



RFPA UPDATE

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

Issue #20

Winter 2011

ON WRITING AND PURPOSE: AN INTERVIEW WITH HERMAN HANKO

Meet Professor Herman Hanko. His love and concern for the church of Christ knows no measure. He preaches with a wisdom and intensity that no preacher can have without living 80 years and experiencing wars, church controversies and divisions, pop culture, political uprisings, world travel, mission work, teaching Bible lessons to young catechumens, instructing seminary students, giving speeches, and spending hours researching, studying, and writing. His intensity and wisdom come out in a gentle scowl and a firm but comforting thump of the pulpit as he preaches to congregations of people who increasingly feel the pressures of a depraved world.

As voracious a writer as he is preacher, Hanko has authored and co-authored nine RFPA books, written countless articles for the *Standard Bearer* magazine, and penned numerous pamphlets pertaining to Christian life.

Hanko has served the church of Christ for fifty-five years, laboring ten years in the pastoral ministry and another thirty-five years as professor of New Testament and church history at the Protestant Reformed Theological School in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He continues to serve the church even in his retirement,

preaching and lecturing both in the United States and abroad. Hanko earned an AB degree from Calvin College, a ThM from Calvin Seminary, and an MDiv from the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Hanko graciously consented to a brief interview concerning his writing life and the purpose behind it all.

RFPA: What is the writing process like for you? Do you enjoy the research, the outlining, the writing, or the revising the most?

Hanko: I like the actual writing the best. But to write well requires blood, sweat and tears—to use a version of Churchill's call to the British when they were attacked by the Nazi powers. I have what I suppose would amount to another three or four books tucked away in my files somewhere or stored on my computer with, I hope, a backup, that will never see the light of day. But I surely had a good time writing them.

RFPA: Can you describe your ideal writing environment?

Hanko: When one has raised a relatively large family, one learns to work under any conditions and anywhere a typewriter or



Professor Herman Hanko

computer can be set up. One of my books was written in its original draft in a B & B in Northern Wales. Another is composed of SB articles that were written at some very unusual times and under some very strange circumstances. Another of my books was written in South Wales in the small confines of a kitchen in a small B & B. Another was extensively revised in Singapore, one of the noisiest cities I have ever been in.

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Presenting...



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RFPA GIFT REGISTRY: REFORMED BOOKS FOR BELIEVING HOUSEHOLDS

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For more information, visit www.rfpa.org/catalog/gifts.php, email bethany@rpfa.org, or call (616)457-5970.

ON WRITING AND PURPOSE: AN INTERVIEW WITH HERMAN HANKO

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RFFPA: How do you choose topics for your books?

Hanko: The books I have written are based on my own work, primarily as a professor in our Seminary, although in some cases they are based on classes I taught.

RFFPA: How do you seek to make your books distinctive?

Hanko: There is a great deal of “foam” in the book market: silly, superficial, worthless, and religiously insipid. Solid, Biblical and doctrinal literature is needed for those who still like what Paul calls “strong meat” in distinction from “milk”. They are the core of the church of Christ.

RFFPA: Why do you write for the RFFPA?

Hanko: The market reached by the RFFPA is exactly the market in which I desire to sell my books. They also do an excellent job of producing very attractive and worthwhile books. We live in an age when in the religious book market Solomon’s words have been shown to be true: “Of the writing of many books there is no end.”

The RFFPA provides, so far as I know, the only consistently Reformed and Biblical books one finds on the market. Increasingly, those people who still want to be Reformed and who enjoy solid biblical material are turning to the RFFPA for books. We ought to be thankful that the Lord provides us with this opportunity

to be a consistently Reformed voice in today’s church world.

RFFPA: Why do authors such as yourself write these books?

Hanko: It is the calling of ministers of the gospel to instruct in the truth of the Scriptures. If one can, one carries out that calling through preaching, teaching, and writing. I enjoy all three and occupy myself in all three as much as possible. We are also called to spread the truth far and wide; books are able to do that. Therefore, I write out of faithfulness to our calling, arising out of a deep sense of the blessedness and glory of God’s truth.

RFFPA: Which of your RFFPA projects is dearest to you and why?

Hanko: I really do not have a work that I consider to be especially dear. I rarely, if ever, read my own writing after it is published, wherever it may appear. I find too many things I wish I had said differently or explained more fully. I guess I enjoyed them all, but because exegesis is my first love, I guess I would have to say that commentaries are the most enjoyable. But, having said that, history, especially of the church, attracts me like a magnet attracts a nail, and so writing history is a fascinating occupation.

RFFPA: Tell us about your upcoming book, *Justified unto Liberty: Commentary on Galatians* (available Spring 2011).

Hanko: I was attracted to the epistle to the Galatians in my years in seminary, and my attraction to this epistle continued into my ministry and remains still today. This epistle’s main themes—an unconditional covenant, the purpose of the law, and liberty in Christ—powerfully and unforgettably refute the error of justification by works, an error widely promoted throughout history and still today by leaders in Reformed and Presbyterian circles. Being schooled in the work of the ministry during the time when these matters were towering issues [schism of 1953 in the Protestant Reformed Churches] left an indelible impression on me. The power of the epistle of Paul to the Galatians has never left me.

RFFPA: Do you have plans for future book projects?

Hanko: Yes, I have plans for future books, but at my age I do not think these will ever be finished—or, perhaps, even started. I do have my daughter doing some preliminary work on two of them. But if my work should be brought to an end tomorrow, no harm will have been done.

The Lord, in the great work of the gathering of the church, has no need at all for any of us; he can do it all himself if he so chooses. It is a privilege of grace to be used by him. “Weakest means fulfill his will. . . .”

RFFPA UPDATE

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JENISON MI 49428-7137

WEBSITE:

WWW.RFFPA.ORG

E-MAIL:

MAIL@RFFPA.ORG

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Thank you

FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

The RFPA thanks its many constituents for their support over the past year. We praise God for his continued provision and guidance, looking forward to what he has in store for the RFPA in the coming years. The RFPA has been richly blessed, and we ask for your continued financial and prayerful support as the urgent work of proclaiming the Reformed truth is carried out. If you wish to make a tax-deductible donation to the RFPA for the cause of book publishing, the *Standard Bearer* publication, or other functions of the RFPA, please contact the RFPA office at (616)457-5970.

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Sixty members of the Association and numerous others gathered on September 23, 2010 for the Reformed Free Publishing Association annual meeting.

Professor Herman Hanko, emeritus professor of the Protestant Reformed Seminary and author of several RFPA publications, spoke on his upcoming book, *Justified unto Liberty: Commentary on Galatians* (available Spring 2011).

He explained that this book came about due to his love for the book of Galatians, his understanding of Martin Luther's attraction to Galatians, the relevance of Galatians to the controversy in 1953 over a conditional covenant, and the current controversy over the federal vision teaching of justification by faith and works.

Following Hanko's address, the business meeting was held, beginning with the voting in of new Board members. Dan DeMeester, Jeff Kalsbeek, Dave Harbach, and Matt VanOverloop were elected by majority vote to 3-year terms on the RFPA Board.

Dewey Engelsma, the secretary of the Board, presented a report of RFPA activity for the previous year. Highlights included work done in the training of new copyeditors and the hiring of Bethany Kingma as an addition to the staff. A brief explanation was offered on enhancements done to the RFPA website as well as current and upcoming book projects.

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RFPA ANNUAL MEETING



Pictured: Dewey Engelsma (secretary), Matt VanOverloop, Dan DeMeester, Gord Schipper (vice-president), Tom Bodbyl, Henry Kamps (president), Ed Hoekstra, Jeff Kalsbeek (treasurer), Titus Kamps, Dave Harbach, and Ryan Brunsting.

Dave Hanko (former treasurer) reviewed the financial details for the fiscal year ending August 2010. Revenue from both the Book and the *Standard Bearer* divisions exceeded expectations. However, both of the divisions showed slight operating losses. These losses had been budgeted for and the actual performance was better than anticipated. The balance sheet reveals a healthy financial organization with a strong cash position, for which the RFPA is deeply grateful.

The strong showing on book sales and *Standard Bearer* subscriptions

was attributed to various promotional activities such as monthly specials, promotional mailings, and flyer distribution.

The 1,180 current RFPA Book Club members explain in large part the volume of book sales as do the 2,350 loyal subscribers of the *Standard Bearer* who enjoy this periodical. The recent trend for improving support and readership has continued into the new fiscal year where the month of December showed the highest volume ever for book sales and the highest number of *Standard Bearer* subscribers since July of 2009.

IN REVIEW: BOUND TO JOIN

A Review of *Bound to Join: Letters on Church Membership*

David J. Engelsma

Reformed Free Publishing Association

Jenison, MI, 2010

Hardback, 167 pp.

Reviewed by Rev. Martyn McGeown

The occasion for this book is the lamentable situation of many Christians who are either without any church or are members of departing or apostate churches. They try to replace church membership with books, CDs and on-line sermons. They fear for their children. What should they do? Engelsma addresses these questions biblically, practically and pastorally.

Widespread confusion plagues the church world on this issue. Some believe that the church is not necessary. All they need is a Bible, a concordance and perhaps a computer. Others do see value in church membership but are fooled by the many bodies masquerading as churches.

What should we look for in a church? Look for the preaching of sound doctrine, the right administration of the

two sacraments and faithful Christian discipline. There, even when there is much weakness in many other areas, is the true church. And there, urges Engelsma, you and your children must be.

Engelsma's thesis is as clear as it is controversial. The calling of all Christians is to become and remain members of sound, Reformed churches whatever the cost. That's Belgic Confession, Article 28!

Christ Himself calls us to forsake all things to follow Him, and following Him means joining His church as she manifests herself in instituted congregations. Christ Himself calls us to witness against the apostasy of the false church by leaving that corrupt body where His name is dishonoured.

Protest ecclesiastically, but when all protest falls on deaf ears, lingering in the false church to change it from the inside

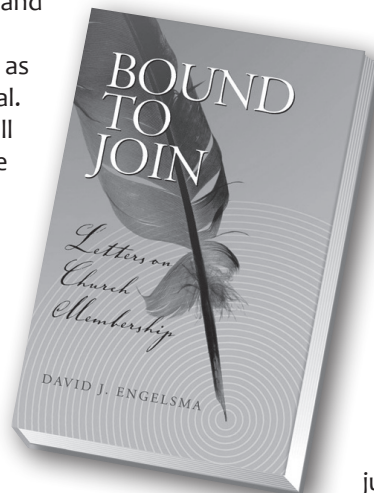
is spiritually folly and disobedience to Christ.

In the preface, Engelsma calls his instruction "strong medicine for serious

ecclesiastical maladies." The applications are pointed and searching, but behind the deep, rich doctrine of ecclesiology. But this is not ecclesiology for ecclesiology's sake. This is ecclesiology in the service of the church, of church membership.

Many will stumble just there. Many applaud church membership while living separated from the church institute. Engelsma shows convincingly that that is not an option.

*Rev. Martyn McGeown is the missionary to the Limerick Reformed Fellowship in the Republic of Ireland.



[CHECK OUT WWW.RFPA.ORG](http://WWW.RFPA.ORG)

LARGEST ORDER IN THE HISTORY OF THE RFPA

In mid-September, nearly 700 RFPA books made their way across the Atlantic Ocean to supply readers in Europe with solid Reformed literature. Rev. Angus Stewart, the pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, placed the order to supplement the existing book supply in the bookstore maintained by the church.

The Covenant PRC Bookstore is the main distributor for the RFPA throughout the British Isles and Europe. Visit their website at www.cprf.co.uk/bookstore.htm.

Stewart's order is by far the largest order in the history of the RFPA, totaling over \$6,000 in book sales. While this marks an exciting milestone for the RFPA, the spread of the truth of God's word knows no price. May those who read these books be blessed by the truth found in them.



An order of nearly 700 books makes a very welcome mess in the packing room at the RFPA.

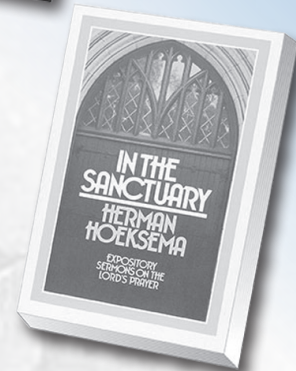
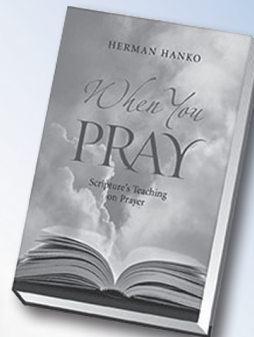
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When You Pray
by Herman Hanko

In the Sanctuary
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Non-club members will be charged an additional \$3.00 for shipping.



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I would like to purchase _____ sets of *When You Pray* and *In the Sanctuary* for \$12.00 plus tax (\$25.95 retail value).
Michigan residents add 6% sales tax.

rfpa.org

A WORD FROM OUR READERS

I have a copy of *Doctrine according to Godliness*. I love it. Every portion of doctrine explained, short and to the point while being very accurate. It is a useful tool to give to new or interested newcomers to the reformed church as well as young children to have as something to refer to as they grow up. I will read it often and will read it to my children when they are old enough.

-a reader from Iowa, United States

Good job making the Heritage Recordings sermons downloadable to iPods. The sound quality is great. Just another great way to distribute and reach those looking for true preaching. Technology is a wonderful thing.

-a reader from Michigan, United States

What a wonderful book [*Doctrine according to Godliness*! Anybody who really would like to worship and live in obedience to our Creator, have to read it... Not to "earn" salvation, of course, but out of thankfulness for His saving grace.

This book is even easy to read for people whose home language is not English. It contains short pieces, straight to the point... and so true and inspirational.

-a reader from Namibia, Africa

About a year ago, I began a one-year subscription to *Standard Bearer*, a subscription that must be nearly expired. I love this publication and want the *Standard Bearer* to continue gracing my PO Box uninterrupted.

Thank you for a conservative, biblical publication that causes me to think about my faith, its doctrines and distinctives! Blessing to all associated with the *Standard Bearer*!

-a reader from Maine, United States

I really appreciate the new book, *Peace for the Troubled Heart*. It is written from a very good perspective. But it's those deeply theological books that I love. When are you going to come out with another like *Behold! He Cometh*?

-a reader from Texas, United States

The RFPA and the Protestant Reformed Churches have done so much for me over the past 30 years. I have been an avid reader of the *Standard Bearer* for years and the best surprise of all is when a new Book Club book arrives in my mailbox. I have been a pastor for many years and I could not have continued in my office without the guidance of such authors as Mr. Hoeksema and Mr. Hanko and others.

-a reader from Florida, United States

The true church always documents for the next generation. There is no contradiction in the books that line these shelves [the display case of RFPA books at the RFPA office]. That is a sign of the true church.

- reader from Michigan, United States

My wife is reading *Lori* and I am reading *Marriage, The Mystery of Christ and His Church*. I believe that this is the best book defending God's institution of marriage ever written.

-a reader from the United Kingdom