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FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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SATAN BOUND AND SET FREE

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IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL - Righteousness Trail - Ed Lotterman 1
TRUTH VS. ERROR - Over Home to Heaven - Rev. R. C. Harbach 4
Satan Bound and Set Free - Rev. J. A. Heys 7
CRITIQUE - A Rise in Swearing? - Ben Wigger 11
Rev. Moore's Mailbox 13
By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them - Harold Tilma 17
Creative Writing - Jim Huizinga 19
News From, For and About Our Churches - Linda Zandstra 21

Editorial

Proverbs For Young Pilgrims: RIGHTEOUSNESS TRAIL

We welcome as our new Associate Editor, Ed Lotterman of our Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. His first editorial appeared in the October issue. He began by writing under the general heading of "Proverbs for Young Pilgrims". He plans to develop this theme in this issue with the title of "Righteousness Trail".

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by Ed Lotterman

The long line of pilgrims which had previously stretched across the prairie now is disappearing into the woods. Near the end of the line, the young pilgrim looks ahead and watches as one by one the pilgrims start down the path. While the line becomes shorter, he wonders about the pilgrim life. Each day there is a variety. There is different scenery along the way. Sometimes the way is rugged and the day's journey is difficult. Other days the time passes rapidly and almost in a monotonous way.

There is also a variety of associations among the pilgrims. Some days the pilgrims walk in their own family group. Other days families may intermingle. On this particular day, the line of pilgrims is arranged by age group. The older pilgrims are at the head of the line with the younger pilgrims following on behind.

The young pilgrim sees that the path is narrow so that the pilgrims must walk single file along the trail. As he approaches the beginning of the trail, he sees that a sign has been posted, "Righteousness Trail".

The trail is old. Many feet have trodden upon the path, making it hard. The firm path allows for relatively easy walking, and the air is cool from the shade of the trees. Although the pilgrims are moving at a rapid pace, there is much to see and the promise of an interesting day is in the air.

The young pilgrim is again impressed by the firmness of the trail. His thoughts are concentrated on the many pilgrims who have entered the trail before him. Some of the more prominent pilgrims ahead of him are: Adam, Abraham, David, Daniel, Paul, and, yes, John Calvin. Because on this day the pilgrims are arranged by age, the young pilgrim is able to see some of the spiritual leaders with whom he is better acquainted. Because the young pilgrim

is more familiar with these spiritual leaders, he does not readily appre
relationship between them and the previous more prominent pilgrims
now begins to realize that all of the pilgrims are in a single line.

Suddenly a small fleck of birds flutter in a nearby opening. Listen to the chirping! Seems as though birds are always busy doing something. "Didn't Jesus say something about taking care of the birds?" wonders our young pilgrim.

And look at the flowers in the little clearing! "Jesus had something to say about the flowers, also," he thinks again. "Why didn't I learn the verses better when I had the opportunity?"

A short way farther down the trail the young pilgrim sees a waterfall. What beauty! He remembers hearing a preacher explain a verse (Oh, what was that verse again?) about "grace for grace..." being like a waterfall.

Wishing that he could remember more of what he had been taught, the young pilgrim now resolves to be a better listener when the older, more experienced pilgrims talk.

As the young pilgrim follows the person in front of him down the path next to the water below the fall, he remembers a hymn which he once learned. The hymn seems to be appropriate and he begins to hum the tune. Evidently the older pilgrims ahead have been inspired also, for they are singing. As the words of their singing drifts back to him, the young pilgrim stops humming his hymn and joins in the singing. The thought occurs to him that the song is a psalm.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Proverbs 12:28, "In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof is no death."

Toward the end of our last contribution, we presented some thoughts concerning God's Law. Knowledge of the Law of God must permeate our lives. Instruction in righteousness is an aspect of the knowledge of the Law of God. Let us observe the young pilgrim as he is walking among fellow pilgrims on the "Righteousness Trail".

First of all, we notice the movement of time. There is the motion of time in each day. Our days are filled with various people, events, and opportunities to learn. How often do we fail to use each day in the service of our Lord? Much has been spoken and written concerning "Redeeming the Time." (Cf. Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5). I do not wish to write on the subject, but we do have the idea expressed here. We must use each day in full potential to serve Him with Whom we have to do.

But for our young pilgrim, the motion of time is also evident in Church history. Many are the saints who have plodded along the path of righteousness. And our young pilgrim stands near the end of a long line of fellow believers. It is a covenant line. The relationship between the believers in the line is that all

owing the same leader. And the Leader is Christ. Christ is the center of tory. His people through all ages of history follow Him. He blazed the trail, so to speak. He not only made the way of righteousness, but He is our righteousness. He is the way of life.

As our leader, Christ makes His truth known. Through all of history He preserves His truth. His truth has been developed from generation to generation until finally our young pilgrim receives it.

This truth is not merely expressed in doctrine. Sometimes we fail to understand what doctrine is all about. We tend to think of doctrine as so many statements of Theology which must be learned. This is academic in nature. We learn our doctrine in catechism or perhaps in some class at school. We must not leave our doctrine there. Our doctrine must be our life! We must live our doctrine. Doctrinal truth must come to expression in our lives.

Our young pilgrim in "Righteousness Trail" also applies doctrine to his life. For example, the doctrine of Creation. He not only relates that which God has made to various Scriptures, but he laments the fact that he failed to learn properly what he has been taught. He understands that this is a sin because of doctrine which he has not forgotten. With firm resolve he is determined not to allow it to happen again. (Which doctrine would that be?)

So the question confronts us: Do we relate the various events in our lives to the doctrine which we have learned? Doctrine is related to life in our Proverb: "In the way of righteousness is life."

Notice that there is only one way. It is the way of the righteousness of Christ. For the young pilgrim it is the only way he knows. He has been instructed in this way, and to follow the pathway of righteousness is expected of him. But he wishes to have no other way.

Finally, let us observe our young pilgrim as he is in the company of fellow believers. He does not stray from the path of righteousness in order to seek fellowship with those who are not in the pathway thereof. Rather, he seeks to remain with his fellow pilgrims on "Righteousness Trail". He has life with them, that is, he lives with them in the way of righteousness. He realizes that to separate himself from his fellow pilgrims is to follow a path of sin and shame. It is a noisy, rowdy, riotous path which leads to death.

But to remain with fellow pilgrims is life. It is the quiet, peaceful life of contentment. It is a life filled with learning about our Mighty God and Heavenly Father. It is a life of service, of giving of ones own self. It is an abundant life.

....,For a good courtship, rule number one is, *Get to know each other.* Rule 2 is, *Get to know each other's family.* Rule 3, *Take time to enjoy your courtship* without hastily plunging into marriage. Rule 4 is, *Build up a strong esteem for each other,* keeping for yourselves a good conscience.

Leaving Father and Mother, pp. 12-16.

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

OVER HOME TO HEAVEN

Many ministers we know have testified of visits to aged saints in which they were much more blessed than the one visited. These saints, some in their nineties, it has been pointed out, live close to heaven, and this is wise. One may speak of soon "going over to heaven." When language like that comes up in converse with older saints there is bound to be a blessed enchange. Then who tires of talking about heaven? Certainly not these ministers nor those visited with heaven so much on their minds! What a point of contact—heaven! It's not "the weather," or clothes (old Christians think little of "what ye shall wear"), or current events (such are crowded out by the prospect of "going over home to heaven"), or cake, or tea, but *heaven*.

Remember that dear lady in her nineties who frequently so spoke? She was a pilgrim and was radiantly happy to tell you so, where she was going, that's right, "over home to heaven." Remember how she loved to talk of her house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? She would speak of her heavenly Husband who had never left her, though her earthly husband had died years ago. She would describe her landed estate, rich in still waters and green pastures, of her hidden treasure, of her ownership-title and of the Testator who willed it all to her in the blood of the New Testament. She loved to remind that it was all safe "over there in heaven," as Peter averred, "reserved in heaven for you."

Or to change the picture a little, there you *lay* in the dentist's chair (you don't *sit* in them any more), while the technician scrapes your teeth with a steel implement. In another moment the "blower" is in your mouth to "dry" off a tooth, the next, the "squirter," then the "scraper," the pick and the rotary

brush. In between times, with dental tools going into and out of your mouth, u try to carry on a discussion about—"heaven." Even a dental technician can be heaven-minded. Christians in all walks of life want to be sure that they, their husband or wife and all in the family know what is essential to know about heaven, about how and "when we all get to heaven." Again, heaven is a much better point of contact than a dental check-up, although the latter may, and why not?, lead to the former. Some are taught that when we as Christians die, we do not go straight to heaven. We first go to "Paradise," where our souls sleep in the dead body until Christ comes. Then the dead in Christ shall rise first, while those who remain to the coming of the Lord are caught up to heaven, together with the resurrected saints. So shall we ever be with the Lord. Then *you*, as Protestant Reformed Christian, may be asked, "What do *you* think?" You may reply that the soul does not sleep in the grave, nor in the dead body, for "we know that when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1). You may explain that this house is not the glorified body which we get at the Second Coming of our Lord. For this passage is answering the question, What happens to us Christians when we die? Nor is this house a special body to temporarily house us during the "intermediate state," that is, in that state of death for the saints between the time they die to their resurrection. For this house is not temporary, but "eternal in the heavens." Actually, this house in the heavens is heaven itself. Jesus spoke of it when He had said, "in My Father's house are many mansions (many homes)." This house is spoken of another way, as the City whose Builder and Maker is God. It is also referred to as the new and holy Jerusalem. But what about "the third heaven"? What is "Paradise"? What is meant by "Abraham's Bosom"? A book published in 1971 claims that the angel Gabriel took a man on a foreign mission field up into heaven, as Paul was taken up in II Corinthians 12:2-3. He was taken into the first heaven, the second heaven, the third heaven, and finally all the way to the "seventh heaven." Now why would a reputed missionary scholar speak in this way of "the seventh heaven"? Where does scripture speak of this imagined heaven? This idea is no part of the doctrine of the Christian church. It is rabbinical theosophy, something developed up out of the Talmud. In this connection, beware of what the Apostle Paul says about Jewish myths (I Timothy 1:4; 4:7; II Timothy 4:4; Titus 1:14). But to get back to those terms inquired of (above): they are all synonyms for the same place. They denote ***heaven***. Jesus when He died went right to heaven, as did also that penitent thief. They both died on Mount Calvary, and their souls went right to heaven. Jesus promised this converted thief, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." How did that happen? Absent from the body was his soul in the moment of death and then immediately present with the Lord. That is how it happened. We may be sure of that. The word of God tells us so. Check your concordance. Then we know that three days after his death Jesus rose from the dead in the same body in which He was crucified. Forty days afterward, the Lord soul and body went up to heaven in His glorious ascension. Now, soul and

body, He is no more on earth, but in heaven. There He wills to be worshipp by us. Therefore, when we die, according to II Corinthians 5, we are abs from the body and immediately and forever present with the Lord. There is purgatory after death. Our purgation is in this life in the precious blood Jesus Christ shed on the cross. There "the blood of Jesus, God's S *cleanseth* (durative present, 'keeps cleansing') us from all sin" (I John 1:7). there is no need for the Romish myth of *purga*-tory.

Heaven is a frequent topic of conversation at home, isn't it? Also at home, every one recognizes everyone else. Why should it not be so in heaven? There will not be less but more perception in heaven. Adam recognized who and what Eve was at first sight. Then will not husbands and wives, parents and children know each other in heaven? If the original members of the Thessalonian church shall be Paul's crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord at His coming (I Thessalonians 2:19), then will not ministers know their people, and people their ministers in heaven? The three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration knew Moses and Elijah, not by introduction, not by sight, but by revelation and intuition. Will we not know them too when we get to heaven? The communion of saints will be perfected there. We shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, so we shall surely recognize them. Abraham knew Lazarus. Then shall we know even as we also are known.

It was when he was between the ages of 15 and 18 that Augustus Montague Toplady wrote the famous hymn, Rock of Ages. The fourth stanza goes like this:

When I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!

There was once a minister who used to sing it, "When I soar to worlds well known, *Sit there* on Thy judgment throne." Of course he had in mind Revelation 3:21 and I Corinthians 6:3. Think of "going over home to heaven," and one does not think of it as "worlds unknown." Since we are born from above, then our birth and parentage are from heaven. Jerusalem above is the mother of us all. Heaven is our Home. God is our Father who is in heaven. The world is a strange place. But the natural man is at home here in this world. He fits right in with this world. The Christian is not at home in this world. It is only a motel to him. So he is not yet in his proper place. Our kindred are there in heaven. The very center of heaven is the Lamb, our Redeemer. There are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the spirits of just men made perfect. "When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be!" Meanwhile, this world is to us "a strange country" (Hebrews 11:9). We are just passing through to "a better country." We do so singing,

I am a stranger here,
Dependent on Thy grace,
A pilgrim as my fathers were,
With no abiding place.

But shouldn't we right from the outset have sought to prove the existence of such a place as heaven, or, if that is expecting too much (who can prove there is no such place?), at least have "established" the possibility of heaven, and then perhaps the probability of heaven? Not at all, for why should we attempt doing what neither the fathers, prophets and our Lord did not do? The scriptures themselves begin where we must all begin, on the supposing of what is previous to all thought, action and history, namely, *God* and *heaven*! "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This is what faith does. Faith has proof enough. Faith sees and knows; sees heaven, knows the God of heaven. The word of Jesus is enough for faith: "I go to prepare a place for you." Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Hell is a prepared place for unprepared people. Are you as prepared for that glorious place as to be able to say, I'm heading onward over home to heaven?

SATAN BOUND AND SET FREE

by Rev. John A. Heys

There are sincere people of God—and their number is legion—who believe that Christ can come now any day, and that He will come in such a way that He will be invisible to the unbelievers while the believers, both living and dead, will be caught up to Him in the air to reign with Him from there for a period of a literal one thousand years. The living will mysteriously have disappeared from among their unbelieving neighbors, and the dead will have been resurrected so that both will bodily meet Christ in the air. They further believe that during this one thousand year period Satan is bound so that he cannot deceive the nations into sin and unbelief, and as a result there are mass conversions, a wholesale acceptance of Christ, and Christianity will have come to its own.

Those who believe this do not deny the triune existence of God, the virgin birth of Christ, the divine nature of Christ, His resurrection and ascension into heaven. But if one holds to this idea of Christ's return and follows it through

consistently, that one will deny many of the cardinal truths of Scripture, including some of those just mentioned. For that reason alone I would be grateful to the *Beacon Lights* staff for asking me to write on this subject. I do always appreciate these opportunities to write for you young people, and a subject such as this is certainly worth our consideration because of the widespread subscription to this erroneous view, and the danger that it poses today in our midst.

This view of the binding of Satan does not do justice to the very passage of Scripture in which it appears, namely, Revelation 20:1-11. In these verses God Himself tells us in what way and to what degree Satan is bound. We are told this in verses 7 and 8. There we are told that, as soon as he is set free, he goes and gathers Gog and Magog to come up in literal, physical battle against the camp of the saints and brings about that great battle of Armegeddon. It was in regard to this desire of Satan that he was bound these one thousand years. He could not get the pagan nations to come up in war against the Christian nations for a long period of time determined by God, and because of which he was bound all during that time in this respect. Scripture must interpret Scripture. And when God Himself in Scripture explains this binding of Satan, we may not ignore part of the passage to introduce our own ideas.

What is more, even if Satan was bound in the sense of which the Premillenialists speak of it, so that he could not tempt into any sin, even if Scripture did not tell us in what respect he was bound, we still could never come to such a view of it, if we let Scripture interpret Scripture. Granted that Satan is taken out of the way completely, he still has legions of servants who are free to go about and continue his work. The Premillenialist wants that binding literally, and the one thousand years literally, and he must therefore literally limit the binding only to Satan himself. And these servants of him, who are not bound, are willing servants who likewise hate God's church with all their being. Seeing their master bound, their hatred would not diminish, but they would only be stirred up to more activity and hatred because of those chains on their master.

Then, too, let us assume that Satan is bound so that he cannot move men to sins of any kind, that he is completely eliminated, removed from the scene and his evil works are stopped one hundred percent. Let us even assume that all his willing servants, though not bound with him, are filled with such fear of similar punishment that they do nothing. Then the question arises, "How is it then that Gog and Magog are not converted and that Christianity does not take hold among them? How is it that they still hate God's church so fiercely that they can be stirred up so easily and quickly to war against the Christian nations? Did his binding really do any good?

There is an even more serious objection. This whole idea that the removal of Satan from the scene will result in more conversions, and in Christianity taking hold, rests upon a denial of total depravity and the fact that we are all born dead in trespasses and sins so that we are spiritually *dead*. It is not simply Satan's power over us that keeps us from believing in Christ, that is, his power

exercised over us in this life. He got the whole human race to die spiritually in paradise. And we must not deny the divine nature of Christ as though He cannot save us unless Satan is put out of the way. What we need is to be born again. And Christ has been doing that to His elect children all through time and while Satan was not yet bound. Satan does not make it harder for Christ to save us. His miracles of casting out evil spirits shows His complete control over them. He need not bind them with chains to make it easy to convert and save and bring to faith. Why, we would ask, did God not destroy him instead of chaining him for a time? Why does He let him loose later on?

No, we must insist that Satan is bound in only one sense, and that is to keep him from realizing that powerful assault against the Christian nations by the pagan nations that never embraced Christianity. Ever since God spoke those words of the mother promise of Genesis 3:15, Satan has wanted to wipe out all the seed of the woman, and has been working towards this. For a thousand years, that is, for a long period of time, God, because He decreed an universal church, and intends to gather in all the elect, so that He waits until all of them are born and reborn, prevents Satan from stirring up these heathen nations against the Christian nations. He is not literally bound with chains. You cannot hold a spiritual being that way. But God does not allow him to wake up the heathen nations in war against the Christian nations. Satan cannot realize a war that is truly a world war, and which pits all the heathen nations against the Christian nations, until God is ready to have him do so for the sake of the coming of Christ.

The question in your minds no doubt is, "When was he bound. Has he been already? If so, when will be the time when he is set loose?" One need but skim over the headlines of the newspaper, need but listen with one ear to the newscasts and news reports to realize that Satan is loose right now! Nations that will have nothing to do with Christ and His church, but worship their own idols and have their Society of the Godless, atheistic nations, nations who openly reveal hatred and opposition against Jehovah, the God of Israel, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ are waking up, are already defying the Christian nations. Think of how the oil-rich Arab nations are defying the nations who depend upon their oil. Think of the hostage situation in Iran. Take into consideration the arms race with Russia, and the fact that China, which, although there are sincere children of God in her, does not herself want to be called a Christian nation, has the atomic bomb and is becoming a serious threat to peace in the world. The many riots and revolutions throughout the world are all setting the stage for a confrontation between what we call Christian nations (the camp of the saints, the camp wherein the saints are to be found in goodly numbers) and the idol worshipping nations. Dates and times we cannot give, and must not try to give them. But the binding we may in general say took place after Christ's victory over Satan on the cross, after His resurrection and ascension into heaven. And some time in the past Satan was given power and the right to prepare the heathen nations for that confrontation which will be ended by Christ when He comes upon the clouds of heaven to save His church

and to glorify her. And we may see that we are indeed in the last part of the last hour, and that Christ's return is not far away. He cannot come yet today. The Antichrist has not come. The sun has not yet been darkened; nor has the moon turned a bloody red; and the stars have not fallen. But all this can come very soon. And the gospel has been—or today by radio can be—spread to every nation, tongue and tribe.

Now we ought to note that God binds Satan through an angel. The whole situation is completely under God's control. And Satan does not work himself loose. Once again it is God Who decides the moment that actually sets him free. We read that he is loosed, not that he gets free. God determines what shall take place as far as Satan's actions are concerned as well as those of earthly kings, of whom Solomon says that God has their hearts in His hand to turn them wherever He wills as waters of the river.

The binding of Satan we can quite readily see is for the good of the church so that she can spread from corner to corner of this globe, so that she can develop in the truth, and so that all her members without exception may be born, come in contact with the truth and be brought to the faith.

It is also for the good of the church that God sets him free. Satan must serve the preparation of the coming of Christ. He must serve the filling up of the measure of iniquity not only, in that he produces the Antichrist, but also in the sense that he is used to drive the believer closer to his God and to look more earnestly for the return of Christ. And one of the reasons why this vision is given to us is that we by faith may see that all is well, that *all* is *always* well. God is in control; and all things work according to His eternal, unchangeable plan which ends in a glorious church in a glorious environment serving God in perfection. It is to assure us that Christ will come and that even Satan will be used to prepare His way. The exact number of one thousand indicates how in detail God has planned all, and that when His time is come, the enemy will be used as planned. Nothing is more sure than the coming of Christ to save His church and fulfill all God's promises to her.

1981 SINGSPIRATION SCHEDULE

February 15	Hope
April 19	Hudsonville
May 17	Faith
Summer	Pre-convention
September 20	Hope
November 22	Faith
December 20	Hudsonville

A RISE IN SWEARING?

by Ben Wigger

One of the most important distinguishing characteristics of any person is his name. Most people would prefer that their names be used in a good context. No one likes to hear others use his name in any kind of a bad light. If you feel good about yourself you also expect others to feel the same way. And when you possibly hear some negative gossip about yourself, it hurts.

Your name serves to draw a mental picture for others. When your name is mentioned, others relate to it either for good or bad; for in a sense, your name helps serve as a description of you. And for that reason, we do all we can to see that our name is used with respect.

But are we as considerate when it comes to our regard of the use of God's names. We expect our own friends and families to use our names with respect and fairness, but do we give God the same consideration?

There really is no question or doubt in any of our minds, is there; that we are guilty of abusing or blaspheming God's name? Blasphemy is the hatred of God which is based upon open rebellion toward or a disregard of God's existence, or impatience with His laws. It is the degrading of His nature or holiness by word or deed.

It is my firm belief that the world is now being prepared for the eventual emergence of the anti-christ, who will lead a world-wide program of deception and rebellion against God, and ultimately against us as the Church. Anti-christ is the means by and through whom Satan will make his great and final attempt to seize control of this world and set himself up as lord and ruler.

Any way in which Satan can put forward rebellion against God is of value to him. It could possibly be the counter-attraction of pleasure, or the encouragement of materialism, or the added momentum to man's sinfulness.

All of these will do, just as long as God is defamed or ignored.

Blasphemy with its godlessness will also have a part in the preparation of this world for the kingdom of anti-christ.

We believe, as Christian young people, that it is a very serious matter to use God's name in a sinful way. God is, after all, a holy God and therefore all of His names are holy. And that demands that we always use His names with fear and reverence on our lips.

It is also our responsibility to uphold God's name. That means that we must hold ourselves back from the temptation of swearing or cursing. And besides that, we should never become part of these sins in others by keeping silent when blasphemy occurs.

There is no sin more provoking to God than the profaning of His name. In the book of Leviticus (chapter 24:16) we read that God demanded death for any who dared blaspheme His name. God has not changed His law. We hear it read to us from Sunday to Sunday. But, is the keeping of God's third commandment that important to us?

We must also bear in mind that the natural man, apart from the saving power of Jesus Christ, is by his very nature a profane person. All of his actions are constantly in rebellion toward God and His law.

For this reason blasphemy in the world is regarded as a very general thing, certainly not something to be taken seriously. Man by his very nature is continually seeking to destroy the difference between that which is Holy and that which is common. Man cannot stand to be reminded that he is in violation of God's law, and it is for that very reason that as believers we can expect more persecution from the world because we stand directly opposite man's hatred for God's holiness.

We should be aware that the world is in gross violation of God's third commandment. But we must not lose sight of the fact that far too often we are also guilty when it comes to keeping this important law of God.

For an example, we are often guilty of the thoughtless use of the name of God. Far too often our hearts are not filled with what should be fear and reverence when we pray to God. We use His name in a far too casual manner. This is often evident when we speak of God in our daily conversation, in Bible discussion during society, and even in our preaching.

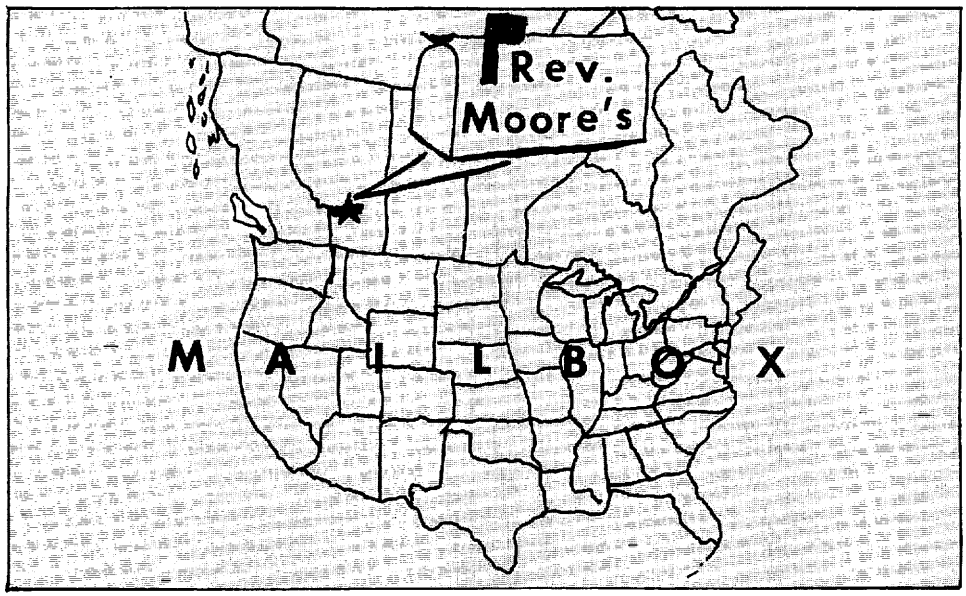
We are also guilty of blaspheming God's name when we refuse to use it. The power of God is seen throughout all of our lives, as well as throughout all of creation. To deny that there is a creator of this world is to insult God, and as such, is a serious sin.

And then there is the obvious sin of actual cursing and swearing; for whatever reason, whether out of anger or frustration, or perhaps swearing makes us feel like a part of the group we desire to be identified with. We could also feel that to swear once in a while shows a certain amount of maturity and worldliness, something that as young people we often feel tempted to express.

It is such an easy sin to fall into. Our hearts soon become hardened to it, so that we really don't hear it anymore. But let us not forget the last part of the

third commandment which says "for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain."

It is our calling to openly, and that also means publicly, condemn this sin. It should bother us when we let this sin go unheeded in ourselves or in others. It is our calling as believers to let our light shine. But how often don't we fall short? It is hard to speak out to others when we know that we are as guilty as they are. For we all violate all of God's laws. But thanks be to God Who gives us grace, so that we can take our sin to the foot of the cross and know that we will find forgiveness.



Send questions to:
Rev. Richard G. Moore
12324 - 134th St.
Edmonton, Alta. T5L 1T9

The question that we consider this time is a rather broad question, and one to which we shall try to give some basic principles from the Scripture to be a guide for its answer. The question is set forth by the Senior PRYP Society of the Hudsonville Church. The question asks for a proper Scriptural view of "birth control" especially in light of all the attention given this topic by the world and worldly institutions.

At the outset, I receive this question as a concern of covenant youth who are looking forward to being led by the Spirit of Christ to God given husbands and wives. By this I take it that as covenant youth your concern is for a

sanctified walk in thanksgiving unto God within the blessed bond of marriage in which, the Lord willing, you shall soon enter. The reason that I mention this is that Scripture clearly sets forth the truth that all sexual contact outside the bond of marriage is abominable to God, and thus terrible sin.

For example we read in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." And another, "But fornication and all uncleaness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks." Ephesians 5:3, 4.

The elect, redeemed, and called child of God is filled with Christ's Spirit and Word, and he flees sin and seeks His God by the grace that abideth in Him. Thus, outside of marriage, this question is not one that we entertain as covenant youth. But we flee fornication which is abominable to our covenant Father!

But now concerning the question of "birth control" within the bond of marriage, let us consider the following.

In the first place, the term "birth control" is not a good one, as I am sure you all realize. We confess by faith that our God upholds and governs all things by the Word of His power. We confess that God alone is sovereign, and that He determines all things that come to pass. So much so that a sparrow may not fall to the ground without His will, and all the hairs of my head are numbered, cf. Matthew 10:29-30. Thus in the deepest and ultimate sense, God controls birth, all birth. He brings forth the elect church in time, as well as the reprobate shell. And man does not really control birth at all. Though, it is often true, that he foolishly thinks that he can. Remember that even in wicked unbelief, man can but do the will of God Almighty. And when the wicked foolishly think they can plan families to make this world more liveable, etc., we must remember it is but a fulfilling of the Scriptural truth, that God gives them over to a reprobate mind. And they sin unto sin, following that pathway to hell! (Romans 1:18 to the end.)

Thus, if we entertain the idea that it is our right and prerogative to determine the size of our family, or to determine when we will have children, that we are the authors of our own destiny with respect to our families, then we sin against the sovereign God. And we would make ourselves to be gods. Any so called "birth control", practiced under this supposition by us, is nothing more than wicked unbelief and sin. The result of this course is that we too would determine by pure natural reason, how many children we can afford, or have talent to raise, etc. If I and my wife did this there is no way that we would have ten children today! And it is only by God's grace that we have the blessing of many children.

Our God does not give to His people children without also giving His people the grace and the means for their care according to His perfect wisdom. And when our God gives us His Spirit and Word, and applies that Word to our hearts, then in perfect confidence as we marry, we look forward to the children

God is pleased to give into our care. And it is by the sovereign grace of God given to the elect in Christ that with joy we hear the Lord's command of blessing, saying to us, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it," Genesis 1:28. Indeed God's children view the bringing forth of children as a blessing of God. And they rejoice in God's Word, "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord." Psalms 128:3, 4. As God hath chosen His church in Christ, and redeems them unto the adoption of children, as heirs of righteousness, He gives us grace to fear Him. Then our joy is not in how few children we have, or for that matter how many children, but our joy is in God's will with us, also as He is pleased to bring forth the children of the covenant, through the means of our union in the Lord in Marriage.

Thus we do not practice any "birth control" with a view to determining the size of our family. But bring forth children in gladness and rejoicing. Knowing and confessing the Scripture as recorded in Psalms 127: "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are the children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." Psalms 127:3-5.

Natural man when he views the bringing forth of children can only see them as a burden. He says if we have too many children we won't be able to have the kind of house that we desire, we won't be able to have the kind of transportation we want, we won't be able to enjoy the love and freedom that we have before we receive children. If we have too many children, we will not be able to educate them the way we would like to, etc. The list can go on to infinity.

But Scripture says to us, happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them (and God determines the full quiver); God says of such, they shall not be ashamed. When our God gives to us His covenant people, children (His heritage), to care for, He shall provide us the riches of grace and the means to care for them, in the fear of His name.

We conclude by repeating again, we by grace then practice no birth control from the viewpoint of attempting to determine the size of our family, or with a view of chosing the time that we feel is right to have our children, the heritage of the Lord. But with gladness and in the fear of His Holy Name we receive our children as the blessing of our God. And this in the complete confidence that God shall give us exactly at the proper time and in perfect measure children to care for. And He will sustain us in all ways as Godly parents in Christ. Hence for the large part our question is answered. The general rule is that we are not filled with care by this question. But in faith enjoy the bond whereby God has set us in, knowing that as the Lord has united us together in Christ, so He will in perfect wisdom provide our portion perfectly, also in the children and the means of grace to care for them.

The above the world knows nothing of, and counts it foolishness. But,

remember the fruit of the world's attitude is eternal desolation!

But is there not any time or occasion for the Christian parents to practice certain measures of sanctified wisdom concerning the matter of child-bearing in their life together as husband and wife? I believe that there is such a need, but it is with much spiritual caution that we should approach any attempt to explain such practice.

In this article, we have not the space to speak concerning all the various means that are available that allows intercourse without pregnancy. This could be included in a carefully worked out lecture on this topic. Maybe even you should arrange for such a lecture by one of God's servants. But for now, let me just say that there are many means that the world uses, which God's children can have no part of! Devices that kill the fetus after it begins its development, pills that change the whole natural condition of the body, etc. We will not use such!

However, there are occasions when God's children come to a time in their life that they face an operation which will render future pregnancy impossible. And this too has caused serious soul searching and even certain sadness. I refer, for example, to a hysterectomy or certain cancer related treatments. These may become necessary for health reasons. But even these extreme cases of "birth control" should be followed only under certified advice of the medical profession. And I believe only when there is more than one opinion as to its necessity. One must with good conscience be able to say that this is the will of my God.

This leads to the position that the only valid reason for practicing any birth control (And there is as Christ's children a need for sanctified wisdom in the use of anything God has given us) is basically for health reasons. And this that we are able to say before God's Word, this is what Christ would have me do. But even here much caution must be used. Even here we must understand that we but have a beginning of new obedience, and that the old man of sin still cleaves to us. Our reasoning can easily be used in sin's service. We might reason for our wife to have another child would be too much for her physical wellbeing. But in fact, through this rationalization only exhalt our own will against God's. Before God we stand and are judged, and before Him we all also stand in this matter. Only by grace shall we rightly stand.

Certainly our God calls us to walk in sanctified wisdom. He calls us to be stewards over all things. "For this is the will of God even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess your vessel in sanctification and honor," I Thessalonians 4:3, 4. Not only does this refer to holiness in our marriage, but calls us to walk wisely before God in our married life. The Christian husband and wife may not be careless in bringing forth the covenant seed; so that the mother immediately after bearing a child should not become pregnant without a reasonable time of recuperation. Thus God's children who in the intimate union of marriage express their love together also sexually, will practice a sanctified wisdom in this relationship together. This means for most of us, that for a few days a

month that we abstain from intercourse, or if in good conscience one may use a condom, he may do so for this time alone. God gives us the grace to see this as necessary for mother's health. But normally this is but a matter of a couple of months. Beware that it is before God that we say there is a need for any restraint. And further realize that even if we would have intercourse only once in a month and far from the time of normal days in which pregnancy might occur, God in His good pleasure may still give you a child. And He also then makes His will known unto us, and we pray for grace to receive all things in thanksgiving. And remember that our wisdom even as sanctified by Christ is still far from perfect, because of the flesh, so we must be extremely suspect of our own reasoning. Rather, give it into the hand of the Lord our God, knowing that His pleasure is done, and He shall provide for all your needs, also in bearing the covenant seed!

I think that it is obvious from the length of this answer, that the topic is really too large for the Mail Box. I would rather be able to speak to you about these things with the Scripture as our guide, then your concrete questions could be answered very specifically. But perhaps these principles can be a basis for your further study. May God give you grace to search out His Word for all the questions that arise in your souls.

BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM

by Harold Tilma

The article in the February 1980 issue of *Beacon Lights* on the word "Christmas" is very appropriate and much appreciated. How true it is that many do not know what the word means, but when it is used we really give approval to the Catholic mass which the Heidelberg Catechism condemns "as nothing else than the denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ and is accursed idolatry." This is to tell the writer of the February contribution that he has accomplished something. Having for some years held similar convictions, I refuse from henceforth to buy and send cards with the word Christmas.

Sinful showing of imaginary pictures of Jesus and His cross and the erection and display of cross images made of all different kinds of materials and colors are also evils which Protestants have taken over from the Catholic Church. There is no indication or command in all of Scripture that pictures of holy things should be made and that cross likenesses should be worn around

the neck and that cross images should be placed in church sanctuaries. Don't we say that the Holy Scriptures are our only source and authority for faith and practice? All such are fakes and deceptions. But we hear it said, pictures and images help to worship God and they show to others that we are Christians. But the Lord Jesus says something else about this. He said: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Matthew 7:20, 5:16. There is only one true way to show we are Christians and that is to witness by mouth to the Lord Jesus and His Gospel and by our love and obedience to His commandments. John 13:35, Mark 4:20, Colossians 1:3-6, Matthew 10:32, Galatians 5:22-25. For further study of this truth, look up "God is Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth." Not by pictures and images, but by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ Who is the Truth and from the Truth of Holy Scriptures, John 14:6; 6:63; 17:17, Psalm 119:11.

Another matter against which we should be warned is the sinful and profane lottery drawing carried on by state-operated lotteries and business enterprises. Whether you pay for a ticket or whether you just write in your name without paying, it makes no difference at all. The drawing is an awful sin against the Third Commandment forbidding wrong use of the Name of God and His works. These lotteries are run by wicked and scheming people who profit by it when they use God's providence wrongly for financial gain. It is a terrible sin to call for God's disposing of the lot for this purpose. Except they repent, what a terrifying punishment awaits them.

Nicotine cigarette smoking and drinking of alcoholic liquors is producing such horrifying consequences. It seems that our men can hardly wait till divine services are over to put a cigarette in their mouths. I even saw a fourteen year old after services start puffing on one. My brother died of cigarette lung cancer after an operation that took out one lung and part of another. The cancer spread to his liver and his death was not a glorious one by any means. It was pitiable. If the present army of cigarette smokers could witness such a death, it might wake up some to the evil of continued inhaling of nicotine poisoning. Perhaps not. Only the Lord Jesus by His word and Spirit has the power to make you see the sin of it and to quit the stinking sin.

Also parents ought to begin to think how their drinking of intoxicating liquors is such a bad example for their children. Drunkenness is a sin. Far better not to ever start the drink habit. Parents as heads of their families in the covenant of God should so conduct themselves to be the right example to their children. When you smoke and when you drink, you are telling your children, "Do what I do, I smoke and I love to drink, you do the same when you grow up, I am your father." Fathers, make a vow before God never to ever smoke again, never to drink another drop.

God's people in this world are pictured to us in nature as a plant, of which some of the branches bear fruit and others do not.

Believers and Their Seed Chapter 9, p. 114.

CREATIVE WRITING

by Jim Huizinga

Anyone who is familiar with Covenant Christian High School knows that for several years we have had a program called *Interim*. *Interim* is a period between semesters during which students can take special courses and study them intensively. In the past, *Interim* was a full week, each student taking two courses a day, one for the entire morning and one in the afternoon. For several *Interims*, I have had the privilege of teaching Creative Writing. In each class our emphasis was on writing short lyrical poems.

One of the presuppositions of the course is that God has given us the gift of language, not merely as a functional tool with which we carry out the affairs of everyday life, but also as an instrument which God's people can use in a personal way to express their gratitude and praise to Him. Many of the poems written in the past have been genuine, faith-filled responses to God and His mighty works.

One of the final goals of our Creative Writing course has been to publish the best writings of each student in some kind of lasting readable form. We believe that students write better when they write for "real life" readers. Besides, when students have worthwhile things to say, it is only proper that they be given a medium to say them.

A small booklet, entitled IMAGES, was produced at the end of the 1978 *Interim*. To this point the teacher has reneged on his promise to supervise the production of a similar booklet for the 1980 *Interim*. Hopefully, we can fulfill this promise by printing some of these poems in the next few issues of the *Beacon Lights*. Although I have not consulted with any of the students, nor have I asked their permission to publish their poems here, I hope they will not consider my doing so a presumption. I hope that they will consider this special poetry feature a worthy substitute for what we had planned. In addition, I hope that our *Beacon Lights* readers will enjoy reading these poems produced by the students of Covenant Christian High. Perhaps by doing this we can encourage more young people to write creatively and to offer their writing for publication. In this way, others may share in their insights and talents, and God's glory will be the greater.

Many poems are written about simple things.

The Catcher's Mask - Dwight Quenga

A strong steel fence,
Attached to a padded oval,
Held by elastic straps,
Cold when touched.

A strong steel fence
That holds back,
the ball that tries
To break through.

A strong steel fence,
Uncomfortable when worn,
Gladly taken off,
But loved by the catcher.

Cheezy People
- Linda Pastoor

People say
That old age
Is like wine.
Well, I say
That cheeze,
Like people,
Gets moldy
And decrepid.
But scrape off
The outside and
It's just as good,
And even more
Flavorful.

Only
- Linda Pastoor

Only the old
Appreciate
Youth.
Only the defeated
Understand
The meaning of
Victory.
Only the poor
Know
What it is
To be rich.
If only . . .

Elegy to a Pair of Slippers
- Linda Pastoor

We lived under the sofa,
Charlie and me.
Each day, at five fifteen,
Without fail,
The dog would come and
Bite us,
Carrying us
To the master.
He'd put us on his feet.

But now,
We sleep soundly,
Charlie and me.
No dog bites.
No smelly feet to cover.
Only the dusty,
Sheetcovered
Couch.

Death
-Amy Huisken

Autumn,
with the glorious colors
of the changing trees,
leads us
into winter,
seemingly white and pure,
and sinful.
Death,
symbolized by the color black,
leads us
into heaven,
white and pure,
and perfect.

NEWS from, for and about our churches

by Linda Zandstra

BIRTHS

—Mr. & Mrs. Harold Veldman of Faith: daughter, Rachel Joy.
—Mr. & Mrs. Doug Tolsma of Edmonton: son.
—Mr. & Mrs. Art Tolsma of Edmonton: son.
—Mr. & Mrs. Rich Wories of South Holland: son, Michael Neil.
—Mr. & Mrs. D. Pastoor of Redlands: daughter, Nicole Marie.
—Rev. & Mrs. Nish of Jamaica: boy, Dane Cornelius.
—Mr. & Mrs. Dan Pastoor of First: boy, Bradley Alan on Sept. 6.
—Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Bishop of Kalamazoo: daughter, Ginelle Jane on Sept. 14.
—Mr. & Mrs. Timothy Russ of First: boy, Chad Michael on Oct. 12.
—Mr. & Mrs. Don De Jong of South Holland: son, Daniel Jon on Oct. 19.
—Mr. & Mrs. Dewey Vander Noord of South Holland: daughter, Stephanie Elaine on Oct. 20.
—Mr. & Mrs. Harry Petroelje of Faith: son, Benjamin Peter on Oct. 23.
—Mr. & Mrs. David Looyenga of First: daughter, Brianne Kate on Oct 24.
—Mr. & Mrs. George Hoekstra of Hull: daughter, Wendy Jo on Oct. 29.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

—Nathan Lubbers, Jeanine Van Baren, Mike Van Baren, and Don Vroom in South Holland on Aug. 31.
—Roxanne Gritters in Hull on Oct. 12.
—John De Jong and Daryl Poortinga in South Holland on Oct. 26.

MARRIAGES

—Pete Dykshorn and Barbara Haak on Oct 10 in South Holland.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

—Hope received Mr. & Mrs. Dale Reitsma and three baptized children from First; Mr. Thomas Bodbyl from Hudsonville; and Mr. Neal Meyer from Coopersville Christian Reformed Church.
—Hull received Miss Sandra Vander Woude from Southwest.
—First received Mr. & Mrs. Mark Juires from Zion Reformed and Twelvth Street Christian Reformed Church respectively.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES

—A singspiration was held in Faith on Oct. 19. The theme: "Our Reformed Heritage."

—The young people of Hull had a hayride in Edgerton on Oct. 20.

—Hull young people sponsored a singspiration on Oct 26. Collection for the 1982 Young People's Convention.

—First's young people had a Polaroid Party on Nov. 15.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

—The Lansing Mission sponsored a lecture on Oct. 29. Prof. Decker's topic was: "The Foolishness of Preaching."

—A lecture was held in Sioux Falls on Oct. 29. Rev. Kamps' theme: "The Bible and the Reformers' Faith."

—A lecture was held in Hudsonville on Oct. 30. Prof. H. Hanko spoke: "Reformed Yet Always Reforming."

—A program was held in Hope on Oct 31 to celebrate Prof. Hanko's 25 years in the ministry.

—The Jubal Brass Choir performed in Hudsonville on Nov. 2.

—Pictures were shown on Nov. 14 in Southeast by Mr. Lau Chin Kwee on Singapore.

Bulletins and worthwhile news items should be sent to:

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