

The Standard Bearer

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Set in Order the Things That Are Wanting

“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”

Titus 1:5-9

After Paul was released from his first imprisonment, he stopped at the island of Crete with Titus. Apparently Paul, because he had made commitments to others on the mainland, could not stay there long. Nevertheless, while Paul was on Crete, he and Titus visited many cities, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The result of this work, by God’s grace, was that there were groups of converts in various cities

on the island. But Paul had to leave the island before there could be any official organization of the groups into established, instituted congregations.

Though Paul had to depart, he could leave behind Titus, his spiritual son after the common faith. He left him with instructions. These instructions were first given orally (“as I had appointed thee”), before he left Crete. And, here, the instructions come in the form of an inspired letter to Titus. Titus is to stay in Crete for the purpose of completing matters, namely, the organizing churches.

As we will see, the instructions had to do with the ordaining of officebearers. As we begin a new year, many churches that hold to terms for elders and deacons (rather than ordination for life) are installing new men into office. The importance of maintaining the special offices is clearly established in our text.



The task that Paul gave Titus was to “set in order the things that are wanting.” The idea expressed in these words is that there were things that were lacking, i.e., not yet finished, and once these things were finished, they would be set right.

What was lacking was the ordination of elders. The

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word “and” is not used to refer to another duty Titus had to do, but identifies what was lacking. Set in order the things that are wanting, even ordain elders. We learn that in his first missionary journey the apostle and Barnabas did just that. After they preached the gospel in Derbe, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, confirmed the souls of the disciples, exhorted them to continue in the faith, and “ordained them elders in every church” (Acts 14:21-23). Our text, like this history from Acts, indicates that all that Paul believed to be needed for the organization of a group of believers into an instituted church was the ordination of elders. The office of elder represents the headship of Jesus. In the body of elders Christ is truly present to lead, instruct, and discipline the disciples of Jesus. The Reformed Church Order today bases on this history its practice of organizing new congregations by electing and ordaining elders.

The office of elder is described in Paul’s use of two Greek words (*presbuterous* and *episkopon*), both of which are translated “elder.” The former refers to the office from the perspective of the age and dignity of the men in this office. The latter speaks of the duty of the office, namely, to oversee, to watch over, the spiritual welfare of others. In Acts 20:28 Paul says to the elders of the Ephesian Christian church that they had to take heed to themselves and “to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” The oversight consists of providing the flock with good pasture, making sure that each of the sheep eats of the good pasture, all the while protecting the flock from predators, sometimes even from other sheep.

In the verses that follow, Paul gives the qualifications that must characterize someone who will serve in the office of elder. Paul gives a very similar list in I Timothy 3 (where he gives also a list of the qualifications for the office of deacon). It is interesting that here Paul presents only a list of the qualifications for the office

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of elder, just as Acts 14 speaks only of the ordaining of elders. It is possible that early in new dispensational history it was thought that the office of elder was essential (for the *being* of a church) and the office of deacon was not (having been instituted only for the *well-being* of a church).

The qualifications given for the office of elder are equally necessary for the office of minister/pastor. He too is an elder, a teaching elder. And the Reformed Church Order declares that, while he is under the oversight of the elders, he shares with the elders the responsibility of spiritual oversight of the flock. The ministers, too, must meet these qualifications.



It is important to know the qualifications of an elder. The qualifications Paul lists are a restatement of what he had orally communicated to Titus. God would have the list of qualifications repeated in written form, not only to assist Titus’ memory, but also for the church in all future ages. The early church had to know them.

The church of the twenty-first century must also know them.

The list of qualifications is the Holy Spirit’s list. If men were to put together a list, then we might find the following: a pleasing personality, a good speaker, well-organized, and such like. But these are not on the Holy Spirit’s list. The qualifications on the Holy Spirit’s list might not be evident in every officebearer to the same degree, but they must be in every

officebearer to some degree.

Remember the chief characteristic of all officebearers as presented in Paul’s introduction of himself in the first verse of this letter: “a servant of God.” For an officebearer to have the attitude and conduct of a slave is absolutely essential. Consider the various characteristics in the list from this perspective.

These qualifications are not in a man naturally. Nor are they obtained by taking a course in a college or seminary. They are the result of grace. Only one who truly knows what it is to receive the grace of God is able to

have the attitude that gives rise to these characteristics. And only one who is aware of how much he is graced will strive to develop these characteristics.

The chief characteristic is “blameless.” It is first in the list and it is repeated. It means that one is above reproach and that he in fact has the approval of others. The other members of the church and also the world about him find him to be blameless. This implies that those around us must be able to observe these qualifications (it is not just whether we believe we see them in ourselves).

The person who may be an elder/minister in the Christian church must be, if he is married, a good family man. He must be “the husband of one wife,” or literally “a one-wife’s man.” This makes it obvious that the elder is a male. The idea of this qualification is that he is faithful to his God-given wife, devoted to her, faithful in supporting and caring for her out of his love for her. Further, he is to have “faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.” (We note that these two qualifications are not to be taken as requiring that every elder is to be married and is to have children, but what he is to be if married and if he has been given children.) It should be evident that he teaches his God-given children as best he can, so that they share the Christian faith and adorn it with godly conduct. Are the children not submissive, or are they open to the charge of recklessness? A man whose children behave as pagans ought not be appointed an elder.

In Paul’s list of qualifications for the office of elder and minister, Paul includes several characteristics that ought not be present. Note that each of the five negative characteristics indicates a focus on self. One who is obviously self-centered may not serve in the office! One, an elder, must not be “self-willed.” This refers to one who calls attention to himself and is arrogant and self-indulgent—someone who obviously focuses on pleasing himself more than having a servant-concern for others. Two, an elder must not be “soon angry,” that is, given to outbursts of anger. He must not be contentious, defensive, ready to compete with and beat those who differ with him. Three, he must not be a “striker,” that is, one who is ready and eager to use his fists. This refers to one who is strident in maintaining personal opinions (and therefore does not really listen). Four, an

elder must not be “given to wine”—that is, literally, one who lingers beside his wine, a drunkard. And five, an elder must not be “given to filthy lucre.” This is someone who is very conscious of money and of material gain, indicating a fondness for earthly riches.

There are eight positive qualities Paul is inspired to present as necessary for one to serve as an elder or as a minister. Note that each of the eight speaks of one’s being a blessing to others in his faith or actions. One, he is to be a “lover of hospitality.” It is interesting that this is first. He must be ready to befriend strangers. This attribute ought to be found in all who are the recipients of the covenant, which is defined as a relationship of friendship! Two, an elder must be “a lover of good” (in the original Greek there is no word for “men”), indicating a readiness to do what would be beneficial to others. Three, he must be “sober,” of a sound mind, balanced in all issues, not filled with prejudices that would make him lean one way or the other. Four, he is to be “just.” This speaks of being righteous, of striving to conform himself to the standard of the will and character of God. He is known to be fair and honest to others. Five, he is to be “holy,” ever aware of his moral obligations, as revealed in his being devout or pious. Six, he is to be “temperate,” or self-controlled. He must possess the moral strength to control his sinful desires and impulses. He is to be restrained in his speech and conduct, because of his concern for God and his neighbors. Seven, an elder or pastor must be known for “holding fast the faithful words.” Others see him to be one who knows and applies to himself the truths and commands of Scripture.

And, eight, he is to be “able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” “Sound doctrine” is, literally, healthy teachings, for the teachings of Scripture give health to those who believe them and live them. An elder, by sound teaching, is to be able to urge others to joyful service of God. To exhort is the activity of calling another alongside oneself in order to reprove him for errors. When one exhorts another, then, he is not standing toe to toe with the other, but has him at his side, admitting that they together face a common foe, whom they must fight and resist. One who exhorts is, thus, not aiming to beat a foe, but to win over a companion. Such an elder knows that he cannot convince, but

he is ever praying to Him who alone is able to convince one to acknowledge his error and to repent.




In I Timothy 3:13 Paul is inspired to add an incentive to those who use well the office of a deacon. The same applies to faithful elders and ministers. Faithful use of the offices enables one to “purchase to [himself] a good degree, and great boldness in the faith, which is in Christ Jesus.” The hope for a reward is not sinful in itself. It is the activity of the faithful Father working with His children, giving them incentives for their working for His glory. The calling of an officebearer in the church of Jesus Christ is truly self-denying and self-sacrificing (for the wives and children of officebearers as well), so the hope of a reward is very important (if not necessary).

“Great boldness in the faith” is to know that by God’s grace one did his best. This is an answer to the devil, who constantly uses an elder’s knowledge of his personal weaknesses and failures to create doubts and

pangs of guilt. This refers to the possession of a confidence or assurance that one is in the faith—that one is saved. This assurance arises from a knowledge that the Christian faith is correct, for it is biblical.

Boldness and assurance of one’s salvation fits perfectly with humility, even as it increases the officebearer’s assurance that Jesus Christ uses weak means to accomplish His will in His church. In fact, our fathers, in the beautiful Canons of Dordt, teach us that the sense and certainty of one’s election first provides the children of God with “additional matter for daily humility” (Canons I, 13); and the certainty of one’s perseverance “is the real source of humility” (Canons V, 12).

Thus does faithful, but always weak, service in the offices provide those who serve in these offices an increased awareness of the presence, the greatness, the unconditional nature of God’s grace. One who is aware that he is always receiving grace (a love he does not deserve) is the best qualified to serve in the offices. And his service will occasion increased opportunities for him to grow in his assurance of faith. God is so good! 

EDITORIAL

REV, KENNETH KOOLE

A.D. 2011 – Year of Upheaval

It was quite a year.

In the realm of natural catastrophes, 2011 will hold its own with any preceding it.

When you have a tsunami the scope of the one that arose just off the coast of Japan, the result of one of those rare earthquakes that measure 9.0+ on the Richter scale, with the sea itself rising like a living creature to sweep 15-20 miles inland, sending a nuclear reactor into meltdown, rendering man completely helpless, causing a nation the size and stature of modern Japan to teeter on the brink financially, you

have an event of apocalyptic proportions.

Add to that the spate of tornados that boiled in clusters through the South a number of times this past summer, wreaking havoc far and wide, bringing record deaths with the destructive winds. The pictures of what was left of Joplin, Missouri and other towns in the paths of these monstrous winds still resonate.

And hurricane Irene wreaked extensive damage along the east coast as well.

One is reminded of Revelation 9:12: “One woe is past; and, behold,

there come two woes more hereafter.”

And then the upheavals on the national and social scene. There have been few years to match what took place this past year in the Arab nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea—the repercussions of which will certainly continue into 2012 and beyond. Corrupt, oppressive government after government falling one after the other. And being replaced by what? Apparently by others just as self-serving, oppressive, and corrupt as the ones that preceded them. In

other words, what triggered these social upheavals is not going to end any time soon.

What these revolutions evidence is the seething resentment of the 'have-nots' over against the 'haves,' an unwillingness to endure it any longer, and, as a result, a rising up against the powers that be.

One cannot miss the connection to what Revelation 6:6 calls the running of the black horse with its rider holding the balances, crying, "... three measures of barley for a penny [the food of the poor], and see thou hurt not the wine and the oil [the luxuries of the rich]," representing the social disparity between rich and poor and the growing resentment between the social classes as a result.

And this gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' shows no sign of diminishing. 2011 was the year, we are told, that the world's population reached the seven billion mark, a figure which, unless drastic changes take place in various countries, will continue to escalate upwards. And with it, increased demands on this earth's limited resources.

But then the question is, how to suppress the angry and resentful multitudes.

The answer?

At first by threat and the use of brute force.

And when that does not work?

Then by leaders directing the anger and resentment of the disenfranchised towards other 'ethnic' groups. "They are to blame. Take out your anger and frustration on them."

An example?

Consider pre-World War II Germany, with its economic turmoil and food shortages, a nation, interestingly enough, also starving for oil to feed its industrial appetite and produce economic growth. In the end, all factors worked to ferment a deep-rooted national resentment to all who contributed to their misery.

And who, said the government and that Fuehrer of theirs, was most to blame? Who else but the Jews!

And the horror of the holocaust followed.

A portent of things to come.

Only the next time it will not be the Jews to be blamed and to be rounded up like sheep. The devil will use his next "Fuehrer" to bring another group into focus. And Scripture is rather clear about who they will be.

It is not just in the Arab world where these financial inequities and resulting social 'fault lines of mounting pressures' showed themselves this past year. Just across the Great Sea in Europe social unrest also showed itself and continues to fester. Developments in Greece, Italy, and Spain come to mind. Not to put too fine a point to it, they are bank corrupt and living on borrowed money. They are saddled with staggering debts to other nations that they cannot possibly pay back.

The euro teeters, the large financial lending institutions totter, and the bankers demand austerity from those living off their loans. How else are they going to get some reimbursement?

Faced with what modern man calls austerity—a bit removed from the real deprivations experienced

by many in past centuries—mobs rioted in Europe too. "Where is the promised wheat and barley for a penny? Surely, such handouts are our inalienable right! We are entitled to such, and if not soon forthcoming, we will take what we want by force."

If things do not improve financially in Europe, depending in large measure on whether its pampered working class will make the required concessions, 2012 will almost certainly bring more such unrest, riots, and, likely, governments teetering on the brink.

And it is not just Europe. Our own nation is dealing with a financial crisis the likes of which it has never faced before. The national debt is around fifteen trillion, we are told. It is hard to comprehend, much less keep track of, sums this large. Fifteen trillion is a staggering number. In the Milky Way there are an estimated 300 billion stars, itself a staggering number. Now, multiply that not by one or two, or even by ten, but by *fifty*, and you will arrive at the national debt. Unless stringent spending measures are taken, it is going to continue to accelerate upwards. On that, economists of every stripe agree. The cost of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid is approaching sums that are simply, say the economists, unsustainable. At present these funds are strained to the limits, surviving only by siphoning money from other funds that Congress has no business touching.

Added to this (according to a front-page story of *USA Today*, October 8) is a report from FEMA

(which provides federal funding for national disaster relief) that its funds have been all but depleted. As of October, eighty-nine disasters had already been declared for the year. Hurricane Irene, which inundated the east coast with flooding, wreaking havoc on large electrical grids, had strained FEMA's already thin resources to its limits. And FEMA reports it is still paying out huge sums for the Katrina disaster of 2005.

What does this all mean?

That as 2012 dawns, our nation stands virtually naked in its financial vulnerability.

In other words, it would not take much for the Lord God in His providence to send a calamity or two in 2012 severe enough, such as a drought in the Midwest, not only to send our nation reeling, but to send reverberations through the whole financial structure of the Western World and bring it down like a house of cards.

And do not think the bankers and Wall Street professionals are not well aware of this. Our nation's productivity and supply hang by a thread. So the money-men preach consumer confidence and put the best spin on the future, lest panic spread, the bears (the thin and ill-favored kine) devouring the bulls (the fat and well-favored kine), and spending stops and it all comes to a grinding halt.

If it does, the great depression of the 1900's will look like a mere skin rash.

It is exactly in such a time that we live.

What does that all indicate?

That when the ascended Lord Christ decides it is time to loose Satan to give rise to the Antichrist to establish his one world kingdom, all things will be in place.

This was brought home in a chilling way by a recent article written by Ross Douthat (Grand Rapids Press, Nov. 24). In an editorial entitled *Conspiracies, Coups, and Curren-*

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cies, Douthat reflects on what took place this past year in Europe in a couple of nations due to debt crises and threatened default because of financial insolvency.

Governments in Greece and Italy were removed from power and replaced, not, Douthat is convinced, by freely run elections determined by the people, but by decisions made by a consortium of financiers, powerful industrialists, and high placed bureaucrats of foreign states (whom Douthat labels "technocrats"). As you read the following, keep in mind that Douthat is not some wild-eyed conspiracy theorist. He is on the staff of the *NY Times*.

...for the inhabitants of Italy and Greece, who have just watched democratically elected governments toppled by pressure from financiers, European Union bureaucrats and foreign heads of state, it evokes the cold reality of 21st-century politics. Democracy may be nice in theory, but in a time of crisis it's the technocrats who really get to call the shots. National sovereignty is a pretty concept, but the survival of the European common currency [the euro] comes first [!].

...[the] forced departures [of these governments], however welcomed [by many in those nations], opens a troubling window on what a true European state would look like. Stability would be achieved *at the expense of democracy* (emphasis mine—kk), the rituals [!] of parliaments and elections [may] endure, but the real decision-making power would pass permanently to the forces represented by the so-called "Frankfurt Group"—an ad hoc inner circle consisting of Germany's Angela Merkel, France's Nicolas Sarkozy, and a cluster of bankers and E.U. functionaries, which has spearheaded European crisis management since October.

This preview is important because this is precisely the future almost every informed commentator assumes Europe needs [!] to embrace in order to save the euro and prevent an economic meltdown.

...One could argue that the [European Nations] should have known what they were signing up for when they joined the euro in the first place. But the fact is that the project of European union has never enjoyed deep popular sup-

port. Its advocates were always adept at re-running referendums until the vote came out their way, or designing treaties that bypassed the voting public entirely. The people of Europe always have been wary of trading their sovereignty for ever greater unity—and now we can see why!

Insightful, and chilling.

Note the highlighted phrase—“at the expense of democracy.” Democracy has to do with national sovereignty, civil liberties, and laws in place that are meant to assure a people that they (we) have a voice in determining their (our) nation’s direction and internal affairs.

This, Douthat is convinced, was severely compromised by what occurred this past year in Europe due to its growing debt crisis.

What Douthat is alerting us to is a state of affairs that is not just *hypothetical*, but that in reality just took place in Europe.

As he states, “After the current crisis has passed, some voices have suggested, there will be time to reverse the ongoing centralization of power and reconsider the E.U.’s increasingly undemocratic [!] character.”

But, as Douthat shrewdly points out, such is wishful thinking. Once power has been grabbed, and a stability occurs, why would those with power ever consent to relinquish it? Especially when it is their own monetary interests that are at stake.

The point is, democratic freedoms are all fine and dandy when the economy purrs along. But there comes a time when the rich and

powerful (bankers, industrialists, and politicians) say, “Laws guaranteeing certain inalienable rights notwithstanding, we are not about to have our wealth, which gives us power, threatened. Such laws are now to be suspended. We will determine the slate of officials who can be chosen for this and that country, and they will make decisions according to our policies, or be removed.”

At first, of course, the voices of alarm are assured that this is only temporary. But if a consortium by its financial policies brings economic stability, surely it would be sheer folly to risk it all again.

It is becoming increasingly clear that for twenty-first century society, national sovereignty and personal freedoms of choice may be deemed no longer to serve ‘the public good’ any better than dial-up telephones and the like.

Significantly, in the opening paragraphs of his article, Douthat raises the specter of a growing consensus among many power brokers east and west that only a truly global super-state [!] can prevent the debt contagion from spreading.

All things considered, if 2011 with all its upheavals has made anything clear, it is that the way for the rise of the Antichrist is wide open. When he will appear, who can say? But that things are ripe for his taking power with the backing of a consortium of powerful friends in many nations is clear.

A possible scenario presents itself.

Another tremor adding to the present financial crisis and threatening the wealth and lifestyle of the

rich and powerful is not acceptable. Intensify the present financial crisis, and the ascendancy of the Man of Sin may be closer than we think.

And surely, if he and his regime bring security, financial stability, and boom times as a result (the bull market running, profits soaring), he cannot be all that evil, can he?

We are reminded of I Timothy 6:6: “..for the love of money is the root of all evil.”

It strikes us that if Antichrist is the greatest evil, then that monetary crisis and financial greed should pave the way for his appearing and taking power makes perfect sense.

And then, one thing more.

Remember that what lies ahead of us is not simply the year 2012, but the year A.D. 2012.

2011 was the year of our Lord, and so will be 2012.

That is to say, this past year was completely under our Christ’s control—from the tsunami out of the sea of Japan and the upheavals in the nations, to the tremors that threaten a financial tsunami as well.

Our Christ knows exactly what He is doing. When the Antichrist appears, it will be because the ascended Lord prepared his way, using even the wicked in their greed to accomplish His own purpose.

The appearing of Antichrist is for us and our little ones a terrible and chilling thought.

But then comes this thought—in bringing the Antichrist, our Lord Christ prepares for the great day of His own appearing as well.

Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!

Even so, He comes. 

Light

God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. This is the fundamental, glorious message that Jesus revealed and His church declares (I John 1:5). God is light. But light is not God. Light is a creature. In the beginning God said, “Let there be light!” That light He divided from the darkness, called it day, and it was good (Gen. 1:2). He made stars to give light upon the earth, and He prepared the light so that the day is His (Gen. 1:15; Ps. 74:16). He is the Lord who showed us light (Ps. 118:27) as a picture of Him who is our light and salvation (Ps. 27:1); who covers Himself with light as a garment (Ps. 104:2); and who is the Father of lights with whom is no variability, neither shadow of turning (James 1:17).

The many mysterious physical properties of light make it a most intriguing picture within creation. Light, for example, has a dual nature, exhibiting properties of both waves and particles. The speed of light is considered a fundamental limit and universal constant to which even time and space conform. A light particle (called a photon after the Greek word for light) is basically energy without substance (mass), experiences neither distance nor time, and yet interacts wonderfully with matter. But there are three qualities that Scripture especially emphasizes—its glorious spectral properties, its ability to illuminate and transmit reality (truth), and its energy as a fundamental necessity for life.

Not only was light created first, but it is a prominent revelation of God and His salvation of life throughout the Old Testament. While Egypt was buried under three days of deathly darkness, the children of Israel lived in the light. At Sinai, seven light-giving candlesticks were prescribed for the house of God (Ex. 25:37). During their 40-year pilgrimage, the covenant people were led and protected by a pillar of light (Neh. 9:19). And the people of God understood those pictures. They prayed, “Lift up the light of thy countenance upon us” (Ps. 4:6);

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they sang, “In thy light we shall see light” (Ps. 36:9); and they confessed, “Thou hast delivered my soul from death... that I may walk before God in the light of the living” (Ps. 56:13). The wise man wrote that God’s law is light (Prov. 6:23); His word is light for our path (Ps. 119:105); in the light of the king’s countenance is life (Prov. 16:15); and the path of the just is as a light that shines more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18). Prophets promised such a day when righteousness would shine forth as the light (Ps. 37:6); light would break forth as the morning (Is. 58:8); the light of God’s glory would rise; the Gentiles shall come to this light; and “the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light” (Is. 60:19-20).


Light is a special picture of Jesus, who is personally both Jehovah and His salvation. Inasmuch as He is the brightness of God’s glory and express image of His person in the flesh, He is the Light of the world (Heb. 1:3; John 8:12). Very God, He has immortality, dwelling in the light no man can approach unto (I Tim. 6:16). In Him was life, which was the light of men (John 1:4). But He is not only God. Jesus is the firstborn of every creature; like light, He is the first “Let there be” (Col. 1:15). In the darkness of Bethlehem, a star was born (II Pet. 1:19). The dayspring from on high visited us to enlighten and guide our feet in the way of peace (Luke 1:79). He brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (II Tim. 1:10), that whoever believes on Him shall not abide in darkness but shall have the light of life (John 8:12; 12:46).

But the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:5). He came into the world He made, but the world knew Him not; He came unto His own, but His own received Him not (John 1:10-11). What darkness! The darkness of death (Luke 1:79). The darkness of depravity and willful ignorance. Men loved the darkness. They hated and would not come to the light. Why? Lest their evil deeds be reproved (John 3:19-20). And the god of this world blinded their minds, lest the glorious light of the gospel should shine unto them (II Cor. 4:4).

Not so for the children of light (Luke 16:8). God, who

first commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ (II Cor. 4:6). We have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9). Having light sown for righteousness (Ps. 97:11), and doing truth, we are come to that light in order that our deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God (John 3:21). Christ living in us, we are the light of the world (Phil. 2:15) and are made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12). Seeing the light of this world, we stumble not (John 11:9).

And so we are exhorted to walk as children of the light (Eph. 5:8). We must take heed that the light in us be not darkness (Luke 11:35), and we must heed Scripture

as a light that shines in a dark place (II Pet. 1:19). We are called to cast off the works of darkness, put on the armor of light (Rom. 13:12), and be not unequally yoked with unbelievers, for light has no communion with darkness (II Cor. 6:14). But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we do have fellowship one with another (I John 1:17). He who says he is in the light, but hates his brother, is yet in darkness (I John 2:9-10). And so also, let your light so shine among men (Matt. 5:16). Believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light (John 12:36). Look for that day in the city of God when there will be no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God and the Lamb is the light thereof, and the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it (Rev. 21:23). 

■ “Occupy” and the Black Horse

What’s going on? What does it all mean? It began in New York City—“Occupy Wall Street.” It was the first week of October. *World* magazine (October 22, 2011, p. 8) described it this way: “It started out as little more than street theatre, but throughout the first week of October the Occupy Wall Street movement grew into what *The New Republic* called ‘a younger, dreadlocked version of the Tea Party.’ With declared complaints against corporations that ranged from the sound (‘They have taken bailouts from taxpayers with impunity, and continue to give executives exorbitant bonuses’) to the misdirected (‘They have held students hostage with tens of thousands of dollars of debt on education’), nearly 700 protesters were arrested on October 2 as they shut down a lane of traffic on the Brooklyn Bridge.”

This movement soon had a ripple effect—the protests spread to many cities across our country and around the world. A *Kalamazoo Gazette* headline in mid-October read: “I’ve never been this angry before”—words from a nurse from Battle Creek, Michigan, one of the Occupy Kalamazoo protesters who was angry

about bailouts and about corporate greed sanctioned by the government. There are many widely-varied grievances, but the vast majority of them are economic and financial concerns regarding poverty, joblessness, and wealth inequality. Some protesters openly state that they want a revolution, the overthrow of our government and the capitalistic system. Many contend that a failed system, in which only one percent of the population enjoys most of the nation’s wealth, brought them to protest.

Gerry Wize comments in an article in *Christian Renewal* (October 26, 2011, p. 21): “So why ‘Occupy Wall Street’? It’s a symbol of greed, but symbols don’t always match realities, certainly not in simplistic, unqualified ways. At the heart of the ‘Occupy Wall Street’ movement is the desire to find a place for blame to land, blame for our unemployment, deep debt, and the fading of the American Dream, as though full employment, extra cash on hand, and the assurance that everything will be more than alright financially for us—regardless of how bad they may be for others—were undisputed rights.”

But solutions to the perceived problems from the Occupiers are few. Marvin Olasky comments in *World* magazine, in an article entitled, “Reactions to Occupation” (November 5, 2011, pp. 49, 50):

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From other reports it's clear that many Occupiers travel light in any knowledge of economics and business. Many Occupiers seem clueless about the irreducible complexity of a vast market system, and how hard it is to run even a small organization, let alone a massive one. They complain about private greed for money but don't recognize public greed for power. For example, they blame free markets for housing foreclosures when they should blame congressional pressure on businesses to make loans to those who were not credit-worthy.

Accompanying that cluelessness is an entitlement mentality: Some young Occupiers think they deserve what they desire, and are not getting it only because others are greedy. Some complain about bailouts to banks deemed too big to fail, but think they're too cute to be unemployed. Some have often taken college courses that teach no marketable skills, including clear thought, and because of grade inflation have received A's. One Occupy sign read, "We're here, we're unclear, get used to it."

In recent weeks there have been increasing incidents of confrontation and violence between Occupiers and police. In Oakland the Occupiers faced off with police officers in a heated protest on October 25 in an attempt to reclaim as a campsite a plaza in front of City Hall. Bay area police officers launched beanbags and sprayed tear gas at protesters who tried to re-enter Frank Agawa Plaza, which was closed for sanitary cleaning. Police said they responded defensively to protesters who threw rocks, bottles, and cans of paint at them. They arrested more than 100, with one serious injury reported. Some Occupiers are turning destructive by shattering windows and starting fires. Many of their camps are starting to self-destruct through theft, rape, and filthy conditions. Over the country there have been thousands of arrests as overly-indulgent mayors finally put their foot down and sent in the police to clear out the encampments.

How are we to evaluate the "Occupy Wall Street" movement and the economic turmoil around the world? No one can dispute the economic disparity we see in our land and around the world. In many countries the economic chaos has led to open rebellion, rioting, and revolution. Men attempt to find natural causes and explanations for the problems, but in the light of Scripture, this spirit of discontent and envy and the

stark contrast between rich and poor are but the clear evidence that the black horse of Revelation 6:5,6 is running his course through the earth!

With the opening of the seals in Revelation 6 we are given the revelation of the history, the unfolding of God's counsel with regard to this new dispensation. The first four seals are manifest as horses of different colors, with their riders—they represent strong, irresistible forces that are directed and controlled ultimately by Christ Himself. The white horse, which is first, represents the victorious progress of the gospel and the cause of Christ's kingdom. The other horses follow him and serve him: the red horse symbolizing war with all its destruction; the pale horse symbolizing death and its power and influence. But our focus here is upon the black horse, which symbolizes economic contrast, poverty vs. prosperity, throughout the earth. We read concerning this black horse: "And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine" (Rev. 6:5, 6).

In the light of Scripture, the color black signifies scarcity, famine, and hunger (Jer. 4:24-28; 14:2; Lam. 5:10). The rider of this black horse has a pair of balances in his hand with which he does some weighing. A voice out of the midst of the four creatures cries, "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny, and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." A penny was the average daily wage of the laborer of that day. One measure of wheat or three measures of barley (which was somewhat cheaper and less nourishing) was considered just enough food to sustain one person for one day. On the other hand, oil and wine are symbols in the Bible for luxury and plenty. These must not be hurt, damaged, or disrupted—in other words, do not touch the great prosperity that some have!

Clearly it is the black horse with its rider that maintains the contrast between the rich who live in abundance and the poor masses who often live by the day. Always the running of the black horse brings the sharp contrast between scarcity and plenty, between luxury

and miserable poverty, along with all the conflicts between the “haves” and the “have nots.” The black horse is running his course through the earth, galloping also through our land! Yes, we can distinguish many factors that are involved in our present economic turmoil, but ultimately it is the result of the running of the black horse.

The black horse has a mission to fulfill under the direction of the Lord Christ. We must remember that the white horse, representing the cause of Christ as manifest in the preaching of the gospel, cannot run alone. If he did, we would see the kingdom of Antichrist reach the height of its development prematurely.

To prevent that, the black horse, as directed by Christ, must maintain the tremendous contrast between rich and poor. And it is a simple fact that, no matter where you go in all the world, no matter what the form of government or the type of economic system, rich and poor remain!

Generally speaking, man strives to do all that he can to destroy this black horse. Many economic philosophies hate this horse and its rider. Today, also in our country, we see an increasingly radical ideology that denounces capitalism and the free enterprise system. Many envision a complete restructuring of government, banking, and business that would give students, workers, and consumers the dominant voice. And much of the modern-day church joins in this materialistic fray in the name of social justice and economic equality. Much of the church fails to recognize the mission of the black horse. Much of the church labors for an earthly kingdom and fails to recognize her antithetical calling to live in the expectation of the Lord from heaven.

Meanwhile, we certainly do not make light of the financial struggles that many endure. Many of God’s people too experience the stress, the frustration, the trauma due to the lingering effects of recession. But as God’s people, in the light of Scripture, we see and expe-

rience the goodness and faithfulness of our God even in the midst of these difficult times. We are assured of Father’s care. What a blessing is prayer—that we may cast also these cares upon the Lord! And in these times the communion of the saints becomes especially meaningful as we strive to bear one another’s burdens. Above all, we need the Word, and the pure preaching thereof, which direct our faith away from the earthly toward the heavenly inheritance that is ours in Christ. We need the Word, which assures us that the running of the black horse through the earth means that the time shortly comes when our Lord returns.

At the same time, we know that ultimately also this

horseman shall cease to ride, and the universal peace and prosperity of the antichristian kingdom will come. That’s the future! To all the problems that contribute to the social and economic contrast, the antichristian kingdom will appear to have the answer. The economic chaos of the world will be solved as that one centralized power will be in a position to distribute energy resources, food, and wealth equitably among all peoples. But, of course, to have a share in that redistribution of wealth one will have to carry the mark of the beast. One will need this mark in order to live in that kingdom. It will be needed to buy groceries, to transact business,

to ply one’s trade, to own a car or house, to travel the highways, to enter a hospital. There will be no compromise on this matter. By grace, the child of God will rather lose all his earthly goods and go hungry than be a traitor to his Lord!

But for us there is comfort! Never forget: Christ reigns! He opens the seals of the book of God’s counsel. The Antichrist has power given him for just a little while. His days are numbered and shortened for the elect’s sake. At the present time the black horse is still running. He that is wise redeems the time, and sees the running of the black horse as a sign of the return of our Lord. May the Lord grant unto us that we be faithful, if need be, unto death! ☺

We can distinguish many factors that are involved in our present economic turmoil, but ultimately it is the result of the running of the black horse.

The 60th Anniversary of the “Declaration of Principles”: A Commemoration* (concl.)

Reflections on Its Significance—60 Years Later

The significance of the Declaration of Principles of the Protestant Reformed Churches [concerning the Covenant of Grace] is great—greater even than its author and defenders in the early 1950s could have imagined. The full significance of the Declaration becomes apparent only today in light of the astounding doctrinal developments in almost all the conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches in North America.

At the Time

Obviously, the significance of the Declaration is that it settled the controversy over the covenant in the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). That controversy—deliberately begun, I repeat, by those who intended to introduce the conditional covenant into the PRC—was dividing, and thus destroying, the denomination.

It is not true that the Declaration *caused* the schism in the PRC. Already before the Declaration was decisively adopted, a Protestant Reformed consistory in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada (zealous for the conditional covenant) disciplined a Protestant Reformed minister for preaching the unconditional covenant. The Declaration rather brought the existing, deep doctrinal division in the denomination to light, and settled the conflict.

In adopting the Declaration, the synod of 1951 did

what synods are required to do: settle doctrinal disputes, clearly and decisively, that is, without hedging, compromising, or obfuscating. Thus, the adoption of the Declaration restored peace to the churches.

The effect of the adoption of the Declaration was that those contending for a conditional covenant (and they *were* contending for it) left the denomination, in 1953. At once, they declared the decision of the synod adopting the Declaration null and void in their fellowship. Within a few years, in 1961, they returned to the Christian Reformed Church, where their covenant theology—and they—were at home.

The remnant again enjoyed unity in a cardinal truth of the Reformed faith, that is, the doctrine of the covenant of sovereign, particular grace.

Regarding its Purpose

Second, the Declaration functions in the PRC according to its original purpose. This purpose, the preamble of the document states, is that the Declaration “be used only by the Mission Committee and the missionaries for the organization of prospective churches.”¹

The Declaration is not the *basis* of the organization of new churches. The Reformed creeds are the basis. The Declaration is a necessary instrument to prepare groups for organization and to determine whether a group may be organized as a congregation in the denomination. Groups with whom the PRC are working in missions must know and be in full agreement with the doctrine of the covenant the principles of which are spelled out in the Declaration. The missionary must

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** Fourth installment of the text of the address given at the annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA) on September 22, 2011 at Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, MI.*

¹ Declaration of Principles, in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 412.

instruct the group in this truth, using the Declaration. He may not merely wave the Declaration before the group a few days before organization.

At the synod of 1953, which treated protests against the Declaration, Herman Hoeksema said this about the necessity of the Declaration in missions: “[The Declaration] was absolutely necessary in order to prevent the Liberated from streaming into our communion of Churches and corrupting it with their doctrinal errors regarding the PROMISE and the COVENANT and related matters.”²

Implied in that original purpose is that the Declaration be used in all our *ecumenical* work, in all *contact* with other churches. Ecumenicity aims at relationships, culminating in that of sister churches. In relationships, each ecclesiastical body influences the other, ultimately by the opening of pulpits to the ministers of the other body and by the opening of the table to the members of the other body. Adoption of the Declaration to prevent the influx of members maintaining a conditional covenant and, thus, the introduction of the doctrine of a conditional covenant into the PRC implies that the PRC may establish no ecumenical relationship apart from knowledgeable, genuine oneness in the doctrine of the covenant outlined in the Declaration.

Binding in the PRC

Third, the Declaration is binding upon all members of the PRC. The Declaration is a synodical decision, indeed, an especially important synodical decision, as both the history of its adoption and the contents of the decision demonstrate. Synodical decisions in a Reformed denomination of churches are “settled and binding,” according to Article 31 of the Church Order of Dordt.

No member of the PRC may challenge, or even question, the principles of the covenant affirmed by the Declaration, that is, apart from an overture to synod. No one may plead for reconsideration of the issue, unconditional versus conditional covenant. To do so would be schismatic.

Witness

Fourth, even though it is no creed, the Declaration

² *Acts of Synod...1953*, 264.

can serve, and ought to serve, as an important witness to the belief of the PRC concerning the creedal doctrine of the covenant of grace.

Contending for the decisive adoption of the Declaration at the synod of 1951, Hoeksema wrote: “We must clearly express what according to the conviction of the PRC is the plain teaching of the Confessions [concerning the covenant]...in distinction from the Liberated view of the covenant and of the promise of God.”³

In View of the Federal Vision

Fifth, the Declaration stands the PRC in good stead today, and is a beacon of light to the Reformed community of churches, with regard to the covenant heresy that calls itself the federal vision.

By its own self-description, the federal vision, which is now troubling virtually all the conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches in North America, is the development of the covenant doctrine of Klaas Schilder, Benne Holwerda, Cornelis Veenhof, and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (“liberated”) (RCNlib). The federal vision is the development of the covenant doctrine that the PRC rejected in the Declaration of Principles in 1951.

The federal vision is the necessary, inevitable, natural development of the doctrine of a conditional covenant into a covenant theology that denies justification by faith alone and, with this cardinal truth of the gospel, all the doctrines of grace that are confessed by the Canons of Dordt. For the doctrine of a conditional covenant is, as Hoeksema charged, Arminianism in the covenant.

At bottom, the doctrine of a conditional covenant is the fundamental false doctrine against which the church has always had to contend, from Jesus’ personal struggle with the Pharisees and Paul’s conflict with the Judaizers to Dordt’s battle against the Remonstrants: in salvation, God depends on the sinner. In the doctrine of a conditional covenant, as fully developed by the federal vision, God depends upon the baptized, infant sinner for covenant salvation.

In the aftermath of the schism of 1953, when not only the schismatics themselves but also the watching Reformed church world cursed the PRC for contend-

³ Herman Hoeksema, “The Proposed Declaration,” the *Standard Bearer* 27, no. 8 (January 15, 1951): 173.

ing uncompromisingly for the unconditional covenant, Hoeksema prophesied that history would justify the PRC regarding their confession of the unconditional covenant and their condemnation of a conditional covenant. By the heresy of the federal vision, God has fulfilled Hoeksema's prophecy, justifying in history the adoption of the Declaration by the PRC.

God has done more. By the adoption of the Declaration, God preserved the PRC in the truth of the gospel of sovereign grace, which Dordt confessed, *as this truth applies to the covenant*. Even more importantly, God preserved His truth in the PRC. He preserved His truth in the PRC so that in the present hour of crisis regarding sovereign grace in the covenant the members of the PRC, believers and their children, would be protected from the soul-destroying heresy of the federal vision. His purpose was also that the PRC witness to the truth of the covenant to the confused, troubled, and erring Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

Warning

The significance of the Declaration is also its warning to the PRC, especially to the officebearers. This is a warning against an unsound zeal for ecumenicity and an unhealthy emphasis on missions. I desire not to be misunderstood; I dislike being misrepresented. The warning is not against *zeal* for ecumenicity or against *emphasis* on missions, but against *unsound* zeal and *unhealthy* emphasis.

The Declaration became necessary because of division and controversy in the PRC over the doctrine of the covenant. The PRC foolishly brought this division and controversy upon themselves.

Upon Herman Hoeksema falls the greatest blame for this foolishness. Under Hoeksema's leadership, the PRC opened themselves up to Schilder's and the "liberated" Churches' doctrine of the covenant.

The synod of the PRC invited Schilder to speak at officebearers' conferences and to preach throughout the denomination.

In the *Standard Bearer*, Hoeksema declared to all the readership, that is, to virtually the entire membership of the PRC, *after conferences on the doctrine of the covenant*, that Schilder and the PRC were one in the fundamentals of the Reformed faith, and disagreed

only in incidentals: "We agreed upon fundamentals, and for the rest we agree to differ."⁴ This was false. The difference regarding the covenant was, and is, fundamental. Within a year, it would be the heroic task of Hoeksema to convince the PRC of this fundamental difference.

The equivalent in that day of our Contact Committee sent a letter to the RCNlib in 1948 expressing that both denominations "stand on the foundation of the Three Forms of Unity" and that any doctrinal differences there might be between the two denominations are "no confessional differences." This letter went out over the signatures of Herman Hoeksema, George Ophoff, and John De Jong.⁵ The letter displayed an unseemly eagerness for growth from the "liberated" immigrants in Canada and for ecumenical relations with the RCNlib. The letter was public.

Reading again the *Acts of Synod* and editorials in the *Standard Bearer* of 1947 and 1948 in the knowledge of the history of warfare and schism that would follow, I groaned in spirit, "Hoeksema, what are you saying? what are you doing?"

We brought the schism upon ourselves. What motivated us was personal friendships, desire for growth, zeal for ecumenicity, and emphasis on missions—*unsound* zeal for ecumenicity and *unhealthy* emphasis on missions. Doctrinal differences were minimized, or ignored, or even denied. The zeal and emphasis were not *in* the truth and *on the basis of* the truth.

Ecumenicity and missions may not be pursued at the expense of the truth. Doctrinal differences may not be ignored. All ecumenicity and missions—important callings of the church—must proceed deliberately, cautiously, and surely, on the basis of oneness in the truth.

To describe happenings in the history of the church like that of the schism in the PRC in the late 1940s and early 1950s, theologians use a Latin phrase: "*Dei providentia et hominum confusione*," that is, "the providence of God and the confusion of men."

Among us was confusion; in and over that confusion was the providence of God.


In spite of the confusion of men, God directed the

⁴ Herman Hoeksema, "Our Conference with Dr. Schilder," the *Standard Bearer* 24, no. 5 (December 1, 1947): 103.

⁵ See *Acts of Synod...1948*, 38, 39. The translation of the Dutch is mine.

entire history for good—the good of the PRC, the good of Reformed Christianity, and the good of the preservation and development of His truth and gospel.

Indeed, *by means of* the confusion of men, God

accomplished His glorious end: the confession of sovereign grace in the covenant—in *the Declaration of Principles*. 

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

REV. WILBUR BRUINSMA

The Place of Laity in Missions (8)

Families Moving to a Mission Field

This is the final installment on the subject of individuals or families from established churches moving to a home mission field. We refer the reader, once again, to the past articles written in the *Standard Bearer* on this subject. This present article does not stand on its own. To assure a better understanding of the subject, it is good to know the biblical and historical precedent of the spread of the gospel by means of individuals and families moving to various places in the world.

In the last installment we gave answer to a number of objections raised against the idea of moving to a mission field. In this present article we address a number of benefits. What a blessing families from established churches can be to a home mission work (or to a smaller, isolated congregation)! Then too, what a blessing a mission work can be for a family or individual who moves to live there among these new believers! There are mutual advantages that benefit all involved.

There should be no confusion about the purpose for an individual or family moving to a mission field. That purpose is *not* to do mission work! If the calling church in conjunction with the Domestic Mission Committee decides to send someone to assist in the practical labors of a mission, the selection of who will be sent is strictly

theirs to make. When an individual or family decides to move to a mission field, it must not be with the intent to become a “quasi-missionary,” who will assist the missionary in his labors. The individual saint or the family that desires to come ought not to think that they need take special classes in order to be a better witness or to be able to show their knowledge in the Scriptures, or such like. The purpose of a family moving to a mission field is simply to live there and become an active, living part of the group just as they did when they were in their church. They move in order to join the rank and file of believers who, in this place, strive to walk as a witness in this world. Just the presence of a spiritually well-grounded family or individual will be of great benefit to the mission labor.

How then can such families or individuals be of benefit? Here are a few benefits.

I. Increase of numbers

Often the first question asked when someone inquires of a missionary how his work is progressing is: How many people do you have there? Numbers. We must learn that numbers do not show the whole picture. But numbers do play a part in the development and ultimately the organization of a mission field. Obviously, there ought to be enough people to have a vibrant congregation when the mission organizes. But there is more involved than just that. For example, most often people who have little background in Scripture, much less the Reformed faith, will decide to visit a church service or attend a Bible study. When they

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Previous article in this series: March 15, 2011, p. 271.

walk in, they are met by a small group of people. The first question is: If this is a legitimate church, then why are there so few people? They may attend a Bible study and see maybe five people there. The first thought is: Why doesn't this study of God's Word attract more people? We may rise up in noble indignation and make the judgment, "Well, these people ought to come for the truth, not the number of people sitting there!" The answer is: That is true, but not many people (whether churching or unchurching) know the truth anymore. Time must be given them to learn the basics and become convicted of the truth. Most of the time, however, a person cannot get beyond that first impression and stick around long enough to hear the truth. Numbers are not essential, of course, but they do help. When families of the established churches become a part of the mission group it increases numbers, which, in turn, helps facilitate the work of the mission.

In that connection, the more families with children, the better the catechism classes, Young People's Society, and, believe it or not, the more quickly the desire for a Christian school will come to fruition. I have found that the desire for such a school is present soon after initial work on a mission field begins. Certainly, a small Christian school can be organized before the institution of a church. But families and children are needed to make this happen—and, it might be added, so are Christian school teachers

2. An example

The second benefit of a family or individual moving to a mission field would be that of their example. Most within the Protestant Reformed Churches have had the benefit of several generations of example. When a young man and woman of our churches start a home and family together, there are many biblically-rooted spiritual habits or customs they take up in their new family. Many families on a mission field do not have the benefit of a godly example left by believing parents and grandparents. They do not understand the simple ABCs of godly living in the home or in the world. Many come from thoroughly wicked backgrounds. An individual or a family or two from our established churches have much to offer simply by way of example. What sort of entertainment do you seek? How do you

conduct yourselves toward one another in the marriage? How do you teach your children to pray? How do you discipline your children? How ought I to conduct myself as a living member of the church of Christ? What ought my attitude be toward my employer? These questions and more are *answered* in the preaching and in Bible study, but they must be *worked out* in life. To this end, the example of saints who have had the benefit of believing generations before them would avail much.

This does not mean that the families or individual saints that move to the mission field need to prepare themselves to teach the saints on a mission field. It just means living there! It means becoming an integral part of the life of the mission: mingling with the saints and establishing friendships. In this way, too, it would help assist the labors being done on a mission field.

3. Stability

When our mission work in Sioux Falls began, it consisted of a majority of families and individuals from the established churches. That was a good thing. In fact, that is what led to its speedy organization as a church. The mission took on a distinctly Protestant Reformed flavor almost immediately. There were men who with some training were ready to take their place as elders and deacons in the church. There was knowledge in the creeds and the Church Order. The saints were grounded in Reformed history and tradition. In short, the presence of families and individuals from the established church contributed to the spiritual stability of the mission work.

The same is true anywhere. This does not mean that the focus of mission work ought to be soliciting members of our churches to move *en masse* to different places in the United States to form a church. We have the calling to preach the gospel to all creatures. The call of the gospel must go out to everyone indiscriminately. It is a tremendous blessing to see new believers come under the truth and in time take their place in the church. This is the focus of mission work. But a family or two or a number of individuals who transplant themselves from an established church can blend together with these new saints to form a vibrant fellowship. The established believers would lend a much needed stability to the group, while new believers would lend the needed

zeal and enthusiasm in the gospel to carry on in the work.

These, then, are the benefits for the work of missions when families and saints move to the mission field. When all of these benefits are added together, there is the overall benefit of organizing sooner. Numbers and stability are factors in organization. The goal the saints long for and work toward on a mission field is to become an instituted church. When this goal is not reached for years, the saints, at times, can become weary and discouraged. Families from the churches would help facilitate a swifter organization. That would be to the benefit of the mission itself and to the denomination in general.

So far we have been considering the benefits that such families and individuals would have for the mission work itself. We need to consider, as well, a couple of benefits such saints would themselves derive from moving to a mission field.

1. A deeper appreciation for the truth

Visitors to the Pittsburgh mission, unless they come with a closed mind and critical attitude, usually find that they leave with a deeper appreciation for what God has given us as churches. This appreciation is not acquired because the saints on a mission field lack an appreciation for the truth. On the contrary, the saints on a mission field are new to those truths and are genuinely excited about them. Not all of them may have as yet a full understanding of those truths, but they hear them and desire them. They are priceless to them. These believers are not in the mission because it is the popular thing to do with friends and family. On the contrary, it is not the popular thing to do! There is no pressure whatsoever put on them from family, friends, or the community at large of which they are a part to cast in their lot with the church. Exactly the opposite is true: they are viewed as being strange and fanatical. The saints on a mission field in general exude a kind of zeal and enthusiasm for the truth that can sometimes be lost in large congregations where a long-time member can simply drift along as one in a whole community of believers.

This is not to say that there is no deep appreciation for the truth within the established churches. We thank

God that among many there is an appreciation for the truth. But that appreciation can be increased, become richer, when one is part of the work of a mission. Whereas one's zeal for the church and its doctrines can wane on the part of many because they are just one among a crowd, being a part of a mission group where every person is a vital part of the work can be of real benefit.


2. A better witness

Have you ever had an opportunity to witness to another person about your faith? No, I do not mean that you argued with someone of a different Reformed church over a detail of doctrine. Have you ever encountered a person who wanted to know what you believed, so that you took time to have a cup of coffee with him in order to talk with him. Let's not use the poor excuse, "I may not have anything to do with a person who does not believe!" That is a cop-out! It ignores the calling of every child of God to be ready to give an answer to those who ask of our hope. It is the calling of every child of God to be a witness. If there is one thing a person confronts on a mission field it is the need to witness.

When living among family and friends who believe the same as we do, we perhaps have little opportunity to witness to others. Perhaps when the opportunity does arise, we cringe and avoid it. The result is that oftentimes we do not get into a good spiritual conversation even with one another. I am not talking about a conversation that centers on the church or on doctrinal battles being fought in the church. I refer to the need to speak about the blessings of salvation we share with each other. When in a mission setting, we learn how to witness about these things to others. Then God uses our godly conversation in such a way that others may be gained to Christ (Heidelberg Catechism, Lords Day 32; Q & A 86). This, in turn, benefits our own spiritual life.

These benefits added together result in the overall benefit of how we view the church. The church does not consist in that congregation or those few congregations with which we are so familiar. The church is much larger and more varied than that with which we are familiar when living in our own little world. Be-

ing a part of the mission work opens our eyes to the beautiful truth that the church is the body of Christ gathered from the whole human race. That is indeed a blessing!

What a wonderful confession is on our lips when we believe there is that universal body of Christ: "I am, and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof" (Heidelberg Catechism; Lords Day 21; Q & A 54). 

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

MR. CAL KALSBECK

Ideas Have Consequences: The Cult of Charles Darwin (3)

"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment."
I Chronicles 12: 32

Charles Darwin's ideas about natural selection as the driving force of evolution *initially* were of little consequence. Yes, the *Origin of Species* did upset many Bible believers, and it did provide unbelievers with a "scientific" alternative to God, but as unbelievers they would have continued in their unbelief even without Darwin's theory.

The real problem with Darwin's theory is that some of his followers took what he wrote seriously. In fact they took *action* based on his flawed theories.

Darwin himself led the way. What was implicit in his famous *Origin of Species* became explicit in the *infamous* book he wrote twelve years later. Charles Darwin was a eugenicist. In *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Darwin made crystal clear that his idea of "survival of the fittest" should be applied to human beings. (Interestingly, Darwin's modern-day disciples seem hesitant to connect their hero to this book.)

Mr. Kalsbeck is a teacher in Covenant Christian High School and a member in Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.

Previous article in this series: June 2011, p. 393.

Modern-day Issachar ought to know about these ideas of Darwin, how they were applied by Darwin and his disciples, the consequences of these ideas in the past and present, and, if left unchecked, where they will lead us in the future.

Darwin: the Eugenicist

The "science" of eugenics is an applied science. It takes some of the ideas of animal breeding and applies them to human beings. The "science" of eugenics seeks to speed up Darwin's theory of natural selection in human populations. Justification for eugenics is logical: given that the survival of the fittest human beings is going to happen anyway, why not speed things up just a bit with human intervention like the animal breeders successfully have done? In 1859 Darwin opened the way to eugenics in *Origin of Species*:

As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive; and as, consequently, there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be *naturally selected*. From the strong principle of inheritance, any selected variety will tend to propagate its new and modified form.¹

¹ Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* (New York: Mentor 1959), 29.

The careful reader will observe, in this quote and throughout the *Origin of Species*, the omission of *human beings* from the discussion. It is likely that this was by design, since Darwin knew that his ideas would be scandalous enough all by themselves without making the application of them to humans. Nevertheless, Darwin conjured up the courage to make the implicit explicit in *The Descent of Man*. There he wrote:

With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health.... We civilized men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment. There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to small-pox. Thus the weak members of civilized societies propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man. It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed, leads to the degeneration of a domestic race; but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed.²

If...various checks... do not prevent the reckless, the vicious and otherwise inferior members of society from increasing at a quicker rate than the better class of men, the nation will retrograde, as has occurred too often in the history of the world. We must remember that progress is no invariable rule.³

The Spread of Darwin's Ideas about Eugenics

These seeds of Darwin would eventually grow and reap a bitter harvest. By 1917 Darwin's eugenics was fast making its way into the public schools. One high school textbook in use at that time presents a case for the practice of eugenics. The reasoning is summarized as follows:

² Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, with an introduction by John Tyler Bonner and Robert M. May (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), Part I, Chapter Five, 168.

³ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, Part I, Chapter Five, 177.

1. Improvement of Man—If the stock of domesticated animals can be improved, couldn't the same be done for future generations of humans?

2. Eugenics—When people marry, society should make certain demands to prevent the passing of diseases, feeble-mindedness, and handicaps to their posterity. (Just to emphasize the point, a case study of a family named the Jukes was presented. Of their 480 descendants, 33 were sexually immoral, 24 were drunkards, 3 were epileptics, and 143 were feeble-minded.)

3. Parasitism and Its Cost to Society—Families like the Jukes do harm to others in society by stealing, spreading disease, and corrupting its members. At the same time they are a drain on society's resources because they are protected and cared for by the state. They take from society and give nothing in return; in other words they are parasites.

4. "The Remedy—If such people were lower animals, we would probably kill them off to prevent them from spreading. Humanity will not allow this, but we do have the remedy of separating the sexes in asylums or other places and in various ways preventing intermarriage and the possibilities of perpetuating such a low and degenerate race. Remedies of this sort have been tried successfully in Europe and are now meeting with success in this country."⁴

The "this country" referred to in the text is the United States, and, interestingly, this textbook was the one at issue in the Scopes trial of 1925. Nevertheless, while that textbook and Charles Darwin did not explicitly recommend the direct *extermination* of the inferior, Darwin did predict it:

At some future period, not very distant as measured in centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races. At the same time the anthropomorphous [i.e., most human looking] apes...will no doubt be exterminated. The break will then be rendered wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state, as we may hope, than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as at present between the negro or Australian and the gorilla.⁵

⁴ George William Hunter, *A Civic Biology, Presented in Problems* (New York: American Book Company, 1914), 261

⁵ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, Part I, Chapter Six, 201.

While Darwin's language here is a bit confusing, his rankings are clear: Caucasians are at the top, with the Negro and aboriginal Australian just slightly above the gorilla, and natural selection (with or without the help of man) is in the process of cleansing the world of the undesirables.

Darwin's Eugenics Put into Practice

Charles Darwin's prophecies came true, not "centuries" but mere decades later. And what were scientific prophecies for him became the destinies of others, two others in particular: Adolph Hitler and Margaret Sanger. Both would find aid, comfort, and scientific support for their programs in Darwin's theories of evolution and eugenics.

Richard Weikart sums up the motivation of Hitler's eugenics-in-practice program for Europe as follows:

...Nazi barbarism was motivated by an ethic that prided itself on being scientific. The evolutionary process became the arbiter of all morality. Whatever promoted the evolutionary progress of humanity was deemed good, and whatever hindered biological improvement was considered morally bad. Multitudes must perish in this Malthusian struggle anyway, they reasoned, so why not improve humanity by speeding up the destruction of the disabled and the inferior races? According to this logic, the extermination of individuals and races deemed inferior and "unfit" was not only morally justified, but indeed, morally praiseworthy. Thus Hitler—and many other Germans—perpetuated one of the most evil programs the world has ever witnessed under the delusion that Darwinism could help us discover how to make the world better.⁶

What Hitler accomplished in the name of Darwinian evolution (and its obvious consequence: eugenics) in Europe, Margaret Sanger would accomplish in America. One main difference is in the numbers: Adolph would have his millions, while Margaret would have her tens of millions. Another difference was in the primary method: for Hitler it was gas and for Sanger, pills.

That Sanger's concerns are rooted in Darwin is not

⁶ Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 227.

difficult to demonstrate. She nearly plagiarizes Darwin's *Descent of Man* when she writes in her book, *The Pivot of Civilization*, "Modern studies indicate that insanity, epilepsy, criminality, prostitution, pauperism, and mental defect, are all organically bound up together and that the least intelligent and the thoroughly degenerate classes in every community are the most prolific. Feeble-mindedness in one generation becomes pauperism or insanity in the next."⁷ Sanger's solution? Birth control! Or, in her own words: "...when we realize that each feeble-minded person is a potential source of endless progeny of defect, we prefer the policy of immediate sterilization, of making sure that parenthood is absolutely prohibited to the feeble-minded."⁸

In an interesting, but humorous aside, Sanger waxes eloquent (maybe even prophetic) in her writing about the consequences for a democracy of allowing the undesirables to breed. When "the dead weight of human waste" votes, Sanger complains, "Equality of political power has thus been bestowed upon the lowest elements of our population. We must not be surprised, therefore, at the spectacle of political scandal and graft, of the notorious and universally ridiculed low level of intelligence and flagrant stupidity exhibited by our legislative bodies. *The Congressional Record* mirrors our political imbecility."⁹ One would think that 75 years on Sanger's birth control program would have solved this problem, but alas, it appears to be worse than ever!

All jesting aside, this is serious business! Sanger's Darwinian-eugenics-put-into-practice program has had devastating consequences. Don't forget, Margaret Sanger is the foundress of Planned Parenthood, and Planned Parenthood, in its zeal to do Sanger's bidding, has murdered countless millions of unborn children. No, they don't *call* it eugenics (Hitler and the Nazis made that a dirty word), but eugenics it is. Evidence of this is the work of an organization called Life Dynamics. In their fight to return full legal protection to unborn children, they have conducted an exhaustive study that shows that "An incredibly high number of these facilities [abortion clinics, ck] are located in zip

⁷ Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization* (Lenox, MA: Hard Press, 2006), Chapter Four, 37.

⁸ Sanger, 44.

⁹ Sanger, Chapter Eight, 71.

codes that are disproportionately black or Hispanic, and I'm not talking about a little bit disproportionate—ten or 15 percent. We found zip codes that were 1,800 percent disproportionate, and a ton of them that were 500 to 600 or 700 percent.”¹⁰ Life Dynamics concludes that the “report undeniably shows that the black and Hispanic communities are targeted by Planned Parenthood.” If their conclusion is true, Planned Parenthood promotes eugenics, but with a different name: “freedom of choice.”

Darwinian Evolution's Legacy: A Culture of Death

Modern-day Issachar is not surprised by developments such as these. Darwin, Hitler, and Sanger are only a few of the pawns in the age-long history of the culture of death initiated by the Devil in the Garden of Eden. Ideas have consequences, and bad ideas have bad consequences.

If these bad ideas are not rejected, they will develop, as sin always does! As the Day of the Lord becomes more and more imminent, so also does the development of our modern world's culture of death—a path that leads to barbarism. A path that begins with abortion to terminate an unwanted pregnancy doesn't stop there. The path moves on to aborting to avoid the need to care for a mentally retarded child; it moves on to aborting

¹⁰ <http://www.onenewsnow.com/Printer.aspx?id=1435298>

the child because she is a girl; it moves on to aborting to avoid certain genetic imperfections, and on, and on.... And is there really a difference between killing a child one week before birth and killing him one week after? Or maybe 28 days after birth (as Princeton's ethicist, Peter Singer, would have it)? Or...?

And what about the other end of life? If open season on the young is okay, what about the aged and infirm? Certainly the aged have little to offer society. In fact, Darwin (and his disciples) would conclude that they are “parasites.” And why would not today's children consent to such a thing? After all, their parents cared so little for them when they were young that they cast them into the daycare center when they were six weeks old, doped them with video games, and mesmerized them with television so the parents wouldn't be bothered. Why not reciprocate when the parents become old and bothersome? The Lord said it would happen: “...and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death” (Mark 13: 12).

And what about the Christians? Are the altars of the culture of death ever satisfied? Reread Matthew 24:9-22.

Darwinian evolution requires death! Thus death becomes the necessary method for cleansing society of its undesirables.

This is the culture-of-death-legacy of Charles Darwin. But it gets worse!

... to be continued. 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

Young People's Activities

Sunday afternoon, November 27, the young people from our Michigan churches met at the Grandville, MI PRC for their annual Thanksgiving Mass Meeting. This year's featured speaker was Prof. D. Engelsma,

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

who spoke on “Thanksgiving for the Church,” based on Psalm 48. We thank Prof. Engelsma for providing the “Church News” with the following explanation of how he came to choose that particular subject to speak on. “I informed the young people that I decided on my topic a few weeks earlier in the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. After a bright German young man informed my wife and me of all the significance of the Castle

Church—on its doors Luther once nailed the 95 theses, in the church is Luther's tomb, Luther often preached in the church, and more, I asked him whether he himself believed the truth of the gospel that Luther taught and that of the Reformation, which began at the Castle Church, restored to the people of God. His answer was, ‘I believe in God and I believe in Jesus, but I do not believe the church.’ What he meant was that he never attended

church, did not belong to a church, and had no use for the church. He informed me that most of the young people in Germany today would not even acknowledge faith in God, and that of the few who would, most do not believe the church, that is, are not members of a church. Then and there I decided what my speech to the PR young people a few weeks later (which I had already agreed to give) would be. I urgently impressed upon what seemed to be an attentive audience, the beauty, strength, and worth of the church institute, the marks of a true church; the calling of the present generation (including me) to speak of these things to the generation following (the young people—see Psalm 48:13); the reasons for thankfulness for the church and membership in her; and the ways in which they must show their thankfulness to God for the churches in which these young people have membership.”

Evangelism Activities

We include here the last of our churches’ Reformation Day lectures held in October and November.

The Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC sponsored their annual Fall Lecture on November 4. Prof. R. Dykstra spoke regarding, “Restoring the Bible to the Believer.”

The Library Committee of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada hosted a Reformation Day video lecture on October 31 on “The History of the KJV—‘Ere Many Years, the Boy that Driveth the Plow,” by Prof. R. Cammenga, with proceeds from a book sale held the same night going to the library.

Prof. B. Gritters was the guest

speaker at a Reformation Lecture held on November 4 at the Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA. Prof. Gritters spoke on “Music’s Indispensable Place in (the) Reformation.”

The Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL invited Prof. D. Engelsma to speak at their Reformation Lecture held at Bethel on Friday, November 4. Prof. Engelsma spoke on the subject, “The Significance of Calvin’s *Institutes* for Today.”

Congregation Activities

Rev. D. Lee, pastor at Bethel PRC, is planning, D.V., to give five lectures this year on Calvin’s *Institutes*. Rev. Lee writes that, as of early December, he has not yet figured out exactly when to schedule them, but it is likely that there will be one lecture giving an introduction, and then one lecture on each of the four books of the *Institutes*, making it a total of five lectures, January through May.

The Covenant Ladies’ Circle of First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada invited all the ladies and their daughters (10 years and older) to their annual Christmas Cookie Exchange on December 1. Ladies, along with their daughters, were asked to bring three dozen cookies/bars to exchange for a variety of cookies/bars.

The Choral Society of the Hull, IA PRC hosted a Thanksgiving Sing-spuration in their church on Sunday evening, November 27, following their evening worship service.

The Choir of the Hudsonville, MI PRC presented their annual Thanksgiving/Christmas program on Sunday evening, December 4. What a wonderful way to end the Lord’s Day, with the words of Psalm 100:1, 2: “Come before his presence with singing.”

The Activities Committee for the

Young People’s Society of Calvary PRC in Hull, IA planned a young people’s/grandparents’ game night for Monday evening, December 5, at Trinity High School. Invitations were extended to grandparents; and any of the young people who did not have grandparents to invite were encouraged to “adopt” some for the night.

Sister-Church Activities

A recent bulletin from the Hope PRC in Walker, MI contained a brief note from Prof. and Mrs. H. Hanko from Singapore and the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church: “I spoke for the congregation this past Wednesday (Nov. 23) on the catholicity of the church and sister-church relations. It reminded us again of the fact that the great truth of our confession—one, holy, catholic church—is a reality and a blessing of God that gives us great joy. We bask in the kindness and hospitality of saints from a different race. The weather, as always, is hot, but not so bad as usual. Almost every day dark clouds gather, thunder rumbles, lightning flashes, and heavy monsoon rains fall to cool the air and earth. Next Sunday will be an exciting day for the church here: five young people will make confession of faith in the morning worship service; in the afternoon service a baby will be baptized and two adult converts will also be baptized....”

Minister Activities

The Edgerton, MN PRC has extended a call to Rev. G. Eriks to serve as their next pastor. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Classis

■ Classis West of the PRC will convene on Wednesday, March 7, 2012, 8:30 A.M., at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, CA. All material for the agenda of this meeting must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than Monday, February 6. Delegates should be aware that an officebearers' conference on the subject "Herman Bavinck: The Theologian" is being planned for Tuesday, March 6. All delegates must inform Hope's Clerk, Mr. Peter Smit, of the details of their travel arrangements and lodging needs. Mr. Smit can be contacted at (909) 797-7933, or clerk@hopeprc.org.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,
Stated Clerk

Lectures

■ The Evangelism Committee of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church will be hosting a conference entitled, "The Answer in an Age of Uncertainty" on January 27, at 7 P.M., in the church. Join us as Rev. Eriks and Rev. Lanning address tolerance and postmodern tendencies at college and in the Emergent Church Movement. Hope to see you there!

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Southwest PRC express heartfelt sympathy to their missionary family in Pittsburgh (Rev. and Mrs. Bruinsma and daughter Lydia), and to fellow officebearer Trevor Kalsbeek, in the loss of Rev. Bruinsma's mother, and Trevor's grandmother,

DOROTHY BRUINSMA,

who was graciously delivered from this vale of tears on Friday, November 25. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19). May that be the source of comfort, and peace, and hope for the bereaved family.

Rev. Arie denHartog, President
Gary Boverhof, Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ With humble thanks to our heavenly Father our parents, **DENNIS and BETH VAN UFFELEN**, celebrated their 40th anniversary on December 22, 2011.

We, as their children, are thankful for their godly example as they raised us to fear His Name. We pray for God's continued blessing on their beautiful marriage so that they may continue to walk and work together in service of their Lord. Psalm 119:2: "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart."

- * Dan & Dawn Howerzyl
Bethanne, David, Julia, Kayla
- * Scott & Heidi Van Uffelen
Alex, Arianne, Lydia, Katelyn,
Natalie, Joseph
- * Kyle & Melissa Ten Broeke
Jessica, Owen, Ethan
Oak Glen, California

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Doon PRC express their Christian sympathy to Robert and Geraldine Blankespoor and Tim Blankespoor in the death of their mother and grandmother,

DENA BLANKESPOOR.

"I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

Rev. David Overway, Pres
Alan Van Bommel, Clerk

**Visit the new
RFPA website
www.rfpa.org
and listen to
audio sermons
from the archives of
the PRCA**

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Peace Protestant Reformed Church mourn the loss of member

MRS. DOROTHY BRUINSMA,

who went to be with her Lord on November 25, 2011. We express our Christian sympathy to Mr. Wilbur Bruinsma, Keith and Wanda Bruinsma, Brian and Stacy Bruinsma, Greg and Elizabeth Bruinsma, Michael and Janelle De Jong, Calvin Bruinsma, Micah Bruinsma, Alex and Cyndi Kalsbeek, Kenton and Lisa Kalsbeek, and their children in the death of their dear wife, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. May our covenant God comfort them by His Word and Spirit.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

Rev. Clayton Spronk, President
William J. De Jong, Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour December 2011

Date	Topic	Text
January 1	"Be Strong As You Face the Future"	Joshua 1:5-9
January 8	"God Chastens an Unfaithful Family"	Ruth 1:1-6
January 15	"The Conversion of Ruth"	Ruth 1:7-18
January 22	"The Homecoming of Naomi"	Ruth 1:19-22
January 29	"The First Meeting of Boaz and Ruth"	Ruth 1:1-17