

# CALVIN SEMINARY FORUM

Vol. 5 No. 1

Winter 1998

## COVER ESSAY

# WHAT IN HEAVEN IS GOING ON?

The above heading was part of the sub-title of the cover article on Time magazine of December 27, 1993. The entire cover title reads: "The New Age of Angels: 69% of Americans believe they exist. What in heaven is going on?" The 1993 popularity of angels has largely continued into 1998.



Guido Reni:  
St. Michael  
Slaying the Devil,  
c. 1626-1627

### A Renewed Interest in Angels

The editors of Time judged that the renewed interest in angels warranted a cover story. The cover article (56-65), written by Nancy Gibbs, notes that the rising fascination is more popular than theological and that all sorts of people are asking all sorts of questions about angels. Some book stores have established special angel sections.

The article also suggests the main reason for this renewed interest in angels is the "New Age" movement. From the New Age perspective angels are not the strong holy creatures the Bible teaches them to be, God's messengers and representatives of his law and order, but nonthreatening, loving, and always kind creatures who offer help even when we do not ask for it. One line from Nancy Gibbs' article (56) reflects well the New Age mood: *"For those who choke too easily on God and his rules, theologians observe, angels are the handy compromise, all*



**ANDREW BANDSTRA**

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*fluff and meringue, kind, nonjudgmental."*

There is, of course, variety in the extensive literature that reflects the New Age perspective. Some of it is bizarre, closely associated with astrology. These are clearly non-Christian in their advice about angels. Other books are more helpful, simply putting in print the stories of people who have had or believe they have had

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encounters with angels. Here it must be remembered that beings similar to biblical angels appear in other religions as well. Thus the worthwhile and well-done TV program, *Touched by an Angel*, while not explicitly Christian, presents a message that often stands head and shoulders above that of other TV programs.

There are also some good books by Christian authors on the subject of angels. Many of them, however, do not lay out what the Bible teaches about angels but often retell the encounters that Christians have had with angels. Such "angel stories," I believe, are worthwhile and edifying. But there is still a dearth of books that attempt to present the biblical teaching about angels. It is hoped that my book, *In the Company of Angels*, is a small step in that direction.

An Older Interest  
in Angels

*The Bible itself is replete with references to angels. It uses the term "angel" or "angels" some 290 times.* The vast majority of these references are to heavenly messengers, though some refer to human messengers. Add to this total the many references to what are no doubt classes of angelic beings, such as cherubim (65), seraphim (2), and archangels (the word occurs only 2 times, but references to Gabriel and Michael probably belong here). Then add to these, various other terms used for angelic beings, such as Paul's five words for "principalities and powers" and other terms used to refer to angels, such as "sons of God," "spirits," "holy ones," "watchers," etc. Altogether there are about 400 references to angelic beings in the Bible.

Equally important, however, is the fact that the Bible nowhere gives a full explanation or theology of angels. The biblical story simply mentions them, evidently expecting the reader or hearer to understand what is meant. Check out the first references to cherubim in Genesis 3:24 or to the "angel of the Lord" in Genesis 17:6-13. No explanations are given. In fact, the closest one comes to a theology of angels is found in Hebrews 1 and 2. Here they are at least described as "spirits" who "minister" and who have some "authority over the created world. But the main

//  
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thrust of Hebrews 1 and 2 is not to develop a theology of angels, but to show that they are subordinate to the Son of God, the crucified but exalted Lord.

Perhaps because there is so little explanation of the angels in the Old Testament, some of the Jewish literature, of what is often called Second Temple Judaism, develops considerably the role and function of angels. And perhaps because the New Testament says so little about the nature and function of angels, early Christian authors also developed a more thoroughgoing theology of angels. The high point of this interest is reflected in a writer of the fifth century, who took on the name, Dionysius (see

// Altogether there are about 400 references to angelic beings in the Bible. //

—Bandstra

Acts 17:34), and wrote a book entitled, *The Celestial Hierarchy*. (Because this was an assumed name, he is often referred to as *Pseudo-Dionysius*.) He thought he could establish from the Bible nine ranks of angels and could list them in terms of their "distance" from God. From highest to lowest order these were: seraphim, cherubim, thrones, dominions, virtues, principalities, powers, archangels, and angels. This ranking is taken over, refined, and made ontologically significant by Thomas Aquinas.

The Bible, however, only mentions groups of angels without specifying ranks or numbers. John Calvin, in his chapter on angels in the *Institutes*, thought the same and warned that the Bible does not really tell us much about the "nature" of angels. He does say that the Bible teaches that angels are created spiritual beings, but does not support the heavy speculation about the "nature" of angels that one finds, for example, in the two writers mentioned above. Over and over, Calvin insists that we must avoid speculation about angels that goes beyond what the Bible teaches. Christian theologians must teach about angels only those things that are "true, sure, and beneficial" for the faith of believers. In this way, Calvin gives us some good basic guidelines in dealing with the renewed interest in angels in our day: avoid undue speculation and teach only those things which are

"true, sure, and beneficial."

The Renewed  
Challenge for Today

It is my judgment that the biblical teaching on angels has been neglected and therefore has left a vacuum into which the "New Agers" have rushed with their stories and speculation. Already some 35 years ago, Karl Barth, in his 3 fine chapters on angels in Vol. 3 of his *Church Dogmatics*, argued that Christian theologians

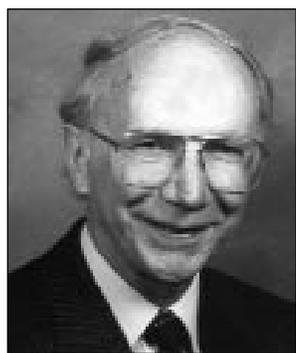


have contributed to the near denial of the existence of angels by, at best, presenting "a weary shrug of the shoulders" interest in them. Instead, Barth insisted that we ought to forthrightly and vigorously present what the Bible teaches about angels. In affirming this, Barth picked up on what Calvin said about speaking those things that are "true, sure, and beneficial," and likewise warned against unbiblical speculation about

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Henry Zwaanstra, Editor

# Holwerda Retires – Zwaanstra Named Editor



**DAVID E. HOLWERDA**

Professor of  
New Testament  
at Calvin Seminary.

vehicle the seminary possesses.”

*The faculty also believes its Forum is important. The seminary's new Strategic Plan has as its very first goal: "To transmit and shape our Reformed confessional-theological identity for and within the Christian Reformed Church in North America, both by training the church's ministerial leadership and by our wider service within and on behalf of the denomination." To implement this goal, the first action the plan calls for is to "triple the number of the Calvin Seminary Forum mailed to each CRCNA council."*

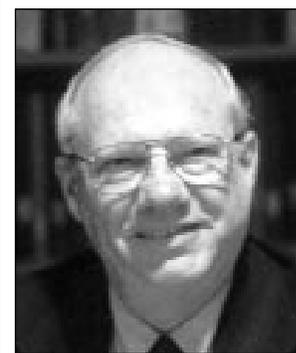
## Holwerda Retires

Retiring editor, David Holwerda, deserves much of the credit for the Forum's fine reception in the church. He, more than anyone else, took what he in the first issue called "a long cherished dream" and made it a reality: The Calvin Seminary Forum. In his first editorial, Holwerda expressed the hope that the reality would live up to the expectations of the dream. It

Before accepting the appointment to become the new editor, I reviewed all the earlier Forum issues. I also reread all of Holwerda's editorials. They were impressive. So much so, that I almost decided not to accept the position. President De Jong, other seminary professors and members of the staff, and dear friends, however, convinced me that the work was important and that I should say "yes." I did.

## Holwerda's Editorials: "Thank You"

It is admittedly presumptuous for a new editor to comment on the work of one who preceded him. An historian should really know better. I cannot, however, adequately express my appreciation for how far editor Holwerda has brought the Forum and the seminary's thanks for what he has done without going into some detail. Holwerda was a wise, thoughtful, insightful, forthright, and personally and socially sensitive editor. He dealt realistically and honestly with complex problems in the church and in our rapidly changing society. *Upon retirement, he deserves briefly to be heard again on three subjects: interpreting scripture, tradition and change, and the peace and unity of the church.*



**HENRY ZWAANSTRA**

Professor of  
Historical Theology  
at Calvin Seminary.

With this issue the Calvin Seminary Forum enters its fifth year. It also has a new editor. David Holwerda is retiring as professor of New Testament at the end of this school-year. Henry Zwaanstra, veteran professor of Historical Theology, has been appointed to replace Holwerda.

The seminary is pleased with the reception its Forum has received. Christian Reformed ministers and church members have commented on the fact that

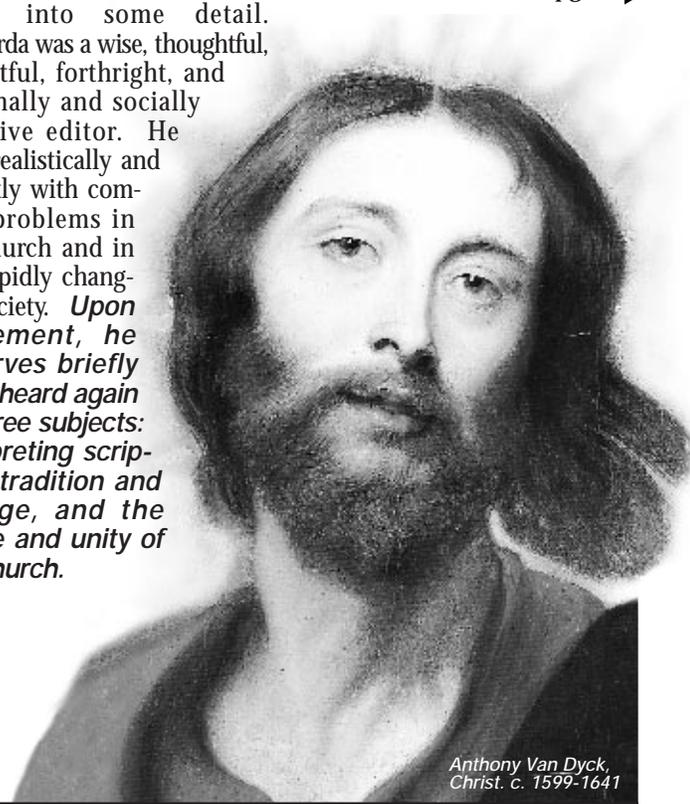
Holwerda believed that complex and difficult problems in the church could not be resolved

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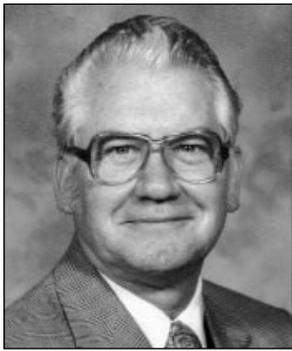
**// Retiring editor, David Holwerda, deserves much of the credit for the Forum's fine reception in the church //**

the Forum has a "distinctive look" and is "instantly recognized" as a Calvin Seminary magazine. More importantly, they assure us it gets read. Representatives of the seminary say, "The Forum is the single most effective public relations

has! Holwerda, contributors of articles, and the seminary's Forum Committee have given the seminary and the church an interesting, useful, practical, and edifying treatment of theology and theological issues.



Anthony Van Dyck,  
Christ. c. 1599-1641



**ROBERT RECKER**

Emeritus Professor of Missiology at Calvin Seminary

# THAT CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

that an apostolic heart must be concerned for the conversion of both the Gentile and the Jewish worlds - thus all people. The pastoral prayer should not simply express "in-house" concerns. Its focus cannot simply be on the needs of the local congregation. Its concern must be as wide as the body of Christ: past, present and future.

## Components of the Prayer

**1** *As traditionally conceived, there were several components of the prayer, once commonly called the "long prayer."*

After an opening address to the exalted God, there was an expression of communal thanksgiving that the congregation could draw near to the throne of grace as the people of God. Thanks was offered for communal salvation — an acknowledgment that this flock was washed in the blood of the Lamb. In this part of the prayer the congregation thanked God for being a faithful, covenant God who remains true to his commitments and promises. Additionally, thanksgiving was expressed for the mercies which adorn the daily life of the congregation, the lives of the individual members, and the progress of the church universal. Typically, God was thanked for breakthroughs at Rehoboth and Zuni, for the effective work of missionaries in China, and for new beginnings in missions in Africa and other parts of the world. The South Water Street rescue mission and the Nathaniel Institute for Jewish evangelism were also often included in these prayers. Certainly the congregation, represented by the pastor in prayer, was aware of broader church and

kingdom concerns. Depending on the attitude of the local pastor, a prayer of thanks was sometimes offered for the Christian Labor Association. The ministry of the Christian school was certainly remembered.

**2** *Secondly, confession of sin was included in this prayer spoken on behalf of God's people.* The pastor set the tone sensitively and sincerely in the confessing of the

elders recorded by the Seer of Patmos. In this way the congregation through prayer celebrated its oneness and kinship with the entire, universal church of both the old and new dispensation. This prayer was then a sort of ecumenical celebration before the throne of God, a recognition of the far-reaching impact and scope of his grace. Such is the God of glory to whom all acclaim is due. And exactly in that moment when members of the congregation were naked, as

**“ The pastors set the tone sensitively and sincerely in confessing the sins and shortcomings of God's people. ”**

sins and shortcomings of God's people. Sins of omission and commission were confessed comprehensively in "thought, word and deed." The pastor ordinarily acknowledged the congregation's lack of gratitude, and its hesitation and failure to proclaim Christ's gospel in the world in a passionate and credible fashion. Traditionally, the prayer acknowledged the congregation's failure to fulfill Paul's mandate truly "to let your lives be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). Members were reminded that they were to confess their sins against each other and their neighbors and that they were to forgive as they had been forgiven in Christ Jesus.

**3** *Thirdly, the pastoral prayer included heartfelt adoration to God.* Symbolically members of the congregation fell down in humble adoration before God, like the worshipping twenty-four

it were, before the face of God, some felt the pain of a son or daughter who was not at their side, of a neighbor who still resisted the claims of God's grace, and of countries in which only a handful of people worship the one, true and living God. For this God ought to be worshiped by all flesh; every knee ought to bow, and every tongue confess, that this God is indeed God.

**4** *Fourthly, the congregational prayer expressed praise:* praise for the covenant son or daughter who had appeared before the consistory to confess faith in Christ, for the person who had returned home after surgery, for a good Thanksgiving Day service in which the collection plate overflowed with bills. And, of course, there was praise for God's revealed virtues, the manifestation of his grace in his people's lives!

One might entitle this article, "The Ecclesiology of the Pastoral-Congregational Prayer." In it I am raising the issue of the scope and spirit of the traditional congregational prayer in the worship service. We might begin by agreeing that it is an intercessory prayer of the entire congregation. The pastor gives voice and leadership on behalf of the congregation's intercessory role in this world.

## Scope of the Congregation Envisioned

The scope of the congregation envisioned in the prayer is indicated by Christ's "High Priestly Prayer", found in John 17:20. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message." These words of the Christ push out the walls of the local congregation into the wide vistas of the world and history. It is quite plain in this passage that Christ is praying for the entire catholic church, for its growth and well-being in the world.

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, shows his apostolic heart and passion in Romans 10:1 where he says, "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved." Here he reveals

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PRAYER cont.

RECKER

And in that communal praise through prayer to the faithful God, the congregation acted as faithful stewards for everyone. They spoke for those who cannot speak — for the babe in the crib, for the aged saint lying on her deathbed, and for those sinners who had not yet caught or been taught the spirit of praise. Representatively members of the congregation spoke for the multitudes outside, for the

Timothy to pray for “all men”, and in particular, for “kings and those in high places” (1 Tim. 2:1-7). In this passage Paul connects prayer for civil magistrates with the wish that people may live peaceful and quiet lives and come to a knowledge of the truth and thus to salvation. In addition, he affirms that there is only one Mediator between God and men, who is also the one who gave himself as a ransom for sinners. To this Paul joins his own commissioning as a preacher and apostle, “a teacher

Congregationalism, the temptation to be totally absorbed in the affairs of the local congregation, is a danger in our time. The church has always believed that Christ’s church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. The entire church of Christ is called holy, and all God’s children are called saints. This sanctified people of God is the one people of God, united in Christ through all times and in all places. This people is authorized and qualified to be God’s ambassador to the nations. And

communicate God’s claims and the Gospel of grace. And in a sense, this prayer is a profession of faith because it contains and reflects the church’s faith. The faith of the church is present in and motivates the prayer.

**6** *Finally, this prayer indicates the submission of the church of Christ to the will of God.* The prayer was often concluded with “God’s will be done!” This showed the congregation’s readiness to walk with him, to live for him, to sacrifice for him, and to represent him in various ways in accord with the members’ abilities, opportunities and callings. In these words the bride of Christ accepted the yoke of the kingdom, declared the Kingly rule of Christ, and testified to its readiness to put on the harness of the King in order to pull the little wagon of the Gospel of Christ through the length and breadth of a world belonging to God! The last words of the congregational prayer were often from Revelation 22:20, “Amen. Come Lord Jesus.” These words were said in response to the Spirit’s invitation to come and drink!

As a boy I was profoundly influenced by the prayers of my Father at the kitchen table, and by the prayers of my minister at the service in our local, little church. To the prayers of both of them, I felt I could say a “hearty Amen.” And I was also blessed because some of my ministers paid attention to the “little ones”. ■

*“As a boy I was profoundly influenced by the prayers of my father..., and by the prayers of my minister”*

unreached peoples, for the yet unrepentant heart of a son or daughter of the church. And in that moment they expressed a plaintive longing in their hearts that these might come and join them. They prayed that the empty seat at the communion table might be filled!

**5** *Fifthly, then there were the prayers of intercession for the sick, ailing, and those confined to their homes.* Some intercessors remembered to pray for the poor who are always with us, and for the general work of “institutions of mercy”. Prayers were also offered for the aged and for the widows and widowers. And certain pastors remembered without fail Paul’s injunction to

of the Gentiles in faith and truth.” All of this indicates the saving intent of Paul’s injunctions to engage in communal prayers. Christians, represented by their leaders in communal prayer, must be aware of their social, cultural and political context, and take these into consideration in intercessory prayer.

The pastoral prayer must not be reduced to “in-house-affairs.” The second table of the law, with its command to love our neighbors as ourselves, must become very evident in the prayer of the pastor-shepherd. In the congregational prayer the Good Shepherd’s passion for the salvation of the lost sheep must be heard again.

this universal church, established by Christ through the apostles, exists prior to the founding of any local congregation. The local church, under God, therefore owes its existence and much of its doctrine, traditions, and practices to the historical church of Christ. No local congregation can live out of itself and to itself. Hence, the pastoral prayer should express thanksgiving for the founding of other local congregations whether in Spokane, Sioux City, Sacramento or Sandusky. For the congregational prayer is a celebration of the church’s progress by the grace of God.

The congregational prayer is not a vehicle for preaching, although it does indirectly com-

appointed end; and (3) God is operative in all things that come to pass in the world. A “theist”, its seems to me, is always tempted to fall back into a kind of deism that affirms only that God exercises a general oversight over creation. A proper belief in angels will help us affirm that creation and history are a vessel that God pilots day by day. That possibility makes it worthwhile to take up today’s challenge about God’s angels. ■

COVER ESSAY cont.

BANDSTRA

angels. In this regard he quoted with approval another author who said that in speaking about angels we should do so only “softly and incidentally.” Barth meant by that, of course, that center stage in the Bible belongs to God and Christ Jesus as Lord; angels belong only in the wings. In these matters, Barth is surely right.

It is also my judgment that a renewed emphasis on the biblical teaching of angels will help us to become/remains “theistic” in our confession about God and his providential care. A “theist” is one who affirms that God not only created the world, but continues to be involved in creation and in history in three ways: (1) God preserves all his creatures; (2) God directs and governs all things to their

# What I Most Want my Students to Know about MISSIONS



**ROGER S. GREENWAY**

Professor of Missiology  
at Calvin Seminary

I realize that only a small percentage of my students will eventually become missionaries in the formal sense. After leaving seminary, most of them will minister in churches in North America. Nevertheless, as members of Christ's Body and leaders in his church, they will be involved in the missionary enterprise. It is with this in mind that I will identify the things that students most need to know.

## Biblical and Theological Foundations

How anyone can preach and teach the Bible without recognizing and declaring God's missionary purpose for the church and his desire that all nations and peoples hear the gospel, I cannot fathom. Yet there have always been ministers and theologians that miss the point of missions altogether.

I want every student passing through my classroom to see God's missionary intent throughout the Bible, from

*Genesis 3 where God comes calling our fallen parents, saying "Adam, where are you?" to Revelation 22, where the Spirit and the bride extend the final invitation, "Come! Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."*

For me, concern for missions is a theological issue. No matter how pious or profound some theologians may appear, I advise students to be wary of them if they show little or no interest in missions. My reasoning is as follows: *To know God in the biblical sense is to worship him, worship him exclusively, and pursue his glory above everything else. This inescapably implies that you become deeply disturbed over the fact that billions of people worship other gods and daily rob God of the honor and gratitude due only to him (Rom. 1:18-23).*

What are the first two commandments? Acknowledge only the one true God and worship him in the way he sees fit. How, then, can anyone truly be knowledgeable about God and not be moved to action by the fact that multitudes totally desecrate his first two commandments? Implied in the two commands is a mandate for missionary action.

Putting it another way, the issue in missions is the glory of God. This is what I want my students to grasp and let it give shape and direction to their ministries. For some, I am sure, it will mean dedicating their lives to promoting the worship of the true God in

places of stark paganism, ignorance and unbelief.

## Awareness of Global Conditions

If indeed concern for missions comes first from a passion for God and his glory, it is fueled by a knowledge of the state of the world, the needs of the global church, and the issues facing God's people throughout the world.

*For that reason, I insist that my students become acquainted with a number of global realities. They must know about the pop-*

*ulation explosion in this century, and the fact that half the world's approximately six billion people are under twenty years of age. People living in North America can hardly comprehend this because we live in a "graying" society. But it has tremendous implications for missions, youth ministries, and the needs of the global church.*

Seminarians need to be aware of the evangelistic opportunities inherent in population movements. People away from home are as a rule more

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To know God in the biblical sense is to worship him, worship him exclusively, and pursue his glory above everything else.



MISSIONS... cont.

GREENWAY

open to hearing the gospel. Urbanization represents one of these movements. During the past two decades the greatest migration in history has occurred. Two billion people moved from rural areas to cities. This has made cities the new frontier of global missions.

Refugees represent another great population movement. Never before has the world had as many refugees, people forced from home by civil strife. Around the world, great numbers have been converted to Christ in refugee camps and many more have been touched by Christian compassion.

In recent decades hundreds of thousands of people have voluntarily migrated from one country to another in search of a better life. International students by the tens of thousands, many of them from countries that are closed to missionaries, enroll in western colleges and universities. Wherever my students eventually minister, I know there will be people from elsewhere to whom they can minister in the name of Christ. I want them to be aware of the special opportunity these people represent for Christian witness.

I also want my students to be keenly aware of the grinding poverty that grips much of the world. *Globally speaking, spiritual poverty and mate-*

world in which two billion people are malnourished and 500 million are on the edge of starvation. *In missions we inevitably address both empty stomachs and empty souls. Didn't Jesus do the same?*

Church Revitalization

It may seem strange to include church revitalization among the things that I most want my students to know in the area of missions. But the fact is that around the world there are churches in dire need of doctrinal reform, leadership reinforcement, and in some cases outright revival. Certain churches are confessionally sound but missionarily sick. They are surrounded on all sides by unsaved and unchurched people, many of whom may be receptive to the gospel, but the churches are doing little or nothing to evangelize them. In such cases a ministry of church revitalization can rightly be considered a missionary ministry, and a difficult one at that.

Church planting, church development, and in some cases church renewal — all are important in missions and each is different. Each requires workers with gifts and personalities suited for the particular task. I urge students who are interested in missions to evalu-

*the majority of Christians now live in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Given projected growth rates, by the year 2025 only 25% of all Christians will be westerners.*

Equally important is the fact that non-western churches are engaging in cross-cultural missions, in some cases to distant and difficult places. In the foreseeable future, Christians in the West will probably continue to hold a large share of the financial resources of missions, along with the strongest seminaries and missionary organizations. But more and more the momentum will shift to the non-western world. *This means that one of the greatest challenges before mission leaders in the next decade will be to redefine the ongoing role of western missionaries and make the transition to global partnership in missions as smooth as possible.*

Mission Education in the Local Church

One of the signs of a spiritually healthy church is its interest in the growth and well-being of the global Body of Christ. Similarly, a sign of spiritual anemia is confusion about missions and disinterest in anything beyond what is local. Recognizing that most of my

**“ I want every student passing through my classroom to see God's missionary intent throughout the Bible. ”**

ramifications around the world. I want my students to leave seminary deeply convinced that theirs is a world of unprecedented opportunities to advance Christ's kingdom and that God is as mighty to save as he ever was. I hope that the students' time in seminary will contribute to making them people with global vision and with such a passion for God's glory and lost people that it will rub off on every congregation they serve.

Missions is the Overflow

*If I can leave one thought with my students it is this: Missions is the overflow of true passion for God's praise and worship. Whatever goes on in churches and denominations, however great the music and preaching, however well-organized the programs and services, if they do not kindle in the members a fervent desire to "declare God's glory among the nations" (Ps.96:3), something is wrong.*

*Behind and beneath everything there must be passion for the one true God, for his honor and glory and the worship due to him alone. Where such passion exists, missions flows like water from a spring that cannot be turned off. ■*

**“ Missions is the overflow of true passion for God's praise and worship ”**

*rial poverty very often go hand in hand. This means that mission work almost always must be "wholistic" in the sense of addressing whole persons, body, mind and soul together.*

Integral mission endeavor is the only valid response to a

ate themselves carefully in order to avoid being thrust into ministries that are not in line with the way God made them and gifted them.

Students often are surprised to learn how tremendous the missionary harvest has been in this century. *The fact is that*

students at the seminary will serve churches at home, I try to prepare them to become informed and effective mission educators in the places they will serve. My basic assumption is that what happens in the local church in terms of missionary vision and activity will have

EDITORIAL cont.  
ZWAANSTRA

by simply quoting texts from Scripture. In fact the clear teaching of Scripture may even differ from what a single text seems clearly to say. In his judgment Reformed principles of biblical interpretation often demanded a reading and understanding more complex than a plain or literal reading of the text. Yet he affirmed without qualification the authority of Holy Scripture. Discovering God's will from Scripture is not always easy. In interpreting Scripture he recommended a process of weighing texts, and determining which have priority, in discovering God's will on an issue. Texts should be understood in the light of God's basic will. Specific texts relating to an issue should therefore be weighed and evaluated according to what Scripture clearly suggests is God's more comprehensive will.

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**Holwerda dealt realistically and honestly with complex problems in the church and in our rapidly changing society.**  
//

*Most importantly by Christ's life, death, resurrection, and promise of return.* The apostolic tradition or witness is the foundation on which the church is built and this foundation, Holwerda insisted, cannot be altered. Nevertheless, he said, that the life that flows from God's past is a dynamic force that shapes and changes the present. The Apostolic tradition must be interpreted and expressed anew as culture changes. Historically, the church

meaningful and intelligible in the particular culture in which the church lives. Our children will demand such change.

A churchman, Holwerda made "every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). He did not set truth and unity against each other. For him church unity is truth, truth created and given by God himself not a matter of our choosing. With Calvin he said that the church cannot require agreement on all issues. Agreement must, however, be maintained on matters central to the faith. The unity of faith may not be broken. Likewise for him, schism is more than disagreement. It is a grievous sin, a breaking of the unity of the true faith.

Zwaanstra Editor

The Forum is now under new management. It will, however, continue the tradition Holwerda began in interpreting Scripture, in

CALVIN SEMINARY  
**FORUM**

Calvin Seminary Forum  
Volume 5, Number 1  
Winter, 1998

The Calvin Seminary Forum is published in Winter, Spring, and Fall editions.

Calvin Theological Seminary  
3233 Burton St. SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
Subscription price: \$8.00  
In Canada: \$10.00

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John Cooper  
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Jeffrey Weima

That church and the questions and challenges affecting her life and ministry will set the agenda.

We hope that the Forum will assist Christian Reformed ministers and church members become more Christian and Reformed in their lives and ministry. At the same time we also hope that the Forum will continue to be an effective Christian and Reformed witness to the world.

*The Forum will remain a place where voices can be heard. Most will be seminary voices. But as in the past, again today we invite other voices to speak. Four years ago our readers were invited to submit articles, to raise questions, and to bring to our attention problems that should be discussed. Today, we renew the invitation. ■*

*"We hope that the Forum will assist Christian Reformed ministers and church members become more Christian and Reformed in their lives and ministry"*

*Editor Holwerda believed the basic realities of human life and the Gospel do not change. The church therefore should be shaped by God's milestones, by tradition, by the past, by what God has said and done.*

has always done this. It must continue to do so. Change in the church is simply inevitable. The challenge confronting the church is to appropriate and to express the unchanging Apostolic tradition in language, forms, and practices that are

maintaining the unchanging truth of the Gospel in a rapidly changing world, and in promoting the unity and peace of the church in the essentials of the true faith. As originally intended the Forum will serve the Christian Reformed Church.