

THE STANDARD BEARER

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Sola Scriptura
Sola Fidel
Sola Gratia

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In This Issue . . .

As suggested already by the cover, this issue includes a double feature. There is, first of all, a reference to the 16th century Reformation, the anniversary of which we celebrate later this month. The three Latin phrases, well known and much appreciated by us, are referred to by Prof. Hanko herein as the "three great 'solas' which God restored to the church through the Reformers." That's "Scripture alone," "faith alone," and "grace alone." Prof. Engelsma, as you will see, adds a fourth: "Christ alone." And he declares further that "that man truly celebrates the Reformation, and he alone, who joins the church that proclaims and defends the body of truth that the Reformers fought and suffered for . . ."

Therein also lies the point of connection between our bringing to mind in this issue the Reformation, on the one hand, and our featuring the Seminary, on the other. For, belonging to the "much" which, as we are reminded by Prof. Hanko, has been given to us by the King of the church is this: a rich heritage of the truth — the truth, that is, of the Word of God, as it was set forth in the Protestant Reformation, developed further by our own spiritual fathers, and maintained in our Seminary, which for over 60 years has trained men for its proclamation. For that, we are humbly thankful.

In this issue, therefore, Prof. Engelsma addresses the matter of proper celebration of the anniversary of the Protestant Reformation; Prof. Decker shares with us the text of the sermon he preached at Prof. Engelsma's installation; and Prof. Hanko gives us the substance of his message at this year's Seminary Convocation, held on September 28 in Southwest Church. (To the third member of the Editorial Committee was left the easy part, the picture-taking. Hope you enjoy those, too. The one on the cover is, of course, the Protestant Reformed Seminary building, located in Grandville, Michigan.)

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor-in-chief: Prof. David J. Engelsma
Managing Editor: Prof. Robert D. Decker
Editors' Assistant: Mr. Don Doezeema

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EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, Michigan 49418

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 - 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426

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BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, MI
49516

PH: (616) 243-2953

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
c/o Protestant Reformed
Church
B. Van Herk
66 Fraser St.

Wainuiomata, New Zealand

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Decorating the Monuments of the Reformers

Celebration at the end of this month of the 16th century Reformation of the church will be a dangerous activity for Protestants. The danger is that churches and their members seize upon the occasion of the anniversary of the onset of the Reformation to praise the Reformers profusely, while repudiating the truth of the gospel that the Reformers proclaimed. Men and women who in fact are hostile to the Reformation-doctrines decorate the monuments of the Reformers, strewing the flowers of their praise upon the Reformers' graves.

Christ called this hypocrisy, and pronounced His woe over it. Referring specifically to the scribes and Pharisees and their loud declarations of regard for the prophets of the Old Testament, Jesus said, "Woe unto you . . . hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous" (Matthew 23:29).

The evil is prevalent today. Lutherans who are indifferent to the doctrine of justification by faith alone and whose churches are busy selling out the doctrine in high-level discussions with the

Roman Catholic Church will bless the name of Martin Luther on Reformation Day. Presbyterians and Reformed who vehemently oppose Calvin's doctrine of eternal, sovereign election and reprobation will, nevertheless, extol the Genevan Reformer as a hero of the Protestant church. Protestants who are disgusted with the Reformation's insistence upon Scripture alone, including the stress upon doctrine and expository preaching, and who are swept away with the giddy excitement of the charismatic movement will yet pay homage to the Reformation.

What accounts for this strange behavior?

Why do these Protestants not spit on the graves of the Reformers, or, at least, leave any adorning of their tombstones to those who believe what the Reformers taught, and love the Reformers for the truth's sake, as spiritual fathers?

Such towering, powerful figures are the Reformers, by the Providence of the God Who governs history and its thought, that their enemies cannot ignore them and dare not revile them. Such a glorious event is the Reformation in the history of the church that those in the Protestant churches, at any rate, who

radically differ with it dare not launch a frontal attack upon it, but must pay lip-service to it. Besides, it is much more effective to blunt the Reformation's message among the people when one is draped in the mantle of an admirer of the Reformers than when he appears as an out-and-out adversary. The Pharisees could spread among the people the legalism that the prophets abominated when they were building the tombs of the prophets, as they never could do if they were perceived by the people as the children of them who killed the prophets.

Even the atheistic, Communist regime of East Germany joined in the monument-decorating charade in 1983 — the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther. Not only did the East German authorities refurbish the notable Luther-sites, but they also spoke highly of "Comrade Luther," claiming him as a forerunner of socialism. Surely, the activity of decorating the graves of the righteous attained an extreme bordering on the farcical, in this praise of Luther by the Communists. A State for which God is the enemy extolled the man for whom the God revealed in Jesus Christ was the only hope of men. A State committed to the notion

that religion is the opiate of the people honored the man for whom the Christian religion was the sinner's only peace. A State slavishly serving the idea that true happiness for man must come through revolution hailed as a hero the world's fiercest anti-revolutionary, whose denunciation of revolution, "Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants," is much to strong even for most Christians.

To a man, the Reformers rejected all honoring of themselves. Zealous as they were for the name of God (the motto of them all was "To God Alone, the Glory"), the thought that men might praise them was obnoxious to them. Luther expressed displeasure at his followers' naming their church after him. Calvin was buried without any monument at all, so that in a few months no one could know where his remains awaited the resurrection. There would be no decorating of his grave!

Nevertheless, Protestants ought to honor the work of the Holy Spirit through the Reformers, and the Reformation as the greatest deliverance of His church by our Head since the days of the apostles. By it, "Zion in her low estate/Was bro't from bondage by the Lord," as we sing in a versification of Psalm 126. Of those who enjoy the liberty that resulted from the Reformation — true Protestants, it ought to be the case, as *The Psalter* continues, that "in ecstasy we sang for joy,/By grace and wondrous love restored."

This is done by embracing the truth — the doctrines — given back to the church by the Reformation, with believing hearts and minds, and by confessing these doctrines with the mouth. The church honors her prophets by receiving the prophets' message!

It is fitting that the churches keep up the remembrance of the Reformation among us by a special meeting at which the history of the Reformation is recounted and the doctrine explored. Ministers do well, on the last Lord's Day in October, to preach a passage that sharply teaches one or another of the outstanding Reformation truths, explicitly drawing attention to the Reformation and our indebtedness to it. The theologians of the church have the duty, and privilege, to be busy studying that fascinating history, as well as the teachings of the Reformers, for the benefit of the people of God. Our Christian schools and our homes should avail themselves of the annual anniversary of the Reformation to instruct the next generation as to the great things God did for us in that mighty movement. High school students can be encouraged to read Roland H. Bainton's *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*; we might put into the hands of the grade school children such small books as Peter de Rover's *Champion of Geneva: A Sketch of John Calvin for Young People*, or Thea B. Van Halsema's *Glorious Heretic: The Story of Guido de Bres* (author of our Belgic Confession).

But none of these activities, commendable as they all are, is a substitute for the Reformed man or woman's hearing, believing, confessing, and living the Reformation doctrines, week-in and week-out.

Will our celebration of the Reformation be genuine, or will it be a mere decorating of the Reformers' monuments?

Do we regard Holy Scripture, in its entirety, as the inspired, and therefore inerrant, Word of God? Is our confession of the sole authority of Scripture as God's Word proved by our diligent attendance at its preaching every

Sabbath; by our willing attendance at the catechism classes this coming season; by our daily reading of the Scriptures; and by our effort to direct our behavior according to Scripture's role? Do we live by faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen, and by faith in Him alone, i.e., by the grace of God only? Is the cross of Christ, i.e., His doing and dying some 2000 years ago, our only righteousness with God the Judge, so that we have peace — actually and experientially have peace? Is this Christ-received-by-faith-only the power of a new life for us, so that we are holy, in a corrupt world? Do we confess these doctrines, regardless of the cost personally? Do we contend for them, when they are contradicted, or corrupted? And is this because we *love* the truth? Men and women (and their covenant children) who can answer yes to these questions are no hypocrites when they commemorate Reformation Day on October 31.

This has everything to do with our church membership. We honor the Reformation by supporting the preaching of its gospel in a congregation and a denomination that are faithful to the Reformation doctrines. We ourselves receive the truth restored by the Reformation by sound preaching of this truth every Lord's Day. We confess "Scripture alone"; "faith alone"; "grace alone"; and "Christ alone" — not individually, but with the church to which we belong. That man truly celebrates the Reformation, and he alone, who joins the church that proclaims and defends the body of truth that the Reformers fought and suffered for; maintains his membership in her; and is a lively member of her.

As for the church, she celebrates the Reformation, not by mouthing empty praise of that work of our Lord in history once a year, but by being the pillar and ground of the truth that has come down to her from the Reformation — the Reformed Faith set forth in the Reformed

Confessions. She herself submits to the authority of Scripture, in order then to teach it to her spiritual children, insisting on it, if need be, to rebellious children, by her discipline. In season and out of season, she proclaims the good news of that Scripture — the grace of God in Jesus as the

only cause of the salvation of elect sinners.

This is the church, this is the people, who are the living monument of the Reformers, and of the prophets whose message the Reformers echoed.

Over them, Jesus pronounces His blessing. □ -DJE

The Sermon
Prof. Robert D. Decker

Committing the Truth to Faithful Men

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." II Timothy 2:2

God has done great things for us! He has given us another professor. Our new professor is a gifted man, a man committed with all his heart to the Reformed faith. This means that our seminary can not only continue, but also progress and grow.

What a blessing this is. In these days when the foundations are being shaken and when many cardinal truths of the Reformed faith are denied, God has given us a man who believes the inspired, infallible Bible, a man well qualified to teach and defend the truth of Scripture. For this we ought to be profoundly thankful to our faithful God and

deeply humble. The task is enormous; the responsibility awesome. But with God all things are possible. By His grace the work can and shall be done. And God's will be the glory.

This text contains an obviously personal word of the apostle Paul to Timothy, his spiritual son. I am not Paul and Rev. Engelsma is not my son. But as part of the inspired Word of God the text certainly expresses the calling and work of a Professor of Theology and thus too the place of the Seminary within our churches.

The apostle Paul is nearing the end of his life and is concerned that his spiritual son, Timothy, a young minister, be strong in the grace of Christ Jesus. Timothy must remember what he had been taught, the truth of the gospel. And Timothy must commit that truth to faithful men who shall be able to teach others. These faithful men are future ministers of the gospel. All of this is highly necessary. The ministry

must continue. In this way, by means of the preaching of the Word, the Son of God gathers, defends, and preserves the church. God is pleased to save His church by means of faithful men who are able to teach others. It is essential, therefore, that the truth be committed to these men. The question is, to whom must the truth be committed? The text answers, "faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." These are *faithful* men. They are men full of faith. They are men who are therefore trustworthy or reliable, men upon whom the churches can depend to do the work of the ministry.

Certain essential spiritual gifts characterize a faithful man, gifts from God apart from which a man cannot be considered faithful. The first of these spiritual gifts is spirituality or genuine piety. A faithful man is a child of God. It is true that there are hypocrites in the ministry. God even uses false prophets like

Prof. Decker is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Balaam to bless His people. Two things may be said about this. These never last. Sooner or later they are exposed and leave or are put out of the ministry by discipline. And these are not the rule but the exceptions. Ministers must be spiritual, pious, godly men. They must be men saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, God's gift. They must be men in whose hearts burns the love of God in Christ. They must be men who love God and God's people, His church and cause. They must be men who have, as one writer put it, "a fascination with the Bible" and who live exemplary Christian lives.

Humility characterizes a faithful man. There is no room for pride in the ministry. Pride, the Bible says, goes before destruction. This is true in the ministry. Self-seeking pride, selfishness, the seeking of the praise of men — all these are abominable sins among God's people. But they are especially abominable sins among ministers. Faithful men are humble men. Like the apostles, they are slaves of God and of His church. They know the truth of what the practical theologian J.J. Van Oosterzee said: "The flock does not exist for the pastor, but the pastor for the flock." They give their lives in the service of God's church! Thus faithful men are men of prayer. They know that all that they have and are are of God. They know that they cannot preach one sermon or perform one pastoral task apart from God's grace. They pray without ceasing for God's grace and Spirit to enable them to be faithful men able to teach others.

Faithful men are men of sympathetic understanding. Jesus, our great, merciful High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities and tempted in all points as we, yet without sin.

This is why we can find in Him mercy and grace to help us in our need. The servants of Christ must know God's people, their needs, struggles, joys, afflictions, sorrows. And faithful men must feel with God's people and understand them so as to bring God's Word to their needs.

Faithful men are men of spiritual courage or boldness. The apostle Paul admonished the church at Ephesus to pray for all the saints and for me that I may have boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel. That must be the prayer of every faithful minister. A minister needs boldness to preach and teach the truth of the gospel which declares that we are sinners who can do no good at all and that our salvation is all by the grace of the sovereign God in Christ to His own glory. That takes courage, boldness. Ministers stand in the front line of the battle of faith. This is why Paul tells Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Further, these faithful men must be able to teach others also. They must have this ability, and this too comes from God. A faithful man must be able to read and understand the Holy Scriptures. He must be able think and organize his thoughts clearly and logically. Thus the minister needs a broad background in the liberal arts and a good knowledge of the original languages of the Bible. He must know the history of the church and he must know the doctrines of Scripture as set forth in the creeds. All this and more he must make his own. He must have the ability to explain God's Word to God's people. This takes hours and hours of hard work. It takes as well much prayer to make a good sermon. Hence a faithful man needs the self-discipline to invest the time and energy in prayerful study of the Word.

A faithful man able to teach others needs the ability to speak publicly. His chief task is to preach the Word twice per Lord's Day and to teach the children and youth of the church. He must have this God-given ability. No professor can impart these gifts to a man. Faithful men are gifts of God who also enables them to teach others. Timothy is exhorted to commit to these men the truth. And this is our calling in the Seminary.

What must be committed to these faithful men? The text answers: "the things thou hast heard of me." The context makes clear what these things are. In chapter 1:13 the apostle speaks of "the form of sound words" which Timothy had heard of him and which he must hold fast. Sound words means literally pure or uncorrupt words. In chapter 2:14 Timothy is exhorted to put the church in remembrance of "these things." The reference is to the teaching of the immediately preceding: "if we be dead with Christ we shall also live with Him" In chapter 2:23 these things, these pure, uncorrupt words, are presented as the opposite of "foolish and unlearned questions which cause strife." These latter Timothy must avoid.

What Timothy heard from the apostle were the sound words, the pure doctrine of Holy Scripture. The apostle taught him Christ from the Scriptures. He instructed him in the faith. Timothy heard the truth of the inspired, infallible Scriptures. And Timothy heard that truth not merely with his ears, but he heard it in the sense that he learned the truth. Timothy had a spiritual knowledge of the truth. It was the knowledge of a true and living faith.

And Timothy learned these things among many witnesses. These witnesses were literally martyrs. In other words these

witnesses were not mere spectators or observers, but martyrs who testified to the truth of what Paul taught Timothy. And these martyrs were many: Timothy's grandmother, Lois; his mother, Eunice; and Paul's co-workers. And, above all, there was the witness of the Holy Spirit of Christ who testified in Timothy's heart and worked faith in him. From a child Timothy knew the Holy Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation.

This is what we too have heard, learned among many witnesses. And we have much more than Timothy. For God has given us the entire Canon of the infallibly inspired Scriptures. We have learned the truth of Holy Scripture, and the Spirit witnesses with our spirits that these things are true.

We have heard these things among many witnesses as well. There is the testimony of the martyrs whose souls are under the altar and who cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" There is the witness of the fathers of the church, the early fathers, the Reformation fathers, the Dutch fathers. And out of the witness came the creeds, especially the Three Forms of Unity, the Westminster Creeds, and others. And make no mistake about it, we have the witness of our Protestant Reformed fathers. Through these we have been given by God rich, profound, brilliant, even unique insights into the truth. Think of it! God's unilateral, unconditional covenant of friendship and fellowship with the elect in Christ Jesus; God's sovereign, saving grace by which alone the elect are saved in Christ; preaching as the means by which the voice of Christ is heard and by which power the elect are brought to repentance and faith while the

reprobate are hardened and condemned in the way of their own rebellion and sin; the absolute antithesis, God and the devil, faith and unbelief, Christ and Belial, the church and the world, good and evil. What a rich, wonderful heritage God has given us. Now is no time for compromise, either in doctrine or in practice. Now is no time for bickering over non-essentials. That sacred trust of truth needs to be taught others in the churches. Without shame that truth must be proclaimed wherever God in His good pleasure sends us.

How shall this be done? The text answers: by committing that truth to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. To commit means to place down, deposit, entrust to one's charge. Notice, this is an imperative. It is not something we may or may not do. We have no choice in this matter. God's command is that we entrust, commit these things to faithful men!

This is the calling of the professor. It determines his method of teaching. What we have learned is a discernible body of truth out of the Holy Scriptures as interpreted by the Reformed Confessions. This truth is not subject to various interpretations or applications. It is not merely to be discussed or debated. It is not up for grabs. Much less is that truth to be contradicted, denied, or undermined in any way. The truth must be faithfully entrusted to the charge of faithful men who shall thus be able to teach others.

This is done only one way: by expounding the Scriptures as interpreted by the Confessions over against all heresies, especially those errors of the present day.

This is utterly crucial. At least two fundamental principles of the Reformation are involved. The first is the formal principle, *sola Scriptura*. The inspired, inerrant

Scriptures are the sole authority for the faith and life of the child of God. The second and closely related principle of the Reformation is the perspicuity of Scripture. Scripture is not an enigma. It is not hidden, obscure, or able to be understood only by highly educated experts. Scripture is uncomplicated, simple, clear, and easy to understand. When one stands before the Scriptures he either wrests them to his own destruction in unbelief or he believes them with childlike faith. And the latter is by grace alone.

Of course students and professors may question, debate, discuss, and probe. They must feel free to do this. But they are free to do this only within the bounds of Scripture as interpreted by the confessions! What is committed to the students must be learned; but that learning is under the ministry of the Word, and it must be mixed with faith. That precious truth, the Reformed faith as given to our churches, must become the burning conviction of their hearts by the grace of the Holy Spirit. When it becomes that, then they will be faithful men who are able to teach others. And by this means God's church will be gathered, defended, preserved unto eternal life out of the whole human race.

This is God's Word tonight to all of us. All of this takes place within the context of the churches. The Seminary is no ivory tower; it is not merely an academic institution of higher learning. The Seminary exists for the sake of the churches and to prepare its future ministers and missionaries.

The Seminary occupies a place which is indispensable for the life and well-being of the churches. It is a sacred trust God has given, a holy calling, a task utterly impossible! None is worthy to commit the truth to faithful men.

None is worthy to receive it and to teach it to others. And none is capable of doing either!

Beloved in the Lord! The seminary needs your love, concern, support, and above all your fervent and constant prayers. Pray that God will give us faithful men who are able to teach others. Pray that God will

enable our new professor and the faculty faithfully to commit the truth to these men. In this way God gives us grace to do the work for the gathering of His church, the coming of His kingdom, and the glory of His ever blessed Name! Amen.

The above is the unabridged text of the sermon preached by Prof. Decker at the installation of Rev. David J. Engelsma into the office of Professor of Theology. The sermon was preached in the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois on August 31, 1988. □

Convocation Speech

Prof. Herman C. Hanko

The Much That Is Required

"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48b).

Esteemed colleagues, students, members of the School Committee, and fellow saints:

As I was pondering these words of our Lord in preparation for convocation, what Jesus says here began to frighten me. After all, we have received of the Lord so very much; and Jesus emphasizes that for that very reason much is also required. That is a sobering thought as we look over our own place in Christ's church.

As is clear from the context, the Lord is speaking of His second coming at the end of time. He is, as so often, stressing that His coming will be unexpected: He will come as a thief in the

night. And because of the unexpected nature of His coming, it is incumbent upon His people that they live in a state of constant watchfulness and prayer.

To impress this calling upon the minds of His people, the Lord tells a parable. A man who is lord of vast estates departs from his household for a time. Prior to his departure he commits his household and the responsibility for its care to his servants. The time of his return, however, is not known, and this very uncertainty must serve as incentive to the servants to be faithful over that which the lord has entrusted to them.

But there are two kinds of servants. Some are faithful, and of them the Lord says, "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching" (vs. 37). But some become convinced that the lord delays his coming and begin to beat the menservants and maidservants, to eat and drink, and to be drunken (vs. 45). A terrible

punishment awaits them.

However, these unfaithful servants are again distinguished among themselves. The principle of distinction is the amount of knowledge of the lord's will which they possess; and on the basis of that amount of knowledge which they possess, they are also punished: "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (vss. 47, 48a).

In connection with this parable, Jesus lays down the fundamental principle of the kingdom of heaven which we consider tonight: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Prof. Hanko is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

It is evident that the Lord is speaking of His kingdom. In verses 31, 32 he says, "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

This kingdom is the heavenly kingdom which shall be realized in the new heavens and the new earth when Christ comes again. It is well to emphasize this in our day, for one of the great errors of today's church is to make this kingdom of Christ an earthly kingdom realized here in this present history. But it is emphatically heavenly because it is the kingdom of God, perfectly established when the full purpose of God's counsel is reached. It is a kingdom, therefore, of righteousness, established in the blood of the cross and through the power of the resurrection and ascension of Christ at God's right hand.

Over that kingdom Christ rules as sovereign. His sovereignty is far greater than the sovereignty of any earthly monarch no matter how total and complete that monarch's rule may be. Christ not only determines who are to be the citizens of that kingdom, but He makes His own citizens by the power of His shed blood. He rules over their lives totally and completely, assigning to each his place in that kingdom and giving to each his calling. Christ is so sovereign that all that happens within that kingdom comes to pass by His will. And outside the borders of that kingdom even the wicked who war against His kingdom are, under His sovereignty, pawns in His hand to serve the good of His kingdom. Christ rules over it, protects it, fights its battles, gains the victory for it, and leads the

hosts of His citizens from victory to victory as the mighty Captain of their salvation.

But that kingdom, though it is to be finally established in all its perfection in heaven, is manifested on earth. And, while the manifestation of that kingdom of earth embraces the whole life and calling of God's people as citizens of that kingdom, it is particularly manifested in the church. The church and the kingdom are not the same. The church is the body of Christ; the kingdom is the sphere of Christ's absolute rule of grace.

Yet, the two are inseparably related to each other. Through the church the gospel of the kingdom is preached. And that gospel of the kingdom is the power by which the citizens of the kingdom are called out of the kingdom of darkness into citizenship in the kingdom of God's dear Son. By that gospel the citizens of the kingdom are brought into humble worship and service of their great King. Through the power of that gospel the kingdom is preserved and protected against all the forces of the kingdom of darkness. And, constantly strengthened by the preaching, the citizens of the kingdom go forth in the service of Christ to do all the work of the kingdom.

But the King is gone from the earth. He has traveled into heaven. And while He is absent He entrusts those who remain upon the earth with the work of the kingdom and church.

Within that church and kingdom the Lord has given a place to us as Protestant Reformed Churches. It is not a large place, but it is an important one. It is a small place, not only in comparison with that great multitude of redeemed who are already in heaven in the company of just men made perfect, but it is even a small place in

comparison with the church of Christ which is now on earth. Yet, He has given us this place. And in that place the Lord has given us "much." The "much" which He has given to us is very great. It is, in fact, so great that this "much" is most probably "more" than He has given to any other church in the world. And that is what makes this text so frightening.

* * * * *

What is that "much" which the King of the church has given us?

First of all, in general, it is a great heritage of the truth. This heritage of the truth goes back to the very beginning of the New Testament era and includes in it the great creeds of the ancient church. It includes the glorious truths of sovereign grace as set forth by Augustine, the bishop of Hippo in the middle of the fifth century.

But even more than that, it includes the great truths of the Protestant Reformation: the three great "solas" which God restored to the church through the Reformers. "Sola Scriptura." Scripture alone is the one authority for all of faith and all of life. "Sola Fidei." It is by faith alone that we are justified, for our righteousness is only in the perfect work of Christ on the cross, and never in our works. "Sola gratia." It is by grace, sovereign, unmerited, particular grace, that we are saved. And that great heritage is the priceless heritage for which countless saints have bled and died and which has been the treasure of the church since that time till today.

Yet, at the same time, that heritage of the truth includes that which is uniquely Protestant Reformed. This too must be mentioned, for it is that heritage entrusted to us through God's work in our spiritual fathers by whose labors our own denomination

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

OF THE
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Phone: (616) 531-1490

Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rector — *Departments of Practical Theology and New Testament*
Prof. David J. Engelsma — *Departments of Dogmatics and Old Testament*
Prof. Herman C. Hanko — *Departments of Church History and New Testament*
Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema — *Departments of Dogmatics and Old Testament*

October 15, 1988

Beloved people of God,

A new school year has begun up on Seminary Hill, and the faculty and students greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some changes have taken place in the Seminary. Perhaps the most important is that God has called Rev. D. Engelsma to our Seminary faculty this past summer. He was installed at a special worship service held in South Holland on August 31. Participating in the installation ceremony were the Revs. Lubbers, VanBaren, and VanOverloop, while Prof. Decker preached the sermon. A collection was taken at the service for the Library Fund of Seminary which amounted to \$595.42. We are thank ful that the Lord so graciously continues to care for our Seminary and that He has provided again a professor for the school.

During this school year Prof. Engelsma is at Calvin Seminary working towards a Th.M. degree in the field of Dogmatics. This is in preparation for his teaching duties. In the meantime, Prof. Hoeksema is spending a year in Burnie, Tasmania, ministering to the needs of God's people there and will join the faculty next year. Profs. Decker and Hanko will be handling the teaching responsibilities during the current school year.

Some changes in personnel are also a part of the new school year. Mrs. Jone Kuiper will soon be laying aside her work as Secretary to spend more time with her family. We take this opportunity publicly to thank her for her work in Seminary and her always pleasant and cheerful assistance to the professors and students in so many details of Seminary work. For this year, Mrs. Eileen Terpstra will be taking over the office work on a part-time basis. We welcome Mrs. Terpstra into the Seminary family.

Mr. Don Doezeema has also set up a permanent office of sorts in the faculty room of the Seminary. He will do the work of Registrar, assist Prof. Decker in the duties of rector, take over some of the library responsibilities, and give his own expertise in keeping things running smoothly in our school. We are thankful to have his efficient help.

The students in school this year are the following: Mitch Dick, who is in his second year of Seminary studies; Len Holstege, in his final year of Pre-Seminary studies; Ken Elzinga and Doug Kuiper, in their second year of Pre-Seminary studies. Two other students are also working in Pre-Seminary studies, but in different parts of the country where they cannot take part of their subjects in the Seminary.

All this underscores once again the need for students. We commend this need to our churches and urge you to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send forth laborers in His vineyard. Pray for us, brethren; we feel deeply our inadequacy and our dependence upon God's continued help. May your prayers join with ours for God's blessing upon our school.

Fraternally in Christ,
Prof. Herman Hanko
For the faculty

was formed. It is a heritage not separate from that which comes down to us from bygone ages; it is a heritage of the great application of the truths of sovereign grace to two particular aspects of our confession and calling. It is the heritage of the truth of sovereign grace as it applies to the doctrine of God's everlasting covenant of grace which He establishes with His people through Christ; and it is the truth of sovereign grace as it applies to the truth of the antithesis — that great principle which determines all the walk and calling of God's people here in the world.

Based on that heritage, so distinctively ours, God has given us much more. He has given us pulpits occupied by ministers who faithfully preach and teach that heritage and who devote their lives and strength to the work of the church. He has given us faithful men who hold the offices of elders and deacons. It ought to give us pause that throughout the years of existence we have not lacked men of God, men of integrity, men of courage and zeal, who have been qualified by the King of the church to do this work upon which the welfare of the church depends. He has given us covenant homes and covenant schools staffed by dedicated teachers who devote their lives to the education of the seed of the covenant. And last, but not least, he has given us, now for over sixty years, our own Seminary where young men have been trained for the ministry in our churches. From that Seminary have come the men who have preached the gospel of the kingdom both in the established church and in the mission fields where the Lord has directed us. That Seminary has stood through good times and bad, working without interruption in the tasks of the church. And because of

that Seminary our churches have not lacked faithful men who have gone forth into the church to feed the sheep of Christ.

All these gifts have been given by grace. In so many ways we have been and are unworthy of them. He has not given us this great "much" because we have done anything to deserve it. Quite the opposite is true. It is humbling and frightening to think of how we have forfeited all claim to such a great favor. But freely and graciously, with sovereign love, the great King has bestowed upon us this marvelous "much."

* * * * *

Yet, to whomsoever much is given, from him much shall be required.

What is the "much" that is required?

It ought, I think, to be obvious first of all that, most basically, what the King requires of those to whom much is given is faithfulness. If the great "much" which we have been given is especially that one heritage of the faith, then faithfulness is above all what is required. And faithfulness, in turn, requires that we hold fast to what we have received, know it, understand it, love and cherish it, commit it faithfully to generations yet to come, and take that treasure and develop it further. Yes, also this latter. For the riches of the knowledge of God in Christ which are our salvation are glorious treasures of the Scriptures which are an inexhaustible mine of the truth.

But to be faithful in that way is also to have a deep appreciation for that heritage. We always, as is true of the church of all ages, are in peril of forgetting it. Or, which is worse, we are in danger of becoming so accustomed to it that we begin to take it for granted and fail to realize its worth. It we do not appreciate

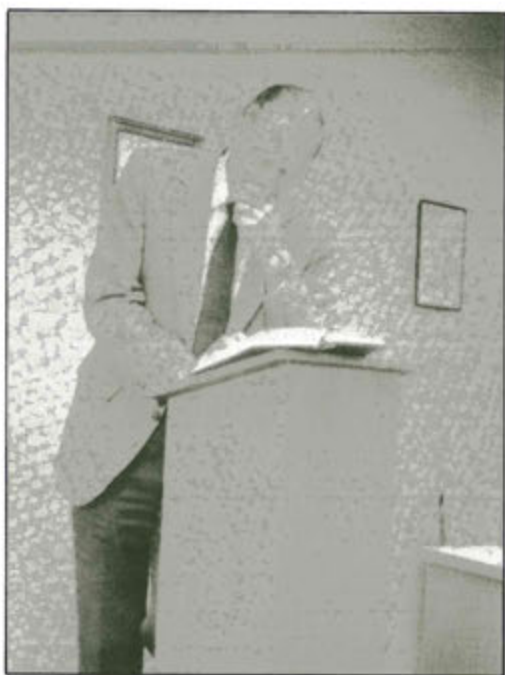
the "much" which God has given, we make ourselves unworthy of keeping it, and the "much" that we receive can and will be taken away. One does not give a priceless diamond to a two-year-old child, for the child does not and cannot appreciate its worth. One does not entrust the keeping of a costly piece of fragile crystal to a small boy with a muddy face who can hold nothing safely in his hands except perhaps a football. A church can make herself unworthy of being the beneficiary of a great treasure. God sent in judgment upon the nation of Israel a famine of the Word because Israel no longer considered it the priceless treasure it was. Thankful appreciation is always the key to faithfulness. And such thankful appreciation is humble recognition that what we receive is given in grace.

And so, because this is Seminary convocation, we can apply this very directly.

In the constant work of the Seminary, "much" is required of our people. It is required of our people that they hold fast to that truth which is and must be taught in the Seminary if we are to be faithful together. The Seminary cannot remain faithful except in constant connection with the people of God in the churches. The Seminary is not "ours," or the Synod's; it is *your* Seminary. It belongs to God's people. It is their school, their institution. It is the place which God has given to them to train young men.

It is often said, "As goes the Seminary, so go the churches." And this is true, for history teaches us that heresy comes into the churches most often through the doors of the Seminary. But the opposite is also true. It is a great evil, in theological education in our country, that the

Life at the Seminary



Prof. Hanko
ponders a
question
from



. . . Seminarian
Mitch Dick



Pre-sems: Ken Elzinga, Len Holstege, Doug Kuiper



Chapel Day



Prof. Engelsma drops by for a brief respite after a rigorous day of classes at Calvin seminary.



Jone Kuiper at the keys.

The seminary has also become home for our *Standard Bearer*. The three members of the Editorial Committee have (or will soon have) their offices there; the R.F.P.A. Board holds its monthly meetings there; and the "workroom" is used for preparing each issue for mailing. Below you see Don Doezema affixing the address labels, Eileen Terpstra sorting the zip codes, and John Veldman preparing the packages for 2nd class mailing.



Seminary is separated from the life of the churches. This spells its destruction. The Seminary must remain your school. To you it is accountable; you must expect from it and see to it that from its halls come men of God whose feet are beautiful upon the mountains to preach the gospel of peace.

The "much" that is required of you includes also the obligation to send to Seminary your sons. This is the "much" that is required of congregations and God's people in their covenant homes.

We all know that God calls to the ministry and that, apart from that call, there is no man who can labor in this glorious task. But that truth does not negate the responsibility which Christ demands when He tells us that, having given us much, He also requires much.

There is sacrifice involved. No congregation, if it is selfish and self-centered, likes to give up its gifted and godly sons. No family, if it knows anything of the travail of the ministry, likes to see its sons in the cutting edge of the conflict of faith. But it is part of that great "much" which the King requires. It is required of you that you send us your sons.

And that same "much" includes your constant prayers: the prayers of pastors in the pulpits, the prayers of fathers at the dinner table with their children, the prayers of saints whose heart is with the cause of Christ and His church. Without your prayers which carry the Seminary on wings to the throne of grace, our work is impossible.

"Much" is required of professors. And to you tonight also I bring this sharp word of your King. To you much has been given, brethren; from you much is required. It is an awesome calling indeed which falls upon us, for from this institution will

come, in these days before our King returns, those who will labor in the ministry of the Word. To you especially is entrusted this great treasure of the heritage of the truth. To you is committed that glorious body of doctrine which countless saints before you have confessed. And belonging to the "much" that is required is surely this, that you (and I) be faithful to it, that we study it and learn it, that we commit it to faithful men who will be able to teach others, and that we develop it in order that the faith of generations yet unborn may stand in that tradition of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

And "much" is required of our students. I am not speaking now especially of the much work — the reading, the studying, the mastery of material, the writing of papers, the producing of acceptable tests, etc. which keep you busy; although I hope and pray that our Seminary never becomes academically deficient. But I am speaking of the fact that you too are the heirs of this great heritage. You are here to be prepared, not only intellectually but also spiritually, for the calling to bring the Word of the truth to the church and to the mission fields of Christ. Indeed, much is required of you.

* * * * *

The contrast of the Lord's words is sharp: Wicked servants and faithful servants. Wicked servants shall be beaten. Faithful servants shall be blessed: "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (vs. 37).

But secondly, the contrast is between those who have received little and those who have received much. From those who

have received little, little is required. From those who received much, much is required.

It is this fear of punishment upon unfaithful servants and this longing hope of blessedness promised by the Lord which serves as the incentive to pursue our work with diligence and to give heed humbly to the "much" required.

The reward is the reward of grace. Our Belgic Confession, in beautiful words, describes this reward of grace as the crown with which God crowns His own gifts. It is all of grace. The calling is of grace, for it is a privilege to labor in the service of the King. The faithfulness required of laborers is given of grace. The reward of blessedness is of grace.

If we could not believe that, we would despair. Better it is then to lock the doors of the Seminary and board up the churches, for the "much" that the King requires is too much. It can come from grace and grace alone.

And that is why our work must be performed in complete dependence upon our King. We will not trust in men. We will not put our confidence in princes. We will not hope in the arm of flesh or in the promises of men. We will not rely upon chariots and horses. That will be futile and vain. Our trust and hope is in our King. To Him we look for all we need. From His hand we expect all things. Relying upon Him and confident of the unfailing faithfulness of His promises, we commit ourselves and all our needs to His gracious and sovereign care. He is the sovereign King. From Him comes our all. Trusting in Him, all shall be well. □

Contribution

Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Some Impressions from "Down Under"

Dear Readers of *The Standard Bearer*:

Although I am on leave of absence as a regular Staff writer during the current volume-year, before I left home I promised that I would write a few lines from Tasmania during our year's sojourn here. In this letter I will try to furnish you a few early impressions.

The other day my wife and I began listing things which are different here. And after we had each mentioned a few items, we ended by agreeing, "Everything is different!"

First of all, of course, the place is different. We are living a half world away from you in the U.S. and in the far southern portion of the Southern Hemisphere. If some of our teachers wish to give their pupils a rather practical geography lesson involving the whereabouts of our churches' activities, they could get out the globe or a world map and have the children locate Australia. Follow this by getting out a large map of Australia — a country and continent as large in area as the U.S. Then locate the province, or state, of Queensland and the large city of Brisbane.

The latter is the location of an Evangelical Presbyterian Church where Professor and Mrs. Hanko visited during their brief stay in Australia and where Prof. Hanko lectured and preached. A few hundred miles to the north is Rockhampton, the location of another E.P.C. And another several hundred miles north, in Cairns, the E.P.C. has a preaching station. Cairns is in the tropics and in the area of the Great Barrier Reef. West of Brisbane and on the edge of the "outback" is Chinchilla, where there is another preaching station, or branch church. Brisbane and Chinchilla are the charge of Pastor Chris Coleborn. Rockhampton and Cairns are the charge of Pastor R.A. (Tony) Fisk. These churches make up the Queensland Presbytery (classis) of the E.P.C. We have been urgently invited to visit there sometime during our sojourn in Australia, something which we would very much like to do.

Now move all the way south on your map of Australia, and you will see the city of Melbourne, on the south coast of Victoria province. From Melbourne move straight south about 250 miles, and you will be on the north coast of the island province of Tasmania. The city of Burnie (around 23,000 population) is located toward the

western end of the north coast. On the 18th of August at 5:30 in the afternoon, one hour behind schedule, we landed at the Wynyard-Burnie airport and had a warm welcome from many of the folk from both Burnie and Launceston. But let me finish the geography lesson. About one hundred miles to the east, and slightly inland, is the city of Launceston. Another 60 miles from Launceston is Winnaleah, where Pastor Philip Burley serves. He is the only pastor in the Tasmania Presbytery. Mr. Burley and his wife were in the welcome party at Wynyard-Burnie airport when we arrived. Tasmania is as far south as you can get in Australia. If you stand on the southern end of the island, there is nothing but the Southern Ocean between you and the South Pole!

So the geography is different!

This means, too, that the time is different. We crossed the International Dateline, which means we are one day ahead of you. But we also lost 10 hours in our flight, which means that right now our 7 o'clock on Saturday morning is 5 o'clock on Friday afternoon in Michigan. After a while, when we change to fast time and you change back to slow time, there will be a 12-hour difference.

Prof. Hoeksema is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

The skies are different, too. In daytime the sun rises in the northeast and sets in the northwest. At night the Southern Cross is the outstanding feature of the skies here in the Southern Hemisphere.

The seasons, of course, are the opposite of those in the north. When we arrived, it was winter, comparable to February at home. And now it is spring (they date spring here from September 1). You might expect it would be very cold and raw. But when we arrived, it was very spring-like. Daffodils and magnolias were in full bloom. Other shrubs and flowers and trees were and are also blossoming. Many of these are strange and new to us. In our yard here on Bird Street, for example, we have flowers, shrubs, and trees such as the following: Protea, Christmas Rose, Azalea, Camellia (pink & red), Bottle Brush, Ornamental Black Currant (which attracts numerous little birds called "honey eaters"), Daphne, Fuschia, Pelargoniums, and Passion Fruit.

The landscape is different, too. Tasmania is a beautiful country of rolling hills, green paddocks (pastures), low mountains (somewhat similar to our Appalachians), rugged bush-lands (forests), and rushing mountain streams. The second Saturday after our arrival, we went for a picnic some 50 miles from Burnie into the bush. Part of the purpose of the picnic (which involved both Burnie and Launceston people) was to investigate the facilities of a camp at the site, with a view to an Easter-time "family camp" for all the Tasmania churches at which I have been asked to speak. In this connection, by the way, I was asked by the young people here to extend a special invitation to our Protestant Reformed young people to spend their holiday (vacation) in beautiful Tasmania

at the time of our Easter camp. I can assure you of a friendly reception and of an enjoyable stay and interesting sightseeing. If you need confirmation of this, just ask the three young ladies from Hope (Walker) Church who recently visited here and who were escorted all over the island by, shall I say, personal tour guides. Thus far we have been kept so busy here that we have not yet had time for much sightseeing; but, especially when summer arrives, we hope to have some free time to see some of the beauty spots along both the east and the west coasts of the island.

There are many other differences. Grocery shopping is different — with different terminology for many items. Meat cuts are different (try "scotch fillet" for a ribeye steak). The money is different. Prices are different — very high! Driving is different — lefthand drive. And do you think Australians (especially Tasmanians) talk English? Guess again! I don't know how many times I have had to say, "What did you say?" or "What does that mean?" We tease one another constantly about our language differences. The problem is not only one of a different accent, but also one of terminology and vocabulary. Fortunately, however, they seem to be able to understand our American accent better than we can catch their Tasmanian accent. My barber told me the other day that it would take 20 years to pick up a real Tasmanian accent!

The congregation has furnished us a very comfortable little bungalow and have done their utmost to see that our every need and desire are met. We have a lounge (livingroom), kitchen and dinette, bedroom, bath and toilet (separate rooms in Australia), and well-furnished office, complete with a brand new

desk and chair, bookshelves, and computer. We live high up on the bluffs overlooking Bass Strait (which we can see from our kitchen window and our back yard). The kitchen cupboards and refrigerator were completely stocked with food when we arrived. And if we so much as mention a need or a wish or something we have in America that we do not have here, within a day that need or wish is filled. The people are overwhelming us with kindness and care and are determined that we shall not be homesick. In a word, we feel we are among friends and fellow saints. Central heat is a rarity here. We heat by means of a wood-burning fireplace which is equipped with a blower, and by means of portable electric heaters in other rooms. One of my chores is to keep the wood-burner going and to fill the wood-box daily; I am learning the art of keeping the fire alive all night, so that I need not start a new fire every morning.

A couple blocks away from our home is the little church building of the Burnie E.P.C., which they purchased a few years ago. Incidentally, Burnie is like the Biblical "city on a hill" that cannot be hid. Almost all of the residential area is high up on the bluffs, while the business and industrial and harbor areas are in the narrow strip of land along the coast.

So much for our circumstances and lifestyle.

Our church life, except for the fact that we sing a capella and from the Scottish "Psalms in Metre," is much like that at home. I am suddenly back in the pastoral ministry, and I am enjoying it. We have services at 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. On Wednesday evening I have a Juniors Catechism Class in the Shorter Catechism. On Thursday evening there is a Seniors Class (16 yrs.

and up) which is studying the Westminster Confession. On Friday night we have Adult Bible Study in which we have begun studying the book of Judges. We're also going to have a Question Hour once per month at the Adult Bible Study. Mrs. Hoeksema is giving the little children some New Testament instruction while we have Adult Bible Study. On Wednesday evening a Ladies Bible Study is planned, and they will meet at the Manse while I am teaching catechism at the church.

I preach as I do at home. Only now I can engage in some series preaching. I have begun a series, in the morning services, on Isaiah 40ff., and plan to get as far as I can in that section during this year. In the afternoon I am preaching from II Peter. The con-

gregation is hungry for soundly Reformed and exegetical preaching and instruction; and that means all — old and young. The young people were asking for catechism instruction already the week after our arrival. I also must mention that the people are extremely happy and thankful to you, our Protestant Reformed Churches, for sending me to them. Already, as I write this, one-tenth of our time here has passed; but they do not even want to think of that.

Sundays are busy days for me. Except for our first Sunday here and for the one Sunday when Prof. Hanks preached there, I have also travelled the one hundred miles to Launceston to preach there at a 6:30 PM service. So far some of the young men have been my chauffeurs for

that trip, thus giving me some chance to relax on the way. By the time we arrive home around 11 o'clock we have had a full day. But Launceston is very appreciative of the fact that their pulpit is filled with lively preaching instead of tape recordings.

I had intended to write about the visit of Prof. Hanks and me to the E.P.C. Synod. But that had better wait for a later letter and until we have first made our report to the Contact Committee.

Please remember us and the churches here in your prayers, even as we remember you.

With love in the Lord Jesus Christ, Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema.

P.S.: Our address is: 59 Bird St., Montello, Burnie, Tasmania, Australia 7320. Or phone us at: (004) 311-695. □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise J. VanBaren

There Are Movies — and Movies

Movie attendance was, once, forbidden to church members. But after the advent of television, cable, and now, V.C.R.'s, there appears to be no restriction upon this activity anymore. In fact, even the most conservative of church papers frequently will carry movie reviews. Still, a concern about the kind of movies which entertain especially the

young is being heard. In the *Calvinist Contact*, December 11, 1987, an article by Henry Knoop, teacher at Durham Christian High School in Bowmanville, Ontario, appears in the "Media Scan" rubric. He writes "Of roller coasters and horror movies":

... My (almost) middle-aged sensibility now tells me that roller coasters are but a cheap thrill, perhaps fun to ride on occasion, but nothing I would go out of my way or pay a lot of money for. Why this discourse on roller coasters?

For a while now I have listened to teenagers as they highlighted again and again the gruesome details of a horror

movie they had seen, usually on video. I am appalled, first of all, by what they consider to be "harmless" entertainment. Texas Chainsaw Massacre is tame stuff compared to some other movies often viewed. "Jason of Halloween fame is alive and well, not only in movie theatres where he and his deranged colleagues rake in thousands of dollars exploiting a teenage market thrilled with his exploits, but also in grade schools and high schools around the country.

"It's just a big laugh!" is the common response I get to my query on why teenagers like to watch horror movies. "You don't take it seriously!"

"But I take it seriously," I respond. "How can you enjoy watching someone get mutilated on screen? Aren't you

Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

celebrating crime and violence?"

Oh, that. That's so phony. Everyone knows no one really gets killed or maimed. Watching a horror movie is like taking a roller coaster ride. It's the thrill of getting scared!"

The thrill of getting scared. I had to think about that one for a while. Was I getting so old that I couldn't remember my desire for "thrills?" Were kids today different than when I grew up? Was this something unnatural? Was this something unhealthy?

Kids today are, of course, no different than when I was young, and there is nothing unnatural or unhealthy about adolescents wanting to "test their limits," to determine just how much they can take. In that regard, I think every teenager should be riding roller coasters.

Yet having said that, the avenue in which kids are testing their limits, in the form of popular horror movies today, is undoubtedly unhealthy and a cause for concern. Most of the current offerings in this genre are little more than exploitation films trivializing serious psychological disorders and social problems of our society. Their graphic depiction of violence and brutality glorifies an abnormal response to life's frustrations. In addition, many horror films do more than a little dabbling in the dangerous world of the occult

. . . The result, however, is anything but healthy. Through constant exposure to horror, an audience becomes desensitized to it. Instead of increasing our concern and emotion for the victims of these crimes, we become deadened to the plight of others and thank God that nothing happened to us. Or we laugh, as teenagers do, perhaps to cover up our real emotions; but probably more often because we don't know, and aren't taught, how to deal with what we are seeing. Horror movies are but another manifestation of an individualistic, me-centered society.

What about "catharsis," the view that horror movies provide an outlet for our pent-up emotions, thus "purging" the audience of any violent tendencies? "Better on the screen than on the street" is the rationale. Won't audience members just express their innate "violence" in other forms if you remove this one?

But where, in this view, is the Christian struggle with sin and battling the "old nature," as scripture talks of it? Is it not just another indication of our self-centeredness, our giving in to our sinful nature? . . .

Many of the expressions of great concern are very much to the point. One wonders, however, whether the writer (and

many others with him), recognizes that the battle against all these evils was essentially lost when the churches accepted the movie and drama as "film art."

The "Pandora's Box" was opened. Should any be surprised at the results? Was not the battle lost even earlier — when churches adopted a certain "common grace" according to which the unregenerate wicked were presumed to be able to do some good also in the realm of "film arts" and the "dance"? But now there is "film art." And "art" must be realistic. There must be some measure, usually, of violence. There is often cursing, using God's Name in vain. In order to portray even the "good" there must be presented as realistically as possible the "evil." Several questions must be answered. Where is to be drawn the line between "art" and that which has no "redeeming value"? What one calls "art," another calls "pornographic." But there is also the real problem that could be called a "development" in sin. Having gained permission to attend the movies (at the theatre or at home on TV), one soon becomes bored with the tameness of the presentations. There is increasing desire for something more, something with greater excitement and thrill. It is almost as though one would say, "It's all right to eat a little poison, but you must understand the limits." Or, perhaps more to the point, it's like trying drugs: one will restrict himself to occasional usage — but soon finds himself addicted to it. He requires more and more to satisfy that craving within him.

One can agree with the above writer that the growing attraction to horror, to violent, occult movies, also by those within the church, is a cause of great concern. Yet one might ask whether, having opened the floodgates in

approving limited movie attendance, there ought to be shock at the fact that youth in the church are revelling in the filth which is flowing forth.

One can see, too, the effect of "common grace" when, in the third point, a "good" is recognized among the reprobate which is presumed to be the "fruit of the Spirit." Having found some of this "good" in the "film arts," the church has been "introduced" to the worldliness of the wicked. But where does the work of the Spirit end, and the work of the devil begin? Can not the young point correctly to their elders and claim that they watch but a milder form of the same corruptions which thrill the young?

It is true too that those who have been introduced to a limited amount of violence, cursing, adultery, and blasphemy, soon see no wrong in watching more of the same. Soon one seeks greater excitement: more violence, sexual deviations, cursing.

And: what of ourselves? What is being watched on TV, cable TV, and V.C.R.'s in our own homes? How many believe they have the Christian "liberty" to attend the movies? Disturbing reports are sometimes repeated. One would hope and pray these are untrue. We who deny the theory of common grace, we who are preaching and teaching against the worldliness of the movie and dance, must practice what we "preach." Christian "liberty" does not allow for this corruption. Where there is sin in this regard, there is the call to repentance. He who loves the Lord is to hate all evil. How can one have fellowship with light while rejoicing in darkness? Those who want the world and the church can find many churches willing to accommodate to this. May we rather as churches be examples of godly profession and a holy walk. □

The Lord Provides for Our Seminary



Rev. Engelsma stands, for the last time, behind "his" pulpit in South Holland.



Installation: Prof. Decker preaches the sermon . . .



. . . Rev. VanBaren reads the form . . .



. . . Prof. Engelsma receives congratulations.



Our new professor confers with his friend, the rector . . .



. . . and tries out a desk in the faculty room.

Bible Study Guide

Rev. Jason L. Kortering

Judges — Jehovah Delivers His Unworthy People (1)

As we begin our study of the book of Judges, we should bear in mind that the events that are recorded in this book follow historically upon those that we examined in the book of Joshua. The Lord raised up Joshua as a leader who guided the people of Israel in their conquest of the land of Canaan and in their assuming their places given to each tribe by the casting of lots. The question arises: what happened to these people after Joshua died? The answer is given to us in this book called The Judges.

THE NAME OF THIS BOOK

The Hebrew title of this book is *Shophetim*, the Septuagint has the Greek word *Kritai*, and the Latin Vulgate has *Judicum*, all translated by Judges. The name of the book then reflects upon those whom God has called to deal with Israel during the period following the death of Joshua. No one leader was given to Israel to replace Joshua. Rather, during the course of time, some fourteen leaders were called by God to meet the needs of His people. Eight of these judges are mentioned in this book as performing acts of deliverance: Othniel,

Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. Besides these, five more are mentioned as having judged Israel: Tolah, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. We usually add Eli and Samuel to this list, and though not designated as such in this book, they are mentioned in I Samuel 4:18 and 7:15.

Why were these leaders called judges? Examining the contents of the book itself and considering the period of history covered in this book, we learn that it was for two reasons. First, they procured justice and right for the people by delivering them from their enemies. Secondly, they administered justice and right by executing the laws that God had given them through Moses and Joshua. Mention is made of this type of leadership in Deuteronomy 17:9: "And thou shalt come unto the priests, the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment." There is a similar reference in Deuteronomy 19:17. An example of this activity, drawn from the book of Judges, is mentioned in chapter 4:4, 5: "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at this time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah

and Bethel in Mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment." Subsequently, she and Barak led Israel in victory over Sisera and Jabin, the Canaanitish king.

THE TIME COVERED IN THIS HISTORY

Generally, we say that the period of the judges spanned approximately 400 years, from the death of Joshua until the time of Samuel and Saul.

If we examine the internal evidence of the book itself, we can list the years mentioned in which Israel suffered under the oppression of the enemies. These total 111 years. If we add to this the number of years mentioned in which the judges ruled, or there was rest from the enemies, these total 299 years, giving us a total of 410 years. This might seem to be too large a number in light of other evidences. For example, in I Kings 6:1 the fourth year of Solomon's reign is mentioned as being 480 years after the Exodus. Unger, in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*, suggests that if we allow forty years for the wilderness stay, twenty-five for Joshua in Palestine, forty years for Eli, possibly forty years for both Samuel and Saul, and forty years for David, plus the four years for Solomon, we have a total of 189

Rev. Kortering is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Grandville, Michigan.

years, which, if subtracted from the 480 years mentioned as covering the entire period from Exodus to Solomon's fourth, leaves us with a total of only 291 years. This also is confirmed by Judges 11:26, where the time from Israel's sojourn at Heshbon (a year or two before the entrance into Canaan) to the second year of Jephthah's judgeship is said to be 300 years. If we add to that the 144 years from Jephthah to Solomon's fourth year, we have a total of 482 years, which closely approximates the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1. The explanation of the actual length of about 300 years, over against the 400 compiled by adding the numbers in the book of Judges, is the fact that some of the years overlapped, or to put it differently, the judges ruled synchronously: e.g., Jephthah and Samson.

AUTHOR AND DATE

The attempt to determine the author is closely connected with the effort to fix the date at which the book was written.

As usual, we will not burden ourselves with the position of higher criticism, which suggests that three different sources wrote the book and that it was concluded at a much later period of history, about 100 B.C. If nothing else, its basic unity defies such an artificial breaking up of the book.

Rather, let us examine some of the internal evidence to see if that sheds light on the time of writing. Edward J. Young has the following:

According to 1:21, the Jebusites were still in Jerusalem when the book was written. Hence, the book must have been edited before the events recorded in II Samuel 5:6ff (David's capture of the city). It is said in 1:29 that the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer, which points to a time before Pharaoh gave the city to Solomon (I Kings 9:16). In 3:3, Sidon rather than Tyre is the chief Phoenician city. This points to a time before the twelfth century. Isaiah 9 refers to Judges 4:5, 6, and passages such as 17:6, 18:1, and 21:25 seem to imply a time in the early mon-

archy when its blessings were fresh in mind.

The latter reference is to the repeated mention that there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes. It is suggested that the author wrote this history looking back at the former period during which there was no king, but that now they had one and the benefits were just being appreciated. Keil and Delitzsch go in the same direction in their commentary on Judges:

Consequently, the book was written before this event (Jerusalem was taken away from the Jebusites 1:21), either during the first seven years of the reign of David at Hebron, or during the reign of Saul, under whom the Israelites already enjoyed the benefits of a monarchical government, since Saul not only fought with bravery against all the enemies of Israel, and "delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them" I Sam. 14:47, 48, but exerted himself to restore the authority of the law of God in his kingdom as is evident from the fact that he banished the wizards and necromancers out of the land, I Sam. 28:9. The talmudical statement therefore in Bava-bathra, to the effect that Samuel was the author of the book, may be so far correct, that if it was not written by Samuel himself towards the close of his life, it was written at his instigation by a younger prophet of his school.

From the above we conclude that the book may well have been written about the time of Saul, 1020 B.C. or thereabout. The author could have been Samuel, though this cannot be established with finality. His source of information may have been both oral tradition and written material, seeing that the period of time covers centuries of history.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

As we approach this book for study, we should be careful that we do not view it as a historical account of a given period of history. If we should do this, we will be much disappointed and certainly fail to understand the message contained in it.

Rather, we should understand that the centuries which are here designated as the period of the judges, form a transition between the entrance of Israel into Canaan and the time in which it was established as a nation. Nothing new takes place in the development of Israel as a nation.

If we view this period of time in this light, we can understand that God did speak to Israel in a powerful way and we do well to listen to that speech. Keil and Delitzsch express it this way:

The whole book, however, is pervaded and ruled by the idea distinctly expressed in the introduction (chap. 2:1-3, 11-22), that the Lord left those Canaanites who had not been exterminated by Joshua still in the land, to prove to Israel through them whether it would obey His commandments, and that He chastised and punished His people through them for their disobedience and idolatry; but that as soon as they recognized His chastening hand in the punishment, and returned to Him with penitence and implored His help, He had compassion upon them again in His gracious love, and helped them to victory over their foes, so that notwithstanding the repeated acts of faithlessness on the part of His people, the Lord remained ever faithful in His deeds, and steadfastly maintained His covenant.

The double message is set forth. Israel was not able to serve Jehovah in their own strength; they were no better than the heathen. Jehovah maintained His covenant and led them through repentance and forgiveness to serve Him. Thus they are made ready for the true theocracy in which He is their God and we are made ready for the Kingdom of Heaven. □

Rev. Ronald H. Hanko

Report of Classis West

The Loveland Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado was host for the September 7, 1988 meeting of Classis West. Though Classis has met in Loveland numerous times before, this was the first time that Classis had the opportunity to meet in Loveland's new sanctuary, and for many delegates this was the first time they had the opportunity to see this new facility.

Twelve ministers and thirteen elders represented the thirteen churches of Classis at this meeting. In addition three delegates from Classis East were present, Revs. W. Bekkering, J. Kortering, and J. Slopsema. These three were given the privilege of advisory vote at the meeting.

Rev. R. Cammenga led the Classis in opening devotions and spoke to the delegates on Numbers 20:1-13. Rev. A. den Hartog was the President of Classis, Rev. M. De Vries, vice-President, and Rev. R. Cammenga was clerk.

Three delegates were present at Classis West for the first time and signed the Formula of Subscription. They were Rev. R. Van Overloop, Elder J. Heys (Loveland), and Elder H. Bleyenbergh (Doon).

Reports were received from the Classical Committee, the Reading Sermon Committee, and the Stated Clerk.

Classical Appointments were granted to Isabel and South Holland according to the following schedule: **Isabel**, Oct. 2, 9 - Dykstra; Oct. 23, 30 - Terpstra; Nov. 13, 20 - Koole; Dec. 11, 18 - Houck; Jan. 1, 8 - R. Hanko; Jan. 22, 29 - Van Overloop; Feb. 12, 19 - Haak; Mar. 5, 12 - De Vries; **South Holland**, Sept. 18, 25 - Cammenga; Oct. 16, 23 - Moore; Nov. 13, 20 - Haak; Dec. 11, 18 - De Vries; Jan. 8, 15 - Kuiper; Feb. 12, 19 - den Hartog; Mar. 5, 12 - T. Miersma. A proposal from Edmonton was also adopted that classical appointments be scheduled through the end of the month in which the next Classis meets.

The most enjoyable part of Classis' work was that of receiving and granting the request of the South Holland congregation for the organization of a new congregation in Lynwood, Illinois. Twenty-four families and six individuals from the South Holland congregation requested this organization and Classis, with the concurrence of the delegates from Classis East, advised South Holland to proceed with this matter. Rev. R. Van Overloop was appointed their moderator and was also appointed moderator of South Holland during their vacancy.

The Classis approved an overture of South Holland to Synod, 1989, requesting that Synod cease the practice of reading aloud its agenda.

Two overtures to Synod from the Lynden Consistory were received. The first requested two changes in the Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons. Classis gave its approval for one change and disapproved of the other. The second overture requested a change in the Form for Public Confession of Faith. Classis also disapproved of this change.

An appeal from a brother against a decision of his Consistory forbidding him to home-school his children was rejected by Classis.

Classis expressed both its appreciation to Prof. D. Engelsma for his many years of work in Classis West, and its desire that God would bless him in his new field of labor in our Theological School.

Classis finished its work Wednesday evening. The total expenses of the Classis were \$7,732.24. The next meeting of Classis West is scheduled for March 1, 1989 at South Holland Prot. Ref. Church.

Rev. Ronald Hanko,
Stated Clerk
Classis West □

Rev. Hanko is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Houston, Texas.

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

October 15, 1988

MINISTERIAL CALLS

Our Holland, Michigan congregation has called Rev. W. Bruinsma, from a trio which included also the Revs. S. Key and B. Gritters.

Prof. Decker has declined the call extended to him from Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan.

MISSION ACTIVITIES

During the first week of September Rev. and Mrs. Bernard Woudenberg of Kalamazoo, Michigan, along with Dr. and Mrs. Dwight Monsma of Grand Rapids, Michigan traveled through the area of Maryland and Virginia on behalf of the Mission Committee, contacting a number of people who have expressed interest in our churches.

The Synodical Committee for Contact with Other Churches requested that the consistory of our Southwest Church in Grandville, Michigan, along with the consistory of our South Holland Church, send their pastors, Rev. Kamps and Rev. Engelsma, to Larne, North Ireland on behalf of the Protestant Reformed Churches, for the work of the ministry of the Word.

Rev. Kamps and his wife left a week early for a vacation in England before they were scheduled to meet Rev. Engelsma in Larne on September 2. They were scheduled to be in Larne September 3-11 and were to return home on September 12.

CONGREGATION HIGHLIGHTS

The congregation of our church in Byron Center, Michigan held their first worship service in their new building on August 14. The Lord willing, in our next news column I will have some details about the dedications of our Byron Center and Southwest Churches, scheduled for September 16 and 23, respectively.

We also want to extend our congratulations to the congregation in Pella, Iowa which celebrated its 60th anniversary on September 16th.

August 30 the children of our First Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan who were entering the second grade through the ninth grade were invited to spend a day at Pleasure Island Water Park in Muskegon, Michigan. Refreshments, supper, and an all-day pass were furnished. Having seen the effects of an entire day at a water park on children and adults alike, I dare say that there must have been some tired people riding home that night.

Sunday evening, September 18, the congregation of Randolph Church held a special Singspiration at which some good psalter singing was combined with a few special numbers especially chosen to feature their new organ.

The Evangelism Society of our Southeast Church is going to promote an attractively-boxed set of cassette tapes of their pastor's

series of nine sermons on Daniel 1-6. Although there is no mention of making these tapes available to those outside of Southeast Church, I can't help but believe that if you wrote the church at 1535 Cambridge Ave. S.E. in Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506 you could arrange to purchase a set. Cost: estimated somewhere between \$15-\$20.

We extend our congratulations to Rev. and Mrs. C. Haak of Lynden, Washington on the birth of their third daughter, Melanie Jane, on August 25, and to Rev. and Mrs. B. Gritters of Byron Center, Michigan on the birth of their fifth son, Bradley Scott, born on September 6.

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

September 13 an Officebearers' Conference was held at our Byron Center Church. Rev. C. Hanko introduced the subject "Practical Help for Elders on Family Visitation." A question period followed this informative speech.

A Men's and Ladies' League meeting was also held on September 13 at our Holland Church. Rev. M. Joostens spoke on "Temptations in our Affluent Society."

On September 6 at 7:00 PM, the night before Classis West met in our Loveland Church in Colorado, the congregation of Loveland was invited to an hour of fun and fellowship in the gym of the Bill Reed Jr. High School. This night was intended to provide an opportunity to meet the delegates of the Classis.

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

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SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The Heritage Christian School Fundraisers sponsored their annual Salad/BBQ Supper at our Hudsonville Church the night of September 16.

August 21 the Covenant Alumni Chamber Choir presented a concert at our First Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. □

On October 18, 1988, our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. ROGER KING will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our Heavenly Father for the years of covenantal instruction, love and care which they have given us. We pray that God will continue to bless and keep them in His care.

"For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations." (Psalm 100:5)

Lou and Cheryl Regnerus

Luke and Jade
Marcia King
Michael King
Lorraine King
David King

On October 28, 1988, our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. MICHAEL VAN BAREN celebrate 40 years of marriage.

We are thankful to our Heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents and for the love and instruction they have given us.

We are thankful for their years together and pray the Lord will continue to bless them in years to come.

"Instructing our sons we gladly record The praises, the works, the might of the Lord, For he has commanded that what he has done Be passed in tradition from father to son." (Psalter No. 213:2)

Bob and Jan Koontz
Rob, Shannon, Tracy, and Kris
John and Alice Dykshorn
Alan, Brandy, Josh, Miki, and Joey
Frank and Sharon Van Baren
Frank Jr., Melanie, Katie, and Jennie
Mike and Char Van Baren
Mark Van Baren

The members of the Martha Ladies' Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church extends its Christian sympathy to Mrs. John Boer and her family in the death of her husband **JOHN BOER**.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2)

Rev. R. Moore, President
Iane Hoksbergen, Sec'y.

On September 27, 1988, our beloved parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. LAWRENCE NELSON, celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary.

We rejoice with them on this happy occasion and are grateful to God for their covenantal love and instruction. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them and keep them in His care.

"Happy is he that hath the
God of Jacob for his help,
whose hope is in the Lord his
God: The Lord shall reign
forever, even thy God, O Zion,
unto all generations. Praise ye
the Lord." (Psalm 146:5, 10)

Rick and Sharon Tolsma

Kimberly, Jennifer, Michelle, and
Stephanie
Dan and Diana Lanting
Melissa, Aaron and Keith
Stephen Nelson

[illegible]