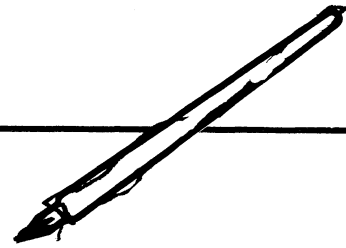




**Clarion**  
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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## On being wasteful

One or two generations ago most people still lived very carefully with their money, with their food, with their other possessions. There was often a simple reason (although for many it was not the only reason). They did not have much money to spend. To use an old Dutch saying: they turned a dime around a number of times before spending it. Was it really necessary to buy this or that? Or should this dime be kept for a later, more necessary, expenditure? Today, in general, the situation is not so intensely tight anymore in many families, also with most of us, though there is still poverty, often endured in silence. Nevertheless, we can and should be thankful for this change, which makes life quite a bit easier.

The same holds for food. If our grandparents were to tell us about the food that was available to them and that they usually ate, we would hear that there was much less variety and that their meals were mostly very simple. I remember that an orange was a treat which we received about once a year, at Christmas. Sometimes we got an apple in the fall and winter. Pudding was on the table only on the Sunday (custard). Also this situation has changed. A look in a grocery store shows a great variety of food products. And I suppose that, although soberly, the change is reflected on most of our dinner tables as well.

The same holds again true for the things with which we surround our lives: the furniture, the adornments, the vehicles to move around with, and whatever there is more. A generation ago, when life had to be built up, everything was simple and sober. There was money only for the (most)necessary things. But in the last forty years the general picture changed. Much more money became available. The economy grew, from which practically all profited, although not without hard work. We can be thankful for this blessing, but should hope and pray, at the same time, that this blessing does not turn into a curse.

The latter is possible. Affluence often makes people forget God and His service. By nature we are selfish. We live in a consumer society that thrives on spending. The easiness with which quite large amounts of money are earned by older and by young people, provides the possibility of spending much. Buying and spending keeps our society going. But does this not also mean that there is a lot of wastefulness? I concentrate now on wasting food.

There is a wasting of large amounts of food for economic reasons: food is produced, dairy products, grains, fruits, in

great quantities. When at a certain moment the price of these products drops below the cost of production because of these large quantities, much of what is produced is destroyed to keep the price high. Economists will say that this is unavoidable. Flooding the market with cheap products will ruin the producers economically. Economists do not reckon with (dependence on) God's blessing.

There is also a wasting food on a more personal level. This has to do with the affluence with which we are surrounded. People take a lunch along to the job or to school. But during lunch time they do not like to eat what they brought along. There is a shop close by, or the coffee and food truck comes along, or in the school a bag of potato chips and chocolate bars can be purchased. So the lunch is discarded and ends up, perhaps, in the garbage bin. Thus not only money is spent unnecessarily, but also food goes to waste.

This is not the only way in which good food is thrown out. Lots of it goes to waste in restaurants, but also in the homes. If something is not desired anymore for whatever reason, it is just thrown out. Many do not want to eat bread that has become a little (too) old and dry and is not fresh anymore, to mention only this example. In one way or the other, we all know of this phenomenon, and perhaps have contributed to it.

Is now the old way of life better than the new? Did our grandparents act better than we do? We should not fall into the trap of this dilemma, because then we easily make the past time the norm with which we approach our own time. The time, past or present, with its way of doing things, cannot be the norm. The norm for our life is Christ: the Christ of the Scriptures, who gave His blood for the forgiveness of sins and leads us back to God, to faith in God, and to the service of God according to His Word. There is no other valid norm.

Did it ever strike you that Christ Jesus Himself, at a specific occasion, spoke against letting food go to waste? You can read this in John 6:12. Christ had just fed a crowd of five thousand men (not counting the women and children, Matt. 14:21). The Lord had done this in a miraculous way: from five small barley loaves and two fish he broke so many pieces of both bread and fish that the whole crowd was satisfied. They could eat their fill. Bread and fish means carbohydrates and proteins, the two main nutritional elements in man's food; barley bread was not luxurious food; wheat was the normal grain for human food, barley was more for animals and for



the poor, cf. Rev. 6:6. Nevertheless, although simple, there was more than enough. What Christ provided was given in abundance and not scarcely.

Now, what did our Lord say to His disciples, when all had eaten and were satisfied? He said: "Gather up the pieces that are left over, *that nothing may be lost.*" This last verb means "to destroy utterly, to lay waste" be(come) totally lost." Thus our Lord, who created the food in abundance, did not want to let any of what was left go to waste.

The text does not say what was done with it afterward. We can only guess. Perhaps the twelve baskets with left-over pieces were given to the poor. Whatever was done with it is not important. The point in this word of Christ is that nothing of the food should be wasted and perish.

We may ask which doctrine of the Scriptures is at the background of this religious and ethical instruction. This is in the first place the teaching that is summarized in Ps. 24:1.

The earth is the LORD's and the fulness thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein;  
for He has founded it upon the seas,  
and established it upon the (flowing) waters.

It is in the second place that on earth man is steward over what belongs to God, see, e.g., Luke 16, especially vss.

1-12, where Christ speaks the parable of the crooked steward and teaches His disciples to be faithful stewards over what is God's.

The LORD God is the Creator of everything. Therefore it is all His. Everything that man receives for his life here on earth is purely a gift of God's faithful goodness with which He cares for His creatures and provides for them. The purpose is that man now serves God and cares for the neighbour.

Is this not self-evident? If our food and everything else is gift of our Maker and Redeemer, should we then not receive and use it all to His glory? It is therefore a simple conclusion that receiving God's gifts of undeserved, even forfeited, mercy and goodness and then letting them go to waste as consequence of an attitude, a way of life, shows not only lack of appreciation and thankfulness on the part of man, but is also an offence, a sin, against God.

Wasting that which belongs to God, letting it perish because of an attitude of indifference and human arrogance, is, in fact, also in conflict with the very nature of God as the God of life and creation and care. God is the God of life. Therefore, everything that leads to, and is, decay and waste and death, is the opposite of what God is. Christ knew that. Those who believe in God and live by His Word, understand this.

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***"The point in this word of Christ is that nothing of the food should be wasted and perish."***

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Therefore, following their Saviour and Redeemer from sin, those who live in faith, receive in great thankfulness not only the salvation from eternal death, from the curse of sin, but also the renewal of their life here on earth as children of God; they receive with great thankfulness the gifts of food and whatever else they need to use it in faith, carefully, and in order to honour their heavenly Father and their Saviour with the way in which they use it.

Our grandparents and their generation were careful not to waste money and food and other things. Indeed, they could not afford it. Our modern generation does not reckon with God anymore. Modern man thinks that, and lives as if, he can afford to waste (parts of) what he gets, because he considers himself the master and absolute owner over what he has worked so hard for.

However, what guided our Christian parents in the first place was not the question whether they could afford it to waste food and other things. They were led by the Word of the Lord. They lived in the awareness to be God's children who were not to waste God's gifts. They learned to be particular, also on this point. It was for them a matter of faith, of following Christ, of obeying their beloved Master in heaven.

Let us then not adapt to our modern time and its way of life, its attitude, but, in unity with our Christian fathers, live by God's Word. Let us not think and act like the world, but think and act like Christ Jesus, our Lord.

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# The sermon: What may we expect?

By C.J. de Ruijter<sup>1</sup>

The weekly sermon remains a favourite topic of conversation among church members. And rightly so because the preaching has indeed a most central place. You might even say that it is the source, the fountain from which the church draws life.

However, often these conversations leave us dissatisfied; rarely do we feel spiritually uplifted by them. There is an important question which precedes and therefore influences all these conversations: What may we expect from the sermon?

Our discussions about the sermon will undoubtedly be of greater value when we have considered this question in a responsible manner. This and following articles were written to help in these considerations.

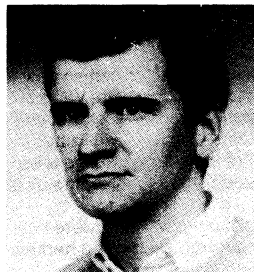
## So many men ...

Often the discussion of the sermon bogs down because of the varying expectations of the individual listeners. Some consider the sermon satisfactory only if something has been learned from it. Others desire a *word for their heart*, rather than an *instructional sermon*. The one church member expects a thorough exegesis of the text and suggests, "I will decide for myself what application I will make for my daily life." Another hopes for a message which has a direct application for his or her own situation. Many people appreciate a lively presentation, while others might consider the presentation itself of little importance. Some like the sermon to be an intellectually demanding, scholarly discourse, while others prefer sermons which address the congregation in a more popular fashion.

Indeed, there are many different ways in which listeners may approach the sermon. Of course, no one will be surprised to hear that no minister will even try to honour all these wishes. However, as long as such expectations determine the way in which we listen to the sermon, its blessings can be greatly diminished. That becomes obvious when in a discussion about the sermon

the opinions badly clash.

It is the express purpose of the sermon to bring together all these different people so they will find each other under the ministration of the Word which speaks to all of them. But you will not find each other when there are sharp divisions of opinion on what may be expected from a sermon. This applies most certainly to the sermon discussion in the consistory meeting.



Rev. C.J. de Ruijter

## The consistory and the sermon

Sermon discussions do belong on the agenda of the consistory. Although only the minister has the task to preach the Word, he is not the only one who is responsible for faithful preaching! The supervision of the preaching is the special task of the elders. After all, they are, together with the minister, the shepherds of the flock. Therefore it is their responsibility to ensure that the voice of The Shepherd is heard in the sermons. We can prevent the preaching from becoming the business of one man only by taking this responsibility seriously.

It is proper that this responsibility receives much attention during the period of the calling of a minister. But this responsibility must also function after the arrival of the minister. Based on their experience within the congregation, the elders will be able to indicate to the minister what the needs of the congregation are. And further, during the regular family visits they will be able to discern whether the congregation can and indeed does work with the sermons.

A wise minister will not be deaf to

the comments of his fellow office-bearers. A fruitful dialogue between the minister and the elders can be of great benefit to the sermons.

Yet, many a consistory seems to have problems with the sermon discussions, as is evident from the regular complaints I hear. This is not because the elders do not dare to discuss the work of the minister. The time when the minister was regarded with awe and when no one would dare criticize him (after all, he had studied for it!) is far behind us. Those who take their responsibility seriously should be able to overcome their hesitancy (with the help of the minister!).

But the actual sermon discussions during consistory meetings show that the brothers have widely divergent expectations. If every one considers the sermon on the basis of his own point of view, a sermon discussion will bog down and the minister is left to help himself. Undoubtedly, there will be ministers who do not mind such a situation, but the congregation will suffer. If it is true that the preaching is such an important life-giving fountain, then the congregation may expect that the consistory will supervise the preaching with the utmost care. Therefore, the question, *What may we expect from the sermon?* is not only of great importance to all church members, but also to each consistory member.

## Sermon evaluation

In the meantime, someone might interject with the question, Do we still do justice to the nature of the preaching in this way? After all, we are here concerned with the Word of God which is ministered on His authority. Should everyone be allowed to voice his opinion? Should everyone in the church become a sermon critic? What, then, is left of listening to the gospel out of thirst for the gospel of salvation?

These are important questions. The kernel of the preaching concerns the question whether we are truly willing to listen to what the LORD has to say. If

that does not come first, there is no point in even discussing the sermon at all. It is not the purpose of a sermon either to allow us to settle down in thorough judgment. Listening to a sermon for critical analysis only places us outside the gospel.

The point is, we must deal with the sermon in a fruitful and constructive way. Therefore we must think about what we may rightly expect and not expect from a sermon.

### Checklist

Someone once asked me, "Can't you develop a kind of checklist for the essential points of a good sermon?" This seems an attractive idea. Checklists are useful when they function as a guideline which you can use to orient yourself quickly, and to enable you to identify important aspects.

To me, however, there is too much of a critical element implied in this suggestion. A checklist often functions in a situation of inspection and examination. With the help of such a list you run past the main points and you check whether all is well. I feel that this is inappropriate in the church. As a member of the church (and consistory) you are not called to give the minister a grade for his sermon. The main purpose of the preaching is to give yourself captive to the LORD. Only with such an attitude can we speak usefully about the question whether the sermon measured up to what we rightly may expect from it. Such an attitude does not permit us to listen as inspectors who will quickly and efficiently check whether all things are in good order.

On the other hand, the request for a checklist does have a positive element. We recognize that the preaching must measure up to certain norms, don't we? It is important that we are aware of those norms, and that we are able to use them when speaking with each other about the sermons. At this point a comparison with a method advocated for the family visit may be helpful. Rev. C. Vonk wrote a book with the title, *Family Visit According to God's commandments*.<sup>2</sup> He pleads for the use of the Ten Commandments as a guide for the family visitation. The elders should consider whether a particular family serves the LORD according to the first commandment etc. This method has been strongly criticized. I once even heard the remark, I would feel like a meter-reader! That danger does exist. A strict adherence to the order of the Ten Commandments might make the family visit rather unpleasantly formalistic. The impression might be made that the

elders have come to check out the situation, while the actual, everyday concerns of the members of the congregation may be left unmentioned.

But it is equally possible to view this method from a different angle. Consider that the Ten Commandments are the rule for our life, given by God Himself, by which our lives take shape before Him. Therefore the use of such a rule as a guide in the preparation for the family visitation as well as for the visit itself can be very helpful indeed. The point is not to ensure that all aspects will be covered. Elders should listen a great deal, and if they are called to speak they will have to speak about much more than is mentioned in the Ten Commandments. However, the rule which we have received from God Himself can be a powerful tool in the work of the office-bearers.

In the same way it is possible to formulate a number of norms, biblical criteria which describe what we may expect from a sermon. A careful use of these norms will be of much help when listening to and speaking about the sermon, without the risk of becoming an inspector who checks off the items on a list to determine whether the minister has gained a satisfactory grade. Based on these considerations I have tried to provide a brief formulation of what we rightly may expect from a sermon.

### What may we expect from a sermon?

Of course, it is not my intention to be

complete and all-inclusive. My purpose is to indicate major criteria for a sermon to help shape the expectation of the listener. In addition, the norms which I will try to formulate are meant to be norms for the preaching as a whole. It would not be fair to demand that all of them should be present in each sermon. Obviously, certain aspects will be emphasized more in one sermon than in another. Therefore the following list should be helpful to shape our expectations about sermons over the long(er) term.

In formulating these criteria I have considered especially the nature, the content, and the form of the sermon. In summary: we may expect a sermon to be:

- educational and pastoral
- faithful to the text
- relevant and topical
- orderly and comprehensible.

These elements will be discussed in future articles.

<sup>1</sup>De Ruijter, C.J. "Wat mogen wij van de preek verwachten?" DE REFORMATIE 63/11, 10 december 1988, translated with permission by T.M.P. VanderVen. Rev. De Ruijter is minister of the church at Rotterdam - Centrum, The Netherlands.

<sup>2</sup>Vonk, C. Huisbezoek naar Gods Geboden, Kampen: J.H. Kok (n.d.). As far as I know this book is not available in an English translation (T.V.).



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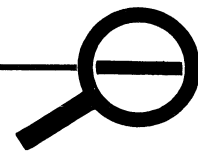
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By C. Van Dam



## Reformed Christians in Romania

Different periodicals have reported that at the heart of the unrest that culminated in the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu was Rev. Laszlo Tokes, a thirty-seven-year-old Reformed pastor in Timisoara. Before we consider those immediate circumstances more closely, let us briefly orientate ourselves to the history of the Reformed believers in Romania.

### The Reformed Church in Romania

Reformed people in Romania number over a million. They are largely ethnic Hungarians who have lived in western Romania since World War I.<sup>1</sup> The Reformed churches in Hungary are fairly well-known in our Dutch sister churches since they have, relatively speaking, many contacts with them. The history of the Hungarian Reformed Church is a long and distinguished one. In the Sixteenth Century the cause of the Reformation gained widespread support among the Hungarians and the Roman Catholic church was powerless to stop its spread. In 1567 at the important synod of Debrecen the Hungarian Reformed Church adopted the Heidelberg Catechism and the Second Helvetic Confession (a Calvinist confession dating from 1566). The Reformed Church in Hungary still subscribes to these standards.

With respect to church government, something analogous to classes and regional synods developed. The synods were chaired by a bishop. Although such a bishop officially had to carry out the will of the synod, the danger of hierarchy was not imaginary. The Reformed churches in Romania were organized in a similar fashion. Of course the tragedy with a dictatorial government is that offices like those of bishop become state appointed. The leaders in the church were generally on a friendly footing with the regime of Ceausescu and, according to Rev. Tokes, often worked with the Communists against the church they were supposed to lead.

In Romania, the Reformed Church has two regional synods each with a bishop who was a puppet of the Ceausescu regime. There are about thirty

vacancies in the churches but only five students at the sole Reformed seminary which is located at Cluj.

### The unrest surrounding Rev. Tokes

Laszlo Tokes became minister in Dej in 1980 and there set up youth and cultural activities which were not pleasing to the state. By means of open letters, he also called upon the two bishops of the church to adopt a less slavish attitude to the state. Because of his dissident activities, the church leadership deposed him from his office as minister. Following the church orderly route, he appealed to the bishop who was responsible for his region. Eventually, in 1986, he was charged to minister to the flock in Timisoara. As seems to have been customary, this was a temporary appointment. In this way a bishop is free to remove an undesirable minister easily and with little fuss.

In Timisoara Tokes again organized the youth, preached sermons that dealt directly with the issues of the day, and so again became an undesirable minister in the eyes of the authorities. Furthermore, he protested against the inhumane policies of Ceausescu in eliminating small villages in favour of large agricultural-industrial centres. He also urged the church leadership to protest on this issue as well as against the plans of the government to limit the number of students at the Reformed seminary.

This action resulted in the bishop's attempting to remove Tokes out of Timisoara and into a small village in the

extreme northwest of Romania. Tokes appealed and the consistory refused to let him go. Eventually Tokes had to leave the parsonage with his wife and took up residence in the church while their son was with grandparents. An attempt was made on his life and he again received an ultimatum to leave Timisoara by midnight on Friday, December 15. However, that night hundreds of people formed a human wall around the church to prevent his removal by the police. By Saturday night that action had mushroomed into a massive resistance to the regime of Ceausescu by the inhabitants of Timisoara. The demonstrations were smothered in blood and casualties ran as high as two thousand; but, by then the resistance to the dictatorship had spread to other centres in Romania.

### Help and prospects

Since the downfall of Ceausescu, help has poured into Romania, also from our sister churches in the Netherlands. Much help is needed in a most basic and material sense of the word. However, such help is also the easiest to give. The material damage is easier to remedy than spiritual damage which a church sustains, in this case the Reformed Church and its leadership. For decades their leaders have willingly worked together with the state against the real well-being of the church of which they were to be shepherds and servants. Indeed, one of the bishops (Laszlo Papp), is known to be a committed communist. Also on the local level, many pastors seem to have cooperated with the authorities in a manner detrimental to the real interests of the church. May many Bibles and good Reformed literature find their way into Romania. God is able to do much more than we can imagine.

<sup>1</sup>This Press Review is dependent on H. Hoksbergen's article, on page 2 of *Nederlands Dagblad* dated January 4, 1990 and also B. Witvoet's article on page 1 of the *Calvinist Contact* dated January 5, 1990 and a news story on page 2 of *Nederlands Dagblad*, 20 December 1989.

### CHURCH NEWS



DECLINED to

Winnipeg, MB: Rev. A. Veldman  
of Albany,  
Western Australia

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Lincoln, ON: Rev. J.D. Wielenga  
of Coaldale, AB

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# The ICRC — a response<sub>2</sub>

By D.G.J. Agema

Now comes then the matter of the two sets of Standards, indeed a key issue in this whole matter. It is then also of utmost importance that we understand each other well. Prof. Geertsema formulates my reasoning this way: the Westminster Standards contain false, unbiblical doctrinal statements, contradictions with our Reformed Confessions, and, in fact, with Scripture; and per consequence, no Presbyterian church which faithfully adheres to the Westminster Standards can be declared to be a true church of Christ. I realize that he puts this in the form of a question, but the next paragraphs show that in his opinion this is what I say, and he continues to rebut that.

I believe that this formulation of my reasoning makes a caricature of what I said. And what Prof. Geertsema does is attack that caricature. I have not stated that the Westminster Standards contain false information or contradictions with Scripture. What I said in Evaluation point 5 was that in my opinion Reformed and Presbyterian are not synonymous. Is such a statement wrong, when our Synods have spoken of divergencies, and when up till Synod 1989 there were appeals on the table about this matter? In addition to this, reading Prof. Geertsema's answer to Dr. Visscher I was left with a question. Does Prof. Geertsema not contradict himself? Dr. Visscher is not allowed to say that Reformed and Presbyterian are different branches of the one family of God and I agree with him — but I am not allowed to say that they are not synonymous. What is it then?

I agree with Prof. Geertsema that this matter of the two sets of Standards is the key issue. I believe therefore that as churches we can only benefit from an open discussion about these matters. Therefore although I feel that Prof. Geertsema attacks a caricature of what I said, I will go into some of the matters he mentions. For, my question to him is, are we indeed dealing with wrong interpretations of Confessions? Prof. Geertsema makes a distinction between false doctrine, and wrong teachings. I do not believe that this is a very helpful distinc-

tion. What is the difference between wrong interpretation of Scripture and false doctrine? Don't we in this way create a grey area between the truth and the lie?

Nevertheless, I think I see what he means. However, when we deal with the so-called divergencies, are we then indeed dealing with wrong interpretations of the Confession? When, e.g., we

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***“Just because our fathers spoke of visible and invisible church, does not mean that I now have to accept a Confession that speaks in the same way.”***

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deal with the matter of visible-invisible church or covenant with the elect, is that only a matter of interpreting the confession? Or is it the wording of the Westminster Confession itself that we are dealing with? I believe the latter. And if a confession is the repetition of God's Word, and between these confessions (not their interpretation but their actual wording) there are divergencies, ought we not to examine these in the light of God's Word? And to add to this, are these so-called divergencies only incidental matters in the Westminster Confession, or are their consequences felt throughout the whole Confession? I believe the latter. I will not take away from the many good points in the Westminster Standards. Neither do I call the divergencies false teachings, for that can only happen after we have carefully examined these divergencies. But I don't believe either that in the divergencies we are just dealing with wrong interpretations of the Westminster Confession. They concern the Confession itself. Therefore the question we have to deal with is whether it is Scripturally correct to speak in a confession about visi-

ble and invisible church, or about a covenant with the elect.

Prof. Geertsema then points to our fathers, who used similar expressions to what are used in the Westminster Standards. I realize this. My answer to him is, that we should not put confessional statements on one line with what past theologians have said. There is a difference. It is even remarkable that although our fathers used such terminology, it never came into the Three Forms of Unity. Just because our fathers spoke of visible and invisible church, does not mean that I now have to accept a Confession that speaks in the same way. A confession is after all a summary of the true and complete doctrine of salvation.

In this respect we may not lose sight of our history. We confess that the history of the Church is not human work but the work of God. He redeems His Israel time and again. We may never deny in word or in action His work of redemption. That is more than just treasuring the heritage of the Reformation. It means that as Churches we should not go back to the time before our redemption. That is what Israel tried time and again, but they died in the desert. We have by the grace of God progressed in 1944 in our understanding of the covenant and the church. Now, I realize full well that the Presbyterian Churches did not go through this. And that should make us very patient in dealing with them. But we may never regard what we learned in 1944 as something that is just a minor point, to be explained culturally or historically. Just as the churches after the Liberation did not want to return to the statement of 1905, so also we here in Canada have to realize that these divergencies are not just some minor points which keep us apart. To compromise in this respect would in many ways mean returning to the time before God's work of redemption in 1944.

One remark yet about the editorial comments on page 356, namely, point V. I said in my article that it is typically the language of deformation to say “Yes, that is what we maintained in the past, but thankfully we think differently

now." Prof. Geertsema criticizes this statement. However, he turns my statement around. He makes it to sound as if any one who ever uses these words is guilty of deformation. But that is not a true rendition of my words. I even acknowledged in my article that it can happen that we speak words that are too strong which later have to be taken back. However, just because that is typically the language of deformation does not necessarily mean that all those who use those words are departing from the truth.

In conclusion, indeed I am critical of the ICRC in its present form. At the same time I want to underline, as I also said in my article, that I am not against contact between Reformed Churches on an international level. I do see the value of it. Only such contact, in whatever shape or form, must have a proper basis. And I believe that this is lacking in the ICRC, which makes it into a potentially dangerous organization.

Wellandport, September 1989.  
D.G.J. AGEMA

## Response

This reply of the Rev. Agema has been on my desk for some time, but I did not have the time to respond to it. Publishing it without responding to it immediately would not be proper. Therefore, it had to wait. The reader will remember the issue, and Rev. Agema quotes extensively from what I wrote, so that it is not difficult to follow the discussion. We are thankful for the clarifications which correct misunderstanding. Further, my response shall be as short as possible. I shall not discuss every detail, but address only a few points, after which I shall concentrate on what is, in my opinion, the main issue.

### 1) Regarding Art. 30 C.O.: the ICRC is a matter which belongs to the churches in common.

My colleague questions whether a General Synod can deal with such matters as the ICRC on the basis of Art. 30 in connection with matters which pertain to the churches in common, because the Church Order is to determine which those matters are, since "otherwise a Synod could deal with anything, also non-ecclesiastical matters, which affect the churches in common." This aberration is cut off by the same Art. 30 because in its first part the churches have agreed to deal that their "assemblies shall deal with no other than ecclesiastical matters and that in an ecclesi-

astical manner." It is true, Art. 50 therefore simply states that "The relation with Churches abroad shall be regulated by general synod."

Now my colleague argues that the historical background of Art. 50 shows that it refers only to the relation with sister churches. In the first place, even if this were true this does not forbid or exclude the regulating of a "temporary" relation with churches with which we do not yet have a sister-church relationship or of a participating as federation of churches in an organization in which churches (church federations) aim to work together. Such relations remain a

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## ***"But must we make national organizational unity a condition for international acceptance?"***

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matter for the churches in federation. And in the second place, in the history of the application of the agreement in what is now Art. 50, Presbyterian Churches have always been included as sister churches. Moreover, again I ask: if a synod cannot decide to join a conference, or rather: an international organization of churches, who can decide on it then? Individual churches? Or individuals? It would simply mean that we exclude ourselves from the ICRC.

Rev. Agema writes that abiding by the adopted Church Order is the proper way to go and cannot be characterized as legalistic and formalistic. I agree wholeheartedly, since Paul says that all things should be done "decently and in good order" (1 Cor. 14:40, cf. Arts. 30 and 31 B.C.), which use the expression "good order," and Art. 33, which speaks about establishing "a certain order" as "useful and good for those who govern the Church." And this is not legalistic or formalistic. However, I characterized with these words a manner of working with the Church Order that says: we cannot involve ourselves in something which is not mentioned and regulated in the Church Order, such as participation in an organization as the ICRC (a conference). The matter as such of having a relation with churches abroad is even mentioned.

### 2) Having and promoting unity.

Rev. Agema asks, "Can we have the unity of the true faith while not having organizational unity? Would that not constitute disobedience toward the Lord Jesus Christ?" Thus having international organizational unity and not national organizational unity is "not promoting unity in the proper way." We agree that there is a conflict with the will of the Lord expressed in His Word when two church federations, while having and faithfully adhering to the same confessional standards, do not seek national organizational unity, but rejoice in having international oneness in faith. But must we make national organizational unity a condition for international acceptance? It can be known that the contact with the Reformed churches and the recognized unity in the ICRC had as effect that the two Irish Presbyterian Churches are making steps on the way to unity, recognizing the unity in the faith which they have.

### 3) The two sets of confessional standards.

Rev. Agema states that I presented a caricature of his view when I made it seem as if according to him the Westminster Standards, at some points, contain unbiblical doctrinal statements, which prevents us from recognizing Presbyterian Churches as true churches of Christ. He meant to say that the two sets of standards are not synonymous. I am glad to read this.

I have to answer here the question whether I did not contradict myself in opposing both Rev. J. Visscher and Rev. Agema. No, I did not. I disagreed with calling churches (federations) branches, since Scripture uses this word only for individual believers, and since this is practically a technical term in the circles of the World Council of Churches and therefore can cause confusion, and this the more where colleague Visscher spoke of "two of the branches." I did not oppose it that the Rev. Visscher placed the churches with the Presbyterian Standards and those with the Three Forms of Unity beside each other on the same level as true churches of Christ. I had the impression from Rev. Agema's article that he denied that we are allowed to place the two on this same level in the ICRC because of the divergencies. It is this which I also opposed.

Now concerning this "synonymous," when I say that I agree with Rev. Agema that the two sets of standards are not synonymous, we must ask the question: do we mean the same thing and do we



draw the same consequences? The dictionary says that the word means "having the same or nearly the same meaning." For me this is the same as saying: there are divergencies, differences. As far as I can see, Scripture does not speak of a covenant with the elect, neither do the Three Forms of Unity. At the same time I will take into account that the Westminster Standards speak also about the covenant with the believers and (all) their seed. I also do not forget that Scripture teaches clearly that there were and will be children of the covenant who break the covenant relation with their God through their disobedient unbelief and that only those chosen to everlasting life will inherit what is promised in the covenant in the way of faith. This Scriptural and Reformed doctrine of election is the heart of both the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession.

In my opinion, it is this stress on the doctrine of election which is the background not only of speaking about a covenant with the elect, but also about the invisible church. The Scottish Confession of 1560 said already that the catholic church consists of all the elect. It is in this tradition that the Westminster Confession says in Art. 25, 1, "The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be." We also believe that "the Son of God out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself . . . a church chosen to everlasting life" (H.C. 21, 54).

The Scottish and the Westminster Confession express herewith a thought which was strong in the days of the Reformation. Ursinus, in his *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* [translated by G.W. Williard; 3rd American ed.; Cincinnati: T.P. Bucher, 1951, p. 287], says, "The invisible church consists of those who are chosen unto eternal life," but he adds immediately, "who are also regenerated, and belong to the visible church. It [the invisible church, J.G.] lies concealed in the visible church, during the whole of the struggle, and conflict which is continually going on in this world between the kingdom of light and darkness." And a little later Ursinus explains: "It is called invisible, not that the men who are in it are invisible, but because the faith and piety of those who belong to it can neither be seen, not known, except by those who possess it; and also because we cannot with certainty distinguish the godly from those who are hypocrites in the visible church."

Now I do not forget that Scripture does not speak about the church as invisible, and that the church as all the elect together, is a picture of the future. And I also am aware of the, in practice, dangerous consequences of speaking about THE church as invisible and consisting of the elect. Dr. K. Schilder has correctly warned us that such speaking can easily lead to disobedience on the point of reformation, of joining the true church, of separating from a disobedient body, of acquiescing in an unscriptural status quo in which truth and lie, true doctrine and false doctrine, are accepted or tolerated beside each other. And so I am thankful, just as my colleague is, that the Three Forms of Unity do not use this terminology. But it does mean that I can say that the Westminster Standards fully maintain the Scriptural and Reformed doctrine of election and are a fully historically Reformed Confession. And in an organization such as the ICRC I can accept the Presbyterian brothers with their Standards on one and the same level. But I hope that continued discussion will lead to an understanding in the Presbyterian camp of the unfortunateness and danger of their (and Ursinus') formulation.

Why do I bring these things to the fore again? Rev. Agema makes the correct distinction between teachings in the past in the Reformed Churches (as that of an invisible church consisting of all the elect) and of what we confess officially in the Three Forms of Unity. But my intention with this is that I would like to use the distinction between false doctrine and wrong teachings. Knowing the Reformed background and intention of Ursinus and the Westminster Standards, namely to reckon with the doctrine of election in the doctrine of the

church, I am not ready to call what they say false doctrine. That term is too heavy, in my opinion. Do I agree with this terminology? No, I do not do that either. Do I then create a grey area? I do not think so. Here is reality. Not counting with this reality would mean falling into a strict black-and-white scheme.

"Not synonymous," therefore, does not mean either for me that, in principle, I cannot accept Presbyterian churches with the Presbyterian confession as sister churches. I doubt whether this is the same for my colleague. He does state, "I did not make a general statement that Reformed Churches cannot have a sister-church relationship with Presbyterian Churches." Rev. Agema does not want to make such a statement, if I understand him well, but deal with each Presbyterian Church on its own.

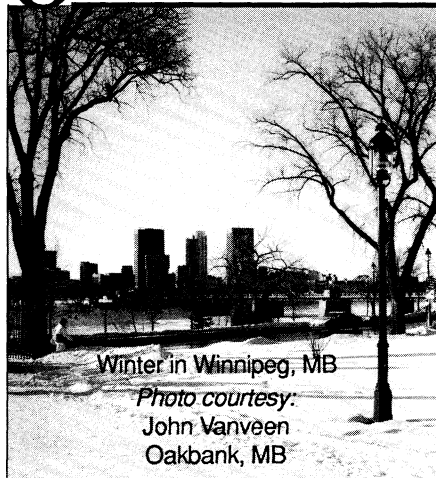
However, at the same time it is stated that we as Canadian Reformed Churches have "rules for correspondence." And that in his "opinion, these rules, as we have them now, indeed make a sister-church relation between Reformed and Presbyterian Churches impossible." Is this not contradictory? Does my colleague not state here in general terms that a sister-church relationship (with the rules as we have them, while I assume that Rev. Agema still stands behind them) is impossible?

A last remark. Rev. Agema is afraid that, if we allow for a "grey area" (his terminology) in the practice of dealing with Presbyterian Churches as spoken about above, we deny the gift of God in the Liberation. It can be clear that this is certainly not what I want. On the contrary, I seek to hold on to it and maintain it, and share it with others. And I would like to stress the gift, the grace element here, while it is my fear that, if we cannot recognize and acknowledge as sister churches those churches which faithfully abide by the Westminster Standards on the principal ground that their confessional Standards do not acknowledge what we have received in the Liberation, and if we, therefore, demand that those Presbyterian churches first have to change certain formulations — I fear that we then make a gift of God granted to us in grace into a Law, a condition, for others.

A P.S.: working together in the ICRC on the same level does not automatically mean for me the recognition as sister church. Also on this point we have to reckon with the fact that we form a federation of churches and that we have to go the ecclesiastical way. But this is a different matter.

J. GEERTSEMA

## OUR COVER

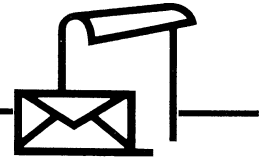


Winter in Winnipeg, MB

Photo courtesy:  
John Vanveen  
Oakbank, MB



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor,

Leafing through the Press Release of the Synod of Winnipeg 1989, I was startled to read under Article 145, sub. 9 "... that the present melody of Hymn 1A is not suitable for it contains Gregorian elements." Under sub. 10 I read: "... an alternate melody for Hymn 1A is desirable, since there still are complaints about the existing one as being too Gregorian."

How is this possible, I thought; where is the substantiation of this charge?

Fortunately, you have among your regular contributors the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene, "Clarion's" true and tried 'hawkeye'. In his characteristic way Rev. VanOene shoots down the spurious generalizations, and suggests that we should not make unsubstantiated judgments.

Apparently, several of our Psalm melodies would fall victim to the same "Gregorian" label-pasting; he mentions Ps. 18, 25, 42, 43 "and you name them."

To back up Rev. VanOene's assertion (though he doesn't need it), I would like to add another well-known one: Ps. 101, in our Book of Praise: "I'll wisely tread the pathway of perfection."

This afternoon, Bob Kerr (Vancouver CBC/FM) played a number of Gregorian chants sung by the Benedictine

(Oblate) monks of the St. Francoise Romaine Abbey in Normandy, France. The last one on the recording was our "own" Psalm 101 tune. Can you imagine, the nerve of those monks! But it sounded absolutely splendid.

Having read these reactions, do we still want to purge our church melodies from a perceived "Gregorian" taint? Of course not. And I don't think that the complainants really object to those melodies either.

My guess is that their shoes pinch elsewhere. Could it just be that some of us vaguely associate "Gregorian" with monks' robes, nuns' habits, and chanted masses? So, say farewell to the (so-called) Roman-tainted melodies? Is there some kind of an emotionally triggered kneejerk-reflex at work here? If so, too bad that we didn't all use the term *plain song*, instead of "Gregorian"; after all, this might have saved a lot of discussion and (idle) deliberation. Neither would this letter have been written. Consider this one a contribution to Rev. VanOene's hope that "the nonsense about "Gregorian" is finally and definitively laid to rest." So, objectors, try *plain song* from now on; you just might learn to live with it or, perhaps, even to like it.

Sincerely Yours,  
RIENK KOAT

Re: "recitative"

It is not my intention to join at this time the discussions about Synod 1989's dealings with the Book of Praise in general and the (singing of) the Genevian tunes in particular. I am still waiting for some one else to point to what for me is the main weakness of synod's actions in this matter.

In the meantime I want to say that I am impressed by the contribution of br. C. Hoogerdyk in *Clarion* Jan. 5th 1990. We may all learn from him.

I have, however, one question. Up to five times br. H. speaks about the Gregorian recitative of Hymn 1A as different from our Genevan tunes to which the Psalm-text is set in versification. But in my simplicity I have always thought that in distinction from the rhymed Psalms and the stanzas of Hymn 1B, the creed is, unrhymed, sung as a recitative. What — then — is, apart from other aspects like origin, so bad about the recitative character of Hymn 1A?

In one respect br. Hoogerdyk seems to agree with the Rev. VanOene (the latter re: videos), namely, that our resources should be limited to "our own brothers," whoever they are and whatever their qualifications may be.

G. VANDOOREN  
C

# SCHOOL CROSSING



By T.M.P. VanderVen

## The teaching profession

Not only is there a shortage of teachers in general, but there is quite a shortage of capable individuals who can help run our schools in an administrative capacity, as principals or vice-principals, or perhaps as a senior, experienced teacher. Teachers are often asked to provide leadership in areas where they have little expertise. Often they are asked to do a wide variety of jobs within the school organization for which they have little or no interest, let alone training.

Among the many reasons mentioned here and there why the teaching profession seems unable to attract

more people, is the rather negative esteem in which it is held. Often we read requests to support the teachers at the school, and to direct criticism to the teachers rather than to others.

The concerns have been the topic of discussion at various meetings of the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies (The League). As a result, two studies were commissioned to help school boards deal with these problems. In March 1987, the League struck a committee to "examine those factors which influence men and women to enter into, and to remain in, the teaching profession in our schools." Originally it

was a three-man committee. The final report was composed by Mr. L. Kampen, and presented to the League in its meeting of June, 1989. We will review this report in a following *School Crossing*. In September 1987, the League struck a committee to study the range of tasks and responsibilities placed on teachers. Mr. Len Lodder, at the time chairman of the League, formulated as follows:

... As schools we have arrived at a level of maturity where we ought to look at the task carried out by the teachers in the schools. We are all familiar with the fact that during the

early years of our schools we did a lot of "flying by the seat of our pants." That pioneering spirit called many of our teachers to perform tasks outside of the classroom which affected their ability to develop teaching programs and curriculum.

The comment that "the schools have grown on the backs of our teachers" does not only refer to the financial implications, but also to the responsibilities placed upon them in regards to programming and curricula.

The time has come for us to commission a study which may document these tasks. . . .

The Committee-of-Three presented its report, *Teachers and Their Tasks (TATT)*, to the League of Can. Ref. School Societies in the League meeting of March 25, 1988. In this School Crossing I summarize some of the major thoughts behind this report, highlighting some of the main recommendations. These comments are, of course, my responsibility.

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The Committee-of-Three which produced the *TATT* Report consisted of L. Lodder, past-chairman of the League of School Societies, J.G. VanDooren, principal of Guido de Brès High School, and T.M.P. VanderVen, principal of the Teachers' College.<sup>1</sup> The Report's major recommendations were discussed at the League's Annual Board Conference, held in February 1989.

**CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION.** The report suggests that there is a need for the development of an articulated programme of courses for our schools. Curriculum development has always received much attention in our schools, yet there exists a gap between the theory of Reformed education and its practice. Further, it is unreasonable to expect that teachers, and in particular beginning teachers, are fully capable of handling all the demands of classroom instruction and programme development. Teachers need assistance by means of formative class visits. Perhaps the Teachers' College faculty could assist schools and teachers with these activities on request.

Teachers need to be provided with an adequate working environment which stimulates learning by students AND teachers. **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** must receive much greater priority. Such development requires time and money. Teachers should be given the opportunity to attend workshops, conferences, seminars, etc. They should be encouraged



***"... it is unreasonable to expect that teachers, and in particular beginning teachers, are fully capable of handling all the demands of classroom instruction and programme development."***

to continue their own studies. Teachers who have acquired specific expertise in particular areas may be called upon to assist fellow staff members, or be provided with time for in-school curriculum development.

**CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT** is at the heart of the educational enterprise. Both local curriculum development and the continued work of CARE Committee (Curriculum Assistance for Reformed Education, a standing committee of the League) should receive high priority. It is unreasonable to expect all teachers to have the necessary expertise and time to develop

learning materials for their classes. Preparation for the daily lessons is time consuming, leaving little time for extras. A thorough knowledge of the subject is required in order to determine what should be taught, when, and to whom. Over the years CARE has been able to help schools by developing curriculum outlines and learning materials for subject areas such as Church History, Language Arts and Reading, Social Studies, and Science.

Further, schools are flooded with a constant stream of curriculum documents issued by the Ministry of Education. By means of such documents the Ministry determines the direction and shape of provincial education. Since the educational system seems to be in constant flux, schools are faced with the additional task of examining and testing all those new ideas. There is a real danger that our schools might lose their unique identity under the barrage of ideas that come from the Ministry. Therefore schools and teachers should have access to thorough evaluations of those Ministry documents in order to determine what should and what should not be used.

Using teachers and principals for **CLERICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS** in a school is an inefficient use of their expertise. Teachers are notoriously bad typists. A computer might help — at least you can erase readily, and the spellchecker takes care of some spelling problems. But secretarial help should be made available to principals and teachers to assist in the school's administration and in activities such as the preparation of units of study, curriculum outlines, and the preparation of teaching materials.

The *TATT* Report also focused attention on the increasing needs of the individual student, and the task of the teacher as a **COUNSELLOR**. The CARE Committee has already published a curriculum guide for guidance in the intermediate division, while our high schools continue to develop their programmes for career guidance and student counselling. It must be recognized that these activities demand time and expertise, and cannot be assumed to take place during lunch hours, or after school.

Also the **LEARNING NEEDS** of individual students receives and must receive increased attention. All our students are unique, and need to be recognized as individuals, but some need personal attention more than others. For some this may be attempted in the classroom during regular instruction, others may need what is known as remedial education, yet for others addi-

tional services may be required from specialists. A few of our schools have full-time help for children with problems, other schools rely on volunteer help. Some schools hire the services of outside specialists. The ACS Committee (Assistance to the Special Child, another Committee of the League) provides a forum for teachers, volunteers, and parents to discuss the needs of such students. Again, time and expertise is required for such activities.

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The Committee-of-Three tried to formulate its recommendations in such a way that they can be implemented readily within the existing organizational structures of our school system. The concern is with the enhancement of the quality of education, and not with the increased comfort and coziness of the teachers. The committee is of the opinion that the level at which our schools

are currently functioning is satisfactory, but perhaps only minimally so. Where possible the efficiency and the quality of the instruction in and the organization of the schools should be improved. It is recognized with gratitude that school buildings are there, that parents, in particular the mothers, are working hard to provide the needed extra equipment, materials, books etc. What is also required is an effective support system for teachers and students in order to provide learning opportunities for all. The TATT Report suggests possible ways by which the various tasks of our teachers can be supported from within the individual school and from within the school system as a whole. All this in order to benefit our children by improving the quality and efficiency of our schools.

However, it needs little contemplation to discover that many of these suggestions will fall by the wayside unless

personnel is available. Without teachers we cannot have schools, and without an adequate supply of well-trained, dedicated professionals it will be difficult to provide our children with quality Reformed education. As Dr. Visscher observes in the 1989 End-of-Year issue of CLARION, the teacher shortage remains with us, and the TATT Report underscores that this shortage is greater than we perhaps realize.

In a following School Crossing, I hope to summarize comments and suggestions from the "Kampen" Report which attempts to answer the question, "What factors influence men and women to enter into, and remain in, the teaching profession in Canadian Reformed schools?"

<sup>1</sup> The 14-page report is available to interested persons at cost. Please contact T.M.P. VanderVen at the Can. Ref. Teachers' College, Hamilton, ON. 

# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Hello Busy Beavers,

Thank you for your letters, poems, puzzles, pictures, riddles and MORE.

Keep up the good work!  
All the club members will enjoy your goodies!  
And I love to get your letters, too.  
Please keep them coming!

Shall we surprise our faraway Busy Beavers with a birthday card?

Yes, let's!  
Let's send these club members a card really soon!  
They are:

*Corinne Versteeg* (birthday March 3)  
and *Emily Vegter* (birthday April 11)

and they share the same address!

Here it is:  
The Reformed International School  
Box 239 Sentani  
Irian Jaya,  
Indonesia

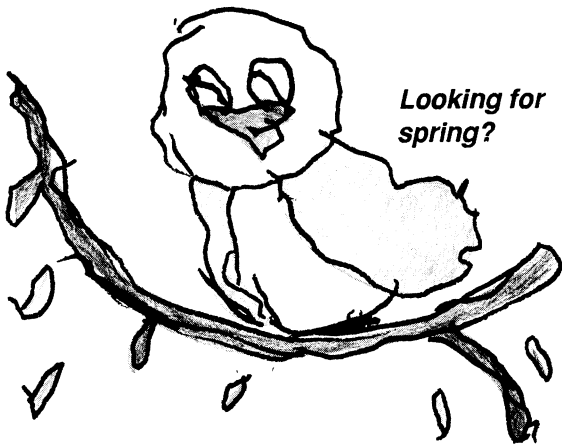
"Happy Birthday" and "Many happy returns of the day" to all the Busy Beavers who celebrate their birthday in MARCH.

Very best wishes for a happy and thankful day with your family and friends. May the Lord bless and keep you all in His love and care.

## M A R C H

Corinne Versteeg	3	Katrina DeHaas	17
Joanne De Boer	4	Linda Schouten	20
Rosaleen Jager	6	Rebecca Stel	21
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Sheila Wierenga	9	Jeffrey Vandergaag	22
Betty Bergsma	12	Amanda Bartels	23
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By Busy Beaver: Lee-Ann Beintema

### Feeding the birds?

Busy Beaver *Mary-Lynn DeBoer* wrote:

"We have a bird-feeder and we buy bird-feed to put in it. Sometimes we put up an onion bag that has holes in it with feed in it and peanut-butter to hold it together. We just moved into our house, so we haven't had many birds. But at our old house we had sparrows and starlings, and even blue-jays and cardinals."

## Quiz Time!

### CHARIOTS

We are used to using cars. In biblical days, people used chariots. Fill in each blank with the proper words about each chariot experience.

1. The Ethiopian eunuch was reading \_\_\_\_\_ as he traveled between Jerusalem and Gaza. Acts 8:27,28.
2. Pharaoh used all the chariots of Egypt to chase the \_\_\_\_\_. Ex. 14:6-8.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ saw a chariot of fire before being taken to heaven by a whirlwind. 2 Kings 2:11.
4. God commanded \_\_\_\_\_ to cripple the horses and burn the chariots of King Jabin of Hazor. Josh. 11:1,6.
5. Pharaoh gave his ring to \_\_\_\_\_ and made him ride in Pharaoh's second chariot. Gen. 41:41-43.
6. In a war with Israel, the \_\_\_\_\_ had thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen. 1 Sam. 13:5.
7. When he saw the sword of Barak, \_\_\_\_\_ got out of his chariot and fled on foot. Jud. 4:14,15.
8. Elah, king of Israel was killed by \_\_\_\_\_, the captain of half of the king's chariots. 1 King 16:8.
9. Isaiah rebuked \_\_\_\_\_ for taking pride in the multitude of his chariots. Isa. 37:21-24.
10. After he was healed, \_\_\_\_\_ got out of his chariot when he saw Elisha's servant following him. 2 Kings 5:21.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ told Solomon that God said to use gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings over the ark of the covenant. 1 Chron. 28:18-19

(Answers next page)



### FROM THE MAILBOX

Hello, *Francine Van Woudenberg*. It was nice to hear from you again. Thank you for your pretty card. And I do hope you had a very good birthday, Francine!

Has "Santa" finished his present for you, *Mary-Lynn DeBoer*? Will you draw a picture of it for us? It sounds beautiful! And it sounds to me as if you had one great time during the holidays, Mary-Lynn. Thank you for the card and good wishes.

Have you done any interesting experiments lately, *Evelynn Bos*? And what is your favourite kind of art? I see you are good at cartoons. Keep on practicing! Thank you for a pretty letter, Evelynn.

I see you mean to keep the Busy Beavers really busy, *Anna Devries*. Thank you for your letter and all your ideas. I'm sure the Busy Beavers will enjoy them. And, Anna, try to steer clear of that 'flu bug, all right?

Hello, *Erin Siebenga*. It was good to hear from you again. How were your holidays? Guess by now you're looking forward to the Spring break, right, Erin? Bye for now.

Do you know how to tell if the baking is good, *Lydia Viersen*? The better it is, the quicker it gets eaten! I guess your gingerbread was great. And it was fun making it, right. Write again soon, Lydia.

I'm glad you and your family had such a good time at Christmas, *Michelle Peters*. Have you been able to skate very much this winter? Bye for now, Michelle.

Thank you for the poems, *Margaret De Witt*. Keep on writing! How were your holidays, Margaret? Are you enjoying winter or are you looking for spring? Write again soon.

Hello, *Melanie DeBoer*. Thank you for a colourful letter! How was your birthday, Melanie? And how do you feel now? I hope you get a pen pal, Melanie. Be sure to let me know!

Busy Beavers, we need a pen pal for:

Melanie DeBoer (Age 13)  
Box 164  
Neerlandia, Alberta  
T0G 1R0

### FOR EXPERIENCED PUZZLERS!

Can you figure out the secret message?

Gdats at ecd Gryp  
Gdmodl wbrg ay urt,  
ayt'e ae Gryp Gdmodly?

from Busy Beaver  
*Evelynn Bos*



Hint: All G's are B's  
and all A's are I's.

