



Round About the Pulpit ⁽¹⁾

PRIORITY OF PREACHING

The title chosen for some articles on preaching represents more than the picture during the public worship, when the assembled people of God sit “around” the pulpit. This title hopefully stands also for the reality of a wider circle “round about the pulpit.” When, according to the LORD’s fourth commandment, Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 38, we diligently attend the church of God to learn God’s Word, we are supposed to be not only hearers but also doers of that Word. Thus our daily lives find, should find, their centre in that pulpit from which we hear the public proclamation of the Gospel.

That is why preaching has always drawn the interest of true believers, especially those of the Reformed tradition. They are known for that interest. They talk a lot about the pulpit, the preaching. Their greatest interest, when calling a minister, is: how does he preach? A V.D.M. (*Verbi Divini Minister*, i.e. minister of the divine Word) is “weighed,” evaluated, and known for his preaching. The main interest in the Theological College or Seminary is that we expect it to “produce” good preachers, who can keep up the good preaching for forty years.

In the previous paragraph the addition was made, “true believers, especially those of the Reformed tradition.” It was taken for granted that they want to uphold the priority of preaching. This should, however, not be taken for granted. These Reformed believers cannot be expected automatically to keep up the priority of preaching, when all around them this priority has been and is being abandoned. A good word for the centrality of the pulpit is, therefore, in order.

For centuries already, the pulpit has been pushed aside in the largest religious organization, the Romanist system. The altar took and still takes the central place. Preaching is of secondary importance.

In other religious systems the pulpit may still seem to stand in the centre, but it has become a platform for human wisdom which is foolishness in the sight of God, I Cor. 1. It is no longer, according to Art. 29 of the *Confession of Faith*, “the pure preaching of the gospel” as the first and primary mark of the true and real church.

But the attack on the pulpit has not stopped there. In recent times preaching-as-such has been rejected. “Preaching” has become a dirty word: “Please don’t preach!” Modern man no longer wants to be preached to. He hates that one-man business and wants it replaced by a “dialogue.”

At first sight there seems to be nothing wrong with a dialogue. Every enthusiastic preacher would like to have some more dialogue with his congregation. After having done his utmost in the pulpit, he loves to hear reactions, including questions and criticism, because they would be a proof to him that the people really listened and that his

message has come across.

In following articles we plan to stress that, as we see it, the preaching situation ought to be a *two-way* business between pulpit and pew. The more of that two-way business, the better!

Yet, the term “*dialogue*” is suspect and harmful. In modern-day thought, fathered by all kinds of theological and philosophical systems (which we leave for what they are in this “popular” talk about the pulpit), “*dialogue*” means that we do not *have* the truth, but are on our way to find, to try to find, the truth. There is not much of a chance that we will ever find it, but the best we can do is try to reach it by way of dialogue, i.e. the exchange of human opinions. Thus, in this whole concept of “dialogue instead of preaching,” there is no room for a divinely inspired Word that may and must be brought as truth to sinners-who-need-salvation.

The conclusion, therefore, must be that this whole “dialogue” idea is a severe and satanic attack against the pulpit as the place from which the divine and infallible Word is proclaimed by human intermediary.

Add, then, to this that, in the opinion of many, preaching has had its time. “Religion” in the sense of “the church in the centre of town” and the pastor a public authority, belongs to the past! The pulpit has been replaced by the press, radio, T.V., and other modern means of communication. It cannot and should not compete with these. The best the church can do in this day is to render “counselling services” to modern man with his many problems.

All this being the case, it is no luxury to talk about the priority of preaching and the centrality of the pulpit. It is a comfort to know that we are not alone in this. Many voices are heard today which call — against the negative ones above — for good preaching, and assert that that is exactly the greatest need of our time: the “living preaching of the Word” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 35). We are confident that we will have the ear of our readers when we speak about what is so close to our hearts: the living preaching of the Word of God as the first and decisive mark of the true and faithful church.

PREACHING PROFESSED

The claim that Reformed believers are greatly interested in pulpit and preaching is based on their profession, i.e. their Reformed Creeds, the *Three Forms of Unity*. Because these Creeds are drawn from and are faithful to the Scriptures, we may use them as a source to find out what, according to Reformed conviction, preaching should be; what it is and what the Lord brings about through it.

Starting with the *Confession of Faith*, the harvest seems meagre; yet this Creed assigns to preaching the

most important place. According to Art. 29, the first mark of the true church is “*if the Church uses the pure preaching of the gospel.*”

The most-striking aspects of this clause are, first, that it is the first-mentioned and indeed the primary mark of the church. The order of the three marks may not be changed. Preaching comes first and last, and is, in fact, the one-and-only mark that decides on the true-ness or faithfulness of the church: “You have kept my Word.”

Second (and we will meet the same in the Catechism), the Confession does not speak about “the preaching of the pure gospel.” That goes without saying. But the preaching of that pure gospel must equally be “pure”! This certainly is not a minor demand. It means that no strange elements are to be mixed with the truth that is being preached. It means that the full gospel according to the Scriptures is to be preached.

Pure preaching “makes” a church; the lack of it breaks that church. It is obvious that the true-ness of the Church does *not* depend upon having certain documents like the Three Forms. Whether there is, locally, a true church depends on whether such “pure preaching” is found there. If that is not the case, such a local church “assumes to itself the name of the Church,” but has, in fact, become a sect, according to the same Art. 29. That’s how important preaching is! It is not a *deposit*, but an *act*.

We have already mentioned the *Heidelberg Catechism*. In it we find an abundance of information about preaching. One thinks of Lord’s Days 7, 21, 25, 31, 35, 38, 48, to mention only those.

The Holy Spirit works a sure knowledge and a firm confidence “in my heart by the gospel,” Lord’s Day 7, 21. The references prove that what is meant by “gospel” is the preaching of the Gospel, Rom. 1:16, 10:17, 1 Cor. 1:21, etc. This becomes abundantly clear in following Lord’s Days. The Son of God gathers His Church “by His Spirit and Word,” Lord’s Day 21; and the Holy Spirit “works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel,” Lord’s Day 25.

Now we understand why believers are so greatly interested in the pulpit! Without preaching we would never have come to faith, Rom. 10:17. We thank our being God’s children to the Holy Spirit Who worked and still works in our hearts precisely by the *preaching*! Yes, we will still learn from the Canons that this preaching should not be separated from meditation, personal Bible reading, etc., but still, it holds the place of honour.

Then comes that beautiful description of the function and task of the pulpit in Lord’s Day 31, which speaks about the keys of the kingdom. Again, the first and really only “key” is “the preaching of the holy gospel.” In answer 84 we confess that the kingdom of heaven is opened and shut by the preaching of the holy Gospel in this way: “by proclaiming and openly witnessing, according to the command of Christ, to believers, one and all, that, whenever they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, their sins are really forgiven them by God for the sake of Christ’s merits . . .”; the rest of the answer describes how by this same preaching the kingdom is shut to unbelievers. In a later article we plan to return to this definition of preaching in some detail. But without that it is already abundantly clear what a mighty instrument preaching is in the hands of Jesus Christ and His Spirit; abundantly clear that preaching is not a matter of “wishing and warning” but of blessing and cursing, of opening and shutting the door.

Answer 84, in the words “proclaiming and openly

witnessing,” prepares the way for that unique and precious jewel of Lord’s Day 35. In the context of an explanation of the second commandment, it is confessed “that God will have His people (a better translation would be, “His Christians,” cf. the Dutch text) taught not by dumb images but *by the living preaching of His Word.*” Here, in one sentence, you have the whole conflict of the 16th century and the driving power of the Reformation.

“The living preaching . . .”; as already stated, it does not say, “by the preaching of the living Word.” Of course, the Word of God is living! But the preaching must be “living,” too. This word is to be understood in contrast to the “dumb images” that fill Romanist buildings. Thus, a living instrument: a person filled with the Holy Spirit, a love for the truth, and a deep concern for sinners who are lost without the gospel of Christ. “Living preaching” must convey a living message that “hits” the hearer right where he is; that cuts through him like a two-edged sword; that forces him to a choice, to a breaking with sin, and a life of obedience.

As we still hope to see, this “living preaching” is also a quest for the *matter* as well as the *manner* of preaching. But again: one cannot overestimate the importance of pure and living preaching.

According to Lord’s Day 38, “we attend the church of God, to learn God’s Word.” Yes, other parts of the liturgy are also mentioned, but the preaching is, again, in the front and the fore. And according to Lord’s Day 48, we are taught to pray against “all wicked counsels conceived against Thy holy Word.” This destruction of the works of the devil is prayed for after the Catechism has put on our lips the words, “Preserve and increase Thy Church.” Thus “Thy Word” is, also here, meant as the *preaching* of Thy holy Word. The pulpit is in danger; it is under attack from all sides. Our prayers must surround that pulpit as with a wall of fire.

Finally, and very briefly, the *Canons of Dort*. Although in the body of this Creed there are repeated allusions to the preaching, as in III/IV, 8, 9, (the parable of the sower!), the preaching is not as much in the limelight as in the Catechism. That stands to reason: the main issue was predestination and related doctrines. Yes, it is always present in the background, especially when the conversion of man is described, and the preservation of the saints.

Most important, however, is the fact that the *Canons* begin and end with the preaching. The preaching is the *framework* of the whole Creed. In I,3 we find the beautiful words, “And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom He will and at what time He pleases; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified”; then follows Rom. 10:14, 15. That is the “gate” to the Canons.

And the conclusion? V,14 (15 is a conclusion to the whole Creed) sings the praise of preaching this way, “And as it has pleased God, *by the preaching of the gospel*, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, and by the use of the sacraments.”

We must break off here. But the above creedal material, we trust, has laid a sufficient foundation for some more articles on preaching, in which we will have an opportunity to consider specific aspects in more detail.

G. VANDOOREN

A Vacancy Filled

That was the main "dish" at the ninth convocation and twelfth anniversary meeting of our Theological College.

The place where we met was familiar: it was the Wellington Square United Church on Caroline Street in Burlington. It has become familiar by now to hundreds of our members in Ontario and far beyond. Although this year there were not as many in attendance as in other years, we had a beautiful evening, and I am certain that all those attending were glad that they did come.

One drawback may have been that this year's convocation was advanced one week. This was done to give Prof. Faber the opportunity to be present. If we had had our convocation at the date originally scheduled, he would not have been able to be there, since by that time he would have started his work as a Visiting Professor in Westminster Seminary. That is a great honour for him, but also for our College. There is a large measure of recognition in the invitation directed to him. The lectures which Prof. Faber is giving there are not only for those studying for their bachelor degree: there are also lectures scheduled for doctoral students. That shows the confidence which the officials at Westminster Seminary have in our principal. Some

of the confidence flows down the official robes onto our College.

At the convocation another honour was bestowed upon us.

As our Prof. VanDam was directed in his studies for the Master's degree by Dr. R.K. Harrison of Wycliff College in Toronto, the latter was invited to attend our convocation, to see his former student being installed as professor of Old Testament. He accepted the invitation and took his place in the "stage party" where his colourful robe formed a welcome contrast with the shades of dark and dark-blue to which we have become accustomed.

Dr. Harrison is a widely-known Old Testament scholar and some of his books are standard textbooks at various Colleges. Prof. VanDam expressed his gratitude to Dr. Harrison for the guidance and help received from him with his studies, and assured his former teacher that he was looking forward to continued contact. In a personal discussion before and after the convocation, Dr. Harrison expressed his gratitude for the invitation and assured us that he wished to honour our College by accepting it.

* * *

The opening was this time in the hands of the Rev. J. Mulder, the vice-president of the Board of Governors.

Psalm 78:1, 2, and 3 were sung, after which the Rev. Mulder read II Peter 3:1-13. He then led us in prayer.

In his word of welcome on behalf of the Board of Governors, Rev. Mulder expressed his gratitude for the presence of so many who came in spite of the long weekend which for not a few is an opportunity to extend their holidays a little. It is especially the fact that this evening we receive a new professor of Old Testament which makes us grateful. A special word of welcome was addressed to Dr. R.K. Harrison, Prof. VanDam's thesis director of the Toronto School of Theology.

The point which followed the opening was the Principal's Address. Since this address is published separately in our magazine, I shall refrain from quoting from it.

The Rev. D. VanderBoom, president of the Board of Governors officiated at the installation of Prof. Van Dam. He first read the Installation Form and we heard a firm "I do with all my heart," when Prof. VanDam answered the questions that were asked. It was very proper that we sang Psalm 134 after that.

The Subscription Form — which can be found in the Acts of Synod Edmonton 1965 — was then read and Prof. VanDam had to go a few times through the motion of signing for the sake of photographers who missed the actual signing. Perhaps we shall be able to show our readers some of the results of the efforts to fix the action in print.

Rev. VanderBoom also read some congratulatory messages that had been received. There was a letter from the Senate of the Theologische Hogeschool in Kampen; there was also a telegram from Prof. Ohmann. The Church at Surrey deplored the loss that it suffered when the Rev. VanDam left that Church after a rather brief service of not even two years, but they were convinced that what is their loss is the gain of the Churches, so that they themselves do receive some benefit in return. Further there were congratulations from the Church at Calgary and the Providence Church in Edmonton.

Our newly installed professor treated us on his inaugural address, for which he had chosen as topic "The Genesis Flood Account: revela-



The C. Van Dam family with their parents.



Prof. Van Dam signs the subscription form.

tion of God's faithfulness." We are grateful to Rev. VanDam for his willingness to permit publication of this address which our readers will read with as much interest as we were listening to it. Nothing has been changed for the publication and no one will have any difficulty with understanding it.

A musical interlude, presented by Mr. J. VanHuisstede at the organ — he accompanied us all evening with the singing — and Mrs. H. VanHalen on the recorder gave us time to digest the inaugural address somewhat while, at the same time, enjoying some different gifts, this time in the field of music. The applause was well-deserved.

It would be strange indeed if Mrs. L. Selles had not appeared and spoken to us on behalf of the Women's Savings Action. From the outset she has gladdened us each and every time with her cheerful messages and welcome donations. The work of the Women's Savings Action is greatly appreciated and continues to be necessary. I shall not elaborate on that need; there are persons more capable who will do so. All I wish to say from this place is that I wished all the sisters could come and have a look and be informed in person about the needs, about the plans, and about future needs which may wipe out the whole balance within a very brief period of time.

Mrs. Selles, too, was so kind as to hand over her speech and here it follows.

* * *

Mr. Chairman, Brothers and Sisters:

The honour of representing someone brings the duty of saying something on behalf of that person.

In this case for me the (now traditional) words to present the cheque are spoken on behalf of *all who work in the Savings Action*.

I have done so in the past and do so now while giving thanks to our Lord, the Giver of all things.

This year we contributed the promised amount for the library and we saved for the new building, the building, a dream of the future, kept alive by the Board of Trustees.

Mr. C. Lindhout Sr. walked from the one bank to the other to obtain the highest interest on our savings. He does a marvellous job.

Mrs. Lindhout kept track of incoming mail, and acknowledges the gifts. She tells me every year that she wants to quit, but so far I have succeeded in persuading her to stay.

With Mr. P. Lindhout auditing the books and no operational costs at all, we cannot do better.

Miss A. Van Sydenborgh helped to keep the tax exemptions straight.

All of you deserve our sincere thanks.

Before the money appears in numbers on a cheque or money order it has been collected from homes far and near. It has been counted and rolled for bank deposit. Think of all the work done *in love*, when you see the amounts on the annual statement.

This afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Lindhout and I attended a meeting of the Board of Trustees, Governors, and Faculty of the College. We asked for their advice on the question, "Shall

we continue to work in the Savings Action or shall we stop when the library can survive on the interest?" (Maybe a year from today?)

The meeting advised us unanimously in favour of *continuing* the work of love done in the Savings Action.

In our Annual Newsletter I hope to give you more information on the discussion and decision taken at this meeting.

And now I ask your cooperation. If we continue, let's do it *together*. If the money is needed now and in the coming years, let's *work* on it together.

I remind you of our goal: Provide money for the *Library* (and teaching aids when requested).

We have done so in the past,

Clarion

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let's continue to do so freely, happily, and thankfully.

Let's do it *together*.

Remember: Many small amounts make one big one.

Mr. Principal:

As usual I may present the gift for the library. This cheque is the last instalment of this year. I also include the promise for the standard amount for next year. If more is needed, ask for more. This is \$3,000.00.

* * *

What is a Reformed gathering without a collection?

During the prelude to the singing a collection was taken. I did not hear any specific amounts, but the rumour has it that approximately \$480.00 was donated by those present. It is a pity that the brethren and sisters from farther away, e.g. Western Canada, never have the opportunity to take part in such offerings. Love, however, is ingenious, and they will find ways and means to make up for that, I'm sure.

The singing of Psalm 95:1, 2, and 3 followed, upon which the Rev. J. Visscher, member of the Board of Governors led us in thanksgiving. Before



The complete faculty.

the recessional we sang Hymm 35, and after the recessional an opportunity was given to congratulate Prof. VanDam, his family and relatives, an opportunity which was not left unused by the many who had come to witness the installation.

It is too bad that one cannot convey adequately via an article and description the actual feeling one gets when attending such an event. There are members who would not miss this

yearly evening for anything, and they are there, year after year. It is encouraging and a reason for gratitude when we notice that the work of the College has the love and the full interest of the membership. After all, the Churches have established it and are maintaining it and all the work done there is for the benefit of the Churches.

May they indeed benefit from it.

VO

Principal's Statement 1981

Twelfth Anniversary Meeting/Ninth Convention
Friday, September 4, 1981

1. College Evening

The eleventh anniversary meeting of our Theological College took place on Friday, November 7, 1980, in order to give the delegates to General Synod Smithville 1980 the opportunity to combine important events. At this eighth convocation the degree of Bachelor of Divinity was conferred upon the Rev. Richard Aasman, B.A. Although he was still to teach in the academic course 1980-81, Drs. H.M. Ohmann, Lic., professor of Old Testament, gave his farewell address entitled "The Living God." At the same convocation the Rev. W.W.J. Van Oene, M.Th., was installed as lecturer in Ecclesiology.

2. Faculty and Students

With thankfulness to the God of life we may report that no illness interrupted the teaching process. Five freshmen had enrolled, i.e. Mr. C. Bosch, B.Ed., Mr. W. DenHollander, B.A., Mr. J. Moesker, B.A., Mr. M.H. VanLuik, B.A., and Mr. W. Slomp who

was admitted via an entrance examination. Together with the four students who took the sophomore courses during this academic year, they formed a student community that was larger than in any year before. Feeble attempts to organize an initiation treatment for the freshmen and a debating club for all students showed the encouraging signs of the awakening of real student life within the walls of our established college building.

As far as the Faculty is concerned, on Monday, April 20, 1981, Prof. L. Selles celebrated his fortieth anniversary in the ministry of the gospel. The Theological College offered to consistories and members of the Canadian Reformed Churches the opportunity to meet Prof. and Mrs. Selles at an "Open House" reception. The widely spread attendance from near and far, the enthusiasm, the heartfelt congratulations, and the tokens of appreciation must have warmed the hearts of our colleague and his wife and have shown to them

how much the churches have learned to appreciate their ministry within our midst. Similar words can be spoken with respect to our lecturer in Diaconology, the Rev. G. Van Dooren, M.Th., who in March had celebrated his forth-fifth anniversary as Verbi Divini Minister, and with respect to our former colleague Prof. Drs. H.M. Ohmann. His twenty-fifth anniversary was combined with his farewell from our College. In May Prof. Ohmann delivered his last lecture in which he summarized his exegesis of II Chronicles 20. At the end of the same month the College organized a farewell reception during which many good words were addressed to our departing Professor of Old Testament. We are thankful that the Rev. C. Van Dam, M.Th., already was at that time in our midst as professor designatus. Synod Smithville had made his appointment effective on a date earlier than the Board of Governors and the Faculty had expected, but this was a pleasant surprise. It made the transi-

tion in the Old Testament department as smooth as possible, and it gave the Rev. Van Dam ample opportunity to prepare himself for his joyful but difficult task. We welcome him within the circle of the Faculty as a spiritual son, but first of all as a brother in the Lord. With great expectation we look forward to his work in our midst of which we reap and taste the first fruits tonight. He and we know ourselves completely dependent on the Lord our God, and also for our scholarly endeavours we confess the simple and deep word of the Old Testament revelation, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10a).

3. Special Lectures and Contacts

During the academic year 1980-1981 we had two special guest lectures. Professor N. Shepherd, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, U.S.A., dealt with the doctrine of justification. His lecture was entitled "The meaning of 'Faith Alone.' A Comparison of Luther and Calvin." The Rev. H. Versteeg, missionary of the Canadian Reformed Church at Toronto, lectured on the mission work in Irian Jaya. He made us aware of never surmised practical implications of our sometimes abstract theological studies. The lecture of Prof. Shepherd was a fringe benefit for us of his status as fraternal delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to our General Synod in Smithville. On the other hand, our Principal was invited to function as Visiting Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary during the Fall semester 1981. The approval by the Board of Governors of a leave of absence and the cooperation of the Faculty in shifting courses from the second to the first semester in the upcoming academic year, made it possible for him to accept this honourable invitation without impairing the theological education of our students. In this context another word of Old Testament wisdom comes to mind, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days" (Eccl. 11:1), and "A liberal man will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered" (Prov. 11:25). The truth of this practical proverb showed itself when, in our attempt to obtain the legal authority to grant degrees by way of a charter of the Ontario Legislature, Westminster Theological Seminary, in addition to other institutions, gave a good testimony about

our academic standing and performance.

With a view to the benefits of such academic contacts our Theological College delegated Prof. L. Selles to the Third International Conference of Institutions for Christian Higher Education in Sioux Center in August 1981. The delegate of the *Gereformeerde Wetenschappelijk Genootschap*, Drs. K. Veling, lecturer in philosophy in our sister institution in Kampen, The Netherlands, visited our College on his way to Iowa.

4. Administrative Assistant

Besides the work of the Board of Governors, the Trustees, and the Ladies' Aid (which is much appreciated), the presence of an Administrative Assistant is indispensable for the daily operation of our College. Miss Anne Van Sydenborgh fulfilled this function in a very effective manner for more than five years. She decided at the beginning of the academic year 1981-1982 to enter into a similar position at the Canadian Reformed High School in the Fraser Valley. We thank her publicly not only for her administrative work in the strict sense in which she acted as Assistant Secretary-Treasurer of the Board of Trustees but also for the many hours during which she functioned as Assistant Librarian. Some voices whisper that she knew her way in our dispersed library better than many a student, not to speak of the esteemed Faculty.

In this year of changing of members of the guard we welcome Miss Teresa Bouwman as our new Administrative Assistant, and we express the hope that she may find much gratification in her not unimportant task in the life of our College community.

5. Synod Smithville

Let me conclude with some remarks about the close relationship of our Theological College and the Canadian Reformed Churches. Especially during this academic year this bond was again expressed and reinforced. During the month of November 1980, Synod Smithville appointed a professor of Old Testament and a lecturer in Ecclesiology. It also acceded to a proposal of the Church at Surrey, endorsed by the Faculty and Board of Governors of the College, regarding admission requirements. In the past a person who was thirty years of age or over, could be admitted to the course of study without being in possession of a

Bachelor of Arts or equivalent degree. He had to possess a High School diploma (Academic Course) or an equivalent level of education and to pass an entrance examination in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Ancient Philosophy. In discarding this provision of entrance examination, Synod Smithville was led, among other reasons, by the following considerations: From the outset it was the intention of the churches to have a Theological College with full academic training and standing. Scholarly preparation for the admission to the studies at the College by an extended study program leading to a B.A. degree will enable the student to build up the necessary knowledge, especially of the languages, in a gradual manner. This is much better than taking a few fragmentary courses in order to pass an entrance examination. Moreover, in Article 8 of the Church Order the churches have also provided an ecclesiastical way for exceptionally gifted persons over thirty years of age to be admitted to the ministry.

It goes without saying that this decision of Synod Smithville 1980 and its considerations strengthen the academic stature of our institution of higher learning. It will certainly have its impact upon our attempts to obtain legal status in the Province of Ontario, but apart from this consideration we welcome it as a new token of the considerate attention that the churches give to their Theological College. Other decisions of Synod Smithville 1980 could be mentioned in this context as well, but I leave it at this one decision for the time being. It illustrates the strong bond between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Theological College in Hamilton. It was a deeply moving experience to be in the session of Synod in which this general assembly bade Godspeed to Prof. H.M. Ohmann and welcomed the Rev. C. Van Dam. Those historic moments threw their encouraging light upon our academic work in this year of the Lord. At our Theological College in Hamilton we cannot work in isolation. We need the love and prayers of our brothers and sisters. Therefore we thank those throughout the vast domain of our Canadian country who remember us before the throne of grace, for our work is *sola gratia*.

Soli Deo Gloria.

J. FABER

The Genesis Flood Account:

REVELATION OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

The following is the text of Prof. C. Van Dam's inaugural address delivered September 4, 1981, upon his installation as Professor of Old Testament at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

President of the Board of Governors, Members of the Board of Governors, Members of the Board of Trustees, Faculty, Dr. R. K. Harrison, brothers and sisters:

This evening I would like to speak to you on the Genesis Flood account as we have received it in Genesis 6-9 and to consider some aspects of it from the perspective of God's faithfulness. There are three main areas I would like to touch on.

God is Faithful in Giving His People a TRUE Account

The first aspect I would like to dwell on briefly is that God has shown Himself faithful by preserving and giving to His people a *true* account of what really happened in connection with the Flood. God gave His *revelation* so that man would not need to resort to pagan speculation. Let us go a little into that.

The Flood was a tremendous worldwide event.¹ It affected everyone and was a watershed in the history of man. It is therefore small wonder that all over the world there are traditions of a great and devastating flood preserved in the memories and literature of many nations — not only in the ancient Near East, but also, for example, in China, Australia, and the Americas. Indeed, there are over three hundred ancient flood stories with broad similarities to the Biblical account now known to us.² This was an event that could not be forgotten! However, it was an event that in due course of time could be misinterpreted and be preserved in a false way by those descendants of Noah who did not want to know of the ways of the Lord. And that is what happened. The polytheistic fables that tell of a great flood are fanciful and far removed from the sober truth as recounted in the book of Genesis, the Word of our God.³ However, in spite of the world of mythology and polytheism that Abraham and the other patriarchs and later Israel lived in, God made sure that His people received a true account, and not only received it, but believed it as

the Word of God and therefore preserved it for successive generations. Now we do not know exactly how the material of Genesis had been made available to Moses, although there are some attractive theories.⁴ Caution, however, is advisable in considering the history of the text of Genesis as we now have it, for we have little hard and fast evidence to go by,⁵ but we do know that Israel received the Genesis account within the context of many pagan explanations of creation and man's history up to the flood. As is clear from the Old Testament, Israel did not live in isolation, but within a certain cultural and literary environment, and was aware of pagan beliefs. The Genesis account was given to them within a certain context. It may be instructive for us to pause briefly at one such pagan myth concerning the Flood to appreciate better God's faithfulness in giving the true account to His people.

In 1969 tablets were published which in their present form date from approximately two hundred years before the time of Moses. With the publishing of these tablets the most complete version yet of the Babylonian Atra-hasis Epic was made available for study.⁶ This myth circulated widely in the ancient world and is important for giving us a pagan view of history from creation to the Flood. (Indeed, it is the only Babylonian myth that covers all this in one story.) This myth, therefore, enables us to appreciate somewhat the pagan literary and religious context within which God preserved His truth for His people.⁷

The first thing that strikes one in reading this (and for that matter other pagan myths) is the complete absence of the sovereign Almighty covenant God. Instead, there is what has once been termed "the silliest polytheism."⁸ The different gods who are identified with various aspects of nature are like capricious human beings at whose whim all mankind is to be indiscriminately subjected to a flood, without any moral justification. The gods also argue as to how the flood is to be brought about, and they deceive each other, as is evident from the fact that not all men are destroyed. They have not much foresight either, for when the flood comes they get thirsty

and hungry and miss the food which man used to supply them with. Thus, when the first offering is made after the flood, they swam like flies to it in order to receive their food.⁹ Indeed, these gods are not transcendent and sovereign in any way. In another Babylonian flood story, found within the famous Gilgamesh Epic, the gods are even pictured as cowering, frightened dogs before the fury of the storm that brings the flood.¹⁰ So the pagan view of reality and of the great flood wholly excludes the knowledge of the sovereign God who made heaven and earth and is above and beyond it, and who rules creation in justice and righteousness.¹¹

And now, although many denied Him, God in His faithfulness preserved the true knowledge of Himself among men and made it very clear that He, the sovereign living God, rules heaven and earth, and that He was the One who brought the Flood about. He also made it clear that He brought the Flood about for a very specific and just reason, and that reason was sin. It was disobedience to the Almighty that brought the catastrophe about. People had to know that, as was doubtlessly also known at one time through Noah "the herald of righteousness" (II Peter 2:5). Sin against the living and just God was the reason. That had to be realized. Then man is helped, for the knowledge of sin is necessary for salvation. But what did man, who was estranged from the living God and who made gods after his own likeness, now attribute the Flood to? In the Gilgamesh Epic no real reason is given. It seems to be the result of the current whims of the gods. However, in the Atra-hasis Epic in which we are now especially interested, a reason is given, and therefore this epic is noteworthy. What reason does it give? Well, man's wisdom — more properly, pagan speculation — came up with the reason of overpopulation. Indeed, that is a major theme of the myth. In the Atra-hasis story the gods had tried different ways to control the population explosion as the gods saw it, for they were bothered by the noise mankind made and had trouble sleeping. But nothing worked in their attempt to control the population. Famines, drought, salinization of the soil,

the itch, and starvation did not decimate the population. Finally, the flood was sent. Something had to be done! There is no clear mention of sin and rebellion against God Most High as being in any way responsible for man's ills and the flood. No, overpopulation was the problem, and therefore the flood came, and therefore after the flood, according to the Atrahasis Epic, measures were to be taken to control the population, by the people and the gods (for example, a demon would snatch some babies), in order to prevent a too rapid population growth.¹² At this point this epic sounds very modern. It is not impossible that the concern with overpopulation as seen in this myth is a reflection of ancient "urban blight" and crowded cities, although more study is needed in this area.¹³

Today, too, overpopulation is blamed for many of man's ills, and population control is still widely seen as essential for coming to solutions. As far as that goes, human wisdom has not progressed too much. Now if one realizes this ancient way of thinking and the larger context within which Israel would hear God's Word, then how comforting and relevant it is that God made sure that His words to Noah after the Flood were recorded. "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth!" (Genesis 9:1). The LORD even repeated it a second time. "And you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on the earth and multiply in it" (Genesis 9:7). God's Word is certainly relevant and in touch with the spirits of the times. Over against the pagan solution which at the same time entailed a fear that the gods conspire to keep their population down, the living God exhorts, encourages, and gives His blessing in this regard,¹⁴ although, as we will see, there is more to these words than the highlighting of God's will over against pagan fears and mythology.

Now we have only touched on a couple of examples (and more could be mentioned) to show that the Lord guarded His children from pagan mythology and fables so that they would not see the Flood from a perverted point of view, but would see the justice and love of the living God; but these examples are enough to show that the Lord in His great faithfulness made sure that His people had His revelation, the true account of what happened, so that they need not resort to current pagan speculation. Yes, for the Lord wants to preserve His work, and He does not want His creation and His people to be des-

troyed. This brings us to the second area that I wish to touch on briefly this evening, namely, God's faithfulness in preserving His handiwork.

God Is Faithful In Preserving His Work

We read in Genesis 6:5-6: "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart." What a contrast these words are with what we find written in Genesis 1 where the LORD rejoiced in His handiwork and where we repeatedly read: "God saw that it was good," and after all was made we can read: "God saw everything that He had made and behold it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). But now it was not good at all. Wickedness and violence fills the earth. This hurt God. He grieved seeing this terrible fruit of the serpent, the great adversary, and God said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them" (Genesis 6:7). God obviously did not delight in the upcoming destruction. Indeed, He still gave man 120 years to repent (Genesis 6:3). But He, the faithful and holy One, sent the flood to save and preserve what was left of the godly seed, for only Noah and his house were still left and they would be saved.

We cannot start to imagine what an awesome event and what a horror the flood was. By it God wanted to wipe the earth clean (as the Hebrew indicates), but in a sense it was more like the undoing of creation. "All the fountains of the great deep burst forth and the windows of the heavens were opened," we read in Genesis 7. Here is the annihilation of all distinctions, an obliteration that reminds us of the words from Genesis 1: "The earth was without form and void." The waters that God had gathered above the firmament on the second day of creation now fell through the windows of heaven, and the waters that had been gathered together to let the dry land appear now burst forth to cover all.¹⁵ In a sense, creation was coming apart, so to speak. The sequence in which the destruction of the birds, cattle, wild animals, swarming creatures, and man is mentioned (Genesis 7:21) is almost identical to the order of their creation — again

reminding us that creation is, as it were, being undone. The earth was returned to the state "without form and void," and no life was possible.

Except in the ark, where God in His faithfulness preserved Noah and his family — yes, where He preserved mankind. For if God had only been interested in Noah, He could have called him to Himself as He did with Enoch. But no, mankind is being saved — yes, creation as a whole, for the creatures as well are preserved. God is faithful. He was the One who had ordered this craft to be built and also gave the necessary directions. He had caused Noah and the animals to enter after promising that He would preserve them, and He had shut the door and He guided the ark. It had no rudder, and, being like a large box, was designed for floating only. The LORD determined its speed, direction, and destination.

So God in grace snatched His handiwork from the threatening chaos of sin, and so those eight people were saved and given life through the water that destroyed (cf. I Peter 3:20). It is noteworthy that the word used for ark can also have connotations suggesting a coffin.¹⁶ Indeed, the occupants of the ark were literally carried through the death and the destruction of God's wrath.

How they must have appreciated their salvation in passing through the divine judgement over the world. The tremendous pouring and outpouring of water continued for forty days, and it was not until after 150 days that the waters started to abate. How the occupants of the ark must have been in suspense hearing the roar of the water and the destruction outside, and how they must have received increased respect for the holy, just wrath of their God, the sovereign Maker of heaven and earth who could do with His creation what He wanted. As Calvin noted,¹⁷ knowing our own human nature, we would imagine Noah being in great anguish though clinging to God's promises. Had God forgotten him or left him for a special torment while the rest of creation had already perished? Why could God not have destroyed the world in three days and have it over and done with? Great and awesome is the fury of the LORD as He in His own sovereign way wiped the earth clean! It is therefore touching when Scripture says that "God *remembered* Noah And God made a wind blow over the earth and the waters subsided; the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain

from the heavens was restrained, and the waters receded from the earth continually" (Genesis 8:1ff.). After being in the ark for over a year, Noah may leave it (Genesis 7:11; 8:13ff.). It was like a veritable resurrection after the passage through the sea of death. At the same time that sea of death was their salvation, for a new start could now be made and new life had. Indeed, in I Peter 3 this aspect is linked up with our salvation in and through the death of Christ as also pictured in baptism (I Peter 3:20ff.).

The destruction process was over. A cleansed though not a new creation, in the real sense of the word, waited. An earth quiet and without life. This cleansed world would need life . . . which, in the deepest sense of the word, must mean the life of Jesus Christ who would bring the rebirth and full renewal of all things,¹⁸ so that life would truly be as God intended in the very beginning without the disruption of sin and the Satan. And so, over the quiet, lifeless earth that was receiving the precious cargo of life from the ark, rang God's words: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." The mandate once given at creation, a mandate that included man's cultural and ruling task, is reaffirmed, although the situation is completely different. The life of man and the existence of mankind is to be continued. God therefore also informed Noah of the measures required to protect that life (Genesis 9:2-6), and then God again reaffirmed: "And you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on the earth and multiply in it" (Genesis 9:7). It is noteworthy that the blessing entailed in the mandate of being fruitful and multiplying given now (and indeed given to man from the very beginning) is later repeated and given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then the nation Israel.¹⁹ For example, in Bethel God said to Jacob: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 35:11) adding the assurance that this would indeed be so. Why was it that this basic blessing and mandate given to all men in Adam, and later in Noah, be repeated to the patriarchs and Israel? Well, this indicates and reminds us that, in the election of His special people, God continued His work for mankind, His handiwork, for it is through Abraham and His seed that mankind would be blessed and the new mankind would come.²⁰ The constant reaffirmation to God's chosen people in the Old Testament of the blessing of being fruitful and multiplying made possible the coming of the salvation promised al-

ready to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15). When the fulness of time came, the Saviour could therefore be born of a woman. In Him, God's judgement but also His grace could be revealed as never before in the cross of Golgotha. For God's plan for a truly new world and a new creation, including a new mankind, would be realized, for His handiwork, as He intended it in the very beginning, would come about. There is no stopping it. Not even sin and the iniquity of men would stop it. Therefore, after the devastation of the Flood, God established a covenant with Noah and all his descendants and every living creature — a covenant with all creation — that never again would all flesh be destroyed by water. The rainbow was made a sign of that covenant. God would bear with the sin of man and restrain Himself and save up His full just anger for the Christ, that through Him mankind and creation as a whole, His handiwork, be saved and redeemed, and that a new mankind one day populate the new earth.

So God showed Himself faithful in preserving His work, and we today may still live in the period of restraint by God. The rainbow can still be seen as a sign of His covenant with creation, a sign of His patience and mercy as the Lord guides history on to the end. This takes me to the final area which I wish to touch on this evening, namely, that God shows Himself faithful by giving this account of the Genesis Flood to us.

(To be continued.)

NOTES:

¹ Many prefer to speak of a local flood; however, the Biblical data speak of a worldwide event. See, e.g., W.H. Gispen, *Genesis*, I (1974), 232.

² See, e.g., M.H. van der Valk, *Mozes' Boeken in Egyptisch Licht* (1930), 143; G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis*, I (1933), 244ff.; G.F. Wright, "Deluge of Noah," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, I (1929), 822ff. Cf. W.F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (1968), 98ff.

³ Although there was a time when it was fashionable to speak of the Biblical account as one borrowed from and dependent on pagan Babylonian tradition, there is justifiably much more caution now. See, e.g. A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (1946), 260-269; G. von Rad, *Genesis* (1972), 120; A.R. Millard in *Tyndale Bulletin*, XVIII (1967), 17ff.; J.V. Kinnier Wilson in D. Winton Thomas, ed., *Documents From Old Testament Times* (1958), 24ff. Indeed, no borrowing from the Babylonian polytheistic traditions took place. Cf., e.g., Aalders, *op. cit.*, 241ff.; K.A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (1966), 90; J.D. Davis, *Genesis and Semitic Tradition* (1894), 120ff.

⁴ See, e.g., P.J. Wiseman, *Clues to Crea-*

tion in Genesis (1977), 3-105 (originally published as *New Discoveries in Babylonia About Genesis* [1936]) as also articulated by R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (1969), 547ff. (Cf. also the reservations of M.H. Woudstra in *Calvin Theological Journal*, V [1970], 184-189 of Wiseman's thesis in discussing the position of B. Holwerda, *Historia Revelationis Veteris Testamenti* [Oudtestamentische voordrachten, I, 1954], 9-17). For other approaches, see, e.g., G. Ch. Aalders, *Oudtestamentische Kanoniek* (1952), 141ff. (also his, *Short Introduction to the Pentateuch* [1949], 153ff.) and W.H. Gispen, *op. cit.*, 201ff.

⁵ Cf. the caution of Holwerda, *op. cit.*, 14 and D.J.A. Clines in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, XXXVIII (1976), 504ff.

⁶ W.G. Lambert and A.R. Millard, *Atrahasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (1969). The tablets have been dated to about 1630 B.C. (*ibid.*, 14; also cf. Millard in *The Tyndale Bulletin*, XVIII [1967], 4). For the date of Moses cf. I Kings 6:1.

⁷ For the wide circulation of this myth see Millard in *The Tyndale Bulletin*, XVIII (1967), 4ff., cf. 17ff.; cf. D.J. Wiseman, in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, I (1970), 41ff.; W.F. Albright in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LVIII (1939), 103; W.G. Lambert in *Journal of Theological Studies*, XVI (1965), 299ff. The Atrahasis Epic is chosen here, for the flood story in the Gilgamesh Epic is actually incidental to the main plot. The Mesopotamian flood story really comes to its own in the Atrahasis Epic. It is also the only epic providing a continuous narrative of the first era of human existence. Cf. W.G. Lambert, *Journal of Semitic Studies*, V (1960), 133ff.; Millard, *The Tyndale Bulletin*, XVIII (1967), 5.

⁸ A. Dillman, as quoted by Heidel, *op. cit.*, 268.

⁹ Atrahasis, III, iii, 31-37; III, v, 34-36.

¹⁰ Gilgamesh Epic, XI, 113-115. Cf. Atrahasis, III, iii, 24-26.

¹¹ cf. N.H. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (1966), 48ff.

¹² For discussions of the matter including other views, see Millard in *Thy Tyndale Bulletin*, XVIII (1967), 11ff.; W.L. Moran in *Biblica*, LII (1971), 51-61; A.D. Kilmer in *Orientalia*, XLI (1972), 160-177; T. Frymer-Kensky in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, XL (1977), 147-155. Cf. H. Schwarzbach in *Numen*, IV (1957), 59-74; W.M. Clark in *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, LXXXIII (1971), 185ff.

¹³ Kilmer, *op. cit.*, 174.

¹⁴ cf. *ibid.*; Frymer-Kensky, *op. cit.*, 150ff.

¹⁵ cf. J. van Andel, *Handleiding Gewijde Geschiedenis* (1913), 26; Clines, *op. cit.*, 500; von Rad, *op. cit.*, 124.

¹⁶ cf., e.g., Gispen, *op. cit.*, 254; A. van Selms, *Genesis* (1967), 133 and the lexicons.

¹⁷ in his commentary on Genesis 8:1.

¹⁸ cf. Matt. 19:28, especially in the Greek.

¹⁹ Gen. 22:17; 28:3, 4; 35:11ff.; 48:4; Lev. 26:9; Deut. 28:1-14. Cf. G.V. Smith in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, XX (1977), 307-319.

²⁰ see, e.g., Gen. 12:21ff.; Gal. 3:7-9; Rom 4:13.



News items are published with a view to their importance for the Reformed Churches. Selection of an item does not necessarily imply agreement with its contents.

KAMPEN

Prof. Drs. H.M. Ohmann was installed as professor of Old Testament at the Theologische Hogeschool in Kampen. This was done on September 2, in the Eudokia Church in Kampen.

The official opening of the new academic year was to take place on Thursday, September 10, at 7:30 p.m. in the College building. (ND)

* * *

KELMSCOTT

The Free Reformed Church at Kelmscott (Australia) dedicated their new Church building in the beginning of August. It has a seating capacity of 500. Kelmscott was instituted earlier this year; its members belonged to the Armadale Church before that. In his official address, the minister, the Rev. Dr. S.G. Huh, said that although this building was now finished, God's Church is not yet complete; he expressed the wish that many be added to the people that it saved. (ND)

* * *

GRAND RAPIDS

Ever since the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (GKN) decided to retain homophiles in unquestioned membership, voices were raised in the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) advocating severance of the ecclesiastical fellowship tie. After a lengthy debate the annual Synod of the CRCNA, meeting in Grand Rapids in June, decided to leave the present relationship with the GKN unaltered. The Synod instructed the denomination's Interchurch Relations Committee to

continue contact with the GKN and to advise the Synod of 1983 whether the "table and pulpit fellowship" between the CRCNA and the GKN should be continued. In following this route, Synod set aside the proposal of its advisory committee which recommended the discontinuance of such fellowship. Synod also decided to inform the members of the CRCNA of the decision of the Synod of Delft concerning the tolerance of homosexual practices on the part of members and office-bearers in the GKN and to urge them to guard the communion table and the pulpit in accord with the decision of the CRCNA Synod of 1973 regarding homosexual practices. (RES NE)

* * *

GRAND RAPIDS

A "hot" item on the CRCNA Synod's agenda was the "women issue." The Synod of 1978 decided that qualified women could be ordained to the office of deacon provided that their work would be distinguished from that of elders. As a consequence of the decision, several local congregations moved ahead and ordained women as deacons. Owing to a barrage of objections from churches and individuals, the Synod of 1979 decided to instruct consistories to defer implementation of the 1978 decision until a further study had been made. This study committee proved unable to reach unanimity and instead offered three sets of contrasting recommendations to the 1981 Synod.

Synod's advisory committee, too, was unable to agree and came instead with a majority and two minority reports. The majority report proposed indefinite postponement of the implementation of the 1978 decision. One minority report proposed that the decision of 1978 be put into practice, the other went beyond 1978 by proposing that all confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements be eligible for the office of deacon. Before a packed gallery Synod discussed the three proposals for a whole day. In the end Synod again postponed taking a definite stand. Instead, a motion prevailed that another committee be appointed to study specifically the meaning and scope of the concept of "headship" as it bears on the place of women. The committee will consider the implications of the headship idea for office in the church as well as for positions in society and will report in 1983. (RES NE)

* * *

YOGYAKARTA

"In realizing God's work to build, to renew, and to unite churches in Indonesia, God is willing to employ our human efforts. We are privileged to have the opportunity of becoming God's co-workers." Thus wrote Dr. T.B. Simatupang, President of the Council of Churches in Indonesia in the monthly magazine *Berita Oikumene* recently. Quoting the statements of the Ninth General Assembly of the Council held last year, he underlined six main points for realizing the ecumenical ideal in Indonesia, namely, to establish one Christian Church in Indonesia:

1. to adhere to the ecumenical ideal with faithfulness;
2. participation oleh (local) congregations and a shift to the regions;
3. self-reliance in theology, resources (finance) and ability;
4. to promote evangelism and mission;
5. to cooperate with governmental institutions and fellow citizens showing responsibility towards society and state, especially in showing concern to poor people;
6. to promote the role and function of women and youth.

These six main points are now being used as guidelines for the work of the present Executive Committee of the Council of Churches in Indonesia. The Council has 53 member churches throughout Indonesia.

This ecumenical ideal has been cherished since the very beginning of the establishment of the Council in 1950; however, the precise nature and form of this unity are still under discussion. (RES NE)

* * *

KAMPEN

From 1971 to 1981 the membership of the "Liberated" Reformed Churches in The Netherlands increased from 85,000 to nearly 100,000, a growth rate of 16%. Much of this growth is due to the relatively high birth rate in these churches, as is evident from the baptismal figures. In the "Liberated" Churches the number of births and baptisms is virtually the same; the number of baptisms in these churches was 2½ % of the total membership, which makes it twice as high as the national average birth rate.

During that same period, the Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CGKN) grew by only 6%, with a baptismal figure of 1.7%. The Reformed Churches in The

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news medley

The correspondents who sent the copies of bulletins from long before the mail strike and included them all to make sure that I would not miss any deserve a special word of thanks. The news which I pass on this time may be partially of a somewhat advanced age, but it is never stale or unimportant; at the most it may have been overtaken by further and newer developments.

I wonder, however, whether it is really necessary to wait with sending them till there is a pile from April to August. The mail strike did not begin till July; I think that it would have been nice if I had received the April and May issues in June at the latest. However, I am thankful that I receive them anyway.

In some bulletins my attention was even drawn to special messages or articles by means of underlining in red. That was especially the case where I was chastised or rapped over the knuckles, whichever way you wish to put it, for what I had written in connection with Edmon-ton's (Immanuel's) building activities. I'll come back to that later. We first travel on to the West Coast.

In Smithers "the Deacons have donated \$200.00 to the Smithers Community Service to be used for the mentally handicapped."

Sometimes the impression may be received that we forget to show mercy to those who are without in spite of the fact that our Church Order provides that the Deacons shall maintain proper communication with other people whose special work it is to provide for the needy. I am glad that the Smithers Deacons show the mercy of Christ also to those who are without and prove thereby that we are no haughty and conceited, isolated group of people but really are concerned about the misery of this world. Perhaps it is done more often and then without mentioning it publicly in the bulletin, but I thought that it would be good to pass it on to you.

In the previous news medley — which I haven't seen in print until this very moment; so much for the improvement of the postal service — I mentioned the Okanagan Valley. Now I can pass on some further information from someone who was there and can speak from his own observation. Rev. Van Spronsen writes in the *Bulkley Valley Echo* the following.

Undoubtedly you are wondering how the developments are in the Okanagan Valley, Church wise. First of all we should all be interested in seeing the number of Churches in B.C. increase and furthermore we also have a family living in that area, . . . During our holidays we had the privilege to spend some time in the vicinity of Vernon and as a result also spent a weekend amongst our brothers and sisters there, together with those who were holidaying in the area. They had invited me to lead the services. We met at the spacious home of the Luhoff family and it was a good thing that they have ample room since that particular day 70 people attended! Of this number about two-thirds were visitors who enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of the much smaller number that lives there. After both services coffee and refreshments were served outdoors.

All together, counting young and old, 22 members live in that area now, but more were on the way, while they still had a number of inquiries. We found this small group very enthusiastic and hope that the Lord will

bless their efforts. When we were there they were in the process of negotiating the rental of a church building. They hope and pray that all this may lead to the institution of a Church in the Okanagan in the not too distant future.

Let us move on to Calgary.

In a previous medley I already informed you about contemplated changes in the liturgy. Those changes have now been adopted and put into practice. As far as the morning services are concerned, there is the change that the Scripture reading and Prayer are switched around: after the singing after the Ten Words prayer is offered; then the Scripture reading, reading of the text and sermon follow. That is as it is done in more Churches and that is one of the two suggested orders which were submitted to Synod Smithville 1980 to be inserted as suggested orders of worship in the new *Book of Praise*.

In the afternoon, however, the Apostles' Creed (either read or sung) comes *after* the sermon. That is a *novum* as far as I know. I have never heard that before.

During my holidays I attended various services; I not only attended them, I also conducted them. And I must say: things are becoming a little bit confusing. For some thirty-five years I never had to ask in the Consistory room, "How do you do things here?" Nor did the brethren ever have to say to me, "We don't know whether you are aware of it, but we do things a little differently here." You knew the order of liturgy and everyone was used to it.

During the last four or five years, however, it happens frequently that you enter a Consistory room and get a piece of paper with the liturgy in use in that Church. Then you have to adjust mentally to that, for the Consistory is the body to decide about the liturgy, not the visiting minister. I can tell you, however, that it is very frustrating. I have further noticed that it is frustrating for the Congregations as well. More than once I heard the remark, "Yes, the previous minister did it this way; but then we got another minister, and he changed it again."

I would plead for uniformity in liturgy. Basically there are two suggested liturgies and I would urge all the brethren to stick to them, either to the one or to the other and not to come with some private inventions. I do believe right away that everyone has a beautiful string of arguments for his proposed order, but there is also something like following the old, long-accepted pattern. I do not believe that now all of a sudden it dawns on us that it was always wrong and liturgically not justified to do it the way we did it. We should not unnecessarily disturb the Congregations or introduce changes which would make visitors from sister Churches feel as if they are in the wrong Church. I don't like all that "renewing" and changing. For all the years of my ministry — and I am among the older ones — I have never felt the urge to change the pattern; yet it has not become a rut.

The Church at Smithville, which decided to use the Revised Standard Version as of September 1, made that decision because "the Consistory felt that indeed for the sake of uniformity . . . this decision was warranted." Well, then, let us have some uniformity in the liturgy as well, as we did have uniformity for many, many years and decades. It is very embarrassing for visitors from sister Churches when they sit down when they are supposed to remain standing or remain standing when they are supposed to sit down, and so on.

In most Churches the Congregation remains standing after the votum and benediction to sing the first song. I like that and it is in accordance with what is done practically everywhere at the end of the service; but there

are a few Churches where right after the votum and benediction everyone sits down again. I found it very strange, however, that all of a sudden, when we sang after the baptism of an infant, everyone rose and the Psalm was sung by a "standing" Congregation. I found that inconsistent, to say the least.

However, we'll go on.

Back to Calgary. The Immigration Committee received a telegram from the Church at Enschede regarding three Christian Turkish families. These families were in danger of being deported, and feared persecution if they returned to Turkey. Calgary was asked whether they could not do anything for these families. They took up contact with Coaldale, for the families were farmers. "If these cases are genuine with respect to religious persecution, so that the people can obtain refugee status, it is surely within the scope of our deacons to support Coaldale in this venture, but also within the responsibility of each of us to pray for these people, that this effort may bear fruit."

We move up to Edmonton. I told you already that I got rapped over the knuckles in the *City Guide*. Fairness demands that I pass on what was written.

Last week a semi-trailer load of doors, frames, casing, baseboard, sheets of 1/2 inch oak plywood (various sizes), aluminum handrails, and oak railings and posts, arrived from Peace River . . . Rev. Van Oene may not think too highly of this gift, but then again, what does the average Minister know about the quality and value of building material?

The last two lines were underlined in red. And since I am an average Minister, I do not know all that much about the quality of building materials. However, I did not pass judgment about the quality of the materials as our readers may recall. Thus this judgment does not affect me. I was writing about the "various sizes" about which I read in the *City Guide*. What did the bulletin say? That there was "an assortment of about 50 solid oak doors with frames and hardware (various sizes). The architect will endeavour to incorporate these into the plans." I wrote about the difficulty of not having uniform size doors. That has nothing to do with quality. It seems that what I wrote was not understood well.

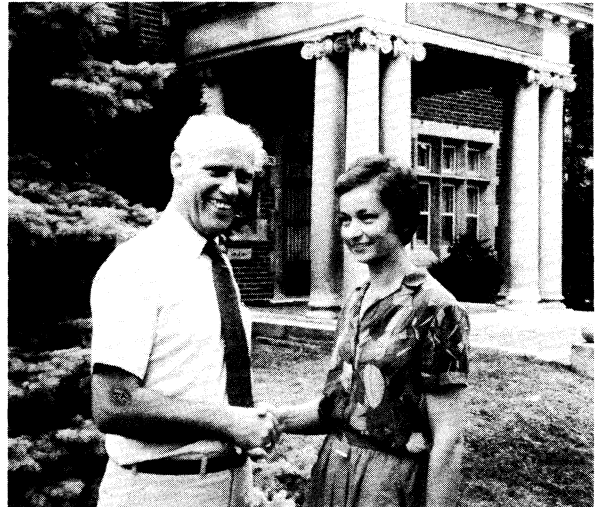
A second passage that was underlined in red is the following.

As far as Rev. Van Oene's comments are concerned about a balcony, these could not have been made from an economic point of view, therefore "no comment."

What did I write about a balcony? This: "Too bad they have included a balcony." Indeed, I did not write that from an economic point of view. It is cheaper to have one big building with balconies on three sides and a seating capacity of fifteen hundred than five buildings with a seating capacity of three hundred each, without balconies.

But my remarks are never determined by financial considerations when these things are involved, except when I think that some money can be saved without sacrificing any aspect of what I deem necessary or beneficial for the Congregation. And I consider a balcony to be not only not advisable for a Church building but even an impediment for the feeling and experiencing of true unity, of belonging together when you are together in the auditorium. Besides, inclusion of a balcony increases the seating capacity to beyond what I consider to be the limit for one autonomous Church. And: who are the ones that rush to the balcony to sit there all the way in the back??

The NE Congregation in Edmonton chose a name. It is



Anne VanSydenborgh, who served our Theological College for five and a half years as Secretary, has taken a similar position at the High School in the Fraser Valley. At the College, Anne also looked after all business and financial matters for the Trustees. She was dedicated to her work, and we are all sorry to see her leave Hamilton. Pictured above, Anne says goodbye to Hessel Dantuma, Treasurer and Trustee of the Theological College.

Arie J. Hordyk

the name "Providence." Thus this Church will be known as the Providence Canadian Reformed Church.

The Immanuel Church Consistory discussed "Lord's Supper frequency . . . It was decided to reintroduce Lord's Supper celebration in the second service for those who could not possibly make it for the celebration in the morning services." It seems that having the celebration of the Lord's Supper only in the morning does not work in this case. I wonder whether we ever will achieve it.

We go a little further north and visit Barrhead. The Consistory decided to rescind the decision not to buy the Alliance Church, and made arrangements for the Congregation to go and inspect that building. I have not read a further decision yet. I did read that the Town Council was approached about building a church in the Industrial area. There appeared to be no objections with the Council; the only thing they wished to know was what kind of a building would be erected, what shape and what size, what size of lot would be required, and so on.

I would be a little hesitant to consider an Industrial area for a Church building. When I see what happened to the industrial area in Surrey where it was once suggested that the New Westminster Church should erect a Church building, I am the more grateful that that suggestion was never considered seriously. Perhaps the situation has changed and perhaps it is different in Barrhead, but in industrial areas you can expect almost anything and I would not wish to have a Church building there. However, it is possible that in the meantime the Alliance Church has been purchased. When the next bulletins arrive I can inform you further, I hope.

Up to Carman.

The Home Mission Committee reported "on various possibilities of spreading the Gospel. The most suitable

seems to use the radio station 'Sun Valley.' A slot is available on Sunday mornings from 9 - 9:15 at \$40.00. The Home Mission Committee will work this out further and report how this can be implemented."

They did so, and

As things stand today we have again contacted CISV and agreed to start radio broadcast on September 6. As committee we agreed to use speeches taped by Canadian Reformed ministers in Ontario at least for the time being. These tapes come complete with introduction and music before and after the address. Although these tapes can be sent directly to the station regularly, we agreed that since we as committee are responsible as to what is aired, we would listen to every tape and then send it on to CSIV.

I think that it shows a sense of responsibility when the committee decides first to listen to the tapes before they are passed on for broadcast. You never know what those Ontario ministers assert. Perhaps it will be better once the exchange program with the British Columbia ministers gets going. That was the intention, wasn't it? In any case: I think that it is wise that the committee decided as they did: when you are responsible for something, you have to know what is going on.

The Consistory report tells us that

A question was raised about the Services during the week in which marriages are solemnized. Not all members of the congregation have always time to attend these. This question was also raised in "Beacon" before. It is the opinion of the consistory that although we should not take these services lightly, but attend whenever we can, these services are not the same as going to church on the Sunday, which is keeping the Sabbath.

I could say quite a few things about the above passage. I, for one, do not believe at all that going to Church on Sundays is "keeping the Sabbath." The sabbath has been fulfilled by the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ and by His satisfaction and has therefore been extended to our whole life, to all our days, as Lord's Day 38 says it so beautifully. However, I wrote about that years ago and shall not repeat it here.

I do not hope that I violate trust when I mention that as a Committee for the Revision of the Church Order we received some criticism on our proposal to include that marriages may be solemnized in a worship service. It was pointed out that we provide that funeral services shall not be conducted, whereas we do allow for "marriage services." The question was asked whether it is not about time that we remove this anomaly from our Church Order. Funerals are private matters, however much a Congregation may be affected by the death of a member; likewise marriages are private, family matters, however important they may be for the Church of Christ.

It appears that the Carman Consistory felt some of this inconsistency when it asserted that "these services are not the same as going to church on the Sunday." Why not? What is the difference between the one service and the other? Is there really any difference? Going to Church on Good Friday is also not the same as going to Church on Sundays, but is there any difference between the one service and the other? I cannot see any justification for a statement to that effect. To me a service is a service. Period.

And when the "wedding services" are oftentimes attended by only a small part of the Congregation, such is not merely caused by the fact that many people are *unable* to attend; it is far more so that many people

decide not to attend because they hardly know the bridal couple or because they don't like them, or because they think they have something better to do.

I still think that, whenever the Consistory calls the Congregation together, the Congregation should come in its entirety unless there are just as valid reasons for not attending as would justify non-attendance on Sundays. There is, however, no Consistory — at least not to my knowledge — that asks members who were absent, "Why were you not in Church Friday evening at the wedding service?"

Does that not show that we finally should draw the consequences and acknowledge that marriages are private, family matters and should, therefore, be solemnized in a private ceremony? "Private" does not necessarily mean "restricted to a few." Members who are getting married will be happy to have as many brothers and sisters attend the ceremony as can possibly come, but then to a private ceremony, not to a service.

Winnipeg — as you may recall — was going to try to get a loan in The Netherlands. I have oftentimes wondered why it is so hard to loan money there, for the interest rate is much higher here than overseas, but we tried the same some years ago and the result was very disappointing. It was for Winnipeg as well: "Attempts to obtain a loan in The Netherlands were not successful."

There seems to be some light coming from other quarters, however, for we read, "With respect to the property of the church it was reported that a group of developers is interested in developing the West side of the church property and that the engineering department of the City of Winnipeg has drawn up a plan for this area." The west side — if I am not mistaken — is the side behind the Church building and the school building. If that is indeed correct, it is my impression that they may not even need a big loan from The Netherlands or from anywhere else, since at least some funds will be forthcoming from the sale of part of the property. I hope that I am right, for the Congregation there has to struggle hard enough as is to make ends meet for the Church as well as for the School.

For some concluding paragraphs we go to Ontario this time.

The Guelph Consistory received a report regarding the expansion of the organ. It appears that the total amount involved is approximately \$6,000.00.

The Stam family has left the country for a year and is now living in Hardenberg, The Netherlands. As our readers know, the Rev. Stam has received a year's leave of absence for study purposes. In case you wish to write them, their address is Meteorolaan 14, 7771EB, Hardenberg, The Netherlands.

I already mentioned that the Smithville Church decided to use the Revised Standard Version as per September 1st. The same applies to the Lincoln Church.

The Smithville "Consistory discussed the work of the deacons and the relationship of the deacons to the consistory. In the future the deacons and elders will strive to maintain a closer contact with each other in their official duties. Deacons will report to the consistory every three months."

The Home Mission Committee received "a letter from the Dutch G.O.V. (Reformed Broadcasting Society) asking for airtime." This letter was "forwarded to the Broadcasting Council."

I don't quite understand this information. Perhaps the Dutch organization wishes to buy airtime here to cater to the Dutch speaking immigrants. You will know

that on the West coast tapes from this society are aired by the Fraser Valley Churches. If the work can be expanded, why should we not cooperate?

The last Congregation we visit is the one at Watford. The worship services in the Dutch language were discussed and it was decided to do away with the regular Dutch services. The consistory discussed the possibility of arranging one extra service in a month to be held in Dutch. No decision as yet.

Although it does not sound all that friendly "to do

away with the regular Dutch services," we understand the meaning. No harm meant! I presume that such an extra service — if the Consistory decides to have one — would be almost exclusively a reading service, for Watford is too far away from places where they can find a minister that is able to conduct a Dutch service, to have him come over and conduct it.

Well, and that exhausts the supply for today.

Happy to have met you again, I sign off.

Cheerio!

vO

Reverend Joesse and Family Welcomed in Albany, Western Australia

"The LORD is good and His mercy is everlasting." With these words from Ps. 100, elder J.A. Diek, deputy chairman of the Church council of Albany, opened his address to the congregation and thus welcomed Rev. L.J. Joesse and his family. The Joesse family had arrived in Albany from The Netherlands only a couple of days earlier. Br. Diek said: "In the Lord's church-gathering work we see His faithfulness to us. This is in fulfilment of His promise to the church of all ages. He guides us as the sheep of His pasture. We welcome Rev. Joesse and his family in our midst, and we pray that he may lead us in the green pastures of His Word both in the preaching and in the pastoral care of the congregation. May your work be fruitful and may your stay be a happy one." Br. Diek also thanked the sister-churches who provided pulpit supply during the vacancy, and he especially thanked Rev. K. Bruning for his work as counsellor to the Church council of Albany.

This opening address set the tone for a happy meeting on a cold and wet day in the Port of the Great Southern.

Br. Diek announced that two messages of regret and best wishes had been received, one from a sister in The Netherlands and the other from the Church at Launceston which was receiving its new minister in candidate Jonker on the same weekend. Thus the four Australian pulpits are once again filled.

After the opening address, the evening was filled with a non-stop programme of speeches, singing, and plays which each in its own way contributed to the success of the evening and gave the new minister and his family some idea of the various organisations in the church. Especially the singing by the School children and the young girls was much appreciated. The chairman of

the Church council, br. J. Plug, who also is our organist, did not trouble to hide his joy by giving a very fine performance from his seat behind the organ.

Each of the speakers expressed his/her joy in his/her own way, and there was an array of them. Thus the chairman of the School Assoc., br. H. Schoof, was very pleased that Rev. Joesse is also a fully trained teacher and thought that he might come in very handy. On behalf of the Immigration Committee, br. A.A. 't Hart told the new family about the two Vietnamese families who are living among us after having been sponsored by the congregation. The Women's Bible study club presented some W.A. wildflowers to Mrs. Joesse and invited her along to the meetings. Delegates from the churches of Armadale and Kelmscott also addressed the meeting. Rev. Bruning, on behalf of Armadale, promised us the standard fare from a minister, namely, three points, and proceeded to typify some of the families in Albany, but also spoke of the bond of Churches and its importance in a big country with so few churches. Elder J. Eikelboom spoke on behalf of the Church of Kelmscott and reiterated

the need to help each other. "A development in one church has direct influence in the other churches," he said. Both speakers emphasised their joy and thankfulness to God the Father in filling the Albany pulpit.

At the close of the evening Rev. Joesse addressed the congregation. "It is obvious that you love the church; you showed that this evening," he said. "We thank God that he has brought us here safely, and we are keen to start our work among you, even though it will be quite a change for us, with a new country and a new language," he said.

The evening was followed by a late supper where everyone had a chance to meet the new pastor and his family.

The following day, Sunday, 28 June, Rev. Joesse was installed by the Rev. Bruning who preached from Hebrews 11:7, with as theme: "The Lord's teaching regarding Noah the preacher."

This was followed in the afternoon by Rev. Joesse who had as text Revelation 6:2, with as theme: "God reveals in Jesus Christ the triumphant march of the Gospel in the world."

Albany, Australia R. VERMEULEN



Rev. Joesse and family.

KELMSCOTT

Official Opening of the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott, August, 2nd 1981

THE AFTERNOON CEREMONY

"This key has been given me, not to lock, but to open this building for all hungry souls who come to be fed by the true preaching of God's Word."

With these words, Rev. Dr. S.G. Hur, minister of the recently instituted Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott, officially received the key to the new 500-seat church building from the Chairman of the Building Committee, br. J. Mulder.

The festive ceremony marked another milepost in the history of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Under the rich blessings of the Lord, the Free Reformed Church of Armadale has grown from meagre beginnings in the early 1950's to a membership exceeding 1,000 last year. The splitting of this congregation into two has brought the total of Free Reformed Churches in Australia to four: one in Tasmania and three in Western Australia. Each, now, has been blessed with its own minister and building. Each minister may preach the true Word of God where God has placed him.

After singing Psalm 127 and reading Psalm 84 the M.C. for the day, br. K.A. Wieske, led in prayer. He then welcomed the distinguished guests and the congregation.

Rev. Hur, having officially received the key, pointed out that, at a time when humanistic preaching is rampant in many churches, and other

church buildings are being closed through lack of interest, the Lord has warmed people's hearts to give money for this building. He expressed the wish that God's Word would be powerfully preached and listened to therein, for, though the building is complete, God's Church is not complete and must grow; from inside through baptism of infants, and from outside through witnessing, so that outsiders, too, may be brought into the bosom of the Church, outside of which there is no salvation. Rev. Hur concluded by expressing the wish that the marks of the true Church would always be manifested in this Church so that it may be a light to the world around us.

Three government representatives, invited to this official opening, were given an opportunity to speak. The Mayor of Armadale, Mr. I. Blackburn, the Minister for Transport and Member for Dale, Mr. C. Rushton, and the Federal Member for Canning, Mr. M. Bungey, all took turns in congratulating the congregation with its new building and, after reminiscing about the first Dutch settlers in Armadale and the rapid growth of their church and school, stated that they wished us God's blessing on our efforts. Mr. Bungey astutely remarked: "Much work has been done. Much still needs to be done. In a world filled with a lack of purpose and discipline, I pray that you will work hard for the spreading of God's Word."

Mr. Holton, the architect, payed tribute to the efforts of the people involved in the construction of the building which, he said, fulfilled well the requests for a simple, functional House of God. It was his opinion that the building stood as "a symbol of the glory of God and to the dedication of the congregation."

In response to the three representatives of government, Rev. Hur pointed out that the Lord had set them in authority over us for the well-being of the Church. "We pray that He may strengthen you to fulfill this heavy task," he said.

Rev. Hur also voiced the congregation's appreciation for the architect's beautiful design as well as the builder's fine efforts.

The congregation then sang Psalm 111 verses 1 and 2, Rev. Hur led in prayer and thanksgiving, and everyone was invited to make use of the lavish supply of refreshments.

THE EVENING FESTIVITIES

The commencement of the evening festivities saw the new church building packed to capacity with happy brothers and sisters from Kelmscott, Armadale, and even Albany.

After singing Psalm 136:1 and 2, Bible reading and prayer, Rev. K. Bruning, as delegate of our Armadale sister-Church, was invited to address the congregation.

Rev. Bruning pointed out that today there is more interest in universities, education, and entertainment centres than in building new churches. This, he said, is because man no longer wants to depend on God, but upon himself. Since we believe in the total corruption of man, we give priority to the church building in order that God's Word may be preached therein. Is it through the preaching of God's Word that man is regenerated, and it is only when man is regenerated that education, study, etc., has sense. Rev. Bruning said that he hoped and prayed that the preaching in this building would result in the congregation being activated to live to God's glory and to witness to the world around us "Like a new building, we, too, must be new people in the Lord."

On behalf of the Church at Armadale, Rev. Bruning presented the Church at Kelmscott with a large Bible for pulpit use.

Br. J. Plug represented our sister Church in Albany. He spoke of the many bonds and ties between us as sister-Churches: the many experi-



The new building.

ences, family relationships, friendships, and, above all, the bond of faith. He reminded the congregation that our unity as Church of the Lord Jesus Christ means that we have the same destination: to come together as the Church of all ages. "Therefore," he said, "we share in your joy today It is our sincere wish and prayer that every sermon preached may be in accordance with the true Word of God."

As was to be expected, there were no delegates from our sister-Church in faraway Launceston. Since telegrams usually travel cheaper and faster than delegates, their decision to convey their message in print was understandable, and we were pleased to receive their congratulations.

It was pleasing to observe that, at a time when so many churches are straying from the Truth, the confession of our Lord: "Thy Word is Truth," inscribed on the foundation stone of the new building, was continually emphasized by both delegates and other speakers during the celebrations.

Speakers during the evening festivities included representatives of men's and women's Bible Study clubs, youth clubs, C.P.S.A., School Association, and sporting groups, all of whom took turns to present a beautiful gift with accompanying speech. Many modest persons, with much trepidation, kneeknocking, and many profuse apologies for having been "coerced," "pushed," "commanded," or otherwise "forced" into speaking on behalf of their club or group, really excelled themselves and drew much



Rev. Dr. S.G. Hur receives the keys of the new church.

applause for their fine efforts.

The evening appeared to be thoroughly enjoyed by everyone as the festivities bubbled over into much gaiety. Laughing, clapping, and general enjoyment was evident in the audience as one group after another entertained the congregation with music, singing, and plays.

Concluding the festivities, Rev. Hur remarked how beautiful and pleasant it was for brothers and sisters to come together in the communion of saints which shares one baptism and one God and Father. Rev. Hur voiced appreciation for the encouraging words from deputies of our sister-churches and said that, just as this

demonstrated that we are all one in the Lord Jesus Christ, so we should work together in the unity of faith. He also expressed appreciation for the many beautiful gifts and for the work done by those who organised the festivities and refreshments. A special word of thanks went to the Building Committee for their fine efforts. Rev. Hur called upon the congregation always to remember the Lord, who graciously allows us to live *in His Church*.

After singing together Psalm 150, Rev. Hur led the congregation in prayer and thanksgiving.

J. NUMAN

FROM THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

The composition of the editorial committee has changed somewhat.

No, this is not a "cabinet shuffle" caused by divergencies or possible other conflicts within the ranks of this committee.

The reason is simply that the Rev. Cl. Stam deemed it wiser to resign his position on the editorial committee due to his absence for a full year. He did not wish to be a co-editor in name only. We appreciate that, but still hope that he will find time to write to us and to tell us a few things about Church life in The Netherlands.

The Rev. J. DeJong of London, Ont., has been found willing to take the Rev. Stam's place and thus to fill the vacancy in the committee.

It will be unnecessary to introduce Rev. DeJong. In the past we did enjoy some fruits of his labours, and

especially the meditations were well received.

Rev. DeJong has not indicated which "field" he prefers as his specific territory, but I am not mistaken, I think, when expecting some more meditations in the near future.

We may use this opportunity again to urge all who would be able to contribute to our magazine to do so.

What we do we do for the sake of the Church membership.

What do *you* do?

All contributions have to be sent to P.O. Box 54, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W7.

Sometimes the publisher receives articles and other contributions with the request to publish them. They are invariably sent to Fergus and from there are or are not included in the material to be inserted in *Clarion*.

Sometimes the publisher re-

ceives letters in which he is asked whether he would be interested in certain contributions or whether introductions at society meetings can be printed in *Clarion*. That, too, is a waste of time: he is interested only in printing what is sent to him from the editorial committee. Such questions should be directed to the editorial committee, address as above.

At times subscribers send too much to the editorial committee's address. Occasionally we find cards in our mailbox which inform us of a change of address. Such cards should be sent to Winnipeg, for that is an administrative matter and we have nothing to do with matters of administration, finances, etcetera.

Each and every one doing his duty and seeking the well-being and edification of Jerusalem, we may expect the Lord's blessing.

vO

INTERNATIONAL

— Continued from page 355.

Netherlands (GKN) suffered a slight decrease in membership; in those churches the drop in the number of baptisms followed the decrease in the national birth rate.

The statistics, published by Drs. G. Karssenbergh in *De Reformatie*, also show that the "Liberated" Churches lost members to The Netherlands Reformed Churches, to the secularity in The Netherlands, and to various small groups. They picked up some members from the (Synodaal) Reformed Churches. The statistics also indicate that with approximately 65 churches without pastors, the shortage of ministers will continue for some time. (RES NE)

* * *

DALLAS, TEXAS (SIM)

A plan to simplify the publication of Scriptures and other materials in the complex Ethiopian script by using a typesetting computer is under way as a joint venture of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and Sudan Interior Mission. SIM linguists Albert and Evelyn Brant, have recently completed programming a micro-computer at SIL's Dallas headquarters.

"The Ethiopian script is very complex," Evelyn said. "We had the problem of fitting more than 300 characters on 96 spaces!"

Plans are to have as micro-computer in Ethiopia within a few months, where personnel will be trained in its use. As each line of a manuscript is typed, it is displayed on a screen and proofread. The tape produced by the micro-computer will then be sent to one of SIL's regional centers where a more sophisticated computer will produce the typeset material. (Comm.)

* * *

WASHINGTON (RNS)

A Senate committee has approved a bill to "promote self-discipline and other prudent approaches" to teenage sex and to urge adoption as an alternative to abortion by teenaged parents.

The bill by Sen. Jeremiah Denton (R-Ala) won a unanimous vote from the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee after it was shorn in a compromise of its previously strict references to "promiscuity."

The revised bill now has the unusual joint support of Sen. Denton,

the conservative freshman senator who was a prisoner of war in Vietnam, and Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass), one of the few prominent liberals left in the Senate in the wake of the 1980 elections. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) cosponsored the bill with Sen. Denton. (CN)

* * *

NEW YORK, N.Y. (AP)

A top Lutheran leader, back from an overseas church tour on which he visited Pope John Paul II, predicted recently there would be officially approved Lutheran-Catholic intercommunion by the year 2000.

Bishop James Crumley, head of the Lutheran Church in America, said such intercommunion already is going on without authorization among some parishes, but progress is being made towards sanctioning it. (CN)

* * *

WINONA LAKE (RNS)

The General Association of Regular Baptist Churches has denounced the "theology of liberation" as being in conflict with its own evangelistic goals in the mission field.

The 4,600 delegates to the annual convention here singled out several aspects of modern missions philosophy for criticism and affirmed their traditional soul-saving theology. The liberation theology, which attempts to ally the Christian church with secular struggles against right-wing regimes, was "unscriptural," they said in a policy statement.

Delegates approved a statement describing the popular liberation theology as being "opposed to God's declaration of man's total depravity and need of personal regeneration." They say their own goal in foreign missions was "to promote the biblical truth that when lost humanity comes into a right relationship with God through the new birth" the socio-economic status of the saved people "will soon begin to fall into the proper place."

The convention also warned against the popular missions theory called "contextualization," by which the Christian faith is accommodated to the value systems of local cultures. (CN)

* * *

The Brazilian government has drawn up draft legislation for an immigration policy favourable to missionaries. Backed by strong lobbying

from the Catholic Church and the National Council of Churches, the new policy gives missionaries the right to a temporary visa, valid for one year and renewable for another year. The visa may be converted into a permanent one. The bill, whose passage is considered assured, specifies the probationary two years in order "to weed out undesirables." (CT)

* * *

The Australian government can legally provide financial support to church schools and those with other religious affiliation, a Melbourne High Court has ruled. The court rejected a suit brought before it by the Council for the Defense of Government Schools (DOGS), challenging the constitutionality of state aid to non-government schools. In effect, the court decided that the separation of church and state clause in the country's constitution does not require the state to discriminate in favour of the secular opinion that religious schooling is divisive in its effects on Australian society. (CT)

vO

Consulaat-Generaal Der Nederlanden CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS

One Dundas Street West,
Box 2, Suite 2106,
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z3
Phone: (416) 598-2520

OPSPORING ADRESSEN:

BARON VAN DEN BORCH TOT VERWOLDE, Paul Jean Edouard, geboren op 9 augustus 1916, naar Canada vertrokken in 1953.

BOSMA, P., geboren op 9 april 1916 te Weststellingwerf naar Canada vertrokken in 1958, vermoedelijk Manitoba.

BRODA, D.W., geboren op 8 juni 1916 te Boguchwalz, Polen, naar Canada vertrokken in 1954.

VAN EIJK, Nicolaas, geboren op 25 mei 1916 te Boskoop, naar Canada vertrokken in 1954.

KRABBENDAM, Jacob Adolph, geboren op 20 september 1932, naar Canada vertrokken in 1958.

KUUS, Gerrit, geboren op 21 augustus 1916 te Boskoop, naar Canada vertrokken in 1953.

REIJNHOUT, K.J., laatstbekende adres te Engeland, naar Canada vertrokken in 1980.

SCHREURS, Adrianus Jacobus, geboren op 9 juli 1916 te Nieuwer Amstel, naar Canada vertrokken in 1952.

VAN DE WIELEN, Antonius, geboren op 30 mei 1916 te Lithoijen, naar Canada vertrokken in 1952.

De Consul voor deze:
(Mw) G. SCHNITZLER

Letters-to-the-Editor

Dear Mr. Editor,

The latest issues of *Clarion* really make me wonder again if there is no rule or preference in writing one's last name if that name contains one or more prefixes. It seems that each does it his own way, but it might be good to know what is proper.

To illustrate the point: In *Clarion* No. 10 of this year I find "Van den Hoek, VandeRee, TenHage and Tenhage, Tenhaaf, deOide, tenBrinke, Te Bos."

Clarion No. 11 gives me "Van Veen, VanBostelen, vanIperen, Vanandel," and to prove that capitals don't make it any easier: "VANDYK and VAN DIJK." As for our ministers, they seem to be at the mercy of the people's preference (or is it the printer's preference?), for in *Clarion* issues No. 9 and 11 I read "VanDooren, Vanderboom, and Van Rietschoten."

When you want to write someone else's name, of course you want to write it properly, so let's get those prefixes fixed.

Yours, BRAM VEGTER

Postscript.

When seeing those Indonesian stamps I thought, "Ah, there comes an article for *Clarion*!" It turned out to be just a Letter-to-the-Editor.

Brother Vegter has the advantage that he has no "de" or "van" or "Opden" or something else in that line in his name.

Let me say that much depends on the person who has the name and how he wishes it to be written or printed. Brothers within one family may differ; fathers and sons may prefer a different manner of writing the surname. I know of a father who insists on having his name printed as "van der . . ." whereas at least one son always writes "Vander . . ." I always use two capitals, writing my surname in one word, but other members of my family use only one capital, at the beginning of the surname. There is no general rule and it is up to the person himself how he wishes to have his surname appear in print.

Since there is no general rule, nothing has to be straightened out.

I am convinced that the printer prints what is sent to be printed in the form in which it is sent. The "fault" is to be sought with the correspondents. Until now we have never received any complaint from anyone that we did injustice to his name by the manner in which it was capitalized in our periodical.

vO

PRESS RELEASE

of Classis Ontario South of Sept. 9, 1981, at London, Ont.

1. At 10:00 a.m. elder S. Vanderheide opens classis on behalf of the convening church of Chatham. He mentions the fact that the church of Hamilton was disappointed when their call for a missionary was declined. He congratulates the churches of Hamilton and Watford on the

fact that their ministers have declined the calls extended to them. He wishes Rev. J. De Jong and Rev. P. Kingma wisdom to decide on the calls they have received. He expresses our sympathy to elder F. Wildeboer whose father has passed away recently.

2. The delegates of Watford examine the credentials and report that all the churches are duly represented. The church of Chatham has some instructions.

3. Classis is constituted. Chairman: Rev. P. Kingma; assessor: Rev. M. Werkman; Rev. P.K.A. De Boer is appointed as clerk. The chairman mentions the fact that the church of Chatham is vacant since Rev. J. Geertsema accepted a call and that Rev. J. Mulder has declined the call to Chatham.

4. The agenda is adopted.

5. Instructions. The church of Chatham asks classis to appoint Rev. J. De Jong as counselor. Rev. De Jong is appointed. The church of Chatham asks for preaching arrangements. Arrangements are made as follows: Oct. 18: Rev. Werkman; Nov. 15: Rev. Huizinga; Dec. 6: Rev. De Boer.

6. Report from brother C. Ouwensloot, classical treasurer. It appears that no assessment is necessary yet for 1982.

7. There are no appeals.

8. Incoming mail is dealt with.

9. Rev. J. De Jong is appointed as classical examiner for O.T. exegesis, Rev. P.K.A. De Boer for ethics, until Rev. Cl. Stam returns, and Rev. W. Huizinga as deputy ad examina, until Rev. Cl. Stam returns. Church Visitors for 1982: for Chatham: Rev. Kingma and Rev. Werkman; Grand Rapids: Rev. Huizinga and Rev. De Jong; Hamilton: Rev. Kingma and Rev. De Boer; Lincoln: Rev. Huizinga and Rev. De Jong; London: Rev. Kingma and Rev. De Boer; Smithville: Rev. Werkman and Rev. Huizinga; Watford: Rev. Werkman and Rev. De Jong.

Delegates for Regional Synod at Hamilton, Nov. 4, 1981: Rev. J. De Jong, Rev. W. Huizinga, Rev. P. Kingma, Rev. M. Werkman with Rev. P.K.A. De Boer as alternate. Elders: G. Hutten of Watford; R. Kingma of Smithville; C. Walinga of Hamilton; F. Wildeboer of London. Alternates in the following order: J. Bartels, M. Bartels, M. Hofsink, P.J. Scholtens.

10. Question period ad Art. 41 C.O. is held. The church of Lincoln asks for and receives advice in a disciplinary matter.

11. Personal question period is held. After a proposal of a delegate, classis decides to increase the mileage compensation to 15¢ per km, effective after this classis.

12. Next classis: Dec. 9, 1981, at London, 10:00 a.m. Convening church: Grand Rapids. Moderamen: chairman: Rev. J. De Jong; clerk: Rev. P. Kingma; assessor: Rev. P.K.A. De Boer.

13. Press release is read and approved.

14. Acts are read and adopted.

15. Censure ad Art. 43 C.O. is not necessary.

16. The ladies are thanked for their excellent service and the chairman closes classis after singing and prayer.

On behalf of classis,
M. WERKMAN



Church News

Leave of Absence - Prof. C. VanDam

The Faculty of the Theological College requested that a leave of absence be granted to Prof. C. VanDam from May 1 until October 31, 1982, in order to enable him to finish his doctoral studies towards a Th.D. degree at the Theologische Hogeschool at Kampen, The Netherlands.

The Board of Governors in their meeting of September 4, 1981, decided to grant this leave of absence which is expected to be of great benefit for the College of the Churches.

For the Board of Governors of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches,
M. VAN BEVEREN, Secretary

* * *

CORRECTION:

Change of Address:

Clerk, Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church, Edmonton:

From H. Noot to:

B. Van Raalte
9019 - 149 Street,
Edmonton, Alberta T5R 0A5

* * *

DECLINED to Chatham, Ont.:

REV. J. MULDER

of Toronto, Ont.

* * *

DECLINED to Brampton and Orangeville, Ont.:

REV. J. DEJONG

of London, Ont.

OUR COVER

The house across the water is the Prime Ministers residence. This is the only way to take it because of all the trees and the security guards in front. (Photo Courtesy of Mrs. G. vanWeerden.)

A Reformed Social-Political Magazine

The Media and the Spirits

We are involved in a war.

The declaration of that war was made in the early beginnings of history: "I will put enmity." A report on that war was given by the apostle Paul in Eph. 6, before he described the arsenal particularly suited for this kind of warfare: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the ruler, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm" (Eph. 6:12). Yes, there is a war on, and in this world, the battleground for ages, there is no peaceful corner, no retreat. The devil never lets up with his schemings and therefore we may never stop taking our stand (Eph. 6:11).

In this struggle the formation of a public opinion is most important. Strong opinions held by ever greater masses can be determining factor for government action (or inaction), for reaction by organized labour, or for policy changes by educators, to mention only a few. Most people will have strong opinions on many subjects; one need only listen to some open line talk shows to hear their extreme expressions: on apartheid, nuclear armament, religious discrimination, overpopulation, baby seals or acid rain. You name it; they know it. However, when searching for the depth of the soil from which these views so abundantly come forth, one will find that often there is no depth at all. Most people simply parrot the media.

Thus it becomes clear that the newspapers, the radio broadcasters, and the television programmers wield great power in this world. Great power means great responsibility. Is this function of gathering and distributing information always carried out in a responsible manner? Unfortunately, those who reach the broadest masses can be trusted the least. Governed by the profit motive, afraid to offend major advertisers, bent on pleasing a wide range of readers, they often cater to the calculated common denominator of what they think is generally acceptable, rather than to adhere to any revealed truth. So the circle has come fully round: the media form the public opinion and the public opinion so formed, guides the media. Only competition between the different businesses in this information industry brings about a certain degree of diversity, to guarantee to some extent that news of importance is not held back. Remove that competition and the result would be: unbridled manipulation of the public opinion, propaganda a-la-Goebels, whose motto was "A lie repeated often enough becomes the truth." Monopolized news media in dictatorial states are clear examples of what can happen.

The Global Village

Whatever one may say about Marshall McLuhan's utterances, his expression "Global Village" perfectly portrays the world of today, in which the events of the day are

instantly flashed on T.V. Screens around the earth. The devastation following earthquakes and floods are shown to us even before the rumblings have stopped. We see the seething mobs of Iranian Muslims in their Satanic frenzy well before these individual demonstrators have cooled off and bedded themselves down for the night. We hear the garbled radio conversations of moonwalkers before the dust kicked up by their shoes has settled back on our faithful old satellite. And commentators often follow — and sometimes even precede — the news with their interpretations and analyses, thereby giving expression to the doctrine of themselves or of their masters. If the word "village" was to conjure up visions of an idyllic arrangement of institutions around the town pump, then that would be the wrong notion. The world is a very rough and noisy place where, in the tumultuous sea of the nations, the stormy struggle for wealth and for power goes on and on. Satan rages there, hurriedly seeking out whom he can devour, to add them to the hosts of those he has already on his side. Satan does not have the media in his hand, but he certainly has his hands in the media. With the word "village" is expressed the fact any event anywhere will have an immediate impact all over the world. This instantaneity, the phenomenon of the twentieth century, can be used to great avail.

Great avail for the Kingdom of God.

Or great avail for the Kingdom of Satan.

In the midst of this upheaval stands the Christian. In his hand he holds the message from God, this revealed Word. Bombarded from all sides with the nervous barrage of information and interpretation, he remembers that he has to prepare for combat against the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." He has been told also that he must work very hard to discern the spirits, whether they be from God, an instruction clearly implying that many are not . . .

Responsible Journalism

If intermedia competition is necessary to ensure a degree of responsibility, it is to be feared that this competition will dwindle — and with it the responsibility — when the news affect an insignificant number of people, such as, for instance, a group of Christians. The Christian view is usually opposed to the worldly view on most issues. When the dividing lines between majority and minority are so clearly drawn, a Christian should expect no favours from the worldly media.

For this reason we need our own magazine. Reformed journalism is not accountable to any "Masters" be they political, industrial, or financial. It has to give account to Jesus the Christ, Who, seated at the right hand of God the Father, governs all things and makes them useful for the gathering of his Church. The mandate of Reform-

Continued on page 367.

our little magazine

Dear Busy Beavers,
 How was your first week at school?
 You were happy to see your friends back, I think.
 And you have nice new neat notebooks in your desk.
 Many of you will have a new teacher, too.
 Here's hoping you all have a great school year this term!
 I hope you haven't been too busy to enter our Quiz Contest!
 Send your entries as soon as possible, all right?

* * *

And now I want to tell you about our LAST contest. Do you remember long ago, before the mail strike, we had a Guessing Contest?
 Well, now finally, we can announce our winners!
 They are Busy Beavers *Hilda DeVos* and *Cynthia Oosterveld*.
 Congratulations to you both! Keep up the good work!
 Have you already entered our big new contest?

Riddles for You

Busy Beavers *Sandra* and *Helena Onderwater* have some riddles for us. Try them on your family!

1. What's big, red, and eats rocks?
 2. Why is it that every man's trousers are too short?
 3. What is the best way to keep fish from smelling?
- Answers:
 1. A big, red, rock-eater!
 2. Because his legs always stick out two feet.
 3. Cut off their noses!

Sandra also has a knock-knock joke for you!
 Knock, knock.
 Who's there?
 Annette.
 Annette who?
 Annette is used to catch butterflies!



From the Mailbox

Hello, *Sandra Onderwater*. Are you having the same teacher as last year? Are you all used to going to school again? Thanks for your letter and the riddles, Sandra.
 It was nice to hear from you again, *Diane Smith*. Thank you for the puzzle. Have you entered our big summer contest? Bye for now!
 Thank you very much for the nice flowers you sent me, *Gwendolyn Werkman*! I hope you did get your watch-band fixed. Did you have a good holiday?
 Did you see our big summer contest in the last issue of Our Little Magazine, *Tania Werkman*? I hope you (and everybody else, too!) have sent in your entry already. What did you like best about your holidays, Tania?

F	B	V	I	C	T	O	R	Y	M	C	O	P	B	V	Y	A	R	P
M	O	M	E	R	Y	T	I	A	R	M	T	A	R	L	K	I	N	G
B	V	R	C	A	U	S	E	R	V	A	N	T	Q	A	W	H	A	G
O	T	F	G	T	E	S	I	T	S	A	H	C	H	A	I	T	K	I
A	R	Y	O	I	S	U	C	A	N	B	E	H	S	U	R	S	E	F
B	I	E	S	T	V	I	N	U	K	N	O	D	E	R	W	E	E	T
Q	A	E	L	O	V	E	R	I	T	P	K	L	I	N	E	R	T	S
S	L	F	T	A	N	D	N	T	E	H	E	T	T	N	E	P	E	R
E	S	I	A	S	P	G	F	E	R	E	S	I	D	E	N	Q	U	I
L	S	L	H	U	D	G	M	R	S	M	E	L	B	U	T	N	O	T
P	E	L	I	O	D	K	E	D	R	S	S	A	N	C	T	I	F	Y
I	K	A	M	O	J	O	R	I	T	I	Y	O	P	E	C	O	P	C
C	A	N	M	H	A	M	P	T	E	R	G	O	F	O	R	O	D	R
S	B	R	V	D	E	G	H	F	Y	R	T	H	Q	U	O	O	I	E
I	R	E	S	T	A	M	B	A	V	I	C	T	H	S	N	V	M	
D	B	T	W	E	N	P	V	R	E	I	S	E	N	E	S	T	I	G
P	L	E	A	K	E	I	N	E	G	H	T	G	F	Y	O	R	E	S
K	I	N	S	G	D	Q	O	M	N	O	F	H	G	D	O	U	Z	N
J	U	S	T	I	F	I	E	D	M	M	B	V	C	X	K	J	S	M

QUIZ TIME

WORDSEARCH Key Words from the Bible

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| CHASTISE | GIFTS |
| CROSS | HEAVEN |
| DISCIPLES | HOPE |
| ETERNAL LIFE | JOY |
| FAITH | JUSTIFIED |
| FORGIVENESS | KINGDOM |
| LOVE | SANCTIFY |
| MERCY | SERVANT |
| PRAISE | SIN |
| PRAY | THANKS |
| REPENT | TRIALS |
| RIGHTEOUS | VICTORY |

I don't know which Busy Beaver to thank for this puzzle! There was no name on the paper. But thanks anyway! I think you all like doing a word-search, right?

Bye for now, Busy Beavers.

With love from your
 Aunt Betty

ed journalism is to show the background of all world events under the dominion of our exalted King. That will already become evident from the choice of topics. Major events in movie industry, for example, will probably be ignored, as well as widely trumpeted sports victories. But ample attention will be given to seemingly unimportant matters, if they have strategic meaning for the struggle of the furtherance of God's Kingdom. And so, in establishing the criteria regarding newsworthiness, an important part of that mandate is already being exercised. And then it will be necessary to formulate an opinion on their facts. Again, such formulation is governed by God's law. We may not distort somebody's point of view and then oppose this caricature. That would be against the ninth commandment. On the other hand, we must not accept somebody's opinion simply because he is a Christian. This, unfortunately happens quite often. We hope to resist this temptation of following men, no matter how great they be. For the truth is not of man, it is of God.

Therefore, there must be a continuous searching of the Scriptures and the process of testing the spirits is to be a constant one. This will be a never-ending task, simply because the Bible is not a jigsaw puzzle, neither is it a handbook with ready made answers for the political in-

tricacies of our age. But we confess with Art. VII of the Belgic Confession "that these Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein."

In the publication of the fruits of these labours, it will then still be necessary that the grounds for the opinions given be carefully explained, so that the readers themselves may draw their own conclusions.

Only then will the magazine serve the upbuilding of Reformed life.

This does not mean that "Reformed" commentary must accompany every item.

Some items will have no comments at all. They will speak for themselves. But, the entire magazine must be permeated by the very powerful awareness that the earth is the Lord's and all its fulness.

May He bless us in these endeavours.

JOHN DEVOS

* * *

For more information on the establishment of our Reformed Social-Political Magazine; please contact your local committee or the Foundation at:

Box 12 Postal Station Transcona
Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada R2C 2Z5

Mr. and Mrs. Hank Marissen of Barrhead are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter:

HENRIETTA ALICE to
JOHN

son of Mr. and Mrs. Dick Froma of Neerlandia. The ceremony will take place, D.V., on Friday, October 9th, 1981, at 3:00 p.m. in the Glad Tidings Pentecostal Church at Barrhead. Rev. S. de Bruin officiating. *Future address:* General Delivery, Neerlandia, Alberta.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. I Corinthians 13:7

DEBBIE BAKER

and

BARRY WOELDERS

together with their parents, are pleased to announce their forthcoming marriage, October 10, 1981, D.V., at 5:00 p.m. in the Canadian Reformed Church of Chilliwack.

Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar officiating.

Future address: Smithers, B.C.

TERRIFIC BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

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