

Interview with Nick Kleyn (2)

Mark Hoeksema

MHH: Nick, do you have comments on all of this?

NK: Well, back in 1975, Prof. Hoeksema and Rev. [*Cornelius*] Hanko came over. And they came to Winnaleah where we actually lived. We lived in LaPort, just only a few minutes out of Winnaleah, and we have to be to the airport at five o'clock. Anyway, it was so funny. We got to the airport, but he wasn't there, and we had no idea what they looked like. So when they came off the plane, Prof. Hoeksema had a big coat on and my wife went up to him and said, "Are you Mr. Hoeksema?" And he said, "No, I'm Prof. Hoeksema" (laughter).

Anyway, they gave a lecture in Burnie Church. Then they went to Launceston, so we didn't see much of them at all. I think Rev. Hanko actually preached in the Presbyterian Church. They only gave him twenty minutes to do his sermon. That was the first time they came, but they came again, back in the '80s. We didn't see them then, did we?

IK: No. They went to Pastor Fisk's house, and Pastor Fisk hadn't told any of the congregation that they were coming, because he felt threatened by the Protestant Reformed. You could see that the people were hungry for learning more, so he felt threatened by that. And then we didn't know anything about it. And we had a bit of a hitch-up with family visitation from Pastor Fisk and John Driscoll. The question came up, "Well, how do you like my preaching?" And I always said he was one of the best preachers that we had as far as doctrine goes. I said, "Oh, I don't think it's as good as what it used to be." And he said to John Driscoll, "Well, what do you think?" He said, "Well, my wife and I said the same thing together." He stood up and said, "If you have anything against my preaching, you go to the presbytery, because it's a presbytery government. We didn't mean it that way. He asked the question and I just answered it. So he was very angry with us after that.

But anyway, life went on, and then we got more to learn from the Protestant Reformed Church. We had the *Standard Bearer* and *Beacon Lights*, and we would order what was on the back. Gradually, like when we got that sermon from the Lord's Prayer and people wanted to hear more of it, Launceston would allow us to listen maybe once a month, and that gave them a bit of easy time because they didn't have a minister at that time, either. The elders were giving the preaching, and they never read sermons. They had to make up their sermonette. So then we in Burnie got much more involved with the Protestant Reformed Church. Then we were saying, "Can't we get a minister from somewhere else," because the EPC didn't have any ministers. Where do we get a minister from? That was our big question mark as a church. And they said, well, we were allowed to look around. So then we had to look around. We had a

Rev. Dekka who had left the Free Reformed Church. We had him come over for a weekend and he preached to us. We just wanted to see what he was like. Then our church put out a call to him. They also put out a call to Prof. Hoeksema for help from the Protestant Reformed Church at the same time. Albert, my brother, said, "You can't do that. You can't put two irons in the fire at once." And we said, "It'll be fine, it'll be fine." So then they both said "Yes." Prof. Hoeksema said he would come. And the Protestant Reformed said, "Yes, we'll help. We'll give you Prof. Hoeksema for a year." And Dekka said "Yes, I'll come." So then they choose Prof. Hoeksema. They said to Albert, "You had better tell him that he can't come." Albert said, "No, I'm not going to do the dirty work for you." So they had to do that themselves.

So then we had Prof. Hoeksema. And it was the high peak of our spiritual wealth. Our boys were teenagers, Albert's boys were teenagers at the time. It was just like a dry sponge that wants to soak in the water. It was tremendous. They were like parents to us well: "Ina, what are you cooking? We had a tremendous time. When we went out for drives, your mom [*Gertrude Hoeksema*] always used to tell us lots of stories.

So that's how we started with the Protestant Reformed. Right before that, because we were allowed to have Protestant Reformed sermons, we got the tapes from Hudsonville. So we heard Rev. VanBaren every Sunday.

NK: And then Prof. Hoeksema went back home. In the meantime, Prof. Hanko came out, too, and he brought a couple of girls along. And Prof. Hoeksema said, "I'm going to introduce you to the girls." Anyway, we had to pick them up at the airport. And Sharon met Daniel then and Deb met Nick at that time. They were in love with each other.

When Prof. Hoeksema left, he organized the wedding. I was in Grand Rapids at the time for the wedding, and I saw Rev. Woudenberg. He had a couple of videos [*of church services*] from Hudsonville, and he said, "You take them home." I said, "You need them Sunday," because that's what he got them for. He said, "Ah, don't worry what Kalamazoo needs Sunday. I'll find some. You take them home." So, we took the videos from Hudsonville at the time of Rev. VanBaren. We couldn't play them on our video player because American is a little bit different speed. So we went to a shop and said, "Can we borrow a video player and a TV for the weekend." We had no trouble obtaining that, so we played the videos. People were so pleased with it they didn't even want audio tapes anymore. So, after that we bought a TV and video player, and they regularly sent the videos from Hudsonville—some of Rev. VanBaren, and then later on with Rev. Gritters. After that we never went back to audio tapes anymore. It was much better to look at something than to sit there and listen. It was so wonderful, we just got the first two tapes from Rev. Woudenberg, and then afterwards we always got video tapes.

IK: We had audio tapes for about three years before we got the video tapes in Burnie. So we were very Protestant Reformed-structured. For Bible Study we were doing the books of Acts, and we followed Prof. Hoeksema's study guide that he wrote for it. Then if we had any questions, one of the men would write to Prof. Engelsma and ask for an explanation.

We didn't even think of asking our men in Launceston. We just went straight to the PR and asked for answers on complications that we had with some of the things. Then we had Rev. [B.]Woudenberg with us for six months, because Prof. Hoeksema had to leave because of his cancer. Then we had Rev. Rodney Miersma from New Zealand. He stayed in Burnie for four months and looked after us.

So gradually we were more introduced to more depth of doctrine and understood it better. Also, the congregation in Burnie was more Dutch, while the ones left in Launceston were all Australians. So our Reformed background was better fulfilled in this area at this time.

NK: When Prof. Hoeksema was there, our son Daniel was very interested in going into the ministry. When Prof. Hoeksema came, that really made the decision for Daniel to go into the ministry. So he had a few lessons with Prof. Hoeksema during the week at his home, and then he applied for ministry in the EPC. He had to make an essay on purity of worship—worship without music in the church.

IK: Regulative principle.

NK: But they called it purity of worship over there. Anyway, he had to make his essay, and he showed me the essay. Daniel mentioned in the essay music is just things indifferent, but we worship God in spirit and in truth. I said to Daniel, "Dan, you're finished with the EPC." And he was. They sent him a letter that they could not accept him any longer in the EPC if he held to that point of view.

Prof. Hoeksema warned him. He said, "Your loss is our gain." And that's what happened. When Daniel came over here in the States he went to the university and then to the seminary.

IK: Later on when Rodney was inspired to go to the ministry, he said, "Shall I go straight to the Protestant Reformed?" We said, "No, your duty is to ask the church here where you belong." So he did, and they straightaway said, "No, not if you hold to the same principles." So they didn't even go into it much—just asked where he stood on the regulative principle. So he straightaway went to the Protestant Reformed.

MHH: So that made the decision for him very simple.

IK: Yes. Because of the history, because when Daniel did his thesis, they said he resigned. And we thought, well, he didn't resign. And when it came to marking (this was foul) there was no marking on where he went wrong, what he said wrong—nothing. To me that was always a fault on the EPC part that they didn't correct where he failed. So, what do you go on?

MHH: But your sons had apparently learned the Protestant Reformed viewpoint about the regulative principle from Professor Hoeksema?

IK: No, we always ourselves were strong about that too. We had no problem singing without music because I don't think it's a sin to sing without music. But I don't think it's a sin to sing with music, either. And that was the difference—that they thought that was sin in worship to sing with music. They only used music for anything not to do with psalms or hymns. Maybe they sing hymns with music. But they won't sing any psalms at home with music, either. We had a farewell for Nicholas [*her son, who also went to the States*] once, and we were singing the psalms. My brother always had his button accordion, so we sang with the button accordion. And some of the EPC people were so rude that they just sat there talking loud because that was not what they would call a right thing to do.

MHH: So it's at this point that you have at least one son in America, and another one either here or on his way. What precipitated *your* move to the States?

IK: All right. Nicholas married Deb, and after marriage he straightaway went to live in America. Daniel and Sharon stayed in Tasmania because Daniel was hoping to become a minister in the EPC. It took a year until the presbytery said no. They just said he resigned. That was hurtful to me because I didn't think it was a resignation. Before that, we had officebearers' nomination and Albert and Nick were on there. But they were never put in office because they could not agree to say that it was a sin to use music. So, that's why Burnie never had officebearers. So then Nicholas, when he became an American citizen, could sponsor us to come to America. Looking back now, who would want your girls to court someone from the other side of the world, a different denomination, that you might have just had a brief knowledge of? But I see that God had Prof. Hoeksema there to put his stamp of approval on it, spiritually, you know.

MHH: Plus, he played match-maker a little bit (laughter).

IK: Then also, he was there for my mother's funeral. I thought that was very special too.

MHH: That is truly an interesting history. Now I would like to put this question to both of you: How would you compare the church of today with the church of your youth?

IK: In the Liberated Church, we arrived from the Netherlands. When a church starts up in a new country, I think you stay more conservative because you don't have any roots, and the roots that you form are God-focused. We had no sport with the Australians. We didn't do anything. We weren't mingling. We were almost like Jews in the Old Testament. Later on when we joined the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, their concept of the covenant was new at first. It wasn't till '75 that it was introduced by the lectures that Prof. Hoeksema gave that our people started to grow more in the necessity of the covenant and the friendship that God related with Abraham. Before that, there was no concept of that. So they didn't want Christian school. In Burnie we tried the Christian school, and presbytery stepped in and said that if you do that, it's our property and not yours. So we, as Dutch Liberated people background, were

not going to do that. So we didn't start up a Christian school. We had a place ready to buy and everything. When we were going to buy it, just as families, the presbytery was going to take over, so we didn't do that.

So then our children went to Laylands Christian School, and Albert and Mary's children went to the Baptist Christian school which was more like a home-schooling). Albert's children went to the Baptist school, and that was more monitored. It's called ACE curriculum. Later on we used that with our four youngest children, and they were homeschooled.

When we came to the PR—I'm not involved with all the sports, but I think that is a weak spot in the Protestant Reformed Churches. I don't mind them playing sports. But in America you can become a college student if you're a good sportsman, huh? That doesn't make any sense to me.

MHH: That was not true in Australia?

IK: No. Still isn't. You don't get in by any sports. There is no college sport. There are sports—they are sports mad, but it is never on a college basis.

MHH: It's not a part of the educational system?

IK: No.

MHH: Whereas it is here, obviously. That's interesting.

NK: Just to get back to your school again. Back in 1972, the EPC didn't start a school. We got involved a little bit with the Christian Reformed school. It was Christian Reformed people. We wanted to start a school on the northwest coast in Tasmania. I was even in the board at that time. So we got together and decided to send out flyers to see how many we could get. We got 22 students, but we still went ahead with a little four-classroom school. After it opened we did get about 60-70 students. And when we got going, then later on some parents wanted to start a high school. I wasn't on the board, but, they didn't want it because they wouldn't be able to get all the facilities that the state school had. So there was a bit of a division. Most parents were going to start a high school because that's just as important [*as grade school*]. But they didn't start a high school, so numbers stayed about 70-80 students. A couple of years down the road, they came to agreement to start a high school, and the school doubled in enrollment.

IK: In the middle of the year. They doubled in their enrollment.

MHH: Really?

NK: It became interdenominational. So we had to pull our children out because it had Baptist ministry, a Pentecostal minister, you know. It didn't work out very well. So then we pulled our children out and we did home-schooling for five years before we came to Grand Rapids.

MHH: Do either of you have any closing remarks?

IK: OK. I'm just very thankful to God for guiding our pathway and bringing us here. And I'm just so thankful we can live here. People say, "Do you miss Australia?" I say, "No, I never miss Australia." I

loved it there, but I have no desire to go back. Spiritually I was famished compared to what we are given here in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Another thing is, when you move and you have to get new roots, I think you are closer with the Lord. We went back to the Netherlands eighteen months ago and the Free Reformed Church, where we grew up in, is so wayward down there. You go to Australia, and they are very conservative. And it's the same denomination in the Netherlands. They allow homosexuals to be officebearers. It doesn't even look like church. The new building is just a hole with loose chairs, jeans, and whatever. It didn't even feel like we were in a worship place. And that is something very unique to the Protestant Reformed, where people sit together as families worshipping God. In the Liberated Church the young people always tried to sit in the back seats and play around. Even in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the kids always sat together. We always made them sit with us. That's why we go to church for, not just to be unrespectful and unattentive.

So I'm so thankful to see our grandchildren growing up in the atmosphere and the school. I'm very impressed with the dedication of learning and praying at the schools here too.

NK: It's like Ina said. It's very family-orientated here. I found that's wonderful. It was like in the EPC and the Liberated church in early years—family orientated. The third time I came here in '89, I could not believe how people came to worship the Lord on a Sunday, how well they present themselves—well-dressed. And big families. It was just wonderful to see, and it is still today. Children sit with the parents in church. It wasn't like that in my young days and later not either, like Ina said. Children sit separately, and I don't think that's any good at all. I hope and pray that it may continue over the years to come that this family-orientation is so important—that the family comes to church and worship together as a family.

IK: You know, Mark, it's very interesting. We've taken some relatives from work to church. They cannot, for the life of them, think that all these little kids can sit still for all that time (laughter), and that there is no separate place for them to go and play. It brings them back a hundred years ago to when that was how it was. And they cannot believe it—there's still a church today that holds to that kind of tradition.

NK: We were in Western Australia in '77. We went to a Presbyterian church. The children had their Sunday School because the children could not sit still in the worship. We were there with our nine children at the time, and our children sat still. That was such a blessing to that congregation to see, to show that children can sit still and worship. And I think it's wonderful that Rev. Smit is going to the Philippines. He's got a large family. It'll be a blessing to the congregation there to show that children can attend worship and sit still in the worship and listen—that's a real experience we had, and I think it'll be wonderful even in the Philippines. It'll be such a blessing there to teach them that we come together as a family to worship.

MHH: It's certainly clear from your comments that both of you see and appreciate the outworkings of the covenant. And I thank you both kindly for your time and for sharing your thoughts in this interview.

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