

Clarion

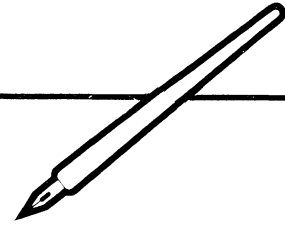
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By P.G. Feenstra



The comfort of Christ's resurrection for the church today

Society has set aside one day in the year in which it celebrates Easter. Our Lord Jesus Christ has given us one day every week in which we celebrate His glorious resurrection. On the first day of the week Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead victorious over Satan, sin, and death.

However, what comfort does the resurrection of Jesus Christ give the church today? We know that Christ's resurrection is the guarantee that our bodies will be raised on the last day, but does it have any benefit for us now? If anyone had a reason to ask this question, it was the apostle John on Patmos.

John on Patmos

John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). Yet he was not sitting in church but in exile on an island called Patmos because of his witness concerning the exalted position of the risen Lord of glory. He was suspended from carrying out his office. The apostle John had witnessed the day Christ rose from the dead, but matters were different now.

On that first Lord's Day the earth shook, but now nothing dramatic seemed to be taking place. When Christ rose, an angel — a messenger of the Lord — had come from heaven with the mandate to roll away the stone from Jesus' grave. His mission was accomplished. In contrast, a messenger of the Lord sits on Patmos out of active service and unable to preach the Word of his Sender. On resurrection day soldiers trembled at the appearance of an angel of the Lord — they were as dead men — but now guards hold John in confinement.

John's circumstances are troublesome, to say the least. At that moment and on His day, the risen Lord Jesus appears to John. He touches John with His right hand, that is, with the hand of His authority and might. The apostle is thrown off his feet. He hadn't expected to see Jesus. As the Lord put His right hand on John He said, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, the living one; I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades" (Rev. 1:17-19).

Jesus: the First and the Last

Jesus Christ introduces Himself by the name "I am the first and the last." This is not an entirely new name. It was with this name that God had built a reputation for Himself throughout the generations. The LORD had revealed Himself by this name to a group of despondent and depressed exiles. Like John, they were in need of comfort and encouragement.

As the exiles sat by the waters of Babylon they wondered what had come of the promises of the LORD. They were sent away from Jerusalem, from the temple, from the land of the inheritance. That made the surrounding nations scoff and jeer at them: "Now where is your God?" they taunted. "Is He too weak to help you?" Therefore the Lord rose to defend His people and challenged the nations to a hearing. The exile did not come about because of His inability to act on behalf of His people but as a punishment for their disobedience and apostasy. The Lord asks, "Who stirred up one from the east whom victory meets

at every step?" (Isaiah 41:2). "I, the LORD, the first and with the last; I am He" (41:4). God judged according to His covenant faithfulness, God's people may change but He is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebr. 13:8). God comes to punish disobedience but also to display His mercy, because He is the first and the last (cf. Isaiah 44:6,7).

The Lord is the first and the last and therefore His redemptive work will not be ruined. The reins of history are firmly in His hands. He was the first and He will be the last.

History is His story

Jesus on Patmos takes on this name of God. Thereby He says to the apostle, "Matters may seem pretty gloomy right now. You may wonder what is going to happen to the church. Don't worry, John. I am the first and the last. I was present before the foundation of the earth. Before the clock of world history started ticking I was there. I am also the last since I am the One who rules and governs history to a particular goal.

Our risen Lord is the first and the last. There isn't a single matter which slips His attention. He is fully aware of all the cares and anxieties of those who serve Him. The One who rose from the dead as our Saviour and Redeemer controls and writes every page of history.

The world changes, the political map goes through dramatic upheavals, but Christ is the same. In this faith we can have confidence that the same Lord who appeared to John on Patmos is with us on the first day of every week and on every day that follows. The resurrected Lord of glory walks in the midst of the churches. He is with us as the very same God who remained faithful to His promises after the fall into sin, in Egypt, in the exile, and on Patmos.

Christ's resurrection is most comforting for those who are willing to put everything on the line for His sake and who trust in Him to help in all situations. The people of the covenant were brought into captivity because of their unfaithfulness. Christ, who is the first and the last, will remove the candlestick from those churches who are unfaithful to Him either in doctrine or in conduct. As the first and the last, He makes His way from point alpha to omega: we must go with Him.

Jesus: the living One

While John is in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, Christ approaches him not only as the first and the last but also as the living One. Our life is subject to death and decay but our Mediator has life in Himself as the Son of God. He laid down His life and took it up — a feat no human could accomplish. His cross at Golgotha was the world's greatest paradox: the living One became a dead person. According to His godly nature it was impossible for the Son of God to die. Yet as a true and righteous man His body became a lifeless corpse.

The living One died to secure our redemption. It was the will of the Father that He should die to make atonement for our sins. He became a dead man to redeem us from eternal death and

to grant to us righteousness and life. The living One appears to John on Patmos and He encourages His servant, "Fear not. Don't be surprised that I am here. For I, who died and who rose on the third day, am still your living and caring Saviour."

Sharing in His life

As members of Christ by faith we share in the life of the living One. Believers face persecution and suffering. They face hardships, sickness and disease and the constant fight against sin and the temptations of the evil one. But with the living One at their side, they are comforted immensely. For though their sins are like scarlet, they have been washed white as snow. The living One guarantees forgiveness and life. The loving one makes us share in His life today by taking the curse out of cribs, cradles, and graves. He gives His life by removing the curse out of work and play; out of breakfast, lunch, and supper. He removes the curse out of all our suffering, our cares and our worries. The living One says to us, "Behold, I am alive from morning till evening and I'm extremely busy tending My sheep and feeding My lambs."

This does not mean we can roll through every difficulty as if it were a "piece of cake". Hard times may come our way. Don't be discouraged by it. Persecution, sword, nor sickness, not even death, can separate us from Christ's love. The only thing that can separate us from the Living One is unbelief, unfaithfulness, and disobedience. We must acknowledge and confess Jesus Christ as the resurrected Lord, the living One.

Jesus: Keybearer of death and Hades

Christ is the living One, but in the meantime death continues to claim many victims. How effective is Christ's work?

Where is the power exhibited at the resurrection of the Son of God? Hades is the realm of the dead, and every second another person passes through its gates. Once the gates of Hades close behind us, there is no way of escaping. Everyone must go through these gates.

Again we are comforted through what the risen Christ reveals to John on the Lord's Day. Christ says, "I have the keys to death and Hades." We are not in the hands of fate or destiny. Jesus Christ our Lord opens and closes the gates of Hades in His time. In other words, no child of God dies unless it is the will of our risen Lord. One person may die by being thrown to the lions and another by being stoned to death; one may die in a car accident, another from a heart attack. However, not one death is untimely. Christ determines when our task and that of a loved one is finished. Christ has the keys of death and Hades; He will also decide when our bodies shall be taken out of the realm of the dead to be united with our souls.

The comfort of Christ's resurrection for the church today is that He who died and who rose is still the first and the last, the living One. No earthly power, or sin of man, or death, or the realm of death can prevent Him from accomplishing His purpose. Christ will build His church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

Christ, the Head of the church, has the keys of death and Hades. Death will not rule over the church; it will not prevent or break down the church-gathering work of Christ. For the powers of death and Hades are subjected to the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Any attempt to shut the doors of this kingdom will not succeed. The preaching of the Word will go on. And the church which submits to the Word of the living One has the richest and greatest comfort in the world for life and death. **C**

A comprehensible sermon

By C.J. de Ruijter¹

This is the fifth and final article dealing with the sermon and what we may expect from it. It pays attention to the structure and presentation of the sermon.

Is the structure, the presentation, and the form of the sermon important? Many believe that only the content is important. If the content is alright, then the rest does not really matter.

That is another misconception. Form and content cannot be separated. Further, the structure and presentation of the sermon is of great importance for the listener. When the sermon has been carefully put together, its message will be so much easier to understand. A sermon should address the congregation, and therefore its form must enable it to speak to the congregation.

A sermon poorly and carelessly put together will form a barrier for the listener. We all know of sermons which make listening difficult. When the importance of

the presentation is ignored, the sermon may become boring. It is not a light thing when the truth is made into a boring event!

Therefore, we may expect that the structure, presentation, and form of the sermon contributes to the ease and effectiveness of the listening. The first consideration is then, that we may expect an orderly sermon.

Theme and points

To help the listener, the sermon should have structure. This applies to every speech. No speaker who considers his message of value and who takes his audience seriously will dare to present a tale which makes little sense. We may certainly expect that a sermon is carefully structured.

It is already an old custom in Protestant churches to capture the structure of the sermon in a theme with accompany-

ing points. However, nowadays this is no longer the practice in many denominations. In general, thematic preaching has been discarded. This is only in part caused by shorter sermons which simply do not leave enough time to develop a theme.

Thematic preaching is certainly not the only way in which the sermon can be structured. Its advantage is that the preacher is forced to clarify the structure of the sermon and to present this to the congregation. This gives the listener an excellent outline to follow the development of the sermon. The preacher must certainly know what he is doing if he does not want to make use of this opportunity. Although there are preachers who can do without, experience tells us that many sermons become rather disorganized in the absence of a theme and points.

— Continued on page 165



By J. De Jong

"When He had said this He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord."

John 20:20

Time for Joy!

John described the joy of the disciples upon recognizing Jesus somewhat differently than does Luke. Luke emphasizes how astounding the disciples were at the appearance of Jesus, and how even continued reflection left the dumbfounded as to what had taken place. But John accents the understanding that disciples came to in seeing Jesus. The word for "see" that he uses points out how they grasped what had taken place, and how this led to deep, heartfelt joy and gladness among the disciples.

What was the reason for their joy? Fear gives way to faith and understanding. Jesus had often revealed Himself as Lord of the elements, one who had power and authority over creation itself. Had He not fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish? Had He not walked on the water, and healed many? It is not entirely unusual that He suddenly appears to the disciples and stands in their midst, despite locked doors. The disciples could have expected this!

Joy deepens when the disciples recognize Jesus as the same person who lived and walked among them before the death on the cross. The dissimilarity between Jesus and His disciples was great. He stood on the other side of the grave, as one risen from the dead! But the similarity between Jesus and His disciples had not been erased. He remains man! He even has the marks of His passion in His hands and His side.

Coupled with His resurrection, these marks are signs of forgiveness and life! Here the disciples can begin to put the pieces together and recognize that reconciliation has come. The Lord of all is also Lord over Satan, sin, and death! The knowledge of the reconciliation with God as Christ had previously proclaimed it to them now takes shape in their hearts. In seeing the Lord, they come to understanding concerning what God has done for them in Him! Their sins have been taken away. Life triumphs over death!

It took the morning of the resurrection to usher in this understanding. Before this moment we never read of this kind of joy among the disciples. Easter is a prerequisite to this joy — the joy of understanding. For with the resurrection the disciples can finally put the pieces of the puzzle of God's council together. At last things begin to make sense for them. At last the spiritual categories of the cross — bearing God's wrath and defeating Satan's power — come into view. With the resurrection all the ingredients of lasting joy are present at last. Here the essential victory over sin and the grave has been realized! And even though there are more steps in the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the essential exaltation has taken place in the resurrection. The good news "He is risen!" is the essential

message of joy to which all that follows represents a deepening addition.

For this reason the Lord Jesus can immediately commission His disciples. It may appear strange that Jesus breathes on His disciples and imparts to them the Holy Spirit before Pentecost has arrived, vs. 21, 22. But here the Lord puts a direct link between the gift granted to the disciples and the gift granted to the church. The disciples come to joy, the joy of understanding. But they may not keep this joy for themselves. This joyful knowledge must be proclaimed. The news of gladness must ring through the world: "He is risen!"

Through the apostolic message the joy of Easter may be ours! Resurrection — the breakthrough of life from the dead — that is the crowning and decisive piece in the puzzle of God's counsel that evokes the breakthrough of newfound joy. And we can only break into this joy when we come to the same conclusion as the disciples did: the one who was raised is the same as the one who died, and in dying and rising He acts for us. Therefore in Him we die to sin, and may rise up to a new life.

So we may share Easter joy! In fact, the dawn of joy born at Easter now radiates over all the world, wherever God gathers His church. Easter is the dawn of the complete gospel, the hour when faith comes to understanding. With this message, resurrection power should also flow from the lives of the saints. Our faith is more than words! Easter brings to us a new calling: Spread the good news! And so: spread the joy! And live in the joy! For the God who brings life out of the dead has also let the light of the gospel shine in our hearts to grant us life immortal. We may be born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead! We may be convinced of the forgiveness of our sins, and be made partakers of the risen, ascended, and heavenly nature of the Son. So the joy of the resurrection may be manifested in our lives all the time, also in pain and suffering. Since the resurrection of Christ, we can even triumph in Him when He calls us to bodily death. For in giving ourselves to Him we may glorify the Son in our bodies. Whether we live or die, the time of joy has decidedly dawned for all the saints. With them we can sing:

Jesus the Saviour reigns;
To Him let praises ring.
The Christ who once was slain
Rose as victorious King.
Lift up your hearts, lift up your voice;
Again I say, Rejoice!, Rejoice! (Hymn 35:2)



A comprehensible sermon

— continued from page 163.

The formulation of a theme demands that the content of the text is concisely summarized. The points help to identify clearly the various elements in the text. Therefore this method remains important to structure the sermon clearly and understandably. That is what we may expect from a sermon, also when the minister does not use a theme with points.

How long?

Often the question is asked, How long should a sermon be? This question is not only motivated by the fact that our listening ability is severely hampered by the strong emphasis on the visual in our time. The length of the sermon is also related to its structure.

I would like to plead for a short sermon. I do not mean that a sermon should not be longer than half an hour, or perhaps twenty minutes. The one minister needs much more time than the other, even though they may say the same. The one speaker uses more words than the other. Further, the length of the sermon depends on the text. Therefore, I do not want to prescribe a time limit. I speak of a *short sermon*. The congregation does not always benefit from all sorts of excursions and elaborations. These do not help the clarity and structure of the sermon, but obscure the message and hinder comprehension. The congregation must be able to follow the sermon readily. Therefore, the sermon must be direct and purposeful, without too many detours. That purpose is determined by the text. We may expect a short sermon, so the congregation is able to follow the preacher readily, and understand the purpose of the sermon.

Reading or speaking

Should the minister preach from memory, without reading from his notes? Many consider this to be the best way of preaching. And indeed, it is a joy to listen to a speaker who is in such full control of the material that he is able to present it without reading from his prepared speech, captivating his audience in the process. Listening becomes more difficult when the minister reads from a printed sermon, with little thought of the audience.

There are, on the other hand, reservations about preaching without a written-out sermon. Experience shows that a speech becomes longer if its text has not been determined before. This is often obvious towards the end of the sermon, when the minister takes time to search for a "nice" ending. More important is the actual formulation. Since a sermon is the

ministering of God's Word, we may expect that the formulation has been prepared with great care. Historically, the church has always paid much attention to the manner in which she echoed God's Word in her confessions. This careful attention should apply equally to the formulation of the sermon. Therefore, the for-

"Only those who really want to listen to what God has to say can sensibly speak about the sermon."

mulation of the sermon may not depend on the inspiration of the moment, or on the preacher's ability to improvise. We may expect that (most of) the text of the sermon in its main thoughts has been prepared before the worship service starts.

Easy or difficult?

How difficult may a sermon be? Does it always have to be an easy one? What, in fact, is a difficult sermon?

At this point I am not concerned with the content of the sermon. Consideration of the content makes us think of the elementary elements of faith and of growth in insight in God's Word. This aspect was dealt with when we spoke of the instructional aspect of the sermon.²

I am concerned here with the level of difficulty in the formulating of the sermon. This depends on the preacher and on his audience. The minister, as a person, is a factor which cannot be ignored. The one can deal with difficult Bible passages in a clear and easy manner, while the thought patterns of another are much more complicated. We will always be able to find personal elements in all sermons. There are limits to the extent in which individuals can develop in their ability to express themselves. The congregation also remains a decisive factor. The average churchgoer will have to understand the main thoughts of the sermon in order to have access to its message.

This does not mean that all listeners should be able to retell the sermon completely. On Mondays, many people are unable to tell anything about, let alone retell, the sermons of the previous Sunday, although they listened attentively and with a desirous heart. We cannot measure exactly what we have received in the sermon and what its effects have been on the basis of what we remember. That would be an overemphasis of the importance of intelligence. In church, we are also busy with the heart!

I spoke on purpose about the main thoughts of the sermon. I do not believe that we should demand that every churchgoer will understand in equal measure every detail of the sermon. In that case we would get a sermon for the greatest common denominator.

Such a sermon could easily impover-



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ish some people. Although instruction is directed at a certain average, I recommend that the sermon contains elements which may not be noticed by all, but may be stimulating to some. These are the important raisins in the instructional porridge, a piece of old pedagogical wisdom often forgotten today.

We may, therefore, expect that the difficulty level of the sermon is such that its listeners are stimulated to continue to work with the ministered message of the gospel.

Speaking, preaching, listening

In these articles we dealt with the question what we may expect from the

sermon. I believe that this is an important topic to speak about with each other. I have only dealt with major elements. Much had to be left out because of the limited space available.

The discussion of the sermon is also important in our houses and certainly in the consistory rooms. I have written these articles to stimulate such discussions, because I know that many are hesitant, and uncertain about what they should talk about when discussing the sermon.

In conclusion, it may be necessary to emphasize again that such a discussion can be fruitful only when it is based on real listening. Only those who really want

to listen to what God has to say can sensibly speak about the sermon. Otherwise, hollow words will be spoken. That should not happen when we discuss the sermon.

When our discussions are fed by a genuine desire to listen to God's Word, we also want to listen to each other when speaking about the sermon.

This will certainly benefit the preacher and the congregation.

¹De Ruijter, C.J. Je moet de preek goed kunnen volgen. DE REFORMATIE 64/15, January 7, 1989. Translated with permission by T.M.P. VanderVen.

²See the article, Pastor and teacher in the pulpit.



Suffered under Pontius Pilate

A Roman prefect in the Creed's Christology

By R. Faber

In this time of the liturgical year we turn our attention to the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. On Good Friday we commonly read Scripture accounts of Peter's denial, the treatment of our Lord Jesus by Caiaphas, the trial before Pontius Pilate, and the crucifixion and death on Golgotha. On Easter Sunday ministers preach on the discovery of the empty tomb, the resurrection of the now glorified Lord Jesus, and Christ's appearance to His disciples. Each of these topics concerns the Lord Jesus Himself and His sacrifice to redeem the world. Indeed, we focus on the crux in the history of our redemption. The unjust suffering and death of our guiltless Lord, and His consequent glorious resurrection are poignantly summarized in the Apostles' Creed: "... suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, He descended into hell. On the third day He arose from the dead ..."

Though the Apostles' Creed is generally considered an apt symbol of the Christian faith, some have questioned the reason for mention of Pontius Pilate. One critic states: "It is at first sight rather puzzling that Pontius Pilate should have been vouchsafed a position in the Church's confession of faith."¹ Karl Barth's reply is representative of the commonly found, yet insufficient answers: "The simple answer can at once be given: it is a matter of date. The name of the Roman procurator in whose term of office Jesus Christ was crucified, proclaims: at such and such a point of his-

torical time this happened."² Though we shall see that "suffered under Pontius Pilate" was employed in the early church to emphasize the historicity of Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection, the role of Pontius Pilate is much more extensive than this. In explaining the reason for the presence of this expression in our creed, I shall point out that Pilate's role is to make manifest the saving work of Jesus Christ; therefore the expression is rightly located at the centre of the Christology in the creed. This function of Pilate is first evidenced in the gospel writers. Using the common Reformed model of Christ's tripartite office of king, prophet, and priest, we shall note that in the gospels Pilate's role is not merely as official judge to ensure the historical reality of Christ's passion and death, but to display key aspects of the Christology. It is Christ's innocence which Pilate ascertains, thus revealing the guiltlessness of the man who "died for the sins of many." At the same time it is this innocent man who is found guilty by Pilate, so that our Lord is condemned to crucifixion and death. It is the same Pilate who records the prophetic resurrection after three days, thus manifesting Christ's glorification. Nevertheless, Pontius brings about the humiliation of Jesus, turning over this "King of the Jews" to the chief priests for punishment. Yet while he brings about the Saviour's humiliation, he also makes His true kingship, to be revealed, and thus points to the glorious King of the resurrection. Having noted the presentation

of Pilate in the gospels as emphasizing Christ's redemptive work is the primary reason for his inclusion in the creed, we shall verify this function by considering the Christological purposes given to the expression by the apostolic fathers and apologists of the first centuries.

Pilate's prefecture of Judea

Pontius Pilate succeeded Valerius Gratus as prefect of Judea, which had come under Roman rule in A.D. 6. He held this difficult post from A.D. 26-36, when he was recalled to Rome. The prefecture required an able politician, one who could impose the Roman rule upon a nation which stubbornly clung to its religion. However, according to the Jewish historians Philo (b. 30 B.C.) and Josephus (b. A.D. 37), Pontius was a stubborn and inflexible administrator, often given to violence and corruption. Josephus provides three instances of Pilate's maladministration and insensitivity to the Jewish religion. Shortly after his arrival, Pilate had ordered the Roman troops to place ensigns of Caesar in the temple of Jerusalem (*Jewish War* 2.169), an act which was certain to arouse the indignation of the Jews who forbade images and statues according to the second commandment. On another occasion (*Jewish War* 2.175) Pilate was said to have employed moneys taken from the sacred treasury in the temple to finance the building of an aqueduct; the ensuing uproar was ruthlessly quelled. It was the cruel and systematic slaughter of

the Samaritans who had gathered on Mt. Gerizim (*Jewish Antiquities* 18.35) which prompted the Syrian governor Vitellius to summon the prefect to the capital (18.88), and Pontius arrived at Rome shortly after Tiberius' death in the spring of 37. The alleged suicide of Pontius in A.D. 39 is recorded by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.7).

If the Jewish historian's pejorative depiction of Pilate is accurate, then it should surprise us that the gospel writers make little mention of the friction between Pilate and the people of Israel (*pace* Luke, ch.13:1). To be sure, in the gospels Pilate is represented as wishing to gain politically from Jesus' arraignment: he worries about the Jews' threat to report Pilate's leniency to Caesar (John 19:12); he makes a friend in Herod by sending Jesus Christ to him (Luke 23:6f.); and for fear of the crowds he delivers Jesus up (Mark 15:15).³ Yet the gospel writers do not depict Pilate in such a light as to denigrate the trial as a common sham. The purpose of the passion narrative is much deeper: to emphasize Christ's role in redemptive history.

Pilate as presented in the gospels

The depiction of the Roman prefect in the passion narratives of the apostles is such as to place the Lord Jesus in the centre. A brief consideration of Christ's tripartite office of king, prophet, and priest, when He is tried and condemned by Pilate, reveals the Christological significance of the prefect's behaviour, thus providing the Scriptural basis for his inclusion in the creed.

The role of Pilate in manifesting the kingship of Jesus Christ is clearly evidenced. When he first faces Jesus, the Roman prefect questions Him regarding the charge for which He is arraigned; yet later he asserts Christ's kingship by means of the superscription of the cross. Pilate commences his interrogation with the words: "Are you the King of the Jews?" We all know well the reply of Jesus, "You have said so" (Matthew 27:11; Luke 23:3).

In his more exhaustive report of the interrogation (John 18:33-38), the apostle John also emphasizes the kingship of Jesus. The Lord makes the profession (18:36): "My kingship is not of this world; if My kingship were of this world, My servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but My kingship is not from the world." Thus to John the role of Pilate is to elucidate the function of Christ as the King. Indeed, it is John who ascribes to Pilate the statement "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." In chapter 19:21 the chief priests request Pilate to alter the title into an *alleged* claim.

Pilate's refusal to comply accentuates the lordship of Jesus: "What I have written I have written (19:22)." In short, the very man who hands Jesus over to the Jews to be crucified bears witness to His kingship. It is this Christological element of king which John brings out in reporting Pilate's behaviour at the trial.

In the gospels Pilate also reveals Jesus' role as prophet. For Pilate figures in the unsuccessful attempt of the chief priests and Pharisees to prevent the prediction from coming true: "After three days I will rise again." According to Matthew 26:61-64, Jesus is brought before Caiaphas on the charge of having prophesied: "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." This claim is not denied (cf. Matthew 24:1f.). Matthew tells us (27:62-66) that it was Pilate who grants the chief priests to secure the sepulchre by setting a guard and sealing the stone; thus his role regarding the verification of Christ's prophecy is complete. Hereby Pilate functions as an official witness to the resurrection, to the realization of Jesus' prophecy.

Christ's redemptive task as the great High Priest in sacrificing His own life is the most important aspect of Pilate's role for the evangelists. The prefect is the agent who condemns the innocent man, to bear the sins of the world. In this regard, Pilate

must first ascertain the innocence of Jesus, and then condemn Him — though innocent — to death. This role of Pilate is predominant throughout the gospels.

The innocence of Jesus Christ is repeatedly avowed by Pontius, especially in the gospel of Luke. In chapter 23:4 we read: "And Pilate said to the chief priests and multitudes, 'I find no crime in this man.'" In chapter 23:16 Luke depicts Pilate as being emphatic: ". . . After examining him before you, behold I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him." And again: "I have found in him no crime deserving death" (Luke 23:22). Similarly Mark (14:14) and John (18:38, 19:4) record Pilate's pronouncement of Christ's innocence. Even Pilate's wife had dreamt of the "righteous man," and tells her husband to have nothing to do with Jesus (Matthew 27:19)! Pilate is fully aware of, and openly declares, Christ's guiltlessness.

Nevertheless Pilate condemns Jesus Christ to death. In so doing he is an agent in Christ's unique sacrifice to atone for the sins of mankind: an innocent man had to bear the wrath of God. Luke writes (23:24ff.): "So Pilate gave sentence that their demand should be granted . . . Jesus he delivered up to their will." The parallel account in Matthew 27:26 reads: "Having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified." Though he had declared Him innocent, Pilate condemns Jesus to death. Thus the gospel accounts of the trial and crucifixion under Pontius Pilate emphasize the three-fold task of Jesus as the king, prophet, and priest.

Already in the first decade after Christ's ascension, when the apostles preached the gospel of His death and resurrection, the role of Pilate in revealing Christ's blamelessness and in condemning Him nonetheless is again stated. In the speech of Peter at Solomon's portico, the Roman prefect is cited, not to provide an historical context of Christ's death, but to stress the guiltlessness of Christ Jesus, "whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him" (Acts 3:13; cf. 13:28). While in this passage the official is mentioned as having determined Christ's innocence, in the prayer of the apostles in Acts 4:27, Pilate is mentioned as one of those who wrongly sought to condemn and crucify Jesus, thus fulfilling God's eternal plan. In these passages it is Christ's innocent suffering and unjust condemnation to death which is central.

The expression used by the apostolic fathers and apologists

A brief synopsis of the expression "suffered under Pontius Pilate" as em-

CHURCH NEWS



CALLED to:

Burlington
(Ebenezer): Rev. P.G. Feenstra
of Guelph, ON

Edmonton
(Providence): Rev. R. Aasman
of Ancaster, ON
(second call)

Winnipeg, MB: Rev. D.G.J. Agema
of Attercliffe, ON

The THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE has noted with thankfulness that Prof. N.H. Gootjes and family have received official landed-immigrant status.

YEARBOOK 1990:

Please note the following change of address:

Rev. P.G. Feenstra
26 Burton Rd.
Guelph, ON N1H 8A7

ployed by the apostolic fathers and apologists shows the continuing Christological purpose of the Roman prefect in the history of the church.

We may first note that the clause, "suffered under Pontius Pilate" is considered to be one of the first to become fixed as a credal expression. An important text in our understanding of the development of the creed, and one which contains the phrase under discussion, is 1 Timothy 6:13. In his instruction to Timothy, Paul writes: "In the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment. . . ." ⁴ Here the expression appears to be one of the many stock expressions concerning Jesus Christ which became common in the first decades after Christ's ascension.

In fact, 1 Timothy 6 refers to what was probably the doctrinal preparation for baptism. ⁵ Similar creed-like expressions regarding baptism are found in the writings of the apostolic fathers and apologists. For example, in the *Apostolic Tradition* (ch.21) of Hippolytus (c. 217), the baptizand is asked: "Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, Who was born by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and died, and rose again on the third day. . . ." also in connection with baptism, in the *Apology* (1.61) of Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 100-165) we read: "Moreover, it is in the name of Jesus Christ, Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate . . . that the enlightened man is baptized." The expression gains specific historical significance in *Apology* 1.13: "Jesus Christ, Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea in the time of Tiberius Caesar," an addition perhaps prompted by the historiographical tag in Luke 3:1-6. These passages merely demonstrate the early credal formation of the expression, "suffered under Pontius Pilate."

Justin's accuracy in dating the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ should not go unnoticed, for in the second and especially third century, the challenge against the reality of Christ's suffering as true human being is made by the Docetists. Docetism (from the Greek *dokein*, "to appear, to seem") is the belief that Jesus Christ merely appeared to suffer and die, and that His physical body was a mere phantom. It does not question the dating of the suffering under Pilate, rather it questions the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, the Docetists queried the dual essence in the Christology. The confession of the two natures of Jesus Christ was destined to become a matter of debate from the second to the fourth cen-

turies, in which Pontius would play no minor role. ⁷

The notion that Justin Martyr frequently employed the expression "suffered under Pontius Pilate" for more than historical reference, is reinforced by the revelation-historical use of it in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch.85. In the context of explaining Psalm 24:7 ("Lift up your heads, O gates . . . that the King of glory may come in") as referring to the glorification of Jesus Christ after His death, Justin uses the credal phrase again: ". . . the true Son of God, who was the First-born of all creatures, who was born of a virgin, who suffered and was crucified by your [Trypho was Jewish] people under Pontius Pilate, who died and then, after His resurrection from the dead, ascended into Heaven." Though the writer uses the by now conventional phrases, it is noteworthy that he does so in a Christological context.

which also expresses Christ's humanity. Thus Irenaeus, also refuting the Docetists, writes of Jesus Christ who ". . . condescended to be born of the virgin, He Himself uniting man through Himself to God, and having suffered under Pontius Pilate, and arising again. . . ." (*Against the Heresies* 3.4.2). Clearly, then, the credal phrase was employed to champion an important element of the Christology, namely the humanity of Christ. It may be noted in passing that even today, when redaction and history critics question the truth of Jesus Christ's existence, the expression "suffered under Pontius Pilate" enters into the discussion. ⁹

Conclusion

Our examination of the role of Pontius Pilate in the gospel narratives, and of the development of the credal expression shows that in the history of re-

"Pilate is an agent in Christ's ultimate sacrifice to bear the wrath of God against mankind."

In the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, who was a martyr during the emperorship of Trajan (c. 98-117), the expression, "suffered under Pontius Pilate" is also employed to champion the reality of Christ's suffering and death in the flesh, and to stress His human nature. Thus, for example, we read in the *Letter to the Trallians* ⁹, of "Mary's Son, Who was truly born, both ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died. . . ." Likewise in his *Letter to the Magnesians* 11, Ignatius expresses the hope that his readers will "be convinced of the birth and passion and resurrection which took place at the time of the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate; for these things were truly and certainly done by Jesus Christ. . . ." ⁸ Hereby Ignatius wishes to show that Jesus Christ did not experience suffering and death in appearance only, but in true human essence. Thus for him too, the expression "suffered under Pontius Pilate" does much more than to date Christ's incarnation in the history of this world; Pontius Pilate elucidates Christ's two natures, especially His humanity.

In this regard the phrase regarding Pontius Pilate is closely connected to the preceding one, "born of the virgin Mary,"

demption the prefect serves a greater purpose than that of placing Jesus' incarnation in the context of human time. Pilate is an agent in Christ's ultimate sacrifice to bear the wrath of God against mankind. The true and righteous man, our Lord Jesus, was declared innocent and yet condemned by the earthly judge, Pontius Pilate. To use the words of Calvin, the Roman prefect is mentioned in the creed "not only to affirm the faithfulness of the history, but that we may learn what Isaiah teaches: 'Upon Him was the chastisement of our peace, and with His stripes we are healed' (Isaiah 53:5). ¹⁰

¹ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longmans, 1960), 149.

² K. Barth, *Credo* (New York: Scribners, 1962), 79.

³ It is not my intention to treat the intricacies of Roman law regarding the trial, nor to compare the accounts of it. Recent and exhaustive discussions may be found in O. Betz, "Probleme des Prozesses Jesu," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, vol. II, 25.1, 565-647 (Münich: Artemis, 1984), and R. Baum-Bodenbender, *Hoheit in Niedrigkeit. Johanneische Christologie im Prozess Jesu vor Pilatus (Joh. 18.28-19.6a)* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1984).

⁴ The interpretation of the Greek *marturesantos ten kalen homologian*, "made the good confession," has long been debated. Some suggest that the word means suffered the martyrdom of crucifixion. Thus Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 20, and C.H. Turner, "1 Timothy 6:12-13," *Journal of Theological Studies* 28, 1926. Others take it to mean bore verbal witness. Thus V.H. Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 30, points to Mark 15:2, in which Pilate asks: "Are you the King of this world?" Similarly L. Doekes, *Credo*, 10, suggests that *marturesantos* refers to the confession of Jesus before Pilate in John

18:36: "My kingship is not of this world. . . ."

⁵ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longmans, 1960), 20, 43; closely followed by L. Doekes, *Credo Handboek voor de Gereformeerde Symboliek* (Amsterdam: Tom Bolland, 1975), 13. Cf. also H.J. Carpenter, "Creeds and Baptismal Rites in the First Four Centuries," *Journal of Theological Studies* 44, 1943, 1-11; S. Liberty, "The Importance of Pontius Pilate in Creed and Gospel," *JTS* 45, 1944, 38-56.

⁶ Similarly, *Apology* 1.61; 2.6; *Dialogue with Trypho* 30; 76; 85. Cf. also Irenaeus, *Against the Heretics* 2.32.4; 3.4.2; 3.12.9; 5.12.5.

⁷ See further J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Black, 1960), ch. xi, "Fourth Century Christology."

⁸ Cf. also his *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 1.1-2, "truly nailed in the flesh on our behalf under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch."

⁹ See B.L. Marthaler, *The Creed* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1987), Ch. VIII, "In Quest of the Historical Jesus, 'Suffered under Pontius Pilate'."

¹⁰ J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* vol. 2, ch. 16.5 in the Library of Christian Classics, trans. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975). Cf. Calvin's Genevan Catechism, question 56-59. C

NEWS MEDLEY

By W.W.J. VanOene



This time we have to begin with something rather serious. It is my fervent hope and expectation that every one will pay attention to it and also will act upon it. Various bulletins mentioned accidents, some of a less, some of a more serious nature. In some instances it was a fall which caused a broken leg (one congregation has four cases of this!), in other instances it was an accident with a car in which several members were involved, sometimes even five of them. It does not even have to be wintertime to see these things happen as a result of snow and ice. One can get into an accident also through the fault of others.

Recently there was a young couple here in the neighbourhood who were killed when a truck hit their small car head-on. Allegedly the other driver was under the influence of alcohol. The young couple left a ten-months old baby behind. There was no will.

This brings me to the point I want to make: I want to urge all members, young and old, but especially the couples who have young children to make a will, in which they also specify who of their relatives will have custody of their child(ren) in case something happens to them. Please, do not delay it but do it as soon as possible. It may prevent that your children are assigned by a court to a family with whom you would not consider them safe especially with a view to an upbringing in the fear of the Lord. You are responsible for your children not only now, but also for their future. Please.

That's all I am going to say about it. First I thought to write an article about it, but it is my heartfelt wish that the above lines may suffice.

In one of the bulletins I read something which gave me great joy. "We also may experience a very special event, the readmission of a member excommunicated many years before." In all the years of my ministry I never had the privilege of reading the Form for the Readmission, nor did I ever hear it being used. That's why I considered it good to let you all share in this joy.

Various churches have issued a new directory or yearbook, and in more than one case it was a combined effort with two or more churches participating. The Australian churches in the Perth metropolitan area issued one (many thanks, brother Martin!) that has a to me very attractive feature. Instead of listing the families and single members separately, church by

church, they have them all listed alphabetically, with the maiden name of the married women added between brackets. Behind the address the church to which they belong is mentioned: (A) for Armadale, (BD) for Bedfordale, and so on. Personally I find this method extremely handy and would recommend it to all churches that issue a combined directory. It also renders it much easier to make corrections and to incorporate changes. All the "official" information is still listed church by church, only the address list is one long list containing all the names. Something to ponder! And to act upon, of course.

The Lincoln bulletin contained the following wish in connection with the issue of a new directory: "It is also hoped that the present issue of this new directory will be the last issue of the three cooperating churches. This in view of the groundwork done by the 'committee for possible institution.' We know that the brothers of this committee are zealous in their efforts to make the wish for institution a realized fact in the not too distant future. Therefore we may hopefully look forward to an outdated issue by June or July perhaps?"

As we are in Ontario anyway with our thoughts right now, we go to Hamilton. Is it not frustrating and something to get upset about when Rev. Kroeze had to report "that his visa authorization was issued over six months ago in Brasilia, but the consulates in Toronto and Montreal were not notified; therefore the six months entry period has lapsed and the authorization has expired?" New efforts would have result in thirty days, it was said, but when this did not materialize, the Kroeze family left on visitors' visa and arrived safely at their destination. There you are: waiting and waiting, and a slip-up somewhere brings you back to square one! The Mission Aid Board intends to send out a mission aid worker as soon as the need and task for such a worker have been properly established, we read. In spite of prices for property and/or homes the churches continue to acquire the one as well as the other. In Watford "the committee found that due to a dramatic increase in lot prices it would be at least as cheap or cheaper to buy a suitable existing manse than to try and build a new one." Meanwhile they are pondering how they can get the funds to execute the plans. They are no exception.

Burlington East, on the other hand, learned that the Building Committee "reported that a settlement concerning the loss of contents of the destroyed Church building and the ad-



ditional expenses was reached with the insurance adjuster. Council approved the acceptance of this settlement. On the basis of this settlement, council also approved the purchase of a new pipe organ, as recommended by the organ committee." Burlington South, meanwhile, received word that their rent was increased by \$ 25.00 per Sunday, and we can understand that they are eagerly awaiting the outcome of consultation with brothers from "East" regarding the possibility of sharing the new facilities, once the new place of worship has been completed. Now that we are speaking about building projects anyway, we jump to Neerlandia and tell you that the old parsonage has been sold by tender and that the ministerial family is happily settled in the new manse. Elora extended congratulations to Fergus on the occasion of the acceptance of a call, but added: We are not going to call yet. "The consistory has instructed the committee of administration to move ahead as quickly as possible with proposals to purchase property for a churchbuilding and to prepare building plans. The consistory would like to present plans in early spring of this year." The Rev.P. Aasman appeared to have recovered from his accident to such an extent that he was again going to preach. For this we are thankful.

In nearby Orangeville the consistory "has decided from now on to alternate the confession of faith in singing and in saying it with the minister (in your heart).... The varying in use of the Apostles' Creed or one of the other ecumenical creeds together with the use of either Hymn 1A or 1B (and in the future possibly Hymn 1C) will help us concentrate more consciously on something which could so easily be done out of routine or custom."

When reading the following passage in Winnipeg's bulletin I felt sort of bad. You are to know that last fall, on a Sunday when Rev. Feenstra conducted the services, we chose to sit on the balcony, not being aware of the need to obtain prior permission from the consistory! Sorry about that. Anyone "wishing to sit on the balcony needs the permission of the consistory. In some cases, families who had requested that permission had to find a place downstairs because their seats had been taken by others. The decision to first seek permission before using the balcony was taken for obvious reasons, namely, we do not like to see only young people sitting there." The last words made me feel somewhat better, but still the bad feeling remains. We won't do it again without asking permission!

Moving on to Edmonton we learn about the contact which the Immanuel consistory has with the Orthodox Reformed Church (Rev. C. Tuininga). "They requested that we discuss how we should understand the Creeds concerning the Church, as well as the practice of 'closed Lord's Supper.' This is only the first meeting, and as such is of an exploratory nature."

The same consistory received information "concerning the

costs and times for airing 'The Voice of the Church' programme on a local radio station. Will be reviewed again at a later date."

Another item which undoubtedly will cause joy is the following. "A rather severe storm blew in last Sunday resulting in quite a number of members not being able to make it for the second service. It was very significant to note that the young people were there in force. Our young people get blamed, quite often wrongly, for a lot of misdeeds. Being absent from the worship services, however, is certainly not one of the misdeeds attributable to them, not last Sunday afternoon, not any Sunday. The consistory takes note of that with thankfulness." And so do we. It was a piece from the Providence bulletin.

About Neerlandia we did already refer to the completion of a new manse and the sale of the old one. There are a few more things to be passed on.

In the first place "the consistory decided no longer to announce the home visits from the pulpit but to do it via the bulletin." This is a vast improvement.

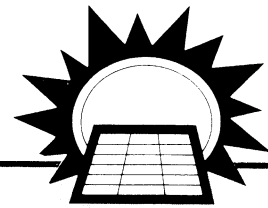
Another improvement is found in the following. "At the last consistory meeting it was decided to do away with the custom that the parents who have their baby baptized go to the consistory room straight after the service. It was felt that this prevents other members of the church to congratulate the parents immediately afterwards. After all, the sacrament of baptism is a reason for joy for the whole congregation. That's why from now on the minister will present the mother with the baptismal certificate immediately after baptism." Especially this last point is to be considered a vast improvement as well. Every time when I may baptize a baby and have nothing to give to the mother I feel sort of empty. Something is missing in my view. For years I always made sure that I had the baptismal certificate with me when going to the baptismal font and took great pleasure in handing it to the mother right after the administration of the sacrament. Now that I am no longer serving a congregation, I have to wait and see whether there is such a certificate. I always ask for it and deplore it when there is none. I would urge all consistories to make certain that it can be handed over to the mother on the day of baptism itself. Such a baptism does not happen unexpectedly, does it? There is always sufficient time to prepare a proper document. The church at Vernon happily reported "This week we will begin our activities in our 'own' churchbuilding and the Potluck Dinner on Saturday evening will be the opening event for the congregation."

No, it is not so that all of a sudden they have sufficient funds to build or buy. You will have noted that the word "own" is between quotation marks. It is used "improperly," so to speak. However, if I remember correctly, the brothers and sisters were able to rent a vacated Presbyterian church building which they have all the time at their disposal. Thus they speak of "our own" building. It is a big step forward, a stepping stone towards acquisition of a building truly their own. In any case : they can receive visitors now, lots of them.

This time we have just one small item from the land on the southern hemisphere. In the Armadale consistory it was decided "to write to the Kampen Theological College (should be "University," VO) suggesting that we direct our efforts to assisting theological training for Papua New Guinea indigenous ministers thereby terminating our financial support for Kampen." Our readers will recall that the need for indigenous ministers is great and that the Australian brotherhood are weighing the possibilities of providing assistance and guidance in this respect. We are the more grateful, therefore, that they do support our Theological College (or Seminary) in Hamilton.

Herewith we have arrived at the end of this medley. I do not know when it will be published, as the previous one has not yet appeared in print. Please do heed warnings and requests contained in the above.

C



By Mrs. J. Mulder

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
The Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd.*

*Psalms 23:1
Revelation 7:17*

Dear brothers and sisters,

David being a shepherd encountered many dangers while caring for his flock. In Psalm 23 he used the image of a shepherd to show us God's loving and protecting care for His people, the sheep of His pasture. David himself had experienced God's guidance and protection in his life. It is very real for him when he says, "the LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want." With such a mighty, strong and faithful LORD as their shepherd, the sheep are perfectly safe. Following that Shepherd and abiding in Him, they will lack nothing.

We find this theme of the shepherd all through the Bible. Also the prophets use it when they speak about the promised Messiah. They prophesied of a Shepherd who would feed His flock, who would gather the lambs in His arms and carry them in His bosom. That Shepherd would guide and direct His people with His staff, the flock of His inheritance. [Isaiah 40:11; Micah 7:14]

The true Shepherd of all God's people has been revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, "I am the good Shepherd"! He came to lay down His life for His people. And so this Shepherd became also the Lamb. The LORD has laid all our iniquities upon Him. As a Lamb led to the slaughter He willingly went through the valley of the shadow of death in order to save us from all our sins. By His stripes we are healed. He became a Lamb, not because He had to, but because He wanted to. Not the soldiers, nor the nails kept Jesus on the cross. It was His love! His love for God and His people. This Shepherd wanted to be the Lamb of God.

The effect of Christ's saving work is shown to the apostle John. He is in exile on the island of Patmos. The churches in Asia Minor have a hard time. Then John, who has so much to worry about, may see in a vision a great multitude of people coming out of great tribulation and there they stand safe and sound before the throne and the Lamb, praising and worshipping God continually. No scars, no wounds, no trace of their former suffering is left. They hunger no more neither do they thirst anymore for the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their Shepherd. With such a Shepherd in your midst, you are perfectly taken care of, there is nothing to want anymore!

That is the comfort and promise of Easter. Christ Jesus, who as a Lamb bore our transgressions, will as a Shepherd guide, direct and protect us. Sometimes there are many things to worry about. How will it go with Christ's churches? Will we be able to resist the temptations? The Good Shepherd knows our needs. We shall not want! He

will uphold us by His mighty arm and He will guide us to the springs of living waters. We can be sure of it! Not because of us, but because of this Shepherd, who was willing to become a Lamb. I don't have many worries, in fact I have only one: that I always abide in Him. Rejoice and give Him the glory, for the marriage feast of the Lamb is coming!

From the mailbox:

Connie VanAmerongen writes, "I would like to thank everyone, who sent me a card for my birthday! I had a very nice day." Thank you for your note, Connie.

I also received a new addition to our birthday calendar. On the request of Mrs. Joanne DeBoer [Smithville] I like to introduce to you Debbie Lorraine Veenstra. Debbie, who is one of a twin, has cerebral palsy. She attends school and she spends a lot of her time in her wheelchair. This past summer she underwent hip surgery and she now receives physiotherapy and pool therapy. Debbie also enjoys "Anchor" Camp every summer. For her birthdate and address see our calendar. Welcome, Debbie!

Birthday calendar for May;

DEBBIE VEENSTRA

RR 3

Sherkston, ON LOS 1R0

Debbie will be celebrating her 16th birthday on May 4th.

MR. HERMAN WEMEKAMP

109 Bythia Street

Orangeville, ON L9W 3V5

Herman will be 52 years old on May 21st.

I am sure that both Debbie and Herman will be looking forward to receiving mail from our readers. I am equally sure that you will not disappoint them!

Jesus, our mighty Lord, our strength in sadness,
The Father's conquering Word, true source of gladness;

Your Name we glorify, O Jesus throned on high;
You gave yourself to die for our salvation.

Good Shepherd of your sheep, your own defending,
In love your children keep to life unending.

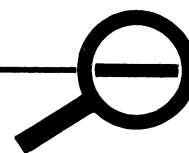
You are yourself the way: lead us then day by day
In your own steps, we pray, O Lord most holy.

Greetings to all of you,

MRS. J. MULDER
1225 Highway 5, RR 1
Burlington, ON
L7R 3X4



By C. Van Dam



The Middle East Reformed Fellowship

Although the Middle East is historically the place from which the gospel of the risen Christ initially went out all over the Roman Empire and the world, today this area is primarily known for its tensions and alas even the horrible civil war in Lebanon. For an outsider, it is difficult to find evidence of the Reformed faith in this part of the world. However, Reformed churches are found in Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan, Israel, Jordan and even Syria and Iraq. In all likelihood these congregations have some form of contact with the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF).

Recently the MERF got into the news and rightly so. *Nederlands Dagblad* (December 23, 1989) ran a large article by P. de Groot on the organization and also *New Horizons in the OPC* (January 1990) published an extensive account by D. Cummings. MERF also deserves a place in our Press Review. This is an organization which in a hostile Muslim world is quietly and effectively working for the propagation of the Reformed faith. For this column, I am dependent on the above mentioned sources as well as on official material put out by MERF.

Origins

The Evangelical Church in the Middle East was for the most part established by Presbyterian and Reformed missionaries. This church however experienced deterioration in recent decades because it was influenced by unbiblical trends, superficiality and dead spirituality. More and more the true fellowship and reciprocal support in the gospel was lacking.

The beginnings of MERF are in 1971 Beirut. As a result of American mission work and the Arabic *Back to God Hour* of the Christian Reformed Church, believers of different nationalities began to come together for fellowship and mutual encouragement. There was a common yearning that the whole counsel of God be preached. To this end they met regularly in prayer and studied the Bible and discussed Reformed literature. The growing fellowship began to sponsor lectures, seminars and other Christian activities in Beirut and by 1974 was fully organized as the Middle East Reformed

Fellowship. War, however, soon forced the dispersion of its members and the official activities of MERF ceased. The members nevertheless did what they could to work towards strengthening the Reformed witness in the Middle East. In Egypt, Reformed literature was translated and published and preaching and teaching took place. In Lebanon, the Lebanon Reformed Fellowship was organized to relieve suffering in their war-torn country.

Present work of MERF

Over time, MERF has had to rethink its strategies due to events as well as cir-



Rev. L.J. Joosse has been lecturing in Cyprus

cumstances. Traditional mission work was becoming increasingly impossible in the Middle East. On the other hand, Christians in the different countries were beginning to make an impact in their countries through radio, literature and other means. On this account, MERF was reorganized in 1983 as a regional organization and was officially registered in Cyprus in 1984. It is from this strategically located island that MERF now does its work for the Reformed faith in the entire Middle East.

There are several areas of activity. Evangelism in the Middle East is fostered by way of two weekly radio programs (MERF hopes to soon have a daily broadcast) and by providing evangelistic literature. The radio program has an audience of about a quarter million people. Since the MERF considers the radio only as a means to bring the gospel (and not as an end in itself), there is much effort devoted to follow-up work.

An extremely important area is also the training of evangelists at the Re-

formed Training Centre at Larnaca. Since you cannot get a work permit as a pastor in the Muslim Arab world, evangelists (whose full-time occupation is not being a minister) are trained in Cyprus and return to their country after a course of study. Typically a course is of a two-week duration so that students from outside Cyprus can come and go within a restricted period of time. They return to their normal trade or profession, equipped to spread the true gospel. Particularly in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and Jordan this approach is being blessed. Where possible MERF co-ordinates evangelistic efforts or supports fledgling congregations.

MERF is also involved in diaconal aid, by which they try to revive and stimulate the office of deacon. There is a great need for the ministry of mercy in the Middle East.

The urgency of the work

The gospel is desperately needed in this predominantly Muslim part of the world. The Muslim faith does not offer true hope and salvation. Since sending a missionary to Muslim Middle East countries is impossible, it is imperative that evangelists be properly trained. Good teachers are desperately needed to give courses.

Guest instructors have come from different places in the world. For example, OPC ministers have given and continue to give their services for this work. Also from our Dutch sister churches help has been forthcoming. Most recently, according to *Nederlands Dagblad* (Nov. 29, 1989) our sister church of Groningen-West sponsored two lectures last year. The Rev. L.J. Joosse gave a course on the covenant and the church (it was his third trip to Cyprus) and Mr. B. Van der Lugt an ex-mission worker taught about the gift of God's revelation. These particular courses were directed to Egyptian students. There is a great longing to be taught the Reformed faith. Members of the Coptic and evangelical churches in a country like Egypt know very little about Augustine and Calvin.

It is small wonder that support from our Dutch sister churches through their committee "Support MERF" is growing.

They can identify with the purpose of MERF which is to teach the whole counsel of God as given in the gospel. It was also noted that whereas in the nineteenth century there was often too much concern with the number of people that could be directly reached and converted, the work of MERF allows for an in-depth approach to those relatively few who will be leaders and who can go out with a better understanding. They can stimulate the work elsewhere so that under the bless-

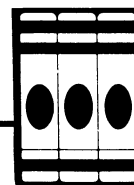
ing of the Lord the cause of the proclamation of the pure gospel can be furthered.

The Lord has prepared the soil for MERF's current labours. Rev. Victor Atallah, the director of MERF, in writing about the work, notes that "religious, economic, social and geopolitical circumstances in the Arab world are very ripe for the work of the gospel. There is much questioning and searching — yes, hunger for the truth. MERF's indigenous strategy of outreach squarely meets the

challenge. An increasing number of Muslims from all walks of life seek to learn more about the Christian alternative, tuning into radio broadcasts and asking questions of their Christian neighbours, colleagues and friends."

Amidst the wars and tensions of the Middle East, the seed of the pure gospel is quietly being sown. At the Lord's time, the harvest will come!

C



BOOK REVIEW

The Minor Prophets

P. Lok, *The Minor Prophets*. London, Ont.: ILPB 1989 (paperback, 238 pages; price \$14.95)

These outlines by the emeritus minister of our sister church in Kampen, the Netherlands, first appeared in Dutch some years ago. (The Dutch original does not specify any publication date.) It is a pleasure to see them in English.

Rev. Lok guides the reader very deftly through the twelve so-called Minor Prophets. His explanation is concise and to the point. The passages under discussion are not only considered in their Old Testament context, but are also related to the New Testament with suggestive hints for their application today. The place of the covenant is never forgotten. The difficult points of exegesis are handled fairly (e.g., the date of Joel, pp. 82-83; cf. on the question of the date of Obadiah p. 134), although more should probably have been said, for example, about the meaning of Hosea 1:2. A helpful feature for study purposes is the references to the Heidelberg Catechism and Belgic Confession. This enables an integration of the knowledge of our confessions in our study of Scripture.

Each outline is followed by questions or points for discussion. These are often very stimulating. For example: Is it true that the LORD still addresses the unfaithful churches on the basis of the covenant? (p. 12); Does Hosea 5:1 imply that the faithful church, which has received the prophetic Word, has a task towards the "house of the king?" If so, does this text authorize the church to petition the government of the land? (p. 30); can you show that Belgic Confession, Art. 37, is closely related to Joel? (p. 99); can Amos be called a social critic in the modern sense of the term? (p. 110); God's grace is not irresistible but it is invincible. What

do we mean by that expression, specifically in its application to Jonah 3? (p. 151).

Are you interested in the answers to some of these questions? Then use these outlines at your study society or group. These outlines are of course no substitute to a close interaction with the Biblical text but they will significantly help such interaction.

This book also contains a helpful chronological chart, a list of two pages of Dutch titles (does that make sense seeing that these outlines are translated because Dutch is no longer widely understood?), as well as a short (too short) list of English titles. Translating is a difficult enterprise, but this rendition is generally quite fluent although there are some examples of awkwardness.

We congratulate the Interleague Publication Board with this latest fruit of their labours. May more be added to the already extensive list of outlines.

C. VAN DAM

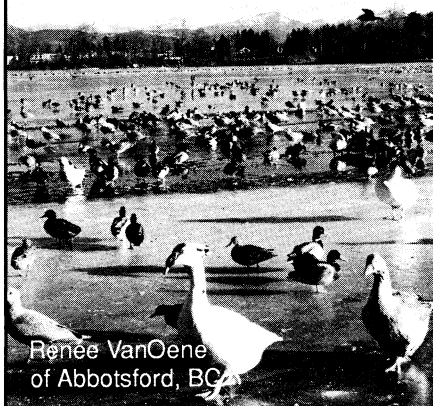
Books for young and old

There is, in the first place, a booklet about *Anak, the Eskimo Boy*, written by Piet Prins. It is the story of a young boy of about twelve years old, living in the northern, arctic region of Canada, above the tree line, where in the winter the sun is not seen (the beginning of the story) and where in the summer the sun does not go down. The book clearly, though in a very simple way, brings the Christian message. It is written for younger children, in grade three or four and higher. We read about the experiences and brave deeds of the boy under harsh circumstances. There is of course a fight with a polar bear, while Anak catches a seal himself. The author is well-known among us. Piet Prins is a pseudonym for Mr. Piet Jongeling, the Dutch Reformed politician and author, the man of "Nederlands Dagblad." The book was translated from the Dutch. On one point I had the impression that the translation failed, namely, when it says about the grandfather that "he worked very." I don't know what the Dutch original says, but think that the English is not complete. It is a nice book of 115 pages for the younger ones. Having read quite a number of Piet Prins books when young, though not this one, I expect that there are more books coming to tell us more about Anak.

The second book is *The Escape: The Adventures of Three Huguenot Children Fleeing Persecution based on historical facts*, by A. Van der Jagt. Br. Van der Jagt is a member of the Church of Laurel. He tells the true story of a brother of sixteen whose father is

OUR COVER

Mill Lake in winter in Clearbrook, BC with Mt. Baker in the background



Renee VanOene of Abbotsford, BC

placed on a French galley and whose mother dies of grief after his little sister is taken away and placed in a house with two mean ladies, far away in Paris. The boy is to become the servant of a bishop eventually to be placed in a monastery. He flees away, finds another Huguenot boy, who has fled his home because his parents gave in to the pressure to rejoin the Roman church. You understand that the plans to free the sister and to escape to Holland are successful through the mighty power of the Father in heaven.

Br. Van der Jagt did old and especially young readers a great service in telling this moving story, based on old documents. It brings the history of the persecution of the Huguenots in France after 1685, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, close to the readers. A short summary of the history of the Reformed Churches in France is added as an appendix. This story about the courage and endurance of faith of three young Huguenot children I heartily recommend. It is excellent reading material. Give it in the hands of your teenagers.

Another good booklet contains two historical essays of Marjory Bowen. The first is about "William III and the Revolution of 1688" and the second is about "Gustavus Adolphus II: elected King of Sweden of the Goths and the Vandals." We all know a little bit about the Dutch Prince William III of Orange who became king of England in the "Revolution of 1688," three hundred years ago, and was an instrument in God's hand to deliver Protestantism from the Roman Catholic threat in the last part of the seventeenth century, coming especially from the French King Louis XIV, at about the same time which the previous

book describes. The French king not only persecuted the Huguenots in his own country, but also tried to break Protestantism outside the French borders. In France he succeeded. In England he failed. (Also in Holland where the French king, in cooperation with a German Roman Catholic ruler, tried to crush the Reformed religion.) The main opponent of the French king was William III.

Gustav Adolph of Sweden lived a few generations earlier, but played a similar role in Northern Europe. For most of us this Swedish king is much less known than William III. But also with respect to him the publisher speaks of "the Lord's wondrous works" of safeguarding the work of the great Reformation in Europe in the seventeenth century. Gustavus is described as a man of "great natural charm; the sweetness and strength of his personality, his ingenuous gaiety and simple enthusiasm for honour and nobility, his tenderness and his lively animation, fascinated and dazzled all who approached him." But "war came to be the main occupation of his thoughts, for his country was at war on all sides", e.g., Denmark, Russia, Poland, and "the entire power of the Hapsburgs." Not only the king was brave; his army was similar: "the Swedes were brave to recklessness, wilful and independent, full of the old adventuring spirit of the Goth and Viking, but they were humane, obedient, prudent, austere, and patient; above all they were animated by a fervent piety and excellently disciplined." The soldiers loved their king for he cared for them "and shared all their hardships." It appears evident that the author, Marjory Bowen, studies both figures quite thoroughly. What we have in these two studies is a summary.

The style is not as easy as in the previous book. I would like to call it instructive and interesting reading, as well as good study material, excellent for students in the senior high school and for those beyond that stage. The reader learns about God's great works in the history of the church of the Reformation some hundred to hundred and fifty years after its beginning. He will appreciate with great thankfulness the freedom of religion today which is, in a historical sense, fruit of the labours of these two men through the grace of God.

All three booklets come from Inheritance Publications, in Neerlandia, Alberta. Br. Roelof A. Janssen, the publisher, does our people, and not only ours, a great service in publishing these and many other books. I heard that many in the Free Reformed and the Netherlands Reformed circles buy and read these books, or buy and give them to their children. If parents want to give their children good books to read, and also seek to broaden their own horizon by reading good books, then here is an address. What br. Janssen published I wish in many, many hands. Old and young can only profit from reading it. This cannot be said of all reading material in our modern days. I understand that one can even become a member of Inheritance Publications and receive these already cheap booklets (less than ten dollars) for even cheaper prices. More is to follow. Thanks, br. Janssen, for a job well-done in both the publishing itself, and in the very nice appearance given to them.

J. GEERTSEMA

C

HYMN 39

II Timothy 2: 11 - 13

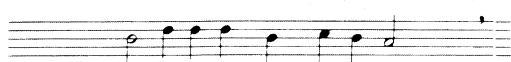
Christe qui lux es. Verona, 11th cent



1. O faith-ful is this well-known word:



If we have died with Christ our Lord,



We'll al-so live with Him a-gain;



His tri-umph shall not be in vain.

2. If we endure, so Christ has said,
We'll also reign with Him, our Head.
If we on earth His Name betray,
He will disown us on His Day.
3. If we are faithless and we stray,
He faithful will remain for aye,
For He cannot Himself deny.
On Christ our Saviour we rely.

By *W.W.J. VanOene*

For one puts either besides it or above it another authority in spiritual matters, an authority which essentially rests in man, if not in his reason then in his *feeling* or in his spiritual *experience*. In connection with this teachings are propagated which in more than one respect are a mixture of the foolishness of the cross with the wisdom of this world, whereby also the fundamental truths of our Christian faith are weakened or abandoned and sometimes, with a show of piety and under a very Christian name the guidance of a spirit which is of this world is accepted. The principal difference between the general and the special, alone-saving revelation of God is being blurred out; the confession regarding Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God and Himself God is deprived of its power; not a single one of the divine mysteries revealed to us remains untouched; and in connection with all this the Word of the Lord is let go of as the infallible rule also for the daily life and a too feeble resistance is being offered to the spirit of this age.

While earlier there was the firm conviction in our circles that the old, well-tested truth should not be exchanged for these inventions of the human spirit, it seems that now another thought becomes established with some and more than one begins to lend an ear to teachings which, as appears from Scripture and experience, cannot bring anything but flagging of the faith, confusion of the spirit, loss of peace of heart, and a going in paths which lead more and more away from God and from His Word.

We can notice another evidence emerging of the confusion of spirits of our days in the following: that all sorts of principles, proceeding from the natural heart of man, and violating in its heart the truth of God revealed to us, are being loudly proclaimed, be it oftentimes under all sorts of beautiful-sounding names.

For this reason the battle which the Church of the Lord has to wage against them is to be put on a level with the struggle which it had to conduct in the first centuries against such schools of thought as Gnosticism and Manicheism, which endeavour to cause the conception of life and world of the natural human heart to triumph over that of Christendom and which, at bottom, lead their adherents back to heathenism.

Further, warnings are issued against worldliness, against serving Mammon, against the influences of socialist ideas, against Neo-Malthusianism, against participation in what is going on in the sinful world.

In the end a word of warning is spoken and an exhortation is included to those who had been made overseers over the flock of the Lord.

* * *

As stated above, there are many good points in this testimony.

What was totally wrong was that it came from a general synod.

Servants (a general synod) were warning and exhorting

their masters (the consistories) here to see to it that they fulfilled their task and met their obligations. Thus things were turned upside down. The same phenomenon could be seen repeatedly in the decades to follow. The apex was reached in the 1940s, but this is something for later. Let us yet quote the last paragraph of the "Testimony."

"Watch then, brothers, and take heed of the heritage of the Lord. Do yourselves walk in prudence and in the fear of God. Be diligent that you may be found unblemished and irreproachable. We are travelling towards a city in which holiness will be the everlasting ornament. Every one who has this hope in Him purifies himself as He is pure."

Beautiful words, if they had been spoken by a consistory.

Now they betrayed a spirit of hierarchy, a spirit which soon would become evident in all its ugliness and devastating power.

The Synod of Leeuwarden 1920 requested the consistories to have this testimony read from the pulpits.

On October 3, 1920, Dr. J.G. Geelkerken, minister in Amsterdam South, had to read it from the pulpit.

After having read it, he requested the congregation to sing Psalm 79:4 (stanza 3 in our rhyming): "Remember not the misdeeds of our fathers." After this he continued as follows: "Beloved, now standing before you no longer as an executor of a decision of the consistory or as one who fulfills synodical wishes, but solely and exclusively as a servant of Christ, who is going to preach to you *His Word, His testimony, God's Word*, I mention as my text Mark 9:29."

There is more truth in Dr. Geelkerken's remark than one might think at first.

This truth should not be forgotten as a result of the fact that it soon became obvious that Dr. Geelkerken's objections were also, if not exclusively, directed against the contents of the testimony as such. Therein he was totally wrong, and his deviating opinions and teachings led to his deposition several years later.

However, this is another chapter.

Prelude to "Assen"

"Little could I think" wrote H. Marinus, "when, on Sunday evening, March 23, 1924, I went to church that that same evening something would be proclaimed by Dr. Geelkerken which would compel me to lodge a complaint against him because of deviation from the doctrine. Yet, that is what happened."

What was it then that happened, and what did Dr. Geelkerken proclaim in that sermon? It was a sermon on God's Word as the church has summarized it in Lord's Day 3 of the Heidelberg Catechism. He dealt especially with the words "From where, then, did man's depraved nature come? From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in paradise" Let us first read brother Marinus' rendition of the sermon passage to which he objected, and then see what Dr. Geelkerken himself published as the literal text. In his letter to the consistory, Mr. Marinus

gave the following rendition of Dr. Geelkerken's words.

"According to the Rev. Geelkerken, the passage in which the Holy Scripture tells us about that first transgression is not to be understood as a literal truth, nor was it written down as such. The Holy Scripture, he says, does not provide any information as to what really had been given by God as a test, neither does it do so about the actual process of the temptation towards or the act of the fall itself, but in a symbolic presentation, by way of an image, it gives the account that our first parents succumbed during a test. This is then supposed to have been done in this manner because our human comprehension which has been damaged by sin is not capable of knowing correctly that which, at that time in Paradise in its high atmosphere, the test of man contained in fact. In order to make this reasoning clear Dr. Geelkerken used the example of a professional who goes and talks with a blind person about colours. This blind person would be able to understand as little of this as we would be capable of understanding if the Holy Scripture had told us the fact of the first transgression and of the fall of man."

Later, Mr. Marinus maintained over against criticism that, even though he might not have given the literal wording, yet he factually quoted Dr. Geelkerken correctly. "Scholars are not yet agreeing about what actually happened at the fall of man . . . One thing is certain: a test was taken, and man succumbed in it."

Having read what Mr. Marinus reported as having been said by Dr. Geelkerken, we now turn to Dr. Geelkerken's own account. Let us see.

". . . the *origin* of sin in our race ? not, therefore, the very first *origin* of sin in the *universe* of which we just spoke ? is told us in the third chapter of Genesis.

"I know that this part of Holy Scripture places us before particular difficulties. It speaks of the state of rectitude, and therefore of an era in the history of the human race which preceded its history such as we know it only, namely, in sin. And, as it is with the state of glory hereafter, of heaven, so we can also visualize that state of rectitude only with the help of what we know in *this* dispensation. When, therefore, God gives us His Revelation about this, He speaks about it, both about that state of heavenly glory and about that state of rectitude, in terms derived from our present, earthly dispensation. Otherwise we would not be able to grasp anything of it and He would be speaking to us as someone speaks to a blind person, one born blind, about colours.

"It is also oftentimes difficult to determine how all sorts of particulars which Gen.3 tells us are to be explained, and there are almost as many 'explanations' as there are learned expositors. Think of the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil,' of the serpent and its speaking, of the tree of life, and so on.

"However, the congregation should not let itself be put out by all this. This much is certain that in Gen.3 we have the divine proclamation of an historical fact, the fact of our fall into sin, which took place at the beginning of the history of our human race. As the Catechism has it: "From where, then, etc . . .'"

When we compare the two renditions, we must come to the conclusion that, on the one hand, there is a difference while, on the other hand, it seems that Mr. Marinus did grasp the gist of Dr. Geelkerken's words. Assuming that Dr.

Geelkerken delivered his sermon literally as he had it written down, and that he did not add anything or change anything when delivering it, we must say that Mr. Marinus was not all that accurate in his rendition. However, in the first place a minister may add some words while delivering a sermon or change a few words, even when he has his whole sermon written or typed out in front of him. And in the second place, Dr. Geelkerken did not have the whole text of his sermon in front of him. He himself wrote later: "I preached from notes, but immediately after I had learned that most likely a complaint would be lodged,

I wrote down an as - faithful - as possible rendition of what I said, and did so in the same week of March 23." We will come back to this later.

Three days after having heard the sermon, Mr. Marinus wrote a letter to the consistory in which he lodged a complaint against the proclamation by Dr. Geelkerken. This proclamation, he stated,

"1. even if it does not deny, then at least it calls in doubt and proclaims as unlikely the truth of the clear message of Holy Scripture about the first sin of man as far as the actual happening of the facts is concerned.

"2. it substitutes for that the proclamation of the probability of something different from what the Holy Scripture proclaims as having taken place in reality.

"3. it therefore does not hesitate to contradict Holy Scripture and thereby makes a closing of the Word out of the opening of the Word.

"4. it is utterly dangerous, especially for the youth, since, tampering with the truth of God's testimony, it undermines this truth and saps and breaks down the reverence for it."

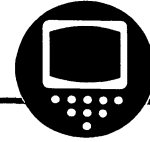
Complaint Dealt With

The consistory dealt with this letter in its meeting of April 3, 1924, and rejected the accusations. When the ward elders visited him a week later, they "wanted to take me along to Dr. Geelkerken to read his sermon. I refused this, for with respect to a matter as the present one I did not see the good of it. I did, however, on my own initiative declare that I was prepared, if the consistory should desire or demand this, to appear in its meeting and there to maintain personally in front of Dr. Geelkerken that of which I accused him. I do not know whether the ward elders did report one thing and another. The consistory never demanded that I appear. I do know that Dr. Geelkerken stated publicly that I "was not agreeable to discuss my objections with him.'"

What to do now? The way which Mr. Marinus chose was to go to classis with an appeal. He did so on May 13, 1924. This appeal reads as follows.

"Via my submission of March 26 last, I informed the Consistory of the Reformed Church of Amsterdam South (of which Church I am a member) that I have objections to the opinion which Dr. Geelkerken propagated in the evening worship service on Sunday, March 23 last, in the Schenkel Church, which opinion concerns the Scriptural record of the temptation and the fall of man in Paradise. I herewith submit to Your Classis a copy of that submission, from which it may become evident to Your Classis what was proclaimed by Dr. Geelkerken and which objections to that arose with me.

— *To be continued*



Meeting of the Canadian Reformed Association for the Handicapped, "ANCHOR" on Feb. 16, 1990

The chairman opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer. Minutes of Nov. 7, 1989 were adopted.

The Director reported that all residents of the Home are healthy and can do their work unhindered. Two new staff members have arrived from Holland. In the very near future they will have their own charge, which means that each resident will have his/her own counsellor. The names of our present counsellors are: Harriet Gelms, Diane Jager, Geraldine deBoer, Nancy vanderGriendt, Lucie Hekman and Stya Hofsink with Mr.

N. vanderHeiden as the Director and counsellor.

The counsellors also make up reports for each resident and visit their school and place of work. Two staff members are in the Home in the daytime (when the residents are not at school or work) and one staff member at night.

The SIL (Supervised Independent Living) Program is being worked on. The Summer Camp Committee is busy organizing Summer Camp 1990. Volunteers are needed for this event as well as accommodation for those attending Camp, in the way of trailers.

All representatives will be encouraged to print notices in the church bul-

letins regarding Anchor's financial need. More members are needed to continue with this important work!

By means of a drive \$16,000.00 has been collected for a much needed new van for our residents.

The budget for 1990 will be printed in the Newsletter. The agenda for the upcoming membership meeting and budget will be given to all members.

The meeting was closed with the singing of Hymn 65, prayer and thanksgiving.

On behalf of the Board,
T. Lodder



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Hello Busy Beavers,

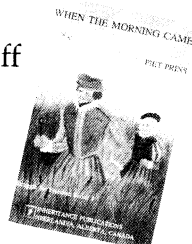
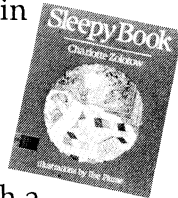
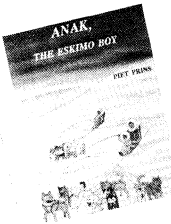
Let's start with the poem Busy Beaver *Margaret Nijenhuis* wants to share with you.

POEM

Books are full of wisdom
God has sent them down to
us.

It doesn't matter where we
read them
In the school or on the bus.
You can even read them in
the zoo
Or even if you have an
"IOU"!

Books can help you with a
story
They can help you find
good words.
Some books may seem a
little gory
But soon you'll come off
the bus
With an "A plus"!
So read!!



New
contest!

PICTURE CONTEST

So many of you Busy Beavers are good at making pictures!

Get out your markers, then, and pencils and crayons and pencil crayons!

Make some cartoons.

Draw and colour pictures.

Borders are very popular these days.

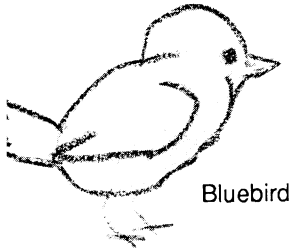
Why not try your hand at it?

Send in as many things as you like! I hope we have many winners in this contest.

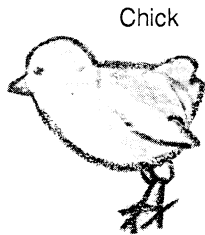
Send everything to: *Aunt Betty*

c/o Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2J 3X5

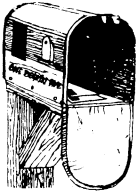
Pictures by Busy Beaver Amy Hofsink



Bluebird



Chick



FROM THE MAILBOX

Hello, *Amanda Bartels*. It was nice to hear from you again. I see you are a very good puzzler. And I know the Busy Beavers will love the puzzles you're sharing. Write again soon, Amanda.

I'm glad you enjoy the way you do things in school, *Mary-Lynn Lof*. Thank you for your pretty letter and the puzzle, too. What do you like best about spring, Mary-Lynn?

A DIFFERENT IDEA

Busy Beaver *Anna Devries* wrote:

"I got this recipe once when I was making Butter Cake. Instead of almond extract I put in peppermint extract by accident! It really tastes like a mint cake, and it's really good. Whenever it's in the cookie box they take them until they're gone! Very good!!!!"

Mint Cake

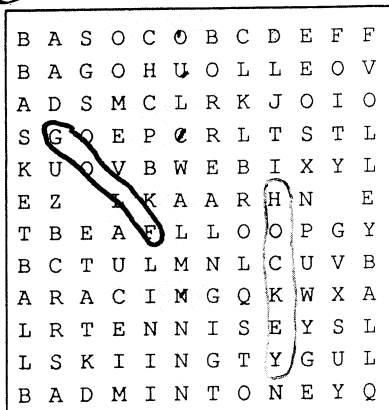
- 2/3 cup butter or margerine
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
- 1 egg
- 1 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- semi-sweet chocolate chips

Mix first 4 ingredients well.
 Mix in flour and baking powder.
 Press into 8x8x2 pan.
 Generously scatter chocolate chips on top.
 Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes.

After taking from oven, IMMEDIATELY spread melted chocolate chips like an icing.

SPORTS!

by Busy Beaver
 Garrett Penninga

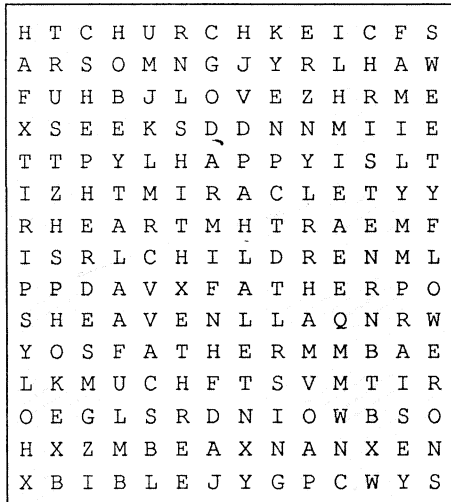


Look for:

- baseball
- basketball
- badminton
- football
- soccer
- tennis
- curling
- hockey
- golf
- racing
- skiing
- volleyball

Quiz Time!

Bible Wordsearch
 By Busy Beaver *Brenda Grim*



Look for:

- | | | | |
|----------|--------|----------|-------------|
| earth | sing | love | God |
| sweet | trust | miracle | Jesus |
| flower | happy | Bible | Son |
| children | obey | heaven | Holy Spirit |
| family | praise | Shepherd | Lamb |
| heart | Father | church | Christ |

Husbands and Wives

By Busy Beaver *Nellie Beukema*
 Can you match these husbands with their wives?

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| Adam | Elisheba |
| Aaron | Hannah |
| Moses | Rebekah |
| Boaz | Eve |
| David | Zipporah |
| Isaac | Mary |
| Elkanah | Michal |
| Joseph | Ruth |

SCRAMBLE FOR SPRING!

By Busy Beaver *Jerrin van Pykeren*

- disrb = _____
- swolerf = _____
- ssuninhe = _____
- sesegrgrna = _____
- niar = _____
- iiiontrgma = _____

Winners!

I know you are curious to see who are the Winners in our Quiz Contest.

They are Busy Beavers *Lydia Viersen* and *Margaret DeWitt*. Congratulations to you both!

Keep up the good work everybody!
 Join in our new contest today.

Love to you all,
 Aunt Betty