



Evangelism and the

Reformed Faith

David J. Engelsma

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Matt. 28: 19, 20

PREFACE

The Church's most precious possession is the Gospel (Matt. 28:18-20; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:13-15; Rev. 14:6). To her is committed the glorious task not only to preach and witness of it to all nations, but also to contend earnestly for it. Empowered by the Spirit of Christ within her, a Reformed Church is faithful to her calling.

Expounding upon this theme, the pamphlet at the same time answers three vital questions:

- Why Evangelism should not corrupt the Gospel.
- Why the Reformed are zealous in missions.
- Why the Reformed doctrine of sovereign predestination gives good confidence and courage to a Reformed church in her mission calling, and makes her work always fruitful.

May this little treatise spur the Reformed to faithfulness in their calling:

*"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.
Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the
name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have
commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even
unto the end of the world. Amen."*

Matt. 28: 18b,19,20

THE EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

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Rev. David Engelsma

Introduction

Strange to say, some suppose that the relationship between the Reformed Faith and evangelism is uneasy and uncomfortable. Stranger still, some charge that the Reformed Faith and evangelism are incompatible. Many outside of the Reformed Churches contend that the Reformed Faith makes evangelism (or "soul-winning," as they like to call it) impossible. Many who profess to be Reformed are now echoing this charge. What is worse, they are radically revising the Reformed Faith in the interests (they say) of evangelism. Read the studies that set forth the foundations, the messages, and the methods of missions: universal love; universal atonement; salvation dependent upon the free, sovereign choice of the sinner. Listen to the evangelists: "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life"; "Christ died for you"; "You can have this wonderful salvation and be born again, if only you will accept Jesus."

Then, there is the danger that those who love the Reformed Faith as God's own truth become suspicious of evangelism; openly or secretly grant the validity of the charge that the Reformed Faith and evangelism are incompatible; and decline to engage in the work of evangelism.

It is the duty of those to whom God has given the inheritance and responsibility of the Reformed Faith to show the perfect harmony of this Faith and evangelism. To do this, we must ourselves see clearly that they are compatible.

What Evangelism Is

Over the years, a certain, definite idea of evangelism has developed. It is necessary, first of all, to subject this idea to the test of Scripture. Speak of evangelism, and one probably thinks of an elaborate, expensive campaign to gather many people to a meeting that will be conducted by a specialist, the "evangelist." One thinks of a specific kind of religious meeting one in which the music, the message, and the other elements are carefully geared to get men to make a decision for Christ. One thinks of a religious work which concludes by reporting, how many hundreds, or thousands, "got saved," or "came forward."

This is evangelism in the popular mind. To do evangelism is to do something like this; and to oppose this is to run the risk of being criticized as unevangelistic, not mission-minded.

This whole great structure, fondly regarded as evangelism, imposing and impressive as it appears, needs to be tested by Scripture. Take, for example, the element so important to modern evangelism, and so prominent: the invitation, or altar call. The altar call is thoroughly unbiblical, apart now from the perverse theology which underlies it - the theology of the goodness and freedom of the will of the sinner and the sovereignty of his will in salvation, what Paul repudiates in Romans 9:16 as the teaching that salvation is of him that *willeth*. It is unbiblical to demand, in Christ's Name, that someone express the spiritual activity of repentance and faith by walking to the altar. It is unbiblical to equate coming to the front with these spiritual activities and, thus, with salvation. It is unbiblical, grievously so, to obtain this result by the psychological, emotional pressures that are exerted. The Christian Church

never knew of such a thing before the early 1800's, when Charles Finney introduced it.

For the answer to our question, "What is evangelism?" we do not look to popular notions, but to Holy Scripture.

In reality, evangelism is the preaching of the gospel. This is the meaning of the word, *evangelism* - a Biblical word in the Greek of the New Testament. Evangelism is the activity of publishing, or announcing, the "*evangel*," the gospel, i.e., the glad tidings of Jesus the Christ, crucified and risen.

This answers the question, whether a Reformed Church believes in evangelism and whether Reformed saints are to be zealous for evangelism. The gospel must be preached! This must be done within the established church, among the saints already called out of the world; for their constant comfort and edification, they are continually to hear the good news. This is why we come to church every Lord's Day.

But the gospel must also be preached outside of the church already established in the truth; this is necessary for the saving of the as yet unconverted and the straying. This is what we mean when we speak of evangelism: the activity of proclaiming the good news to those outside the congregation. Evangelism, then, is the same as missions.

We may take our definition from the "Form of Ordination of Missionaries" of the Reformed Churches. It distinguishes between ministers who labor in the congregations already established and those called and sent to preach the gospel to those without, in order to bring them to Christ: ". . . it is necessary that some labor in the congregations already established, while others are called and sent to preach the Gospel to those without, in order to bring them to Christ" (*The Psalter*, pp. 74, 75). Evangelism, therefore, is the activity of

preaching the gospel to those outside the congregation already established in the truth, in order to bring them to Christ.

Evangelism is not limited to work done with heathen, to work done with those who make no profession of faith in Jesus the Savior. On the contrary, it includes the work of the Church with those who profess Christianity and belong to a church, but who are either ignorant of the truth of the gospel or have departed from it. To bring the gospel to such is not "sheep-stealing," but sheep-gathering; it is not "fishing in troubled waters," but fishing for men.

When Jesus in Matthew 9:37, 38 instructed His disciples that the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers few, and that they, therefore, must pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest, His reference was not, primarily, to the heathen, but to the multitudes of fainting, scattered Israelites, the Old Testament people of God, under the care of the priests and scribes. By false doctrine, apostasy, and simple lack of the Word of God, these people were spiritually sore distressed and, therefore, proper objects of evangelism.

Paul's ministry shows that the work of evangelism is not exclusively with admitted unbelievers. He brought the Word to the Jews first; and when confessing Christians strayed, as they did in Galatia, the apostle urgently evangelized them.

John Murray, the Presbyterian theologian, contended that evangelism must not be limited to work among the unsaved. The word 'evangelism' has generally been understood to apply to the propagation of the gospel among the unsaved. In dealing, however, with the obligation that rests upon the church of Christ to witness to the gospel it does not appear that the various activities of the church that may properly be embraced in the work of evangelism have exclusive reference to those who are

reckoned, in the judgment of the church, as without God and without hope in the world. Particularly is this true when it is remembered that many believers in Christ have so inadequate a knowledge of the gospel, and so impoverished a conception of the Christian life, that a considerable part of the work of the church, properly regarded as evangelism, must needs have as its aim the instruction and edification of such believers. The evangelism that the true church of Christ undertakes must therefore contemplate the bringing of the gospel in its full import and demands to those who, though believers, are nevertheless the victims of ignorance, unfaithfulness and compromising associations" ("The Message of Evangelism," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 1, p. 124, published by The Banner of Truth Trust).

This is why the Reformation was an evangelistic enterprise, a missionary activity. Some have dared to criticize the Reformers for a lack of interest in missions. Defenders of the Reformers, seemingly stung by the charge, have responded that the Reformers were too busy for missions, but that Calvin once sent several missionaries to Brazil. The truth of the matter is that the Reformation itself was missions - a gigantic, energetic, world-wide mission work, with abundant and enduring fruits. The gospel was proclaimed to multitudes in many nations who were fainting and scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd, perishing in the ignorance and lie of Roman Catholicism.

What the Reformed Faith Is

Why, then, is it charged upon the Reformed Faith, and sometimes feared, that it is incompatible with evangelism? This is because of what the Reformed Faith is. It is the teaching that salvation is the free gift and sovereign work of God in Jesus Christ, wholly without the slightest merit or work of man. The message of the Reformed Faith is, "Salvation by Grace Alone."

This message consists of several outstanding truths. God has eternally loved and predestinated unto eternal life some persons out of the human race, in distinction from others whom, in the same decree, He predestinated unto perdition. This is the gracious source and foundation of all salvation.

God gave His only begotten Son to die for all those, and those only, whom He had given to Christ as His people, effectually to redeem them, by atoning for their sins. This is the gracious ground of all our salvation.

God now efficaciously calls, by the gospel and the Holy Spirit, into saving fellowship with Jesus, all those, but only those, whom He chose and redeemed. This is the gracious accomplishment of salvation. This work continues, as preservation, until all the elect, redeemed, and renewed people of God are perfected in glory.

With these doctrines, the Reformed Faith holds that all men alike are, by the fall of Adam, dead in sin and slaves to Satan, having wills that are not free, so as to be able to choose Christ and salvation, but bound, so as to be incapable of doing ought else, save to reject the Christ presented in the gospel.

The Reformed Faith preaches an almighty, gracious God and a powerless, totally depraved mankind. Such a faith, men charge, cannot evangelize. Indeed, such a faith must be

unevangelistic in its very spirit. It cannot be motivated to be zealous in evangelism. Even if it were so motivated, it would have no message to bring.

Note well, however, that this charge, or fear, as the case may be, arises from certain preconceived notions about evangelism - notions that are unbiblical. There is the notion that the motivation of evangelism is God's love for all men and desire to save all men. There is the notion that the message of evangelism is a universal love of God, a universal atonement, and a universal grace in the preaching, all dependent upon the free will of sinners, who, it is thought, are able to choose for Christ. There is the notion that the efficacy of evangelism is the persuasiveness of the evangelist and the decision of the sinner's willed will.

Raving these notions of evangelism, men proceed to corrupt the Reformed Faith in the interests of evangelism. Double predestination hinders missions; and, therefore, reprobation is denied, and men proclaim a universal saving love of God - the evangelist preaches to all and sundry, "God loves you." Limited atonement hampers missions; and, therefore, men preach a universal atonement - the evangelist assures all and sundry, "Christ died for you." An efficacious call of the gospel to some only restricts mission work; and, therefore, men teach that God is gracious to all men in the preaching - the evangelist announces to all his hearers, "God desires your salvation and is now sincerely offering salvation to you." Total depravity does not square with such evangelism (for what good is all this love, atonement, and grace, if the sinner cannot avail himself of it?); and, therefore, it is suggested to the sinner that he has the ability to open up his heart to let Jesus in, or he is told outright that the new birth depends upon his believing.

With this kind of evangelism, the Reformed Faith is incompatible; of such an evangelism, it is the sworn foe. A Reformed preacher would not dare to engage in evangelism of this kind. He would not, because he fears to stand in the Judgment, having preached a message that robbed God of His glory in the salvation of sinners and that taught sinners to trust for salvation in their own ability and activity. The worst evolutionist, a veritable Charles Darwin, will not be so culpable of despoiling the wonderful works of God as such an evangelist.

But this is not Biblical evangelism. With Biblical evangelism, the Reformed Faith is perfectly compatible. It is false, it is absurd to suppose that the Reformed Faith cannot do evangelism, because of the doctrines of grace that it espouses. These truths, assailed as detrimental to evangelism, are truths that set forth salvation as God's gracious gift. They constitute the **gospel, the "evangel", the good news**. How foolish of men, whether within Reformed churches or without, to deny the gospel, in order that they may better evangelize, i.e., proclaim the gospel. Men are really saying that God's gospel is unpreachable, or that it is not serviceable for saving sinners and gathering the Church.

Let us see that the Reformed Faith can engage in evangelism, and how it does so. We will examine, in turn, its message, its method, and its motivation.

The Message of Reformed Evangelism

The message of the Reformed Faith in evangelism will be the whole counsel of God, as was the message of Paul, according to Acts 20:27. The Reformed preacher knows the entire Scripture; and he knows it as the inspired Word of God. He comes with Scripture, not with a little list of spiritual laws or some gospel on a thumbnail. Essentially, the message is always the same, but the preacher applies it differently to different audiences. Christ's evangelism of the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-22) differed from His evangelism of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42). Paul's approach to the Jews of the synagogue differed from his approach to the Greek philosophers of Mars' Hill (cp. Acts 17:1-3 with Acts 17:16-34). That thorough doctrinal instruction is required in evangelism, the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 plainly shows, for it calls the Church to baptize the converts in the Name of the Triune God, implying that the missionary has taught the converts the doctrine of the Trinity. In order to do this, the preacher must himself have thorough knowledge of the Word of God and must possess the wisdom to address the Word to every audience. He must be called and qualified by Christ through the Holy Spirit. We must not have uncalled and unqualified "evangelists," no matter how well-intentioned.

Although our message is the whole counsel of God, there are certain crucial elements in the message of evangelism. What they are, our Lord pointed out in His mandate to the apostles, and to the Church, in Luke 24:47. Immediately upon His resurrection from the dead, Christ opened the understanding of the disciples "that they might understand the scriptures. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to

suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (vss. 45, 46). Then, He commissioned them (and in them the Church down through the ages): "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Similar was the later commission of the apostle born out of due time, Paul, in Acts 26:18: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." This commission, Paul carried out by showing to all men "that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20).

Evangelism must preach the sin of the people, the sin of the people as **guilt** - liability to the punishment of the offended God. Therefore, it is to proclaim the holy and righteous God, Whom the sinner has offended. This implies the preaching of God's Law, which the sinner has transgressed and which he cannot keep. The Reformed Faith does this sharply, pointedly, concretely! In contrast, much present-day evangelism says little or nothing about a holy God, His righteous Law, sin, guilt, and punishment. If sin comes up at all, it is only the aspect of sin that consists of the sinner's temporal troubles because of his wickedness. How different was the evangelism of Christ and of His apostles! Think of Jesus' deliberate exposure of the adultery of the Samaritan woman at the well. Think of Peter's searing condemnation of the Jews in Acts 3:14: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you.

Evangelism proclaims the remission, or forgiveness, of sins for every sinner who repents. This is the removal of the sinner's guilt and the imputation to him of the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith alone. The forgiveness of sins is **the** blessing of

salvation that is to be preached in evangelism. This was the great, glorious concern of the Reformation: justification by faith only. Where is this even to be found in much of modern evangelism? The great concern is that the sinner go to heaven and be happy, or that he be happy and successful here on earth. Not long ago, I heard a "convert" give a testimony on behalf of the famous evangelist who saved him, that accepting Jesus made him a better pass-catching end for his southern university football team.

If remission of sins is preached, the cross is preached; and the cross is preached as substitutionary atonement, as satisfaction made to the righteous God, as effectual redemption of all for whom Jesus died, so that those who trust in the cross enjoy its real benefit. But the cross is not preached apart from the Crucified. Jesus Christ Himself is preached as the message of evangelism; He is preached as the eternal Son of God come in the flesh, so that His blood was precious blood, blotting out sins.

If this is Who Jesus is and if this is what His cross is, the love of God is preached when remission of sins is preached. For it was God Who gave His Son on behalf of sinners - not **all** sinners, but sinners, just the same. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . ." (John 3:16).

Yet another crucial element of the message of evangelism is repentance: heartfelt, godly sorrow over one's sins. In Luke 24:47, Jesus charges that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached." In obedience to the Lord's mandate to him, Paul showed all men "that they should repent." Then, he called them to "do works meet for repentance (Acts 26:20). Repentance is the way, the only way, in which sinners receive and enjoy forgiveness. This is exactly Jesus' meaning in Luke

24:47: the apostles are to preach repentance as the way to have forgiveness.

Here, someone will say, the Reformed Faith is unable to do what is necessary for evangelism. Obviously, Jesus intended that the disciples call men to repent and that they proclaim the promise that everyone who does repent will have remission and, thus, salvation. But the Reformed Faith cannot give the call of the gospel; nor can it promiscuously proclaim the promise. So says the critic of the Reformed Faith. At the critical point, the Reformed Faith proves to be impotent.

The charge, or fear, as the case may be, is groundless. There is not a shred of truth to it. It is true that the Reformed Faith cannot and will not extend a well-meant offer to all hearers, i.e., an offer of salvation supposedly made by God to all hearers in love for them, with a sincere desire to save them, and on the acceptance of which by the sinner salvation depends. For the well-meant offer is nothing but a variation of the Pelagian-Arminian "whosoever will gospel." Long ago, the stalwart Presbyterian theologian, B.B. Warfield devastated this pretender-gospel: It is useless to talk of salvation being for "whosoever will" in a world of universal "won't." Here is the real point of difficulty: how, where, can we obtain **the will**? Let others rejoice in a "whosoever will gospel": for the sinner who knows himself to be a sinner, and knows what it is to be a sinner, only a "God will" gospel will suffice. If the gospel is to be committed to the dead wills of sinful men, and there is nothing above and beyond, who then can be saved? (**The Plan of Salvation**, Eerdmans, 1966, p.49).

But the Reformed Faith can and does call, with authority and urgency, in the Name of Jesus the Christ, all who hear, to repent and believe; and it can and does proclaim that everyone who

does repent and believe shall be forgiven and saved eternally. It preaches repentance.

The repentance which it preaches includes a life of godliness. Repentance, on the Reformed view, is a radical change of mind about sin and, therefore, a radical change of life - a spiritual turning, a conversion. Reformed preaching outside the congregation does not hide from the hearers that the gospel-call is a call to discipleship, to cross-bearing, to self-denial, to Jesus as Lord, as well as Savior. It is sometimes overlooked that in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus told the apostles to **disciple** the nations and that conversion and baptism are followed by instruction "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Evangelism does not end with "getting someone saved," but continues in their being taught to confess the truth in the true church; to love one another; to honor marriage; to submit to civil government; to live in separation from the world and its works; and to keep all the commandments of King Jesus. Reformed evangelism will do this. Much of non-Reformed evangelism leaves this completely out of sight. For this reason, it is also essential in the work of evangelism that those brought to the saving knowledge of the truth be directed to join a true church, a soundly Reformed church. No Reformed missionary could say to a convert, "Now join the church of your choice."

These are essentials of Biblical evangelism. The Reformed Faith, so far from being embarrassed by any of them, proclaims all of them as no other faith can.

But what of the distinctive truths of the Reformed Faith, the "doctrines of Calvinism," on account of which men charge that the Reformed Faith is unable to evangelize? Granted that the Reformed Faith can preach repentance unto remission, does it

leave the great doctrines of grace in the pulpit of the established church?

God forbid!

The Reformed Faith preaches the misery of men to be sin; and it preaches the extent of that misery to be total depravity. It passes upon every sinner the judgment of the gospel, that he is dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1), incapable of any good (Romans 3:9-18), and guilty before God (Romans 3:19). Specifically, it judges the sinner to be unable to repent, believe, and come to Christ, as the gospel commands him to do. The Reformed Faith preaches this in **evangelism**. To the man who objects to this as poor evangelism, it responds by pointing out to him that this was the evangelistic message of the Chief Evangelist Himself. In John 6:44, Jesus cries out to His audience, "No **man can come to me**, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Thus, the sinner is made to know his great need and utter helplessness.

The Reformed Faith preaches that the coming to Christ required in the gospel-call, as the only way of salvation, is God's drawing of a man. We come, but our coming is the work of God in us to draw us efficaciously. Repentance and faith are Divine gifts, not human works. The grace of God is irresistible by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Reformed Faith proclaims this in **evangelism**. To the man who objects to this as poor evangelism, it responds by pointing out to him that this was the evangelistic message of the Chief Evangelist Himself. In John 6:44, Jesus declared, "No man can come to me, **except the Father which hath sent me draw him.**"

In addition, the Reformed Faith preaches, in evangelism, that all such coming is grounded in the eternal, gracious election of God. That one comes to Christ is due to God's gracious election of him in eternity. Election is preached on the mission field,

election involving and accompanied by reprobation - the only election that Scripture knows. Sinners being drawn to Christ are not left in doubt whence all this springs. Penitent and believing hearts must be assured of the eternal purpose of God's love for them and must glorify God with the confession that salvation, their salvation, is of the Lord. This was the evangelistic preaching of Jesus. As He preached Himself to the Jewish multitudes and called them to come to Him, He exclaims, "**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out**" (John 6:37).

The Reformed Faith can do evangelism, because it has the gospel to preach. A message of the mere possibility of salvation is no gospel. A message of a Jesus Who likes to save, but cannot save, is no gospel. A message of salvation dependent on man's running or willing is no gospel. As Warfield wrote, in **The Plan of Salvation**, this is merely another form of "autosoterism" - the gloomy news that man must save himself:

It is only in almighty grace that a sinner can hope; for it is only almighty grace that can raise the dead. What boots it to send the trumpeter crying amid the serried ranks of the dead: "The gates of heaven stand open: whosoever will may enter in"? The real question which presses is, Who will make these dry bones live? As over against all teaching that would tempt man to trust in himself for any, even the smallest part, of his salvation, Christianity casts him utterly on God. It is God alone who saves, and that in every element of the saving process.

Our objection to the free-will preachers is not so much that they offer salvation, as it is that they have no salvation to offer. All who believe their message are themselves proper objects of genuine evangelism. We call them to turn from the dead idols of their own works and will, and to trust in the living God.

We have a message, the like of which there is not in all the world: not a new requirement for man to do something for his salvation, but the announcement of God's gift of salvation. True, we call men to repent and believe; but this repentance and faith are not works of man that accomplish salvation, but the way of receiving salvation. They are not human effort, but the renunciation of all human effort. They are not man's contribution to salvation, but the gift of God to men. True, we call repentant sinners to a life of good works, a life on a "narrow way"; but this life, the life of holiness, is itself part of God's deliverance of us from sin, His work of sanctification. Besides, our holy life is not meritorious, but thankfulness.

The message of the Reformed Faith is the message of grace. It is good news, the "evangel."

The Method of Reformed Evangelism

Just as it has its own message of evangelism, the Reformed Faith has its own method of evangelism: the Biblical method of preaching and teaching. The proper, effective method of evangelism is prescribed by Holy Scripture. No more than the Church may invent her own message may she invent her own method. She is bound by the commandment of the Bible. Christ determined the method in Luke 24:47, when He told the disciples, “. . . repentance and remission of sins should be *preached* in his name among all nations.” According to Mark 16:15, the Lord charged His church in these words, Go ye into all the world, and *preach the gospel* to every creature. To this method, and this method only, is attached the promise that there will be the fruit of those who believe and are saved (v.16). This

is the pattern of the ministry of the apostles, set forth by Paul in the first verse of I Corinthians 2: “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, *declaring unto you the testimony of God.*”

The method of evangelism is not stirring music; puppet-shows; testimonies by worldly celebrities; performances by worldly artists; or dramatic productions. Nor is it the eloquence, charisma, dynamic personality, flamboyance, persuasiveness, or enticing words of the evangelist. Jesus Christ is disgraced today by the gospel-rock (sic!), immodest Hollywood starlets, and Sabbath-desecrating athletes that are used to promote the gospel. Jesus Christ is all but lost sight of behind the big-name ecclesiastical showmen who claim to preach Him. It surprises us not at all that it is continually being disclosed that these evangelistic enterprises are money-making schemes for the personal enrichment of the evangelists and their families. These are the gospel-hucksters (II Cor. 2:17), those who make merchandise of the Church through covetousness (II Pet. 2:3).

It has pleased God to call His people to salvation by the foolishness of preaching (I Cor. 1:21). Preaching is the announcing of the gospel by a man (I use the masculine gender deliberately, here) called and sent by Christ through the Church; it is official, authoritative proclamation. In Luke 24, Jesus sends the apostles out; and He sends them “in his name” (v.47). Romans 10:15 lays down the rule when it asks, “And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” There are no longer evangelists in the New Testament sense. That office was temporary, like the apostolic office. Evangelism is done today by ordained ministers set apart for the work of going with the gospel to those outside the established Church: our missionaries. The reason for this is that Christ Himself gathers the Church. He

has revealed in Scripture that He does His work through the preaching of God's Word, which preaching belongs to the **office** in the Church.

Evangelism, or missions, therefore, is the work of the Church. It is the Church, the instituted Church, that preaches the Word. This is the Biblical pattern: the congregation at Antioch, Syria sent out Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey and supervised their work (cf. Acts 13:4; Acts 14:26,27). Evangelism is not to be done by societies and para-ecclesiastical organizations. They have no authority. They have no power - they lack the office of preaching.

But does not every saint have the duty to evangelize? Is not every child of God a missionary? Emphatically not! It is unbiblical to hold that every believer may and must evangelize. This is to maintain that every saint can and must preach the gospel. Where in Scripture is this authority given to every believer? Where in the practical parts of the New Testament epistles is this made the responsibility of every Christian? The notion that every member of the church is a missionary destroys the fundamental truth of the office in the church. Most pernicious of all is the utterly reckless act of putting this awesome burden on the shoulders of our teen age children who, altogether apart from the matter of office, ought not to be teaching, but learning the Word of God.

This is not to say that the believer should not witness to the truth as he has opportunity; he should -- this belongs to the office of believer (I Pet. 3:15). Let us not forget, however, that we witness, not only with our mouths, but also - and very powerfully - with our behavior. By our godly conduct, others may be gained to Christ (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 86).

Nor do we intend, by denying that every believer is an evangelist, to exclude the saints from the great work of evangelism. How could this be? Evangelism is the work of the Church; and the saints are the Church. Although the instrument of evangelism is the man called to be missionary, it is the Church, the body of believers and their children instituted in the offices of elder and deacon, that is doing the work through him. Just as the body speaks by means of its tongue (you do not say, "My tongue is speaking," but you say, "I am speaking"), so does the congregation of saints evangelize through the missionary. Missions is not the work of the missionary; it is the work of the people of God.

The saints are active in this labor of the Church. They pray for the work of missions. This is the co-operation Paul asked of the believers: ". . . brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified" (II Thess. 3:1). They support the work financially. Paul praises the Philippians for helping him in his material need: "Ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction" (Phil. 4:14).

Not least, the people of God are to live with each other in the church in such a way that the Spirit will bless their witness outside the church. It is striking, in the book of Acts, that the Church grew as it lived in faithfulness to the doctrine of the apostles; in zealous worship of God; and in peace among themselves. Where there is heresy, disinterest in spiritual things, carnality, worldliness, immorality, hatred, strife, and division, evangelism cannot be expected to prosper. For the Holy Spirit cannot be expected to bless our labor; and evangelism depends wholly upon the Spirit of Christ.

The Power of evangelism is the Holy Spirit. He sends forth the laborers into the harvest; He opens doors; He opens the

hearts of men and women to receive the Word; He unites the elect to Christ; He places men in the body of the Church as it pleases Him. There is great concern today over methods of evangelism. Men try to discover what will make evangelism effective. The danger is, not only that they resort to unbiblical methods, but also that they fall back, in the matter of missions, upon their own resources - their own wisdom, their own strength, their own inventions. **The** method of evangelism is preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified; and that which makes this effective is the Holy Spirit. This is the profound, gripping doctrine of Paul in I Corinthians 2. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (v.14). "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (v.10).

Christ pointed out the indispensable place of the Holy Spirit in missions when, immediately after He had charged the apostles with the duty of going out to preach in His Name, He instructed them: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

We must beware lest we suppose that for effective evangelism we need millions of dollars; far-flung radio networks; catchy radio formats; professional television productions; and handsome, eloquent speakers. Once, two men set out on foot into countries of unbelief and immorality, with nothing but the gospel of Christ - and turned the world upside down. Once, an obscure monk in the hinterlands of barbarous Germany spoke out for the truth - and let loose the Word of God over the whole world. The Holy Spirit is the power of missions. We must depend upon Him. We must always be beseeching

Him to make our work fruitful. We must consciously be laboring in His might.

The Motivation of Reformed Evangelism

The motivation of the Reformed Faith in evangelism, generally, is that God, by His eternal election of grace, has a Church to be gathered at all times and among all peoples; and He wills to gather this Church by the gospel.

Specifically, our motivation is obedience, obedience to the command of our Lord, Jesus. He has said to us "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations"; and this settles the matter. Is there any obedience like the obedience of the Reformed Faith with its knowledge of the sovereignty of Christ?

Second, we have the fervent desire that God be glorified in all His creation. We are grieved and angry that the Name of God is hidden and profaned everywhere. We share something of the spirit of Paul in Athens, whose spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, so that he could not but speak on behalf of the one, true God, the Father of Jesus (Acts 17:16ff.). In love for God, we bring His Name everywhere and labor for the establishing of churches that will be light in the darkness. Should any outstrip the love of the Reformed Faith for God?

Third, we love the people of God who are to be restored, or converted. Jesus had compassion on the fainting, scattered sheep who, without the Word, were as sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36-38). Do we? Should we not? Should any love be stronger than that of the Reformed Faith which knows the people of God

to be eternally loved of God, redeemed by the precious blood of God's own Son, and destined for the bliss of glory?

Besides, there is the purpose of God with missions that the wicked be rendered without excuse and that the Day of Christ may come quickly.

The Reformed Faith can engage in this work with the confidence of victory. The difficulties and enemies are many and great. There are materialism and pleasure-madness. There are communism and humanism. There are the heathen religions and the cults. There is dreadful apostasy in the Christian churches. At bottom, there is the spiritual death of every human heart, the blindness of every mind, and the bondage of every will - and the energetic work of Satan to keep it so.

But the Reformed Church is not discouraged, is not pessimistic. For the Son of God has come, has died, has risen again, has been seated on the right hand of God. All power in heaven and on earth is His. We preach in His Name. He shall certainly gather His Church.
