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Western Theological Seminary

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Abstract

Hope College class of 1944, graduated cum laude; Western Theological Seminary class of 1947; Fuller Theological Seminary Doctor of Missiology Degree 1976; Minister of the RCA, 1947-1979; missionary to Africa, 1947-1977; president General Synod, 1978-1979. Galley proofs of the Anuak New Testament which he translated; correspondence for the years 1965-1968, 1970-1971, 1974-1979 (most of this correspondence is in regards to his speaking engagements, his cassette tape ministry in Africa, his work at Fuller Seminary, or his being president of the general synod); clippings from various RCA and Christian publications; biographical information; and pamphlets. Correspondents include J. Robert Harrison, John E. Buteyn, Arie R. Brouwer, James P. Ebbers, Ronald W. Beery, Gordon Van Wylen, Donald W. Hoffman, and Max DePree.

Accession No: W88-0054
Provenance: Harvey Hoekstra
Donor: Western Theological Seminary
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Biography

Harvey Thomas Hoekstra was born in 1920. In 1938, Hoekstra began high school and finished his work in two and a half years. He graduated with honors from high school and carried on that tradition of excellence at Hope, from where he graduated cum laude with an A.B. degree. He received his B.D. degree from Western Theological Seminary shortly after that. He also worked on postgraduate work at the Summer Institute of Linguistics with Wycliffe College. He attended Scarritt College and Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. Studying during the next two missionaries’ furloughs at Princeton Seminary and the Kennedy School of Missions in Hartford, Connecticut, Hoekstra worked tirelessly towards his doctoral degree. He completed his postgraduate study at the School of World Missions, Fuller Seminary in California. He obtained a Doctor of Missiology degree in 1976.

Hoekstra married Lavina Hoffman while still in college. The Hoekstras had six children. Together, they traveled to Africa to be missionaries for the Reformed Church. They served in Sudan from 1948 to 1961. During that time, Harvey worked with native tribes with spoken dialect. He worked to decode the Anuak dialect into written symbols, and then he translated the New Testament into Anuak for the American Bible Society. He also translated Mark, John, Acts, and Romans into the Murle language that was printed by the United Bible Society using both Roman and Arabic letters.

The Hoekstras were expelled from Sudan in 1961. They soon began to minister in Ethiopia. Their main area of ministry was to the Mesengo, primitive forest people who live in southern Ethiopia. Hoekstra began to search for a way to reach these people. He developed the cassette tape ministry to bring his message to the inhabitants. Their program utilizes airplanes, cassettes made in Holland, and Ethiopian personnel to disseminate his message.

For twenty-six years, the Hoekstras ministered in Africa. In 1975, he came back to the
United States to complete his postgraduate work. He then became president of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America in 1978.

Scope and Content

The Harvey Hoekstra collection consists primarily of his correspondence with Robert Harrison, Arie Brouwer, James Ebbers, Max De Pree, Gordon Van Wylen, Portable Recording Ministries, and other RCA figures. Subjects include mission work, speaking engagements, his Doctor of Missiology degree, and his presidency of the General Synod. Correspondence to various boards of the RCA, *The Church Herald*, and general letters sent to churches regarding his mission work are included. The collection is arranged chronologically. The collection contains background information, various papers written by Hoekstra, magazine and newspaper clippings. It also contains the galley proofs for the Anuak New Testament, translated by Hoekstra.

Container List

- Correspondence, n.d., 1942, 1962-1996 (5 folders)
- Papers, n.d., 1974-1978
- Speaking Engagements, 1967-1968
- Translation Work, n.d., 2012-2014