, the Reformed creeds and confessions do not teach it. Lewis mixed the two up.

This supposed confusion on the part of C. S. Lewis is the occasion that we must take to remind ourselves of the proper definition of *total depravity*.

Failing to avail himself of this occasion, Rev. Lems does not give a definition of total depravity, much less a right one. He does take the occasion, however, to bring up again a hackneyed distinction that I—mistakenly—thought had been condemned to the theological sea of

forgetfulness. My article, then, takes up Rev. Lems' call to remember the proper (Reformed) definition of total depravity. In doing so, we will also question his imputation of the teaching of absolute depravity to "hyper-Calvinists."

Rev. Lems puts the teaching of absolute depravity, or some form of it, into the mouths and presumably the sermons, books, and other writings, of unnamed "hyper-Calvinists." Real hyper-Calvinists are those who deny that the call of the gospel must be preached promiscuously, calling all men who hear to repent and to believe in Jesus Christ. This article is not interested in defending real hyper-Calvinists.

The problem with the label is that it is repeatedly used as a canard against those who deny the teaching of the well-meant gospel offer that God in the preaching of the gospel expresses His desire—His will—that all who hear the gospel repent and believe. Denying the well-meant gospel offer, they teach that God in the preaching of the gospel sincerely commands all who hear the gospel to repent and believe, and that in that gospel God promises that those who do will certainly be received in mercy, while at the same time willing, through that preaching, the salvation of His elect people and the hardening of the reprobate. For this position many who are truly Reformed according to the creeds are slanderously called hyper-Calvinists.

Unnamed hyper-Calvinists—real or imaginary—are evidently responsible for the invention and subsequent propagation of this doctrine of absolute depravity. Apparently they were so successful at insinuating this deviant doctrine of absolute depravity for the Reformed teaching on total depravity that they threw off so astute a thinker as C. S. Lewis.

Perhaps Rev. Lems is correct—perhaps he knows of a passage—but those historically labeled as hyper-Calvinists did not teach absolute depravity. The Reformers and those who followed them knew nothing of that distinction either. If one peruses the *Reformed Dogmatics* of Heinrich Hepppe, a recognized synthesizer of Reformed theology, the distinction is not so much as mentioned.

One does read Rev. Louis Berkhof suggesting the distinction during the common grace controversy in the Christian Reformed Church in the 1920s. The charge

¹ <http://reformedreader.wordpress.com/2014/01/20/lewis-got-it-wrong/>. All quotations of Rev. Lems are from this article.

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of teaching absolute depravity was leveled against Herman Hoeksema for his rejection of common grace; it was leveled so often that he mentions it and instead of rejecting it out of hand he attempts an explanation in his *Reformed Dogmatics*. The charge of teaching absolute depravity has also been raised against the Protestant Reformed Churches. The subject of absolute depravity was also mentioned by Christian Reformed theologian Anthony Hoekema when he rejected the Reformed doctrine of total depravity in favor of “pervasive depravity.”²

In short, the distinction between total depravity and absolute depravity was an invention by supporters and proponents of common grace to ward off the devastating charge against their doctrine that it denied the Reformed doctrine of the total depravity of the sinner who does *not* have “much goodness” in him and who is incapable of any good.

The opponents of common grace charged—and still charge—that by teaching an operation of the Holy Spirit restraining sin in the heart of the unregenerate man, common grace teaches that the unregenerate man has “much goodness” in him and consequently denies the Reformed doctrine of total depravity.

To deflect that charge, the theologians of common grace made up the distinction between absolute depravity and total depravity. The effect of the ploy is to make those who teach the creedal doctrine that the natural man is incapable of any good appear radical and outside the bounds of the creeds, and those who deny the creedal doctrine and teach that the natural man has “much goodness” in him appear to teach the creedal doctrine of total depravity.

What is *absolute depravity* supposed to be? Lems says that it teaches that man is “as sinful as [he] possibly could be.” That is indistinct, but it lines up well with Berkhof’s definition. It intends to describe a depravity in which there is no room for different levels of wickedness among sinners and no room for development in wickedness by sinners, either individually or as a society.

Such a teaching would be patently false and absurd, and anyone who taught it is likewise foolish, in light of the clear biblical teaching that all men are born dead in sins, and that there is development in wickedness, as well

as lesser and greater levels of wickedness between sinners. The Messiah-rejecting inhabitants of Capernaum were more wicked than the homosexuals of Sodom and Gomorrah, the one who delivered Jesus to Pilate had the greater sin, and the covenant-forsaking Reformed youth is far more wicked than the fornicating heathen in a jungle.

Rev. Lems contrasts this *absolute depravity* with his version of total depravity in the “Reformation tradition” that “sin has spread to the entire person,” so that our “total selves” are “infected with sin” and man “is depraved in all his parts.” Crucial to his understanding of unregenerate man is that he has “not absolutely lost the image of God.” No one could deny that the image of God, whatever of it man has, is a significant good in unregenerate man. Unregenerate man, then, has “much goodness” in him, as Lewis asserts.

In order to demonstrate that the creeds teach as Lewis did that there is “much goodness in human nature,” Rev. Lems appeals to the Canons of Dordrecht III/IV, 4:

There remain...in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and shows some regard for virtue and for good outward behavior.

I quote it exactly as he did. He quoted the first part of the article. He did not quote the second part. In the second part the article itself condemns such an appeal. Speaking of the unregenerate man and this “light of nature,” the article says:

He is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.

Rev. Lems also appeals to Belgic Confession 14, “[Through Adam’s sin man] has lost all his excellent gifts which he had received from God, and retained only small remains thereof...” It ought to be obvious that “small remains” is hardly “much goodness” regardless of how one defines the small remains, but the Belgic Confession also bears witness against such a use of its words when it

² David Engelsma, “Total, Absolute, or Partial Depravity,” *Standard Bearer*, 77, no. 12 (March 15, 2001): 268–70.

continues that sentence: “which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse; for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness, as the Scriptures teach us, saying: the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not: where St. John calleth men darkness.”

The Reformed creeds teach what a Reformed man must confess about total depravity: The creeds teach that the unregenerate man is “wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness,” and that he is incapable of using the light of nature “aright even in things natural and civil,” but “in various ways renders [it] wholly polluted...by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.”³ They call men “darkness.” He is born not merely “infected” with sin, but is dead in trespasses and sins. Especially is the unregenerate man’s will bound under sin.

The creeds also make clear that belonging to the total depravity of man is that fallen and unregenerate man does not have the image of God. About the image they say:

He [Adam] forfeited these excellent gifts, and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity, and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections (Canons III/IV, 1).

In other words, the creeds teach that man not only lost the image of God, but also that he now bears an image of extreme wickedness, such that he is incapable of any good and inclined to all wickedness.

The creeds do not teach *absolute* depravity. No one teaches absolute depravity except as a theological invention to deflect criticism of common grace. The creeds do teach *total* depravity, and as part of that teaching deny over against common grace—and C.S. Lewis—that there is “much goodness” in human nature.

In that extreme wickedness man can also grow and develop. Man’s depravity is his spiritual death. Just as a dead corpse can rot, so can the totally depraved sinner become worse in his sin. As a rebel against God, man assiduously cultivates his life of rebellion and sin, testing his life apart from God in the ways of wickedness, and advancing in it both personally and socially until the cup of iniquity is full.

Rev. Lems and others of his persuasion should take to

heart his call to remember the proper definition of total depravity especially in light of the recent developments of the *imago Dei* campaign. *Imago Dei* is Latin for *the image of God* and is the name of a new movement that is an iniquitous advancement of the idea that all men have the image of God. This campaign has been endorsed by many, but significantly *Focus on the Family* president, Jim Daley, supports it.

Imago Dei says that they stand for “recognizing the image of God in every human being in and out of the womb, without exception.” Its avowed purpose is the toleration of such gross and developed depravity as homosexuality, “for the image of God exists in all human beings...straight and gay.”⁴

It is also noteworthy that the campaign is not arguing that fallen man has a mere part of the image, but the full image. The argument that fallen man has part of the image is an impoverished doctrinal half-way house. While held by many in the Reformed tradition, it has been developed into the teaching that man has the full image of God and is the source of much error.

Even the texts that theologians use to support the teaching that fallen man has some of the image of God when used in that way support the idea that fallen man has the full image. Rev. Lems writes that man has not “absolutely lost the image of God.” Ignoring for the moment that the creeds teach that man lost the image, if he were pressed for biblical proof would he not invariably turn to Genesis 9:6? That is not what Genesis 9:6 in fact teaches. It says that man was created in the past—in Adam—in God’s image. Man was at one time created in the image of God and thus is not a beast, and for that reason he cannot be killed. But if that passage teaches that man, every man, still has the image, to say that he has only part of the image does a grave injustice to the passage, which does not say “part of the image” but “image”—the whole image. What good man has in him! What is left for Christ to restore?

Rev. Lems is right: it is necessary to keep in mind the proper definition of total depravity. What wickedness comes from the wrong definition!

When keeping that in mind, though, the supposed distinction between total and absolute depravity must be


³ Heidelberg Catechism, Q 8; Canons III/IV, 4.

⁴ <http://swampland.time.com/2014/01/20/the-imago-dei-campaign-evangelical-groups-say-gays-made-in-gods-image/>

rejected. C. S. Lewis was not “mixed up.” He rejected the Calvinistic and Reformed doctrine of total depravity—as he well knew—which taught that there is no goodness in the natural man. He wanted “much goodness” in human nature. Besides, the distinction between total and absolute depravity has never been the issue between anyone in a controversy over man’s depravity. The distinction was unheard of before the proponents of common grace invented it. That distinction ought to be recognized for what it is—a fiction—and it ought to be rejected once and for all. If some persist in propagating it, they should be honest about its source.

The issue in the ongoing controversy about depravity, as in previous controversy, is not whether man is *totally* or *absolutely* depraved, but whether man is *totally* or

partially depraved, whether natural man is “wholly incapable of any good,” or whether he has “much goodness.” Is he *totally* depraved, as the Reformed creeds teach; or is he *partially* depraved, as common grace and its legions of supporters teach, a doctrine for which its supporters have in the past unethically appealed to Canons III/IV, 4 and Belgic Confession 14.

It was those articles from the creeds that the Christian Reformed synod that adopted the three points of common grace in 1924 dishonestly quoted, and which dishonest quotations were used in part to condemn as un-Reformed—and later branded as hyper-Calvinist—those who taught the truth of the creeds about man’s total—not partial or absolute—depravity. 

BELIEVING AND CONFESSING

REV. RODNEY KLEYN

Righteous Before God

Lord’s Day 23

Question 59. But what doth it profit thee now that thou believest all this?

Answer. That I am righteous in Christ, before God, and an heir of eternal life.

Question 60. How art thou righteous before God?

Answer. Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that, though my conscience accuse me that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart.

Question 61. Why sayest thou that thou art righteous by faith only?

Answer. Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God; and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only.

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From Lord’s Days 7-22 the Catechism has taken us, phrase by phrase, through the Apostles Creed, which gives us the substance or content of our

faith—what we believe. Now, Lord's Day 23 asks us, "So what?" or "What's the point?" or "Is there any profit?"

The question itself is a good one, for believing all this is not easy: it condemns me, it demands the sacrifice of many earthly pleasures, it requires that I put away my own thinking and believe God's Word, and it will often bring persecution and even death for believers. The world looks on and ridicules any and every one who believes all this. So, what's the use? Is there any profit in this?

The profit of faith is not health or wealth. Believing does not guarantee an easy life to the child of God. Rather, the profit in believing all this is that I am united to Christ, and that makes me righteous before God and an heir of everlasting life.

What a beautiful, rich answer! The purpose of this Lord's Day is not merely to set forth the correct biblical teaching on justification but to take the believer beyond that to the comfort that is ours through faith in Jesus Christ. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1).

The Wonder of Justification

The Catechism does not use the word "justification," but to be "righteous before God" is the same thing as being justified. Justification is a *legal* term that refers to the verdict that God, the Supreme Judge, gives to us. There are only two possible verdicts: innocent or guilty, righteous or unrighteous. In justification God declares His people *innocent* of any wrong doing (II Cor. 5:19).

Righteousness is not the same thing as holiness. Holiness has to do with a person's character or nature, whereas righteousness has to do with his actions. God is holy, which means there is no moral blemish or spot in Him. Adam and Eve, as they were created sinless, were holy. God is also righteous because everything He does is in harmony with His own perfect holiness. We are righteous when everything we do conforms to the standard of God's own holiness.

But, as we all know, our natures are not holy, but corrupt and sinful, and so we cannot do anything right. We are unrighteous. Every thought and word and deed is contrary to the holiness and the law of God. Because of this, we are all guilty and deserving of death.

And yet, God declares that we are innocent. He

justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). This is the wonder of justification. *Sinners* are declared innocent by God. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel" (Num. 23:21).

The Catechism, in Answer 61, reminds us of this in a powerful and personal way. To the believer, this is what it means to be justified, "though my conscience accuse me that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace," views me "as if I never had had nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all... obedience."

Because of justification, I do not receive what I deserve, which is everlasting punishment in hell, but instead I am made "an heir of eternal life." The Judge, against whom I have sinned and am still sinning, not only sends me out of the courtroom a free man, but He adopts me to be His child and makes me an heir of all that He possesses. Justification means eternal life in heaven with God. Because of justification, we can have assurance.

The Catechism talks about the struggle that we can sometimes have with assurance. My conscience will constantly remind me of my guilt and sinfulness. But there is another testimony, the testimony of God's Word, which is that God has declared me righteous, even though I am a sinner. Both testimonies are true, but the testimony of God's Word concerns our legal standing before God the Judge, whereas the testimony of our conscience concerns our condition, which will always remain far from perfect in this life.

For our righteousness, we must never look to our own conduct or character, but to what God has done for us in Christ. The basis of our justification is Christ, and the assurance of it comes only through faith in Him.

In Christ Alone

Apart from Jesus Christ, there is no possibility of justification. The righteousness that is mine as a believer is an *alien* righteousness, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The basis on which God judges me as innocent is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and His suffering and death.

Jesus stands before God as the substitute for His elect. He does this primarily in His death and suffering, in

which He pays the price for our sins—"the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:5). However, not only does He remove the debt of sin by His death, but He also, by His life of perfect obedience, fulfills the law of God for us. Just as a thief is not only punished for his crime, but must also repay what he stole, so Christ bears the punishment for our crime and also repays to God our debt of God-glorifying obedience.

The righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to us. God "grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ...as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me."

The word "impute" is very important.

God does not *impart* or *infuse* the righteousness of Christ in the sinner. If He did, then the sinner would be righteous within, he would be self-righteous. Then God would begin to judge the sinner as innocent, and would receive the sinner based on what the sinner himself does. But the Bible teaches that even our best works are as filthy rags before God (Is. 64:6), and that if it were possible for us to do everything that we should do perfectly, still God would owe us nothing (Luke 17:10). We can never merit a thing with God. We can never make ourselves worthy of the reward of life everlasting.

Rather God *imputes* or credits to our account the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Imputation means that instead of holding \$500 in your hands and using it as payment for your debt, someone else makes an electronic transfer of \$500 to your creditor. The money is never in your possession, but legally it is considered to be yours. God counts to us the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is always an alien righteousness. We are only ever accepted by God through and on account of the righteousness and perfect obedience of Christ.

Our justification is entirely due to the grace of God! How thankful we ought to be!

By Faith Alone

We are justified by faith alone. Romans 4:22 says that Abraham's faith "was imputed to him for righteousness." What does this mean?

It cannot mean that faith itself makes us worthy before God. Many believe that God the Judge has decided that, because it's impossible for man to live a life of perfect

obedience, all He will require is the one work of faith. Faith is accepted by God as a substitute for obedience. The problem with this is that it makes faith, which is a work of man, the foundation for our righteousness, and it dismisses the justice and wrath of God against all our sin.

It also cannot mean that, after we believe, our faith, or the obedience that our faith produces, becomes the reason for our justification. This is also a popular understanding today. God, it is said, accepts us and justifies us because of our faithfulness. The problem with this view is that it makes justification conditional—it depends on my faith and faithfulness—and so justification is temporary and I can never really be assured of my standing before God.

To understand the meaning of "justification by faith alone" we must first correctly and biblically explain faith. There are five things to understand about faith.

1. Faith is a living union to Jesus Christ. We are counted righteous by faith, because of our union to Jesus Christ, not because faith is some substitute work, but because it brings us into contact with Christ and His perfect righteousness.

2. Faith is the gift of God. Faith is not a choice or an activity that man produces of his own free will. As long as a man is lost in sin, he cannot and will not believe. It is only through grace that we believe (Acts 18:27).

3. Faith always looks out to Jesus Christ. Faith is like the eye, which looks out to the world around, and never to itself. Faith, like the eye, receives its light from without (Phil. 3:8-9).

4. Faith is the opposite of works. Yes, we are called to do good works, but those good works have nothing to do with our standing before God. Good works are the result of grace. Faith says, "not my righteousness" but Christ's alone (Rom. 9:16).

5. Faith is the God-given instrument by which we receive the righteousness of Christ, and so faith itself has no value. A good meal is in the food I eat, not in the silverware with which I eat it. All my value, all my righteousness, is in Jesus Christ.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. My justification is all of grace. God has chosen me to be without blame (Eph. 1:4), He has provided the righteousness of Christ as mine, He has paid the price for my sin in the

death of Jesus, and He provides the means by which I receive the righteousness of Christ.

What a wonderful blessing and comfort it is to be justified. This is the central blessing for the believer.

What profit is there in believing all this?

The Catechism could have said: God is our Father, Jesus is our Savior, Christ died for us, Jesus is Lord, we receive the Holy Spirit, we are members of Christ and His church, our sins are forgiven, and we will inherit eternal life and glory.

But instead it points to the one blessing that makes all these others true, that we are righteous in Christ, before God. All other blessings and privileges depend on this. To know that I am innocent before God the Judge, “to be found in him, not having mine own righteousness...but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”—this is the longing of every child of God (Phil. 3:8-9).

Questions for Discussion


1. Summarize the content of your faith. What/who is the central object of your faith?
2. Does being a believer guarantee an easy life? What contemporary heresy teaches this, and how would you answer it biblically?
3. How would you, and how does the rest of the Bible, answer Job's question in Job 9:2?
4. How can God justify the ungodly? Or to put it another way, how can He declare us just, while we are still sinners?
5. What is “double imputation”? What does the righteousness of Christ include?
6. What is the difference between “imputed” and “infused”

righteousness? Which is correct, and why is this important?

7. Does God accept our faith, or perhaps our faithfulness, as a sufficient alternative to perfect obedience?

8. Discuss this statement: “We are justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone” (cf. Rom. 4 and James 2:17ff.).

9. How does the illustration of the eye help us to understand faith?

10. How does the truth of justification through faith alone, in Christ alone, help us in our struggle with assurance because of our sin? 

The Qualifications of the Office of Elder (5)

Married, With Children? Not Necessarily

The fundamental qualification of the elder is that he be “blameless” (I Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6). By giving further qualifications for the office, the inspired apostle indicates that the elder's blamelessness must be manifest in his personal life, as well as in his relationship to his wife and children: “A bishop then

must be...the husband of one wife,...having his children in subjection with all gravity” (I Tim. 3:2, 4).

These statements assume that the elder will have a wife and children. Before examining their positive significance, let us ask whether this means that a man who is not married, or who has no children, may not serve in the office of elder. Is the having of a wife and children in itself a qualification for the office?

Throughout history, at least three different answers have been given to the question whether a man must

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be married and have children in order to serve as elder. The answer of Reformed churches historically, and the position that I will defend, is that God is not prohibiting single men, or childless men, from serving in the office of elder.

Two Wrong Positions

Rome's position is that an officebearer *may not* have a wife: "All the ordained ministers of the Latin Church, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain celibate 'for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.'"¹ A married man is disqualified from being a priest. A priest who marries jeopardizes his continued holding of his office.

This position we reject as being directly contrary to the Word of God. Putting aside for a moment the question whether a single man *may* serve in the office, every Christian should readily see that Scripture does not support the idea that a married man is, by virtue of being married, *excluded* from the office. In the Geneva Bible, this note is added to I Timothy 3:2: "Therefore he that shuts out married men from the office of bishops, only because they are married, is antichrist." This pronouncement is fitting; without identifying the final culmination of Antichrist as some present or future pope, the ever present spirit of antichrist (I John 2:18; 4:3) manifests itself by adding to and taking from God's Word as it pleases.

The second position is that God restricts the office of elder to men who are married with children. I have heard this position stated verbally before, but not seen it written—until I read the "Letter to the Editor" column in the March 2012 issue of the *Beacon Lights*. There Mr. Derek Vanden Akker commends the PRC for applying I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 faithfully in several respects, but then says:

But I do take issue with the random manner in which the PRC applies these criteria. If the Bible mandates that an elder have a wife and children, why do the Protestant Reformed Churches not prohibit, as the Bible commands them to, the ordination of bachelors, widowers,

and men who are childless?... No wife, no children, no ordination.²

In two ways, Mr. Vanden Akker's comments are helpful in presenting the issue. First, he states the issue concisely. Second, he shows that the question is not merely whether the elder must be *married*; it is also whether he must be a father, and then a father of at least two children (note that I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 refer not to an officebearer's *child*, but to his *children*, in the plural).

Let's spell out the implications of this position. If this position is true, no single man, no childless man, and no man with less than two children, may even be considered for the office of pastor, elder, or deacon. Even though we are now speaking particularly to the office of elder, I refer to the offices of pastor and deacon deliberately: the pastor is an elder (I Tim. 5:17); and the same qualification is later listed of deacons (I Tim. 3:12).

Furthermore, if this position is true, then an officebearer must be removed from office if his wife dies, or if all but one of his children die, while he is serving in office. I do not believe I am stretching the issue when I draw out this implication. It happens that some men who were qualified for office in light of I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and were elected to and installed into office, become disqualified while serving in office. Such may not continue in office; they must be put out of the office. If this is true with regard to a man's spiritual qualifications, why would it not be true with regard to his family qualifications? If a man is in office, but is not the kind of man whom God would have serve in office, he must be put out.

These implications are not the reason why this position is wrong. If a position is correct, its implications must follow. But this position is wrong, because it is a misunderstanding of God's Word. This will become more clear as we consider the third position.

The Correct Position

The third, and correct, position is that the phrases "the husband of one wife" and "having his children in subjection with all gravity" do not require the officebearer to be a married father of two or more children, but rather teach that when an elder is married, and when he is a father, he must be a certain kind of husband and a certain

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994), paragraph 1579, 440.

² *Beacon Lights*, March 2012, vol. 71, issue 3, 4.

kind of father. Not whether he is married and is a father, but what kind of relationship he has with his wife and children, is the issue.

This has been the position of the Christian church and Reformed churches throughout the ages. This position is not stated in official church orders and documents. But it is a position that has been established by historical precedent: churches have permitted single men, and men who are married but not fathers, to be in church office.

While not stated in official church documents, this position is stated by commentators on the texts in question. The Lutheran commentator R. C. H. Lenski says, commenting on I Timothy 3:2, “It is plain that Paul does not say that none but married men may enter the ministry, that every pastor must be married”³ (580). And the Christian Reformed preacher and expositor William Hendriksen says: “This cannot mean that an overseer or elder must be a married man.”⁴

The primary objection to this position, raised especially by those taking the second position stated above, is that this does not do justice to the wording of the verbally-inspired Scriptures, which require him to be a “husband” with “children.” Our answer to this objection is that the apostle so wrote because, in the history of the church, most men *are* married with children, and the apostle is saying *what kind* of married fathers they must then be. To quote Hendriksen again: “This cannot mean that an overseer or elder must be a married man. Rather, *it is assumed* that he is married—as was generally the case—...” (the italics are Hendriksen’s).

In support of this position, we give two biblically-grounded reasons.

“Of One Woman the Man”

The first reason has to do with the intent of the qualification itself. When God says that an elder must be the “husband of one wife,” God means that an elder must be sexually pure and faithful, devoted to one woman—*one*, not two, and not more than two.

³ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 580.

⁴ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1957), 121.

That this is the meaning is evident from two considerations about the words in Scripture. First, in the Greek original of both I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, the English phrase “the husband of one wife” reads “of one wife the husband.” The emphasis is not on “husband” or “wife,” but on “one.” Second, while the words translated “husband” and “wife” are often so translated in the New Testament, they are not *exclusively* translated “husband” and “wife”; their lexical meaning is broader. The word translated “wife” is the Greek word from which we get our word “gynecology”; it can refer to “a woman of any age, whether a virgin, or married, or a widow.”⁵ And the word translated “husband” can refer to any man, distinguished in gender from a woman, and distinguished in age from a boy. So we can literally translate the phrase in question this way: “of one woman the man.”

Together, these points indicate that the fundamental qualification here is that a man be sexually pure, and be faithful to his wife. This qualification says everything about the exemplary relationship that an elder must have with his wife.

The qualification applies even when the elder is single. If a single elder is pursuing marriage, and so has a special relationship with a woman, he must be devoted to his prospective wife. If single and not pursuing marriage, he may not be the kind of man who always has another woman on his arm—one this week, another the next. The elder, whether married or single, may not be a “ladies’ man.”

The mistake of those who restrict the office of elder to married men is, first, that they misunderstand the intent of this passage of God’s Word.

Scripture Interprets Scripture

The second reason why an elder need not necessarily be married is that this position proceeds from the principle, “Scripture interprets Scripture.” I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 are not all that Scripture says on the matter. God Himself placed into special office in the church some men who were single. The apostle Paul is a prime example.

The very fact that God put such men in office indicates that God does not forbid single men to serve in the special


⁵ Joseph Henry Thayer, *The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (1983: Christian Copyrights, Inc.), 123. The Greek word is *gunē*, pronounced *goo-nay*.

offices in His church.

To this the response of some is that God's doing this does not warrant man's doing this; God's past actions in this regard do not regulate the church's conduct. To illustrate this, let me return again to a statement in Mr. VandenAkker's letter. He says: "While it is true that the conscientious application of these verses would prohibit the ordination of Paul himself, as well as the other apostles, and even Jesus for that matter, it is not for us to question God's will as laid out in the Scriptures. It is only for us to obey."

But this is a wrong presentation of the matter. The insistence on unquestioning obedience is not wrong; the child of God must always be prepared to obey without questioning. But it is wrong to suggest that God's ap-

pointment of Paul to hold special office in the church was contrary to God's own revealed will to His church regarding what kind of men can serve. The very fact that God Himself called Paul *as a single Christian* to labor in His church is evidence that God does not forbid single men to hold office. Add this to the correct understanding of the phrase "the husband of one wife," and one can see that God is not inconsistent here.

But, as I indicated at the beginning of the article, we have not yet touched on the positive meaning of the qualifications regarding the elder's relationship to his wife and children. This, God willing, we will do next time. 

ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE

MR. JOEL MINDERHOUD

Main Characters in the Most Elegant Book— Water

The second article of our beautiful Belgic Confession describes God's creation as a most elegant book, full of characters that lead us to contemplate His power and divinity. When we study these characters through the spectacles of Scripture we learn blessed spiritual truths.

What or who are these characters that lead us to contemplate the invisible things of God? Certainly they include the aspects of creation that one readily sees, such as mighty mountain ranges, fluffy white snowflakes, and migrating geese. But they also include things not so readily seen, including nitrogen gas molecules, DNA, and even your gall bladder. We hope, in future articles in

this rubric, to begin a study of what might be considered some of the "main" characters in creation. These main characters are those with which we may be more familiar, either because of their commonness or because of their central place within the creation. The vital role these characters have within the creation will afford us good opportunity to meditate upon the wisdom of God in interweaving all creatures together into one unified and harmonious creation. Perhaps there is no better character to begin with than water.

Abundance of Water

W. Conrad Fernellius once wrote, in the *Journal of Chemical Education*, that water "is both the most familiar and the most abundant chemical compound on the earth. Probably there is no single factor which so much influences the activities of the inhabitants of this

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planet as does water.”¹ Scientists estimate that there are more than 300 million cubic miles of water on the *surface of the earth*—that is, in the oceans, lakes, rivers, streams, and swamps of the world. If that amount of water could be poured over all Earth’s continents, it would cover the land area to a depth of more than 5.5 miles (deep enough to cover even the peak of Mt. Everest—29,000 ft.). In addition to this surface water, Earth’s ground water supply accounts for an additional two million cubic miles of water, while three thousand cubic miles of water are found in the atmosphere as vapor. Although there is a tremendous amount of water on Earth, only a very small fraction of it is in drinkable condition, since much of it is either salt water, frozen in glaciers, or contaminated in some way. Covering 75% of Earth’s surface area and comprising approximately 60% of our bodies’ mass, as well as a very large portion of animal and plant tissue, water is the most common compound on earth.

As abundant as it is, Fernelius was undoubtedly correct that water is also the compound with which we are most familiar. This is because the life of every human from every age, throughout every corner of the earth, depends on it. Consider for a moment that water directly affects man’s ability to transport goods (ocean and river transportation systems); to generate electricity (hydroelectric power plants directly use moving water to generate electricity, while coal and nuclear power plants generate heat that converts water into steam to generate electricity); and even to affect the earth’s climate. More importantly, water is vital for a man’s sustenance, providing life support for all plant and animal life (which ultimately becomes his food supply), as well as providing his critical drinking supply. Every human, without fresh water, is only a few short days away from death. Therefore, we ought to be keenly familiar with water and desire to keep it clean and unpolluted, for we are, most certainly, completely dependent upon water for every aspect of our physical life. Consequently, everyone—from every nation and tribe in history—is intimately familiar with water.

Water’s Unique Structure

Water has some unique characteristics that make it stand out from other molecules in the creation. In this

¹ W. Conrad Fernelius. *Journal of Chemical Education*, vol. 8, issue 1, p. 55, 1931.

article and the next we intend to illustrate some of water’s unique properties. We hope that the reader, by considering these properties, will gain an appreciation for the majesty of God the Creator and His wisdom in creating water as He did. In order to do this we must briefly consider the structure of water.

Water is a compound composed of two hydrogen atoms that are chemically bonded to one oxygen atom. Atoms, such as hydrogen and oxygen, are the tiny building blocks of all substances in the creation. They are, themselves, composed of tinier particles called protons, neutrons, and electrons. The positively charged protons are packed into a dense central area with the uncharged neutrons. Surrounding this central area is an orderly arrangement of negatively charged electrons. Atoms are combined together to make larger and more complex building blocks called chemical compounds or molecules, which will have much different properties and characteristics than the individual atoms had. Water is one such compound; howbeit, a fairly simple one.

In order to form a chemical compound like water, the atoms must bond to each other. What keeps atoms chemically bonded is that they share or use each other’s electrons. The interaction of the electrons of one atom with another atom is what links one atom to another to make a chemical compound. In many compounds, water being no exception, the electrons used to link the atoms together are not, for lack of a better word, shared equally. This ultimately results in the molecule having one part or side unbalanced in terms of its electrical charge—one side has a higher density of electrons than the other, giving one side a partially negative charge and the other a partially positive charge. Water strongly exhibits this condition. Water is therefore said to be a very polar molecule.

In addition to its strong polar nature, water also has a bent shape. Rather than the two hydrogen atoms bonding directly on opposite sides of the oxygen atom, forming a linear molecule (180° apart), they actually bond somewhat on the same side of the oxygen atom, forming a bent molecule (104.5° apart). This bent shape helps to accentuate water’s polar nature.

These two aspects of water’s structure—its bent shape and its strong polarity—are the key contributing factors that give water its unique properties, as we shall see in more detail in the next article. In this article, however, we

will briefly consider just one of these properties: water's ability to dissolve many substances.

Water As Universal Solvent

Water is called the universal solvent. Because of its polarity, water is able to attract a myriad of compounds—themselves also polar molecules—and draw them into a solution. For example, perhaps you want to dissolve some table salt (sodium chloride crystal) in water as you cook. The salt crystal, composed of millions of positively charged sodium ions that alternate with negatively charged chlorine ions, will be dissolved into the water. This is accomplished because the one end of the water molecules (the partially charged negative side) attracts the positively charged sodium ions, ripping them from the sodium chloride crystal. Likewise other water molecules, with their partially charged positive side, attract the negatively charged chlorine ions, ripping them from the sodium chloride crystal. Meanwhile, many water molecules surround the sodium ions, keeping them from being attracted back to the chlorine ions and returning to bond with them. In this way the sodium chloride crystal is broken apart, piece by piece, reduced to its component parts, and kept that way. This process converts the solid sodium chloride crystal into a salt water solution that can be utilized in many different ways, more than the original crystal could. In similar ways, multitudes of crystals are dissolved in water to make a host of solutions, from saline solution to household cleaners.

In a similar manner, dirt is washed from our hands. Water's partially charged positive end and its partially charged negative end are attracted to the charged components of dirt. Sometimes we use soap to help us remove the dirt. Soap molecules help make a "bridge" between the polar water molecules and other molecules in the dirt that are not polar. The one end of the soap molecules is polar and is attracted to the similar natured water molecules. Meanwhile, the other end of the soap molecules is non-polar and can be attracted to other non-polar molecules in the dirt. In this way, water—the universal solvent—is even used to free us from dirt.

Spiritual Truths to Contemplate

Water is a remarkable character in the *Elegant Book of Creation*. It is used by God to reveal many things

about Himself. We hope, in the next article, to develop a few more of water's unique properties that illustrate our Creator's wisdom. We resist the urge to discuss this any further in this article. But we would be remiss if we did not briefly comment on the pictures we see in water. The Scriptures often use the cleansing ability of water and our utter dependence on water as pictures of things spiritual. It uses water in baptism to point to the cleansing work of Christ's blood, and it uses the nourishing and life-sustaining power of water to picture Jesus Christ, the Living Water.


As a universal solvent, water dissolves many substances. In particular, water dissolves and washes away the dirt and the bacteria/viruses from our hands. In that cleansing power of water is the picture of the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Therefore He has commanded all those who are His to be baptized with pure water, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," thereby signifying to us that, as water washeth away the filth of the body when poured upon it, and is seen on the body of the baptized when sprinkled upon him; so doth the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, internally sprinkle the soul, cleanse it from its sins, and regenerate us from children of wrath unto children of God (Belgic Confession, Art. 34).

Baptism (the sprinkling with water) is that physical sign of the washing away of our sins. What a simple yet beautiful picture—easily understood throughout the world, and throughout all ages, by young and old alike! May we learn to see in this physical cleansing the glorious picture of Christ's cleansing of us from all our sin.

In addition to this picture, our absolute dependence on it ought to stir in our mind another picture—the need for the Living Water. Jesus, in answering the woman at the well, said, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13-14). Jesus is the Living Water. Just as our physical life depends on the sustaining power of water, so our spiritual life depends on Christ, the Living Water. Thanks be to God, who has regenerated us and given us the life of Christ so that we have a life from

above! Just as the deer pants for the brooks of water, so we long and thirst for Christ. Thanks be to God, who causes us to thirst after Him and then faithfully nourishes us through His Word and Spirit! In that light, we are especially grateful for the faithful preaching we receive each Sunday. For in the preaching of the gospel we truly hear Christ, the Living Water, speak unto us—by whom we receive the spiritual food and drink for our soul.

Water is one of the main characters in God's Elegant Book of Creation—precious life-giving, life-cleansing water! It is absolutely vital for all of life. Its abundance and special properties, given to it by God, lead us to contemplate various spiritual truths. This we have only begun to do. In our next article, the Lord willing, we will consider this in some more detail. 

BRING THE BOOKS...

MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA, review editor

Prayer, Praise and Prophecy: A Theology of the Psalms, Geoffrey W. Grogan. United Kingdom: Christian Focus Publications, repr. 2009. Hardback, 290 pp. ISBN: 9781857926422. [Reviewed by Rev. Angus Stewart.]

Profound insights into the Book of Psalms have been provided in pithy statements by the two greatest Reformers. Luther averred that the Psalms are “a Bible in miniature” (157). Referring to their spiritual analysis of and power over us, Calvin called the Psalms “an anatomy of the soul.”

Geoffrey Grogan, a British evangelical who died in 2011, also loved and was excited by the Psalms (9), declaring this book “an inexhaustible, inspired resource for the Christian church in every age” and especially in our own day (10). Between his “Theological Introduction” (11-25) and “Practical Conclusion” (275-283), Grogan arranges his twenty-five chapters on the Book of Psalms under four heads: “Its General Features” (including its authors, form, and poetry); “Its Great Themes” (including God’s creating, ruling, speaking to, meeting with, protecting, blessing, and refining His people); “Its Grand Design” (including its structure and message); and “Its Glorious Fulfilment” (in Jesus Christ, who is both God and man, in His sufferings and vindication, according to the New Testament). There is much that is of use here, not only to all believers but also to Reformed pastors. For example, the

book is useful in choosing appropriate Psalms to reinforce and elucidate the sermon in the church’s public worship.

Sadly, Grogan sees God’s covenant as “probably based on the suzerainty treaty model common in the ancient Near East” (130). He frequently interacts with higher critics and higher critical methods and ideas. However, Grogan is refreshingly conservative and orthodox on most points. He accepts the indications of authorship in the Psalm superscriptions or headings (e.g., ch. 2). He identifies the “flood” in Psalm 29:10 as the historic flood in the days of Noah in Genesis (90). His most critical remarks are those against Prosperity Theology (10, 213, 244, 248).

Prayer, Praise and Prophecy contains sane and helpful material on hermeneutics (i.e., Bible interpretation). A verse should be understood in its context. Who is the human penman? What was the situation (if any) in the Psalm heading? How does it fit with Old Testament history and theology and with New Testament fulfillment? What is the teaching of the particular Psalm? Is it one of a Psalm pair (e.g., Ps. 15; 24)? Is it in a group of Psalms (e.g., Ps. 93-100; 113-118; 120-134; 146-150)? In which of the five “books” of Psalms does it appear?

Grogan’s treatment of this last issue—the structure of the Book of Psalms—I found to be the most helpful and provocative in his book. The author, building on the work of others and especially more recent scholarship, seeks to identify unifying ideas within each of the five “books” in the Psalms (Ps. 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150) and traces development through books 1-5 (ch. 15-22). Psalms 1 and 2 are presented as “a double introduction” to the Psalter (ch. 16) and Psalms 146-150 are “the cli-

Rev. Stewart is pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

max of the whole Book of Psalms" (239-241). Though the whole Book contains adoration of Jehovah, this note sounds more and more as the Psalter progresses, concluding with "the final psalm," Psalm 150, which "is perhaps the purest expression of sheer praise that even the Old Testament contains" (247).

The author proposes that "the message of the Psalter can be seen in its essence in [Psalm] 73" (245). He writes,

It is increasingly recognised that [Psalm] 73 is of great importance in the structure of the Psalter. It has in fact been well suggested that it virtually sums up the message, not only of the whole Book of Psalms but of the whole Old Testament, and so becomes a kind of Old Testament theology in microcosm (211-212).


The British evangelical rightly sees Psalm 73 as opposing Prosperity Theology (213). We would go further: Psalm 73 is against all forms of common grace. Quite something if this Psalm is the "essence" of the Psalter and even the "Old Testament theology in microcosm"!

In his concluding chapter, Grogan asks a key question: How should we use the Psalms? He speaks, in turn, of their importance for Christian understanding, experience, worship, preaching, and personal devotion, before stating in summary that the Psalms are a book for "prayer, praise and reflection" and concluding with a reference to the book's "canonical purpose" (275-283).

Undoubtedly there is much that is helpful in this. All of the 66 inspired books of the Bible are "profitable [1] for doctrine, [2] for reproof, [3] for correction, [4] for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16). Within this framework, certain biblical books are especially important for theology (e.g., Romans), wisdom (e.g., Proverbs), etc. The Psalms are valuable for all the things that Grogan lists in the previous paragraph.

But there is especially one thing to which the British evangelical fails to do justice: the *singing* of the Psalms! Alone of the 66 biblical books, the Psalms are not only to be preached, read, and meditated upon but also sung. This is evident in the book's title, headings, content, and use (e.g., I Chron. 25; II Chron. 20:21; Ps. 95:1-2; Matt. 26:30; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; James 5:13). This is the unique canonical significance of the Bible's longest book.

In the Psalms, as Tertullian said, David "sings to us

about Christ, and through him Christ sings about himself" (249, n. 2). We should especially use and enjoy the rich doctrine and devotion of the Psalms in this holy covenant conversation in song, both individually and corporately. Of all the scriptural canon, God has appointed the Book of Psalms to be sung, so that their theology might live in our hearts as both "an anatomy of the soul" and "a Bible in miniature." 

Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms, by Michael Lefebvre (Scotland, Christian Focus Publications Ltd. 2010), pp. 160. [Reviewed by Philip Rainey.]

This is a small book, but with some very big and exciting ideas about the songs we sing in congregational worship. Michael Lefebvre is a convinced Psalm-singer and it is his purpose to demonstrate God's purpose in giving us the psalms and how He means us to use them in our public worship. The book is, therefore, both a call to recover biblical worship, and for those who are members of Psalm-singing churches, to deepen an understanding of the uniqueness of this activity.

The book begins by asking the question: are the psalms a book or a hymnal? Most Christians today regard the psalms as a book, much like any other book of the Bible, a book inspired by God and containing words from God to man. But this is a relatively recent view; for millennia the Christian church viewed *and used* the psalms primarily as a hymnal. To put it simply, the psalms are meant to be sung. Like the rest of Scripture they are God's word to us, but uniquely of all the books of the Bible the psalms are our words to God.

Lefebvre traces this shift in the church's view of the psalms' place in the canon of Scripture (from a hymnal designed to become our words to God to a book meant for reading) to the modern hymnwriting movement of the eighteenth century. For men like Isaac Watts, the psalms contained many sub-Christian elements that necessitated their replacement as the church's songs. Such

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“problems” with the psalms, leading to their replacement with songs of merely human composition, are explored in the rest of the book. The one fundamental premise (or principle) lying behind all the author’s arguments is this: Christians prior to the eighteenth century understood the psalms to be prophetic. That is, they are praise-words specifically meant to be placed upon the lips of Jesus and His people. They were never meant to be used only by the Old Testament church. Their meaning is not limited to the events of David’s life. They are *not* Jewish songs for a Jewish time. The psalms were written by the Holy Spirit for Israel’s Messiah and His people to sing *today!*

Lefebvre brings to our attention a very interesting (and often overlooked) point regarding King David’s plans for the temple. We know that David provided for the building of the temple by stockpiling all kinds of materials. David also provided for the temple and its worship by defeating all Israel’s enemies, thus establishing the kingdom of which the temple was the spiritual center. But we often overlook the fact that David also made provision for the temple in all the arrangements he made for the worship in it. These arrangements extended to the songs to be used in the worship, about which we read in I Chronicles 25: 1-7.

From this passage the author points out two powerful features of church hymnody. First, the hymns of the temple were divinely inspired. In the passage we are told no fewer than four times that prophetic inspiration was a prerequisite for writing the songs of Zion. Second, the temple hymnody was “king-led” (p. 41). It is this point that I would like to emphasize in this review. Like Michael Lefebvre, I was not raised in a psalm-singing church; like him, I too came to love the psalms and to believe in what we call “exclusive psalmody.” But I had never before heard the point about the psalms that he terms “king-led.”

In chapter 2 Lefebvre shows from Scripture how both the *composition* and *performance* of Israel’s worship songs are ascribed to the rulers of Israel. He finds this to be the case all the way from Moses to King David and beyond. He states it this way: “In biblical worship, it is the king who leads the congregation into worship, and it is the king’s own songs that the congregation sings with him” (p. 43). Consequently, “the

New Testament church saw in Jesus, the ultimate Song Leader for the church’s praises” (p. 50). Lefebvre makes this startling assertion: “When you sing the psalms, you are actually singing the songs of Jesus, with Jesus as your Song Leader” (p. 50).

The book offers clear exegesis for this claim from a number of New Testament passages—for example, in Hebrews 2: 11-12. There we read that Christ calls those who are sanctified his “brethren.” And where does Christ do this? He does it as He sings God’s praise “in the midst of the congregation”; and He sings God’s praise there with a psalm (no. 22). The point is that Jesus calls us *today*, in the twenty-first century, “his brethren,” as He sings the psalms in the official worship services of the church. Jesus takes the lead in our congregational praise as our divine Song Leader. Have you ever thought about that? It is not the minister who leads our praise, nor is it the organist, and it is definitely not a professional “worship leader.” It is Jesus Christ, and He must and will lead us in song because He is our King!

In chapter 3, another unique feature of the psalms is set forth. Building on the truth that the psalms were composed first of all for Jesus to sing, and then we with Him, Lefebvre sees them “more like conversations than mere monologues” (p. 63). The psalms are Christ-led conversations in which, as king, He is always at the center, mediating our praise. The psalms are full of changing voices. Like me, you may very well sometimes have struggled to figure out just who is speaking to whom in a psalm. As the author points out: “Sometimes, the king speaks to the people in the Psalms. Sometimes, the king leads the people in addressing God. Sometimes, the people sing to the king, or to God about the king, or to one another before the king” (p. 65).

The author proceeds to offer several examples of the “praising conversations” through which the Psalms lead us. I think these examples, in which is described exactly who is speaking to whom in the psalm and to what purpose, should be read by every member of a psalm-singing church.


The Psalms are holy conversations spoken by God the Father, by Jesus Christ our King, and by us as the people of God. Man-made hymns are monologues in which the triune God is always listening to us; the Psalms are Christ-led conversations in which He and the Father of-

tentimes speak to us. And for that reason we had better be listening!

This unique feature of the Psalms also fits with a covenant theology that understands the covenant as a blessed relation of friendship between God and His people in Christ. The Psalms are songs of fellowship in which God, Christ, and the church sing of their love for each other. The Psalms are, therefore, covenantal.

The weakest chapter of the book is the one on the imprecatory Psalms. The imprecatory Psalms are those Psalms which pronounce curses upon certain men; they include Psalms 55, 59, 69, 79, 109, and 137. Although Lefebvre argues that such Psalms should be sung by the Christian church, his arguments are, I think, weak, confused, and unconvincing. He appears to attempt the reconciliation of God's pronouncement of curses upon men in these Psalms with His attitude of forgiveness towards the same men. This is utterly futile. There is no forgive-

ness for those cursed by God. Furthermore, reprobation is glaringly absent from his explanation. This, of course, is hardly surprising; most modern Calvinists believe in a grace of God for all in the gospel, consequently rejecting sovereign reprobation. But the doctrine of reprobation is the explanation for these Psalms: the curse of God is the execution of God's will of reprobation. And in the psalms, Jesus (and we with Him) sings of this doctrine to the glory of the triune God.

There are more unique features of psalm-singing explained in this book than I have the space to list, features that show how certain things happen when the church sings the psalms in her official worship services that do not happen when she sings other songs. A study of this little book will excite within every Reformed Christian a consciousness of the profound spiritual activity in which we engage when we sing the songs of Jesus—the biblical psalms. 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL sponsored a Spring Lecture the evening of March 21 at their church. Rev. Nathan Langerak, pastor of the Crete, IL PRC, was the featured speaker. Rev. Langerak addressed the important subject of the truth of God's providence and the power God has over all the events that occur in this life. Sadly, the prevailing view of salvation today centers on man's power, and, consequently, the truth of God's providential power is not widely understood. A new website was created to discuss this topic for the March 21 lecture

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(www.providenceconference.org). When we looked in early April, that website was still up and running, so you might find it yet in early May, if you are interested.

In other evangelism news from Peace, we read recently that you can now listen to their worship services on line. Simply go to their website, www.peaceprc.org, click "sermon-audio.com," and after the Sermon Audio page appears, click the on air icon.

Congregation Activities

The members of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI enjoyed their annual Winter Family Conference on March 7. This year's guest speaker was Tim Challies, associate pastor at Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto, Canada and author of

the blog "Informing the Reforming" www.challies.com. Pastor Challies spoke on the important topic of technology and social media, under the theme, "Friends, Facebook, and the Family of God," and how we, as Christians, should responsibly use these things. Pastor Challies pointed out that technology always brings opportunities and risk, and while the opportunities may be immediately apparent, the risks may only become apparent over time.

Technology took another step forward in our denomination on Sunday evening, March 30. The Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN, unable to find pulpit supply for their evening service, asked the Hudsonville, MI PRC if they could join them for their evening service. Now, before you imagine

the entire Cornerstone congregation driving up to west Michigan on Sunday afternoon, let me add that that did not happen. Instead, Cornerstone connected to Hudsonville's live streaming video of their service through the Internet. But instead of watching the service on a computer, it was transferred to a large screen in the front of the auditorium where everyone could see it. So I guess you could say that Rev. Eriks, Hudsonville's pastor, may be the first in our denomination to preach live to two separate congregations at the same time.

In the latest information from the Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA regarding the recent purchase of a new church property, we read in their March 30 bulletin that closing on their new property was held up a little, but it should have been finalized within the next few days. Cleaning and moving was scheduled for the first week in April and, the Lord willing, Covenant of Grace held their first services in their new church building on Sunday, April 6.

The Council of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI called the men of their congregation to a special congregational meeting on March 27. At that meeting the Council presented a proposal to extend their parking lot to the west of their property for an additional 88 parking spaces. Grace currently has space for 95 vehicles, so this addition would double the size of their parking lot. That proposal passed.

In addition to voting to call a pastor, the men of the Doon, IA PRC recently met to consider a couple of

proposals from their Council. One proposal was to remodel the men's rest room and the other was to cement much of their church parking lot. These two proposals also passed.

All the members of the Grandville, MI PRC were invited to a speech on March 18 by Prof. David Engelsma on "Covenant Theology on Rapture and Antichrist: Reformed Truth about the Last Days."

The Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI invited all area PRC congregations to join them Sunday night, March 23, for a program on the January 2014 trip to the Reformed Christian Church of Vellore, India, made by Prof. Barry and Lori Gritters and Deane and Donna Wassink.

The Men's Society of the Hull, IA PRC hosted the Combined Men's Society Meeting on March 24. The discussion centered around the Word of God found in Ephesians 5. After the Bible study, the men looked at Article 12 of the Belgic Confession, dealing with creation.

The Choir of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI presented their annual spring concert on March 30. Everyone was encouraged and invited to attend as the choir sang praise to God.

School Activities

An evening of sacred music commemorating the passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, entitled "What Wondrous Love" was held Saturday evening, March 29, at First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI. The program for the financial support of Eastside

Christian School featured Eric and Crista Phelps on the cello and piano, Jared Langerak on the organ, with Michelle Pipe (voice) and Gabrielle Phelps (violin).

The students and faculty of Heritage Christian High School in Dyer, IN hosted the choirs of Covenant Christian from Michigan and Trinity Christian from Iowa, for a combined choir concert at the Crete, IL PRC, the evening of March 28. Supporters of Heritage were encouraged to come and enjoy an evening with these three choirs. The choirs each performed some numbers, and then the combined choir of some 219 strong sang a few numbers.

The student body of Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA presented their annual All School Program on March 28, under the theme, "The Christian Soldier."

The PTA of Genesis Christian School in Lacombe, AB, Canada invited friends and supporters to join them for their annual Spud Supper on March 21. Following the meal of baked potatoes, ham, salads, and dessert, the students of Genesis presented a program, including recitations, singing, instrumental numbers, and a variety of other entertaining selections. Student projects and artwork were also on display.

Minister Activities

The Doon, IA PRC extended a call to Rev. Brian Huizinga to serve as their next pastor.

The congregation of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI extended a call to Rev. Rodney Kleyn to become their next pastor. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sympathy to Prof. Robert and Marilyn Decker and their family in the death of their mother and grandmother,

DOROTHY DECKER.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen..." (II Corinthians 4:17, 18).

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sympathy to Ike and Jane Kuiper in the passing to glory of their sister,

FAYE VAN TIL.

Our prayer is that they may be comforted by the words of the prophet, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sympathy to Kenton and Lisa Kalsbeek and their children in the death of their father and grandfather,

JOHN KALSBECK.

May their comfort and assurance be found in the truth of II Corinthians 5:1: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sympathy to Joel and Ellen Bruinooge and their children in the death of their father and grandfather,

CHARLES KREGEL.

May they be comforted by the glorious words in Psalm 34: 8, 9: "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the LORD, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hudsonville PRC express their sympathy to Dick and his wife Jane Venema in the death of Jane's mother,

HENRIETTA WOLTJER.

May they find comfort in the words of Psalm 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

Rev. G. Eriks, President
Rich Feenstra, Clerk

Call to Synod!!

■ Synod 2013 appointed Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, MI, the calling church for the 2014 Synod.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 2014 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 10, 2014 at 8:30 A.M., in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, MI.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday, June 9, at 7:00 P.M. Rev. R. VanOverloop, president of the 2013 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Dave Moelker—Phone: 616-453-7077.

Consistory of
Hope Protestant Reformed Church
Dave Moelker, Clerk.

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Randolph PRC express their Christian sympathy to Betty, Kyle, and Tammy Soodsma in the death of their husband and father,

FRANK SOODSMA.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Rev. Erik Guichelaar, President
Jeff Krosschell, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their deepest sympathy to Ken and Mary Velthouse and to Matt and Amanda Velthouse and their families as our Lord called home their father and grandfather,

MR. CHARLES KREGEL.

I John 2:25: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."

Rev. William Langerak, Pres.
Mark Ophoff, Asst. Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

May 2014

Date

Topic

Text

May 4

"Job Repents in Dust and Ashes"

Job 42:1-6

May 11

"God Rebukes Job's Friends"

Job 42:7-9

May 18

"The Blessed End of Job's Life"

Job 42:10-17

May 25

"Jesus' Desire for Us to be with Him"

John 17:24