



RFPA UPDATE

"Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following" – Psalm 48:13

Issue #18

Winter 2010

FRANCE AND OTHER ADVENTURES: WHO IS ANNEMIE? BY PAULA AND RACHEL KAMPS

We had always dreamed of traveling to Europe. We dreamed, knowing that our dream would likely not be realized. But in April, our sister Anna Mae found a deal we couldn't refuse—cheap airline tickets to Zurich, Switzerland, and after consulting with Dad, Mom, and ourselves, we all readily agreed she should snag them. After all, we had several good reasons to go. First of all, it was Calvin's 500th birthday and Geneva wasn't far from Zurich. Secondly, the opportunity to see beautiful Switzerland was hard to pass up. Thirdly, we could meet Annemie Godbehere, a certain faithful Book Club member and *Standard Bearer* subscriber in France with whom Paula (who works at the RFPA) had been corresponding.

So half a year later on September 21, 2009, the five of us were headed to Zurich to see the reformation sights and visit Annemie in southwest France. Arriving in Zurich, we slowly made our way across Switzerland to Geneva. The best word to describe much of Switzerland is "surreal"—it was dream-like; we couldn't believe what we were seeing. Switzerland was full of picturesque farms, beautiful pastures, milk cows, and the accompanying symphony of their bells. All this was enveloped in the beautiful setting of continuous rolling hills and mountains.

We would all agree that one of our favorite sites was St. Pierre's Cathedral in Geneva, more commonly known as John Calvin's church. If a cathedral can feel "warm," that one did. There was not an altar, but rather a pulpit. From this pulpit the Reformation went forth in triumph. There were no idolatrous images or paintings, no receptacles brimming with "holy water," no candles or prayer rooms.

On Saturday evening we heard



Rachel, Henry, Anna Mae, Linda, and Paula Kamps with Annemie and Robert

an exhilarating organ concert in the church, and Sunday morning we went to the worship service in St. Pierre's. We did not understand a word of it—it was all in French. Yet, it was stirring to hear congregational singing in French (to tunes we recognized!) in Calvin's St. Pierre's just like it must have been at the time of Calvin many years ago. However, we did have an English service later that morning at Calvin's Auditoire.

Another highlight of Geneva was the Reformation Museum, located near St. Pierre's. This museum showcased the Reformation as it played out throughout Europe and featured interesting Reformation artifacts—early copies of the *Institutes*, the Heidelberg Catechism, letters of John Calvin, and various paintings depicting Reformation events and of Calvin and other reformers.

From Geneva we traveled across

the border into France and on to the city of Bergerac, a good eight-hour drive. France is much larger, more rustic, and more laid back than Switzerland. As we traveled, we saw numerous vineyards, quaint villages, and grand chateaux (manor houses or estates). The food was delicious and unique as we had never experienced before. Duck, rabbit, lamb, bread, cheese, pastries, and the list goes on.

Prior to our arrival in Bergerac, Annemie and her husband Robert helped us find a charming countryside gîte (French holiday home) about a mile from their own home. We made this gîte our home for the next several days as we explored the region. A French-style lunch at Robert and Annemie's home was a highlight of our trip to Bergerac. It consisted of five courses, lasted four hours, and was incredibly delicious.

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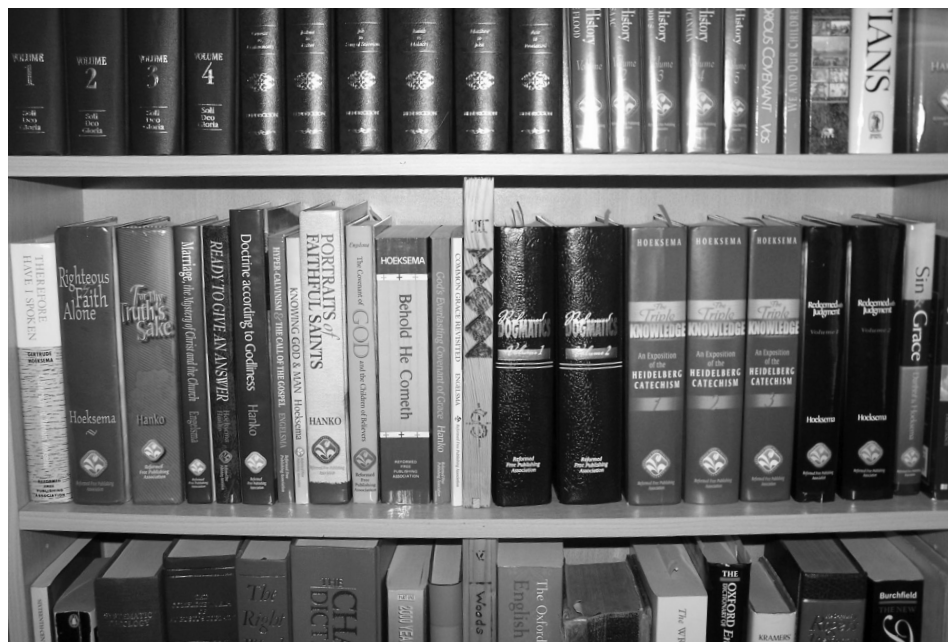
FRANCE AND OTHER ADVENTURES: WHO IS ANNEMIE?

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We had an absolutely wonderful time—*gezellig* (a Dutch word which cannot be translated into English but Annemie told us it comprehends several English words like cozy, warm, home and friendship). Our visit included a tour of their beautiful home and of Annemie's library, where the bookshelves are laden with RFPA publications.

Annemie is of Dutch origin and was brought up a nominal Roman Catholic, and her husband Robert is an Englishman. They used to live in England, but moved to France because the wet weather in England was not good for Robert's health. Annemie came to the conclusion there had to be more to life than just living, and she started to search for the true church. She was introduced to the PRC by a man who gave her the book *The Five Points of Calvinism*, and she told us that she believes 100 percent the doctrines upheld by the Protestant Reformed Churches and has for ten years now. For her Sunday worship, she meets with a group consisting of herself, a retired Anglican vicar and his wife, and an older Dutch lady. She went to school and earned a PhD in Theology in order to be able to translate Dutch writings into English.

Annemie told us that France is a barren wasteland as far as true Christianity is concerned, and we witnessed this firsthand in our travels through Switzerland and France. John Calvin's church in Geneva and Ulrich Zwingli's church in Zurich are merely beautiful empty shells of what they once were. The living truth of God's word is no



Annemie's library

longer there. Today, these churches are only to attract tourists and are ornamentation for the cities' landscapes. However, they do offer up a silent testimony against those places that have forsaken the truths of the Reformation (Matt. 11:21). We were all deeply impressed by the realization of what we have together in the Protestant Reformed churches. We enjoy a beautiful congregational life together with the saints and fellowship and unity in the truth. May God be gracious to preserve us in the faith.

Before we left Bergerac we had opportunity to visit with Annemie for devotion time around our gîte's kitchen table. She has never known a life of the covenant and wanted to understand more of what it is like and how often

we fellowship with other Protestant Reformed people. We encouraged her, discussing questions about the faith and her own personal struggles as a child of God living in France. We read and discussed II Peter 3 and sang several Psalter numbers together. It was truly a precious time!

We still correspond with Annemie. Her latest email to us came before Christmas, in which she expressed the desire to be with us and to be able to celebrate Christmas with the instituted Church. Annemie also mentioned to us that there is, the Lord willing, a significant possibility of her being at the upcoming BRF Conference. If you would like to meet her, head to Wales this summer. Otherwise, France makes for a wonderful vacation.

FROM OUR READERS...

Yesterday, my seminary mailbox held two welcome surprises: your pamphlet on "The Gift of Assurance" and your book, *The Reformed Faith of John Calvin*. Many thanks for both! Both are important, lucid contributions on subjects in need of discerning, reliable treatment. Your two works are most valuable in that quest. I pray that they get wide attention and are blessings to many.

—a professor at Calvin College

The lovely music books [*Praise His Majesty*] are being used and enjoyed by all of my organ pupils! They are a great beginning for playing for congregational singing—especially when they are at the learning stages! We are having a very enjoyable and enthusiastic time at each lesson. We praise the Lord together as we learn!

—an organ teacher

THE HISTORY OF THE RFPA

1960 TO THE PRESENT: FROM PERIODICALS AND PAMPHLETS TO BOOKS

The work of The Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA) during the 1960s and the succeeding years can be characterized as a period of development. While the main focus of the organization had been on the *Standard Bearer* (SB) and other pamphlets as witnesses to the Reformed faith, the organization's viability as a publishing association needed attention.

In 1960, a decision to publish a 32-page booklet of Herman Hoeksema's "Unbiblical Divorce and Remarriage" led to a meeting with the SB editorial staff to develop a reprint (SB articles) pamphlet program to be distributed through the evangelism societies of Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC).

Early in 1963, the Protestant Reformed Men's Society League requested a pamphlet to be published on a speech by Homer Hoeksema entitled "The Atonement of Christ According to Dortrecht." Over 700 copies were distributed to Christian Reformed ministers attending the CRC Synod later that year. There have been many other RFPA projects involving evangelism efforts and pamphlet publishing, but later in 1964, the board decided to suspend pamphlet publishing because it "conflicted with pamphlet activity in local churches."

The RFPA has been astutely conscious of trends in the church world and has addressed certain situations consistent with a desire to be polemical. In 1974, SB articles by Herman Hanko, Homer Hoeksema, and David

Engelsma criticizing Key 73 (a multi-denominational evangelism effort) were reprinted and distributed. An article was printed in the September 1, 1974 issue of the SB titled "AACCS and The Kingdom" which criticized the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship.

The December 1, 1988 issue, which dealt with Reformed principles regarding the state, was sent to various heads of state in Washington, DC. In the last decade there have been many articles dealing with the doctrines of federal vision. Through the years, the SB has served and continues to serve the purpose of alerting its readers to unbiblical doctrines and trends.

In the midst of all this, the RFPA received communication from the Permanent Committee for the Publishing of Protestant Reformed Literature (PCPPRL), a committee which had been formed primarily to publish Herman Hoeksema's dogmatics amongst other books. In 1963, the PCPPRL requested and was granted a merger with the RFPA in which they would function under their own constitution as a subsidiary of the RFPA. Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics* was published in 1967, and in 1970, the PCPPRL offered its books to the RFPA for sale and distribution. The issue of where to store the books and archived SB's was noticed in RFPA board minutes in 1978. Storage had been in First PRC and various other locations, and in 1984, the PCPPRL requested a distribution

center for their books.

The relationship between the RFPA and the PCPPRL needed development. Communication needed to be improved as indicated by the minutes of the RFPA board secretary in 1989 (Peter Koole), addressing a lapse in reporting by the PCPPRL, stating that "the arm (PCPPRL) should reattach itself to the body (RFPA)." Work on a proper merger was carried on in 1994 and 1995 with a joint special committee bringing a recommendation for the merger to the board.

This merger was approved by the Association at the annual meeting in 1995, and the assets of the PCPPRL (approximately \$170,000 - book inventory) were received by the RFPA. Immediately after the merger, the RFPA board minutes were filled not only with discussions about the SB but also with articles on book projects.

The work of the board had changed at this point, expanding from primarily publishing the *Standard Bearer* to a greater presence in the book publishing arena. Finally, in the words of previous RFPA secretary John Buitter in his annual report of 2008, "As the Board reports on the publication year just completed and looks forward to another year of publication of both the SB magazine and new or reprinted books, we covet your prayers and continued financial support so that in another year we can say, Ebenezer—Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

(to be continued)

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THE STANDARD BEARER—A NEW LOOK

The *Standard Bearer* will soon have a new look. The look may change and has changed several times through the years but the contents still remain faithful to the heritage that began with the October 1924 issue. Gary Gore has provided the most recent design change. He has also been used by the RFPA for book design over the last several years. Judy Doezema, as the typesetter, was left the task of implementing the changes. Let the RFPA know what you think of the new design.

THE RFPA ANNUAL MEETING

The RFPA annual meeting took place on September 24, 2009, at Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan. Forty-eight Association members were present for the voting in of new board members and the review of the financial statements. The 2008-09 combined annual budget for the RFPA (includes both books and the *Standard Bearer*) was \$155,460. Income was higher than expected and expenses were under budget resulting in a net worth of \$1,141,237. Rev. Garry Eriks addressed the members on "Read Any Good Books? Reformed Books in the Reformed Home." A transcript of this speech has been included in the January 1 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.



The RFPA board members (left to right): Mike Lotterman, Henry Kamps, Trevor Kalsbeek, Tom Bodbyl, Dewey Engelsma, Gary Nienhuis, Gord Schipper, Dave Hanko, Ed Hoekstra, Titus Kamps, Cal Dykstra. Absent: Ryan Brunsting.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE RFPA

- There are 1,177 RFPA Book Club members.
- Over 2,330 *Standard Bearers* are distributed each issue including 285 copies that are sent to Canadian and foreign readers.
- There are currently over 70,000 books in our warehouse.
- The top selling books in the last five years are: *When You Pray* (1,941 copies), *The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers* (1,903 copies), *Unfolding Covenant History Volume 5* (1,417 copies), *Prosperous Wicked and Plagued Saints* (1,399), *Knowing God and Man* (1,355), and *Trinity and Covenant* (1,352 copies).
- The top selling books in the last ten years are: *Suffer Little Children Workbook Grade 2* (3,046 copies), *Suffer Little Children Workbook Grade 3* (3,010 copies), *Doctrine According to Godliness* (2,687 copies), *Particular Grace* (2,104 copies), *Righteous by Faith Alone* (2,002 copies), and *For Thy Truths Sake* (2,100 copies).

CONFERENCES ATTENDED



The Board made a decision not to attend the Christian Retailers Association International Show since the return on investment had significantly diminished. However, in 2008 and 2009, along with Trinity Protestant Reformed Church, the RFPA staffed a table at the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology which is held locally at First Byron Center Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan. Attendance at this conference has proven effective in exposing our books and *Standard Bearer* to new readers.

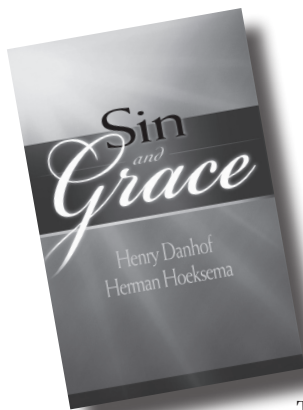
The RFPA was also represented at the Protestant Reformed Seminary sponsored conference celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin in September. Twenty people joined the Book Club and several books in the John Calvin/Protestant Reformation theme were sold.



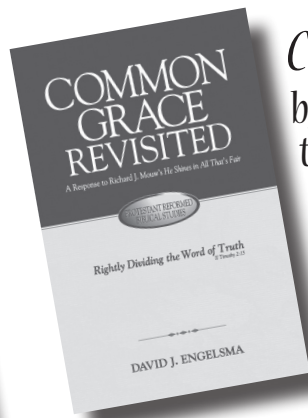
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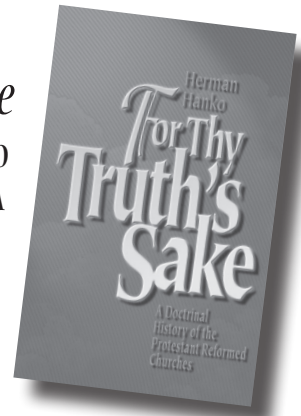


Sin and Grace
by Henry Danhof and Herman Hoeksema
a look back to 1923



Common Grace Revisited
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For Thy Truth's Sake
by Herman Hanko
the doctrinal history of the PRCA



The RFPA Book Club discount does not apply. Book Club members will not be charged shipping costs.



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BOOK REVIEW

The Reformed Faith of John Calvin: The Institutes in Summary by David J. Engelsma

“For those who desire to become better acquainted with Calvin’s *magnum opus*, but who are intimidated by its detail and length, this comprehensive, one-volume summary of Calvin’s *Institutes* is a great introduction. Again, Calvin is allowed to “speak for himself” through ample quotes from his work.

But at the same time, Prof. Engelsma explains and gives contemporary comment to Calvin’s teachings, even at times critically. As he takes us through the four main “books” (or sections) of Calvin’s *Institutes*, we gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for the Reformed faith that God led Calvin to rediscover and develop from the Word of God.

We stand amazed at the breadth of Calvin’s knowledge and grasp of biblical truth. We marvel at

the wonderful way in which he communicated and defended the “faith once delivered to the saints.” But we also see his grace-driven humility and godliness, as he sought to understand and live his faith to the glory of God.”

—Chuck Terpstra in the December 15, 2009 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

The book also includes a sketch of Calvin’s life and work, and four chapters on special aspects of Calvin’s *Institutes* (their nature, history of their publishing, their style and structure, and the prefatory address).

We heartily recommend this wonderful volume to our readers. To order a copy of this book, call 616.457.5970, email paula@rfpa.org, or visit www.rfpa.org.

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