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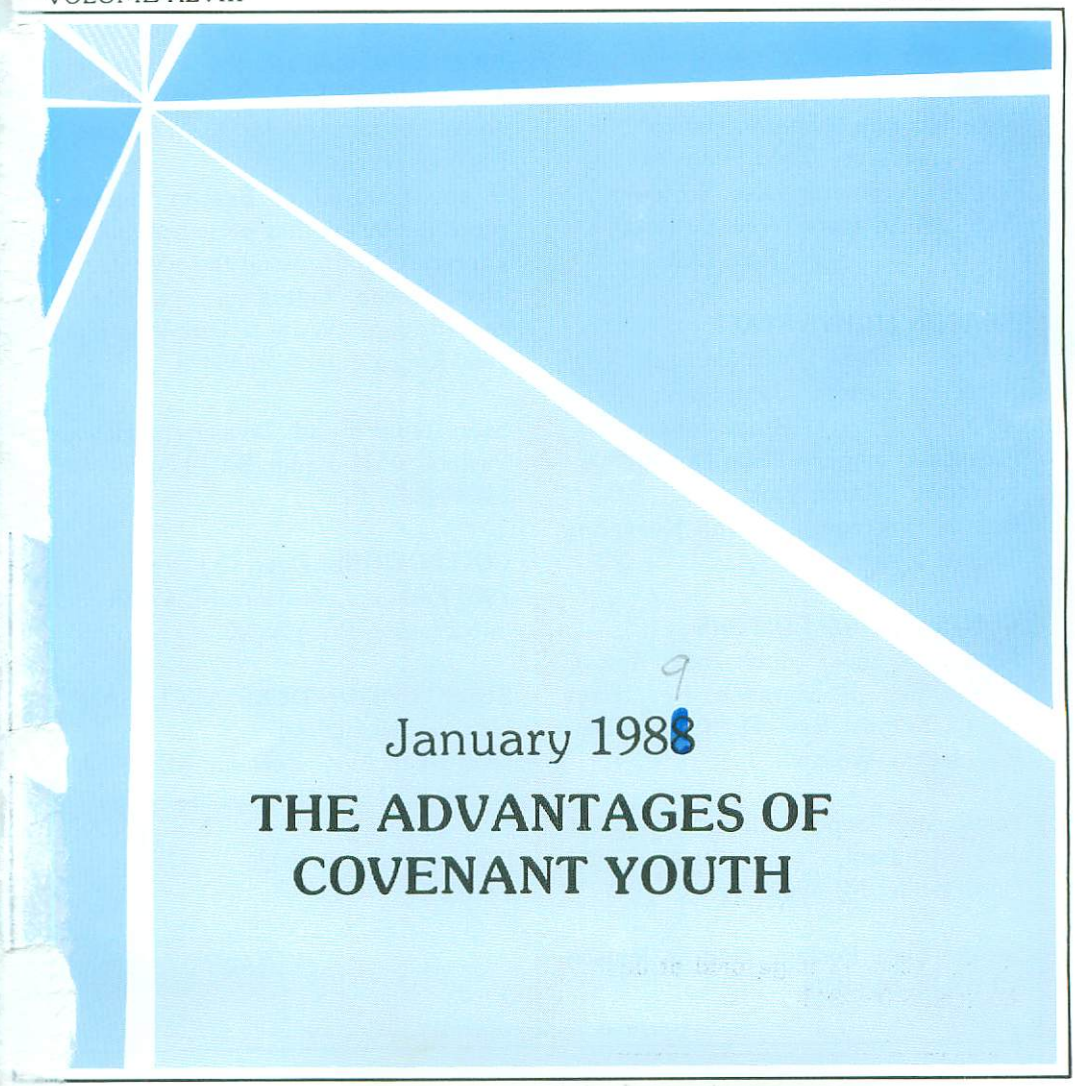

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THE ADVANTAGES OF COVENANT YOUTH

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Postmaster: Send address changes to Joel Zandstra, 6157 Balsam Dr., Hudsonville, MI 49426

Second Class Postage paid at Jenison, MI (USPS 046-840)

EDITORIAL OFFICE: David Harbach
4930 Ivanrest Ave. S.W., Apt. B
Grandville, MI 49418

NEWS EDITOR: Ruth Bleyenberg
3581 Peck, Grandville, MI 49418

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The **Beacon Lights** is available on cassette tape. Write to Dirk Westra, 7960 Ronson, Jenison 49428

Scholarship Fund Treasurer: Howard Pastoor, 5511 Bauer Rd., Hudsonville, MI 49426

COLLECTIONS: Doug Dykstra
7928 Parklane, Jenison, MI 49428
Subscription Price $5.00

SUBSCRIPTION DUES: MICHIGAN
Lisa Van Koevering
3810 100th Ave., Zeeland, MI 49464
OUTSIDE MICHIGAN: Pam Kuiper
4127 40th Ave.
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THE ADVANTAGES OF COVENANT YOUTH

by Rev. R. Dykstra

In this competitive world it seems as though everyone is looking for an advantage. When the 10 year old boy challenges his younger brother to a race, the smaller boy responds, "Do I get a head start?" In a different setting, a man seeking a particular job in competition with other applicants also looks for an advantage—something that will move him ahead in his quest for the coveted position. The Christian life is often described in Scripture as a spiritual race. Here we must eliminate all ideas of competing with **each other** — we do **not** run **against** our fellow believers. Rather the Scriptures encourage us simply to run for the crown, for the reward of glory, for the approval of God. In this grueling race it is good to have an advantage. As covenant youth, we have many.

The apostle Paul wrote to the young Timothy concerning some advantages that he (Timothy) had. In II Timothy 3:14 & 15 we read: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." One advantage we see immediately is that Timothy had already learned something of value, of which he had also been assured. What was that? Timothy had gained much true knowledge of God. He was raised in a home where his mother and grandmother were believing Jews holding to and

instructing Timothy in the truths of the Old Testament. Timothy therefore had learned of God as the Almighty Creator; of Jehovah, the God of Israel; of His law; and of the hope of salvation through the promised Messiah. But he had also been instructed by Paul — in fact, instructed for the ministry of the gospel. Thus he knew God through His Son Jesus Christ. He knew and had been assured of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and of His resurrection and ascension. This certainly equipped him for the "race" and gave him an advantage.

In many ways, our lives are parallel to Timothy's because we, like Timothy, have been raised in the sphere of the covenant. We **have learned** the truth of God. In fact, we have advantages over and above those of Timothy because the truth has been developed and more clearly expressed since his time. We have the advantage of knowing the Reformed faith with all that it maintains, and even the added sharpness of the Protestant Reformed truth. We know and are sure that God has sovereignly established a beautiful covenant with His elect in and through Christ Jesus. We have learned that this covenant is eternal, and that it is **God's** covenant which **He** planned, establishes, and realizes without the aid or even the desire of man. And, this covenant is a bond of blessed friendship and fellowship between God and His people. As friends, not only, but as adopted children of God, we have learned that we must live in holiness with our Father in heaven and in thankful obedience. We **have learned** that, and by the grace of God have been assured of the same. The more we read and study and hear the preaching, and the more we live the life of covenant children, the more assured become.

Paul admonished Timothy, "Continue thou in the things which thou has learned and hast been assured of." The same command comes to each of us, "Continue thou. . ." Then Paul gave two reasons for abiding in the truth, which certainly were meant to encourage Timothy, and us. He wrote, "Continue. . .knowing of whom thou hast learned them and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures."

He first reminded Timothy of his teachers who were, from early on, his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (II Tim. 1:5), and later Paul himself. (Timothy's father apparently was an unbelieving Greek (Acts 16:1-4).) Why would Paul direct Timothy's attention to his teachers? First of all, because evidently his teachers were faithful. They were faithful because they loved the Scriptures, knew the Scriptures, and ever sought to be faithful to them. This faithfulness would be manifest also in a godly walk. Beloved young people, if these words apply to you, you are blessed indeed. Consider the millions of young people in the world today. How many of them can know and be sure that their teachers (parents, teachers, ministers) are faithful instructors of the Scriptures? We are privileged to have instructors who not only love God's Word, but who also labor diligently, teaching us and guiding in the truth.

But there is another, more important reason why Paul reminds us of our instructors, and that is that **Christ** gave us these parents, teachers, and ministers. And since Christ gave them the authority and wisdom to teach, really, it was Christ Who instructed us through these teachers. That clearly is

ıe reason why we must continue in the ;uth, because we received it from ,Christ.

The second reason for continuing in what we have learned is that from childhood we have known the Holy Scriptures. This is obviously connected to the first reason. We have had a knowledge of Scripture because our parents, teachers, and ministers taught us the Scriptures. And they did. Bible verses, catechism questions, and songs of Zion, doctrine and walk of life, we learned from childhood on. We know the truth of the Bible. We know wrong from right. But writes Paul, those Scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation. **That** is why we must continue in the things learned. What we learned was what the Bible teaches. And that is a necessary part of our salvation.

Tremendous advantages God gives us: Faithful instructors teaching in the authority of Christ and a knowledge of the Scripture from youth up. Great privileges these are.

We do not always see it that way, of course. Many times it seems more like a burden — Christian homes; parents who insist on obedience; denying our selves earthly pleasures. Even the work of learning can become a drudgery for us: learning catechism, attending society, memorizing Scripture. Each of us must confess that we have wasted much of the advantages God gave us. This is not just a sad waste, it is the sinful rebellion of ungrateful, adopted children who despise the blessings their Father has given them.

Clearly, we need the admonition, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and been assured of." For many of us that means that we must use the opportunities God has given us now to learn more. By now the newness of the catechism instruction, school, and society year has long vanished and much of our zeal for learning has declined. But this admonition demands that we apply ourselves diligently to our study of the Scriptures. For all of us, this continuing in the truth is the applying of the truth to our daily lives. Continue in the things you have learned when your boyfriend or girlfriend whom you would like to marry rejects the truth. Continue in it when a friend, maybe even a friend in our churches, invites you to a VCR party or a "kegger." Continue in it when the only "decent" job available requires Sunday labor. Continue in the truth by being a living, active member of your congregation.

The Lord has given us as covenant youth very many spiritual advantages. From us He also requires much, Let us gratefully use the advantages of having been instructed in the Scritures from our youth up.

"Let us then know that religion, separated from knowledge, is nothing but the sport and delusion of Satan. . . I call that knowledge, not what is innate in man, or what is by diligence acquired, but that which is delivered to us by the Law and the Prophets."

- John Calvin (on Jer. 44)

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

by Rev. M. Joostens

The Law of God has fallen into disrepute. Not only is there no appreciation for the moral law in the world but, also in the church, there is more and more a de-emphasis of the Decalogue. Often a few words of summary are sufficient and the details of the Law of God are given no attention. In many circles the Law of God is no longer "strictly preached" as God would have it!

There has always been opposition to the Law of God. This need not surprise us. The "flesh" militates against the spirit and would like nothing better than a complete abolition of the Law. By nature we do not cherish gazing into the mirror of the Law of God! We hate to have our sinful nature called to our attention. We dislike the reading and preaching of the law stepping on our toes. There is sometimes, even, a tendency to minimize the law of God in the very pious way of antinomianism. We say to ourselves, "we are justified in the blood of Christ. He has fulfilled the law for us. We need not bother ourselves any longer with the commandments of God or at least we should not be so worried about keeping them!" All this is very wrong. It is a reprehensible attitude over against the Giver of the Law. The Law of God is to be taken very serious. It is a matter of our daily devotion. It is the controlling principle of a sanctified life.

A proper understanding of the Law of God illustrates this. Often the objection is heard. "But the Law belongs to the old dispensation. It was for Israel! We live in the liberty of our Lord Who fulfilled the Law!" True enough. But does that cancel out the Law of God? Does that mean that it is of no use to us? Must we discard it? Definitely not! Most emphatically our Lord taught us different. He is the fulfillment of the whole of the old dispensation. He is the end of the types and shadows for they all pointed in one way or another to Him. So Israel was placed under the "schoolmaster" of the law. It led them to Christ! He is the end of the law as well. He has fulfilled it. This simply means that we are justified in Him. As Paul tells us in Rom. 8, ". . .For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (i.e. we in our flesh could never keep it), God sending His Son. . .condemned in the flesh:" But Christ makes it plain to us, that though He made full the demand of the law for us, it is not for us abolished! He said, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." We stand in that liberty of the fulfilled law.

But that is not license! This does not mean that we may willingly disregard the Law of God. Not at all. It has simply placed the law out of the camp of bondage into the camp of thankfulness. That is why you find a

discussion and exposition of the Law of God in the 3rd part of the Heidelberg Catechism. Being justified in Jesus Christ, we have been raised unto spiritual life! We now desire to live unto God! Our only concern in life is His glory. And, the standard of such a sanctified living is the Law of God! It is the only rule of faith and life. The Law of God is the rule for the new man in Christ who desires to love God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength.

But you say, "That is a positive desire; who needs the thou shalt nots?" We do! For that new beginning of the resurrection life, which we have in Christ, is but a small beginning. It is a principle beginning. It is a principle beginning which must work itself out in the body of this flesh. And the flesh strives against the spirit. Although we are dead to sin, sin is not dead in us. As we struggle against the ever present flesh, we are thankful for the constant reminding, admonition and the encouragement of God's Law. We love to hear it as we gather in that oasis of congregational worship to gather strength and to be encouraged in the battle of faith for the week that lies ahead. The words of Psalter 322 express it well:

"How shall the young direct their way?
What light shall be their perfect guide?
Thy word, O Lord, will safely lead,
If in its wisdom they confide.

Upon thy precepts and thy ways
My heart will meditate with awe;
Thy word shall be my chief delight,
And I will not forget thy Law."

The Ten Commandments
NO OTHER GODS

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

John Calvin once described the inner motivations of people in this way. "The poor yield to the rich, the common people to the nobles, the servants to the masters, the ignorant to the scholars; but there is nobody who does not imagine that he is really better than the others. Everyone flatters himself and carries a kingdom in his bosom." It is one of the most perceptive insights into the workings of the human heart to be found anywhere; and each of us can know how true it is by simply examining his own inner life. Honesty can only compel us to admit that we all stand guilty before the first commandment of God's law, "Thou shalt have no other gods before thee."

This commandment is first because it's most basic. Once one has turned himself from the true God to another, the rest of the law is effectively gone. And, on the other hand, any time one breaks any of the other commandments he is rejecting God as the true God, and is breaking this commandment as well. The first commandment is fundamental and cannot be ignored.

It began, of course, with Satan. He

came to Adam and Eve in the garden and said, in effect, there was no reason why they should have to acknowledge God as their God. They could easily ignore him; they could be their own god; nothing bad would result. In fact. the implication was clearly there that it was actually arrogant and presumptuous for God to expect them to listen to him, or to suggest that any part of the creation, even the fruit of one lone tree, could rightfully be withheld from them. That was Satan's thought. He had devised it while among the angels; and since that time history has re-echoed it again and again.

Take the example of Pharaoh. Here was a man who had benefitted immensely from Israel's service, a people whose strength and faithfulness had been given to them by their God. Because of it, his nation had become the greatest and most prosperous in all the world. And yet, when he was reminded that Israel belonged first to this God, and they must be allowed freedom to worship Him as He wished (Ex. 4:22, 23), Pharaoh was incensed. He was Pharaoh and he didn't have to listen to anyone else. With fury he answered Moses, Ex. 5:2, "I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go."

And it wasn't greatly different with King Saul. He was given by God's appointment a position to which he had no claim and no reason to expect. At first, to be sure, he seemed humbled and compliant (I Sam. 11); but once it come out that he was required to do what God desired (I Sam 15), he set himself in resistance until his mind broke down in maddened distraction (I Sam. 18:10). He would not accept the fact that God is the only God.

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And so it is with our world today; it will not recognize the God by which it was made. To be sure, Christians may worship if they wish; but public recognition of God becomes increasingly rare, and with it morality all but disappears. And the consequences are there. The same self-destructive patterns which drove Pharaoh into the depth of the sea and Saul into wild hatred and psychotic distractions are working their way through the world in which we now live.

And you, Christian young people, are confronted with it.

You live in this world; and it beckons you to come along on this reeling course of self-infatuation which refuses to recognize the true God. There is only one thing sacred in our day; everyone must be left free to be his own god, to do alone what he or she wants. With this no one may be allowed to interfere.

And the fact is that you can understand this quite well. It comes easily to your way of thinking, and you like it. There is something in the nature of each of us which feels very comfortable with the suggestion that we should each be left to do whatever we choose; and the world has devised countless ways of encouraging that. After all, what are the pleasures of this world but just so many ways of making you feel good about yourself, of making you feel that somehow you are bigger and more powerful than you really are. Isn't it this that lies at the root of the rush of pleasure which comes from beating someone else at sport? Isn't it the sublimation of being able to identify with the wild living of some fictitious character living another life than our own that gives the pleasure to fiction in books and film? What else is it that gives that momentary flush of

satisfaction to intoxication through drink or drugs? To be, if only for a moment, like a god; to feel, no matter how unreal, that one can do whatever he wants; that is the pleasure of sin. To have some other god, that's what it's all about.

But "Thou shalt not." There is another way, and it's the only way that's right. Life and living do not consist of doing what we want; life and living are found in having true fellowship with others. And this is only possible when one has true fellowship with God. But it means that we don't live to do what we want, but that we live to respond to others, and above all that we respond to what is right and true. Life is real when we know that we are not our own (Ps 100:3), and so we turn from ourselves to live in response to God who made us. That is what the first commandment is all about.

TREASURES UNTOLD

Anonymous

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Matthew 13:45, 46.

Among all the treasures that we as people of God possess, the foremost of these is our God Himself.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." (Deut. 6:4) The heathen gods are but vain idols, the work of men's hands, which have eyes and cannot see, ears and cannot hear, mouths and cannot speak. But our God is in the heavens, the Holy One, eternal, unchangeable, omnipresent, righteous and just. He is the God of all grace, of infinite goodness, love, mercy, compassion and loving kindness to His people in Christ.

He is Jehovah, the almighty, unchangeable, ever faithful covenant God, who takes His chosen unto Himself, into His heart and life, into His fellowship and blessedness to worship Him, the ever blessed and adorable God!

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Psalm 48:1. He is our Creator, our Sustainer, our Provider for time and for eternity, for He rules as sovereign Lord over all, blessed forever!

Scripture also speaks of the "unsearchable riches of Christ". (Ephesians 3:8)

As second person of the divine trinity He possesses all the riches of God.

Listen also to this: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (II Cor. 8:9)

He emptied Himself (Phil. 2:7), became the lowliest of the lowly, the poorest of the poor, as He bent Himself under the wrath of God to suffer

torments of hell, in order to deliver us from sin and death and bring us along with Him into heavenly life and glory. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the **precious** blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish." (I Pet. 2:18, 19)

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father." (Phil. 2:9-11)

Of Him the inspired Poet sang: "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: Therefore God hath blessed thee forever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and majesty. . . . All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they nave made thee glad." (Psalm 45:4, 8)

The heavens eternally carry the refrain: "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and honor, and glory, and blessing!" (Rev. 5:12)

God in His amazing, sovereign mercy has chosen a people unto Himself in Christ Jesus.

"Glorious things of thee are spoken, O city of God." Psalm 87:3

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following." (Psalm 48:12, 13)

"Zion founded on the mountains,
God thy Maker, loves thee well;
He has chosen thee, most precious,
He delights in thee to dwell;
God's own city, who can all thy glory tell? Psalm 87.

This was said of Israel in the darkest period of her history - think of Israel in Egypt, the sad history of the Judges, the time of Ahab when Elijah thought that he alone was left, the bitter time of the captivity, and the dark hours before the birth of Christ. There was always a remnant according to election of grace! That is also true of the church of the new dispensation. Though hated and despised, though scorned by apostates, though often the offscouring of the earth, (I Cor. 4:13), though scattered over the earth as little groups who cling tenaciously to the truth once delivered to us by the fathers, we are still always the seven thousand who do not bend their knee to Baal.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being **much more precious** than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and **glory** at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 1:6, 7)

We have God's glorious and blessed **promises**.

Immediately after the fall in paradise God pronounced His curse upon the devil, his power, his followers, and his kingdom, assuring them of their everlasting condemnation. God also promised the Christ and the salvation of all those who are in Christ Jesus.

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15.

This also already includes that

wonderful promise that God will gather His church in the line of continued generations of the believers. As God said to Abraham, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Gen. 17:7.

Peter speaks of that promise on the day of Pentecost, saying: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:39.

We do not live on an island. We are not mere individuals who are responsible only to and for ourselves. We are born and reared in our family, in the church. As parents we are responsible for the training of our children, as children we are responsible for submission and obedience to our parents for God's sake.

We also have the blessed privilege of being parents, who in our small way are privileged to serve toward the gathering of God's church and the coming of His kingdom. We have the blessedness, the joy and peace of a covenant home and of the communion of saints in the church.

As God's people we belong to that great family of God, we are members of the body of Christ, saints in Christ Jesus. We experience that "there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye (we) are called in one hope of your (our) calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you (us) all." (Ephesians 4:4-6)

This reaches beyond all racial barriers, all barriers of age, nationality, or any other difference. We are one at heart in the household of our God.

From this follows what Scripture speaks of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." (Ephesians 3:8)

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1) "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" (Psalm 27:1) "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1) "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalm 73:23, 24) "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." (Psalm 25:14)

Christ is for us the Bread of life, the Water of life, the true Vine, the Good Shepherd, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and also the Resurrection and the Life.

Many, many more riches could be added. There are still more to come!

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." (I Peter 1:3, 4)

"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Romans 11:36)

Like the rich fool in the parable (Luke 12:16-21) many of the "now" generation want their good things in this present life. Of them Jesus says: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26)

Of Moses Scripture teaches us: "By faith Moses, when he was come to

years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (Hebrews 11:24-26)

What are your priorities?

Truth Vs. Error

2. God's Controversy With Israel Hosea 4

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

"By swearing, and lying, and **killing**. . . ." The world is full of it. Daily killings continue in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Israel, Iraq, Iran, Ireland, in Sri Lanka, in Honduras and Nicaraqua. But in our own land the crime of murder is appalling! "Four (4) times as many Americans will be killed by abortion as by cancer. . .; 10 times as many will be killed by abortion as by strokes; and 14 times as many will be killed by abortion as by pneumonia and pulmonary disease. . .; 44,000 Americans will die on highways this year; 36 times that number will die by abortions; 25,000 adults will be murdered in 1984; 64 times as many unborn children will be murdered. The number of deaths from all causes except abortion in 1984 will be almost 2 million. When we include abortion deaths, the number almost doubles to 3.6 million.

"From 1775 to 1984, 1.2 million Americans have died in 9 wars. 1.2 million American babies die every 9 months, 4,400 each day, 183 each hour! This month (Oct., 1984) more Americans will be killed by abortion than were killed during World War I.

"The people and government of the Soviet Union murder 13 million unborn children each year. . .1 billion unborn children have been murdered since World War II.

"Comparatively, atrocities committed by Nazis and. . .the worldwide Communist movement seem. . .minor . . . . The Nazi victims are estimated at 15 million, including 6 million Jews. . . Communist victims since 1917, 125 million. But the number of abortions worldwide since 1945 exceeds those combined totals by a magnitude of 7." — Dr. John Robbins, **The Trinity Review**, Jan. 1985. Americans who fought in World War II to destroy Nazism have become far worse than the Nazis and the Communists combined. May we never hear any more about a Nazi holocaust! The only recovery from this horrible trend in neo-Nazism is a return to the morality of the Ten Commandments, and to the plain injunction of Jesus, "Thou shall do no murder." To this there is absolutely no alternative: for we all must die, "and it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this The Judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

". . .and blood toucheth blood." Murders run in streams of blood, blood mixing with blood, even royal blood touching royal blood, blood-thirsty kings killing for the crown: Baasha killed Nadab; Zimri killed Elah; Zimri committed suicide; Jehu killed Jehoram; Shallum killed Zachariah; Menahem killed Shallum; Pekah killed Pekahiah — Hoshea killed Pekah. With innocent blood Manasseh had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other (II Ki. 21:16). Finally, it come about that the blood of the sacrificer mingled with the blood of the sacrifice. II Chron. 24:21; Matt. 23:35, 37.

We can never forget the first time we ever saw color television. It was in South Dakota when on classical appointment. There was shown the blood of Robert Kennedy, spilled by a Muslim assassin! This crime of shedding human blood is.: (1) forbidden by the Word of God (Gen 9:5), (2) condemned in the sentence of capital punishment (Gen. 9:6); (3) hateful to God (Prov. 6:16, 17); (4) defiling to the whole land (Ps. 106:38): (5) cleared away from those accused of shedding it only by the vicarious death of an animal sacrificed in the place of, and made to suffer the punishment of, the murderer. Deut. 21:1-9. This is a type of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice. By His precious blood He fully satisfied for all our sin and cleansed us from all our blood-guiltiness.

"By swearing, and lying, and killing, and **stealing**. . . ." Some of the sins forbidden in the 8th commandment are: theft, robbery, kidnapping, rape, receiving stolen goods, fraud, false weights and measures, counterfeiting, extortion, usury, bribery, unjust enclosures and depopulations (Acts 19:19, 24, 25), covetousness, idleness (II Th. 3:11; Prov. 18), reckless, wasteful expenditure. . . . (Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 142). Add to this: shoplifting, swindling, plagiarism, forgery, and embezzlement. Stealing, Hosea complained, was going on in the church! Today it shocks even the world, let alone the church, what with the scandal of certain popular "evangelists" lately exposed in unfaithful administering of financial stewardships.

Biblical examples of stealing we have in: Eve, Adam, Rachel (Gen. 31:19), Achan (Josh. 7:21), Ahab (I Kings 21), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), and the two thieves crucified with Jesus.

The Cross, and the Word of the Cross (I Cor. 1:18) are, to the impenitent thief, a savor of death, unto death, and, to the penitent thief, a savor of life, **unto** life. Look at those three crosses on Calvary. The man on the central cross has sin **on** Him, but no sin **in** Him. The impenitent thief had sin **on** him and **in** him. The penitent thief had sin **in** him, but no sin **on** him. Since our first parents were thieves, all we, with all humanity, are thieves by nature. Then, reader, where must you take your place, with the impenitent thief, or with the converted thief?

I. B. **Ignorance and forgetfulness of God**. (6). "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to Me; seeing thou has forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

They are "My people," nominally (even organically) the people of God: nominally, in that they name the name of Christ, but do not depart from iniquity (II Tim. 2:19). "This people

draweth near unto Me with their mouth, and honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Matt. 15:8). They bring upon themselves their own spiritual destruction "for lack of knowledge," because they "strive with the priest" (v. 4), with the minister. It is still true "that this is a rebellious people, lying children, . . .who will not hear the law of the Lord; who say to the seers, 'See not!' and to the prophets, 'Prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits' " (Isa. 30:9, 10). Exactly so does many a modern church board advise prospective ministers. For the time has come "when they will not endure (tolerate) sound doctrine, but, after their own lusts, . . .heap to (accumulate for) themselves teachers, having itching ears," that is, "wanting to have **their** ears tickled" (NASB). They want teachers (not preachers) adept at "titilating their hearing." Nor do they care that these false teachers "turn their ears from the truth" (II Tim. 4:30). They do not want that system of propositional truth contained in the Bible; they want some hazy, experiential "truth." They say, "Give us none of that intellectual Heidelberg Catechism theology; give us the personal religion of the heart. Give us not a doctrine, but a person!" So they rebel against their Reformed ministers, refusing to be led in the way of Reformation. And if they cannot cast these ministers out, they withdraw from them. I John 2:19.

Their state is described as one of "lack of knowledge," and that "because thou hast rejected knowledge" and especially because "thou hast forgotten the Law of God." They complained to their ministers, "Don't **preach** the law to us," neither to produce the knowledge (conviction of sin), nor to instruct in a life of gratitude. **Teach** us: don't **preach** on the law, or the Apostles' Creed, or the Lord's Prayer—all that became extinct along with New England Puritanism. Teach us something relevant, like "the creative visualization process of prosperity programming."

"Thou hast rejected knowledge." "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge." Rom. 1:28. They no longer have a Reformed minister. They no longer have Reformed dogmatics, or Reformed preaching, or Reformed sermons. Sermons are passe. "We had a nice **message** this morning." Sometimes these "messages" are called "sermons", but actually are so short, being only about 12 minutes long, that they are "sermonettes by preacherettes for Christianettes." This is really a rejection of preaching and so is a rejection of knowledge. Preaching, too, in a Reformed church should be "election preaching," that is, preaching that is based on the truth of predestination (the heart of the church), and is permeated with the truth of election. This does not mean that we preach the doctrine of election every time we preach; rather, it means that all preaching must be in harmony with election because it is the very heart of the gospel. But the Devil knows that a very effective way to get rid of the truth of double predestination, election and reprobation, is to get rid of preaching altogether. Instead, the modern pulpit, besides its little "message," is overrun with the most popular of sophistries—"Free Willism." Make a list, some time, of all the TV preachers, then see if you can name **one** that does not preach that most damaging of heresies! That heresy is

itself both a **lack** of knowledge and a **rejection** of knowledge; and, if tolerated, it will, over a period of time, destroy the people of God.

This rejection of knowledge means **knowledge** as it is expressed in "the law of God." That is why its rejection is such a terrible thing. God's **law** is rejected until it is finally forgotten altogether. The false church has rejected knowledge in its rejection of the law of God. The state, too, is now totally rejecting the law of God, and in its going over to the religion of secular humanism, has fallen into the downgrade of anti-intellectualistic and irrationalistic repudiation of knowledge. For any "knowledge" without the knowledge of the canonical Scriptures is a form of **ignorance**! The **rejection** of knowledge is far worse than never having had any knowledge to reject. It was not that they never had had any light, but that they **hated** the light. John 3:19-20. This is the awfulness of their sin! "Ministers who reject knowledge, who are grossly ignorant and scandalous, ought not to be owned as ministers."—Matthew Henry. Who today has not heard quite enough of "ignorant and scandalous" ministers? God rejects the pseudo-evangelist from being priest. Perhaps they do not claim to preach; rather, they claim to **teach**. They have an aversion to preaching. Yet, nevertheless, they **cannot** preach; they have no **gospel** to preach. To the sinner dead through trespasses and sins "free willism" is not "good news."

—To be continued, D.V.—

Remember. . .
Thy Creator, God, Who fashioned Thee
And gave Thee breath to praise Him endlessly

Remember. . .
In thy days of youth
That He is Wisdom, Light and Truth

Before Thou find the days of youth have flown
And sorrowing, turn to reap what has been sown. . .
Remember

Sue Looyenga

SINGSPIRATION SCHEDULE

February 19	First
March 19	Southwest (Easter)
May 21	Hope
August	Pre-Convention
September 17	Southeast
November 19	Faith (Thanksgiving)
December 17	Hudsonville (Christmas)