

Clarion

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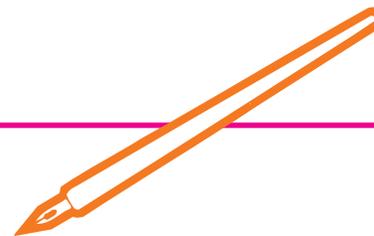


*The Reformation
The 95 Theses Discussed*

Numbers

10:1-10

By N.H. Gootjes



PG

PG required

When parents present a child for baptism, they must rise and make several promises before the sacrament is administered. One of these promises is: Do you promise, as father and mother, to instruct your child in this doctrine, as soon as he (she) is able to understand, and to have him (her) instructed therein to the utmost of your power? Instruction in the biblical teaching (= doctrine) is so important that at baptism parents must publicly promise to do this.

Over the years, this promise has often been used as the basis for catechetical instruction. It has also been used in support of reformed education. Teaching at the schools should not contradict the biblical teaching as summarized in the confessions. We may be thankful for opportunities God gave to make it possible for parents to establish and maintain schools in this country where the instruction is based on God's word.

This is not the only thing mentioned in the promise of baptism, however. The other promise is that father and mother will themselves instruct their child in the biblical teaching. Actually, that is the first part of the promise. Before parents let others instruct their children, they themselves have the duty to instruct their children. Father and mother remain the primary teachers of their children.

There is much biblical support for this promise. To give only one example, God said to his people Israel:

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up (Deut 6:6,7).

Today, it is much emphasized that there ought to be a close relationship between parents and their children. This emphasis is correct and fully biblical. Children are given to parents for care, and parents have to guide them daily, protect them from going in wrong directions, and teach them to live in love and obedience to God. God wants parents to talk with their children, and teach them how to live before the Lord. God prescribed continuous PG, Parental Guidance.

PG lacking

Such guidance extends to all of life. Parents have to give direction to their children in the different areas of our complex life. I want to limit myself here to only one small, but increasingly influential part of life at the end of the 20th century: movies. Two factors have been instrumental in making movies a major force in today's culture. Technological ad-

vances have perfected the movie to become a very attractive and forceful means of communication. Furthermore, the general population has more time for leisure activities than they have ever had before.

If my count is correct, over a two week period about 412 movies could be watched on (cable) TV. That means, every week there are more than 200 to choose from. That number does not even include the many TV series the stations put on to lock the public into their channel. In addition, the local movie theatres advertise their selection, which can be watched on impressively big screens for the price of a hamburger lunch. Movies are very popular as entertainment. But what about Parental Guidance?

Let me refer to an article by Dr. Alvin Poussaint, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.¹ In his profession, he sees it as his duty to keep up with the newest movies. One afternoon he watched an R-rated movie. The graphic sex, profanity and violence seemed to him no worse than usual. However, when one of the characters was shown

after having taken a gunshot in the face, a child in the audience screamed. The mother hissed to the child to make her shut up, and slapped her in the face.

Dr. Poussaint, however, wonders how this child could be in the audience. As a psychiatrist, he is convinced that watching sex and violence is damaging. When children see violence, they begin to think it is normal to be violent. Others become extremely fearful. And when they see scenes of adult sexuality, they are embarrassed. They may

also begin to believe they should behave like that. He advocates stricter laws prohibiting young children from viewing inappropriate movies.

What strikes me in this event is the attitude of the mother. She, obviously, was totally insensitive to what the movie did to her child. She wanted to have her stimulating entertainment, and never stopped to consider its impact, not only on her child, but also on herself. She must have become desensitized. Carried along by the gripping story line, one easily loses the sense for what is good and healthy.

Another striking aspect of this article is Dr. Poussaint's own view of movies. He takes it for granted that the movies which influence the American mind contain scenes with graphic sex, profanity and violence. A certain amount of these ingredients is only to be expected.

It is in this world that we live, and in which the children of the church grow up. They need a lot of PG, if we do not want them to grow up permanently damaged by the pictures stored in their memory.

*Father and mother
remain the
primary teachers
of their children.*

PG – how?

For an evaluation of movies in general, I can refer to a separate publication.² Here, we discuss how parents should help their children meet the challenge movies present.

It is not hard to find information concerning movies. A first impression can be found in TV guides. Children will have a hard time convincing their parents they can watch movies with titles such as 'Carnal Knowledge'. A brief description like: "Jilted lovers spy on their ex-partners and plot revenge" does not recommend the movie, either.

The new movie of Stephen Spielberg about the landing of allied troops in Normandy is advertised as beginning with a protracted and gruesome scene of slaughter on the beach. The soldiers who in 1944 had to go through this experience, will have been damaged by it, but they, at any rate, knew it served the liberation of Europe. Portraying it for people today, and without that motivation, will mean needlessly exposing them to a scarring experience.

*Do not allow the intruder
to become the boss in the house.*

Another good way of providing guidance is to look up the ads (or even the reviews) in the papers. To read the warning in the papers most parents would need an extra pair of glasses, but it is worth the trouble. If we do not allow our children to use coarse language, would we want them to watch a movie labelled as Adult Accompaniment under fourteen: Coarse Language? Not to mention another movie which children under fourteen are not supposed to be watching for the following reasons: coarse language, sexual content, substance abuse, not recommended for children. If this is the normal fare, then movie theatres cannot be recommended. Parents can support their older children not to watch movies that lower our resistance against sin against God's commandments. That applies not only to sin against the first commandment, but also sin against the fifth and the seventh commandments.

Another aspect of Parental Guidance applies to television in particular. Watch movies and shows together with your children. Look at the movie as a guest who spins wonderful tales. A guest is expected to comply with the rules of the house. Do not allow the intruder to become the boss in the house. Discuss the movie together as parents and children, and send it packing if it does not want to behave.

Finally, movies often have a message. That applies even to 'innocent' movies such as *Lion King* and *Pocahontas*. Try to look through the fluff to understand what the movie is driving at. And alert your children to the underlying theme, as well. As opposed to parents, young people today grow up in a world where movies are a normal part of daily life. They have become a dominating force in molding people's outlook. Parents should not give up their responsibility. They have more wisdom and experience than their children. According to God's institution and his command, they should guide their children in the way of the Lord.

¹The article appeared in *Reader's Digest*, Sept. 1997, 77f.
²See N.H. Gootjes, J. Plug, J. Poppe, *Watching Movies: No, Yes, or How?* (London: ILPB, 1996).



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Why Children Kill

By F.G. Oosterhoff

In August of this year the American periodical *Christianity Today* published a disturbing article, entitled "Trained to Kill," about the increasing violence among youngsters. It is a phenomenon the seriousness of which became evident once again in the rash of shootings by elementary school children in recent months. Attempting to explain this "virus of violence," the article concludes that a large part of the blame must go to the entertainment industry. By constantly exposing young viewers to violence-as-entertainment, it contributes to a gradual desensitization of these children. Not all of them, certainly, will try to commit in real life the violence they have seen on the movies or encountered in video games. But some of them apparently will. The article provides data and draws conclusions that deserve our attention. I therefore prepared this summary.*

The way of the army

The author, David Grossman, is a military psychologist, who has studied the program the American army designed to help recruits overcome their strong reluctance to kill fellow human beings. For killing, he says, does not come naturally. It has to be taught, and that is what the army is attempting to do. Grossman draws parallels between the methods followed in this military desensitization program and those at work in the electronic entertainment industry.

That killing must indeed be taught became clear during World War Two. Grossman relates how a test showed that only fifteen to twenty percent of rifleman serving in that war declared that they had been able to fire at an exposed enemy soldier. It was this revela-

tion that led to the institution of the training program in question. The measure was eminently successful: during the Korean War around fifty-five percent of the soldiers had overcome their inhibitions, a percentage that had risen to more than ninety percent in the Vietnam War.

Brutalization and role modelling

The methods used in the army training program, Grossman writes, are brutalization and desensitization, role

aggression," supervises much of the program and at the same time serves as the recruits' primary role model.

Having described this desensitization program, the author shows how strikingly similar it is to the approach followed in the entertainment industry. There is no need for me to describe the manner in which various types of modern music, TV shows, and video games contribute to the brutalization of children who view or participate in this type of entertainment. The facts are

well-known; they have often been described in the media. Nor is it necessary to say much about the role models the entertainment industry offers to reinforce the new values. Rock stars who preach violence as a way of life, trigger-happy criminals, and various other "lawless sociopaths" become the children's heroes. Role modelling, Grossman reminds us, also plays a part in media-inspired copycat behaviour that leads to cluster murders. The young killers who appear on television in-



modelling, classical conditioning, and operant conditioning.

The brutalization and desensitization begin as soon as the recruits enter the barracks. They are physically and verbally abused, their heads are shaved, they are herded together naked and then dressed alike so as to lose all individuality. This part of the program is intended to replace existing norms with a new set of values that "embrace destruction, violence, and death as a way of life." In the end, the recruits are "desensitized to violence and accept it as a normal and essential survival skill in [their] brutal new world." The drill sergeant, who "personifies violence and

spire other maladjusted youngsters to follow their example. "Somewhere there is a potentially violent little boy who says to himself, 'Well, I'll show all those people who have been mean to me. I know how to get my picture on TV, too.'" And so the cycle continues.

How to kill and like doing it

The article describes classical conditioning, the third part of the program, as a mechanism whereby people are habituated by means of rewards to perform certain actions. Grossman goes for examples to Japanese practices during World War Two. The particular one he chooses is that of Chinese prisoners who

were placed in a ditch on their knees with their hands tied behind their back. A number of Japanese soldiers went into the ditch, each of them bayoneting his "own" prisoner to death. Having accomplished that feat, the killers were cheered by their comrades on the bank and treated to a fine meal and other rewards. Classical conditioning, in brief, was a mechanism the Japanese used to teach their soldiers to associate cruelty and killing with pleasure.

Grossman used the Japanese example because the American army considers this type of program out of bounds. But he shows that something close to the Japanese approach is at work in the entertainment industry. "Our children watch vivid pictures of human suffering and death," he writes, "and they learn to associate it with their favorite soft drink and candy bar, or their girl friend's perfume." The effects are noticeable. When after the Jonesboro shootings a high school teacher told her students what had happened at the middle school (where two young boys killed four classmates and a teacher), these students laughed. And apparently that type of response is not at all uncommon. "A similar reaction happens all the time in movie theaters when there is bloody violence," Grossman writes. "The young people laugh and cheer and keep right on eating popcorn and drinking pop."

If classical conditioning teaches a person to *like* killing, operant conditioning, as Grossman describes it, is a mechanism teaching a person to *do* the killing. It's a matter of stimulus and response: a certain stimulus is constantly followed by a certain response until that response becomes reflexive. Both soldiers and police officers undergo this type of training. "Later, when soldiers

are on the battlefield or a police officer is walking a beat and somebody pops up with a gun, they will shoot reflexively and shoot to kill." The same type of reflex action is taught children at interactive point-and-shoot video games. The training these games provide also explains why children involved in the recent shootings were often amazingly accurate marksmen.

An "immune deficiency syndrome"

Grossman believes that we are faced with a phenomenon that functions much like AIDS and that he calls AVIDS – Acquired Violence Immune Deficiency Syndrome. "AIDS," he writes, "has never killed anybody. It destroys your immune system, and then other diseases that shouldn't kill you become fatal. Television violence by itself does not kill you. It destroys your violence immune system, and conditions you to derive pleasure from violence." And that syndrome is passed on daily to the children of the nation, including, in all too many cases, the children of the church.

The editors of *Christianity Today* find Grossman's message sufficiently unsettling to suggest that "parents, the church, scholars, and the government . . . come together to study this question more intensely: *Are we training our children to kill?*"

Perhaps we should do the same. The situation in Canada, of course, is not as bad as the American one, but perhaps this is largely a result of the fact that there are not as many guns around here. The entertainment programs are the same. And in any case, quite apart from the killings, the brutalization and conditioning that the exposure to violence entails are bad enough in themselves.



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of Smithville, ON

Parents, teachers, and other educators will therefore be interested in Grossman's message. Those who wish to order a reprint of the article are referred to the information given below.

*The article appeared in the issue of August 10, 1998. Reprints can be ordered by writing to CT Reprints, Attn.: Paulette DePaul, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL. 60188, or by e-mailing PdePaul@aol.com and requesting "Trained to Kill." The cost (including postage and handling) is \$8 (American) for 10 copies (with lower prices per copy for larger quantities).

Dr. Oosterhoff is a retired teacher of history living in Hamilton, Ontario.

What's inside?

Today we offer you a few articles, both originally speeches, relating to Reformation Day. Dr. J. De Jong writes about Melancthon. What does the life and thought of this Reformer teach us about the unity of the Church? Read on! Dr. J. Faber writes about Guido de Brès, the author of the *Belgic Confession*. Let us continue in the path marked out by the Reformers, holding to the Reformed doctrine and life.

The Reformed style of life is under serious attack. Dr. Gootjes addresses this in the editorial as does Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff in "Why Children Kill." Entertainment media like movies, videos, and computer games, can pump a lot of garbage into our minds. The Apostle Paul said we are not to conform to the pattern of the world but, rather, to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

A significant expansion project is planned for the Theological College, especially the library. Two issues back, Dr. J. Visscher, chairman of the board of governors, introduced the project. In this issue, Dr. Visscher writes a bit more about the expansion and how it is to be funded.

In this issue, you will also find two examples of the fruit borne by our College. We are happy to publish reports of the ordination of Mr. Yonson Dethan in the church in Kapung, West Timor, Indonesia, and of the inauguration of Mr. Richard Bultje as mission worker in the Greater Hamilton Area. Two men committed to the spread of the Reformed faith! May God bless Rev. Dethan and Mr. Bultje.

GvP

By G.Ph. van Popta

An Ancient Doctrine Uncovered

*Habakkuk 2: 4 – ...but the righteous will live by his faith ...
Romans 1:17 – For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”*

About 500 years ago the Renaissance artist, Leonardo da Vinci, painted a beautiful mural of the Last Supper which the Lord Jesus had with his disciples. He painted it on a wall in the dining room of a monastery in Milan, Italy. This painting is at once one of the most famous religious paintings of all time and, perhaps, the world's most abused masterpiece. It has suffered in many ways. Several hundred years ago, someone cut a door into it. Da Vinci originally had many of the disciples as beardless. Someone added beards to several of them. It was covered with a type of wax meant to protect it but which instead collected dirt and grime. Pollution, temperature changes and humidity have all taken their toll. The mural has been darkened with oil and even repainted many times.

Not much was left of the original. Then, twenty years ago, an extensive restoration project was begun. A small team of people slowly and carefully scraped away 500 years of dirt, glues, waxes, oils, and many layers of paint. What did they find? The dingy, somber colours gave way to the most brilliant colours. Underneath the dull grays and browns were deep reds, bright yellows, brilliant blues and greens, and icy whites.

What is the point, you ask? The story of Da Vinci's masterpiece, the Last Supper, could almost stand as a parable to what, throughout history, has happened to the scriptural doctrine of justification by faith as we find it in our text.

Romans 1:17 is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4. In the prophecy of Habakkuk, we read about judgment coming upon the Old Testament church. The people of God had broken covenant with God. They had lost faith in the LORD, and so God was sending the Babylonians to punish them. The

Lord told the prophet to tell the people that those who were not upright before God would feel the wrath of God; however, *the righteous would live by faith*. That was the gospel for the faithful in the church of that time. The righteous would live by faith, by their firm trust in the Lord. God would deliver from judgment those who believed in him.



Martin Luther

Over the years, the people of God painted over this beautiful message. They obscured the brilliant colours of this gospel message with their dull, somber, impossible doctrine of works righteousness. There is even a 2000 year old Hebrew commentary on this passage which explains it to mean that those who keep the commandments of the law are the ones who will be saved.

The Apostle Paul took this text from the prophecies of Habakkuk and

stripped off the years of abuse. He blasted away the grime of works righteousness and restored it to its pristine original state. We are not righteous before God because of what we do; rather, we are righteous before God in Christ by faith. We are righteous by faith in the good news of free grace. That's what Paul proclaimed.

Well, over the years, this pure, brilliant gospel was covered up again by the dirt of works righteousness. For almost 1,000 years, the church taught that the people had to appease the anger of God by doing good works. And if you did not do enough, you would be in deep trouble! You could not be saved. The angry God would throw you into hell. The thick, impossible doctrine of justification by works covered up and hid the liberating message of justification by faith.

Then God in his grace and in his time raised up Martin Luther. As Martin was studying this very passage (Romans 1:16, 17), the crystal clear colours and beauty of the gospel came alive to him. He saw the real masterpiece under all the centuries of dirt and grime. He rediscovered that it was not up to him to figure out how to hold off the anger of God against his sins. God had provided the way to appease his own anger against sin. He had given Jesus Christ. And those who believe in Jesus Christ are saved from God's anger. Those who are righteous in Christ live – they have life now, and they will live eternally.

Let us, this Reformation Day, remember the liberating work God did by way of raising up men such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, and others. We were directed back to the simple and blessed gospel of salvation by faith in Christ. Let us hold on to that gospel. **C**

The Reticent Reformer: Model or Misguide?¹

By J. De Jong

In remembering the Reformation of the 16th century, I would like to focus this evening on one of the lesser known figures of the Reformation, Philip Melanchthon, the close associate of Martin Luther. This year we celebrate the anniversary of his birth. Melanchthon was born on February 16, 1497, thus, five hundred years ago, in Bretton, a little town in the Palatinate. He studied at the universities of Heidelberg and Tübingen, and ended up as a teacher of Greek in Wittenberg in 1518, not long after Luther had begun his duties as professor of Bible, and only a few months after Luther's much publicized first disputation with the scholastics about indulgences (The 95 Theses, 1517).

Melanchthon is perhaps one of the most misunderstood of reformers, and also one of the more disputed reformers. In the books written about him different adjectives are used to describe him: the quiet reformer, the forgotten reformer, reformer without honour, and so on. It does not help that he spent the greater part of his life beside that colossal figure of the Reformation, Martin Luther. Yet he was a reformer in his own right, and we do well to pay attention to his contribution, too. Of course, we do this with the provision that ultimately the work of Reformation does not rest on men, but rests in the power of God. And we need to thank God for the men that He raised up at this crucial juncture in world history to lead his church from the darkness of superstition to the light of his Word.

I want to develop with you one thesis tonight: Melanchthon was known as the reticent reformer, but his reticence had a rationale: he was concerned about recovering and preserving the unity of Christendom. In order to achieve this end, he favoured only the barest minimum of conflict – that which was necessary to preserve the

Melanchthon



evangelical doctrine – and promoted unity of understanding and fellowship. One can argue that at times he went too far; at other times, he did not go far enough. We can, however, honour his essential motive, and on the basis of that motive draw lessons from his life for us today.

One of the deepest underlying concerns of Melanchthon's work was his endeavour for reuniting a divided Christendom. We must remember that he grew up in a world of one church, and for him the goal of one visible church was one that needed to be pursued. He was prepared to go to great lengths to reach it. He was and remained a Lutheran, a compatriot and confidant of the great reformer his whole life long. By 1521, when Luther had emerged as the towering leader of the German Reformation, Melanchthon stood solidly behind him. In this year, he wrote his *Loci Communes*, in which he set forth the basic truths of the gospel in the form of topics

or *Loci*. Thus in a short time, his mind had become crystal clear concerning the stand of the true gospel. And the focus was practical, as the opening sentence of the work makes clear: "The chief aim of the work is to know Christ and all his benefits." It is a theme that returns in the Heidelberg Catechism!

Yet from this Lutheran perspective, Melanchthon is continually seeking unity with other believers, and also unity with the church of Rome. Luther was the firebrand of the Reformation; Melanchthon the representative of the soft and irenic spirit. The contrast with Luther was almost too noticeable to be real. We will consider first his dealings with Rome, then the Oberlanders, then the Zwinglians, and finally the Calvinists.

Talks with Rome

From the first, Melanchthon took part in discussions that would pave the way for a reunification with Rome. He was especially active in the conferences

held from 1539 to 1541, at Regensburg, Hagenau, Ratisbon, and Worms. It was only in the later 1540s, when he saw this possibility slipping from view, that he began to give up on ever achieving reunification with Rome. But all the way through he was willing to concede much to gain reunification. He said he would recognize the pope if the pope would admit of the evangelical doctrines. He was even prepared to permit the pope to have his claimed authority over other bishops, as long as he would accept justification by faith.² When the Emperor brought in the Leipzig Interim of 1548 Melanchthon gave it a rather halfheartedly support, indicating that he was prepared to allow vestments and other rituals as long as the cardinal principle of justification by faith remained unassailed. The Interim allowed justification by faith, but maintained the seven sacraments (including the mass!), the worship of saints and images, and even the external rituals of the Roman church. Calvin, along with many others, considered that Melanchthon and the other German Protestants were going too far at this point. Bucer refused to accept the Interim and was forced to flee. Melanchthon saw it as doing all he could to save the school and the Reformation at Wittenberg.

Melanchthon was also prepared to be less rigid with regard to the role of the will in salvation. In his great battle with Erasmus, Luther stressed the bondage of the will. In fact, so bound was the will that it seemed as if it lost its role completely. Melanchthon, on the other hand, exhibited a new reticence. He insisted that the will (*voluntas*) is not one of the causes of justification. Yet in the Apology of 1542 the will is listed as one of the causes of salvation, along with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Melanchthon clearly means: secondary cause, or indirect cause, but he never says so.³ It seems that he wanted to soften the radical stand of Lutheranism as a concession to Rome, and take away some of the one sidedness and sharpness of Luther's stand against Erasmus, with whom Melanchthon retained a lasting friendship.

One cannot say Melanchthon was entirely wrong; rather he was too cryptic.⁴ For the will is active in justification, just as it is active in appropriating the promises of the gospel. But that will is in turn acted upon, a point which

Melanchthon also repeatedly recognized. At best, his phrasing was ambiguous, and he preferred to leave the details alone. The reticent reformer! Not only was he reaching out to Rome with his approach, he was at the same time reaching out to the humanists who, following Erasmus, found Luther's position too harsh. Yet there is no indication that Melanchthon abandoned the glorious gospel of salvation by grace alone, or that he explicitly opposed Luther's stand in *De Servo Arbitro* (The Bondage of the Will). He preferred the avenue of silence, rather than have all these elements explicitly spelled out.

**For Melanchthon
the goal of
one visible church
was one that
needed to be pursued.
He was prepared
to go to great lengths
to reach it.**

Given his stand, Melanchthon held a strong position on the point of the cause of the division of the church. Consistently – and rightly – he put the blame for the division on the Roman intransigence, and on their refusal to accept the heart of the gospel: justification by faith.

The Oberlanders

The next division with which Melanchthon was confronted in his immediate circle was with the Oberlanders, their chief representative being Martin Bucer in Strassburg. These men stemmed from Wittenberg, but began to move in a more Calvinistic direction. When they could not agree with Art. 10 of the Augsburg Confession, as drafted by Melanchthon, that is, the Lutheran standpoint on the Lord's Supper, they united together to draft the so called Tetrapolitan Confession, a consensus of four cities in which the spiritual presence of Christ at the Lord's Supper was defended. This document was written by Bucer and Capito, and moved close to the Zwinglian position on the Lord's Supper.⁵ Melanchthon himself always remained opposed to the Zwinglian

standpoint. But to accommodate these Oberlanders, Melanchthon drafted the Wittenberg Concord in 1536 which incorporated a softened position on the Lord's Supper. Luther was present at the meeting with these Oberlanders, and although he would have preferred stronger language he was prepared to go along with Melanchthon's creed. Here as well, the problem concerned what was not said, rather than what was said; but a step towards unity was made!

Melanchthon carried his approach further in 1541 when he reworked the relevant article in the Augsburg Confession, which then was called the *Variata*, the changed Augsburg Confession. Whereas the first edition spoke of Christ's bodily presence at the holy meal, the second edition simply spoke of Christ's presence. He also substituted the word "tendered" for "distributed," and left out the words, "they disapprove of those who teach otherwise," leaving this formulation: "Of the Supper of the Lord they teach that with the bread and wine the body and blood of Christ are truly tendered to those who eat the Lord's Supper."⁶ That was a new formulation which unequivocally promoted a real spiritual presence of Christ at the Supper. The wording was carefully chosen: while not denying the Lutheran view, it made room for a spiritual interpretation acceptable to Calvin.⁷ Interestingly enough, Luther never spoke out against the new formulation, even though he made well have had his personal reservations about it. He repeatedly left matters of teaching and formulation to Melanchthon.

The followers of Zwingli

Then the Zwinglians! It was perhaps one of the saddest days in the history of the Reformation when at the castle on the mountain top at Marburg in 1529 representatives of various wings of the Reformation were present at the instigation of Philip of Hesse in order to come to unity, and they failed in their attempt. Luther scratched the words "This is my body" (*hic est corpus meum*) in wooden table. He absolutely refused to budge on his position, and he held the Zwinglians to be of a different spirit. After having come to agreement on all other points, fourteen in total, the ways parted on this fifteenth point.

Although he found them hard to understand, Melanchthon continued his effort to achieve a union with the Zwinglians. Prodded on by Bucer and

Calvin, who urged him to be more vocal about his viewpoint, he continued to exchange ideas with H. Bullinger, Zwingli's successor in Zurich, in a most cordial way. Melanchthon, however, also did not want to alienate the Lutherans from his position, and so divide them anymore than they already were divided. So he was reticent on exactly how the elements work at the Lord's Supper, content to stick with his formulations in the Apology and in the Wittenberg Concord. He would only say: Christ is present, and communicates himself in the signs of bread and wine. Bullinger retained his misgivings about this approach, and although he respected Calvin's position on the matter, he never agreed to sign the Augsburg Confession, since he saw it also as too ambiguous on the Lord's Supper.

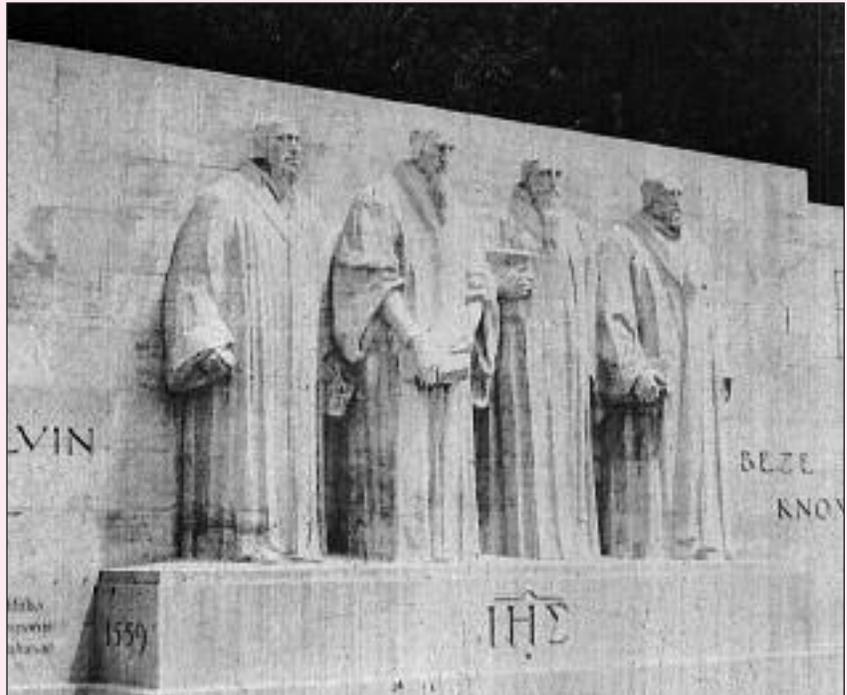
There is no indication that Melanchthon abandoned the glorious gospel of salvation by grace alone.

Contact with Calvin

And then the Calvinists! Calvin had made remarkable headway with the Zwinglians when in 1549 they agreed upon the so called *Zurich Consensus*, a document on the Lord's Supper which brought together the Oberlanders, the Swiss, and the Calvinists. Calvin was hesitant about some of the language used, and preferred a stronger reference to Christ's presence, but he could live with the results. Melanchthon also secretly expressed his favourable inclination to the document. Yet he never took the public stand for fear of alienating the stricter Lutherans.

The stricter Lutherans, spurned on by envy because of this consensus, broke out in more violent attacks against the Calvinists. Calvinism was gaining too much influence for them, and they were especially wrangled because of Calvin's growing influence in Lutheran territory (the Palatinate). They saw Melanchthon as far too agreeable to Calvinist influences. Melanchthon, however, stayed in the background.

Also when Calvin became entangled in debate with the strict Lutheran



The Reformers

Joachim Westphal of Hamburg in 1552, Melanchthon stood in the background. The reticent reformer! How we would have liked him to say more! How Calvin pleaded with him to speak his mind! Even in his public statements, Calvin stated that he was writing also in order to remind the learned and serious men of Germany concerning their duty – obviously having Melanchthon in view. Yet in his letters to Calvin, Melanchthon makes clear that on some points he thinks Calvin is saying too much. For example, he was not prepared to endorse Calvin's statements on predestination. Here too he would rather leave the matter to God, and simply put forward the truth of Scripture that God chooses us, but that the will is active in the choice. He has greater room for inconsistencies and loose ends than Calvin would have considered appropriate. Brevity and simplicity mark his style. No wonder he was called the *Praeceptor Germaniae*, the teacher of Germany.

Calvin was especially troubled by Melanchthon's reticence on the Lord's Supper. He knew that Melanchthon thought about the Supper in terms very close to his, and he knew that Melanchthon's support for his view would have great influence in many sections of Lutheranism. He pleaded with Melanchthon: "I would rather die with you a hun-

dred times than to see you live without speaking the truth at this critical juncture." But there was only silence.

Melanchthon was present at one additional meeting for the purpose of seeking unity among Protestant leaders. This was at Worms in 1557. The French churches sent Farel and Beza, and, while Bullinger retained his characteristic scepticism, the participants agreed to study the Augsburg Confession, and try to reach greater understanding on its statements regarding the Lord's Supper. Melanchthon presented a short position statement at the assembly, along with one presented by the French delegates, but this statement was not materially different from what the Augsburg Confession stated. The brothers could agree that both the Reformed and Lutheran churches formed the one true church of the Son of God.⁸ At the conference Melanchthon privately expressed his disagreement with Westphal and the strict Lutherans, but he declined to make a public statement on this matter.

The reticent reformer! And in the last years his silence grew more and more ominous. He wanted to hold the gospel message to the simplest terms. And he became more and more weary of what he called the *rabies theologorum*, the battles among the theologians. When he was visited in 1558

by a friend and supporter of Calvin's he again verbalized his criticisms of Westphal. But, said the visitor, he met a Melanchthon who had lost his former jovial spirit. Melanchthon said that he himself was not a theologian but a grammarian, and so he was. He was never ordained, and aside from attending church services in Wittenberg he only led family services himself at his home.

Model or misguide?

We see in Melanchthon a fine line drawn. He never would have explicitly compromised on basic evangelical doctrines like justification by faith. Works were for him, a fruit of faith, not a cause of it, born out of faith, not love. But the work of faith itself was something about which he remained consciously ambiguous. He did not mind a margin of ambiguity if people could live with it. It turned out to be impossible, and even in his own lifetime he was faced with so many disappointments that he saw many of his efforts shipwrecked on the reef of human obstinacy and fear. Too often he had chosen the way of *covering* the issues rather than dealing openly with them. Precisely this choice brought more problems than it solved, and he lived to see Lutheranism breaking up into many warring factions. He could have spoken out more than he did! Had he spoken out, the course of the history of the Reformation would probably have been different. That is all hindsight. Some aspects of his standpoint should have been spelled out more. He should have shown his colours. But he never became angry or belligerent, and even with the Zwinglians, especially in comparison to Luther, his tone remained moderate and conciliatory.

The reticent reformer! I raised the question at the beginning: model or misguide? My guess is that of all the reformers Melanchthon is one of the hardest to judge. Being Calvinists, we cannot but wish that he had moved more consciously to Calvin's position, also on the matter of predestination. Was he at bottom one who wanted to compromise the truth of the gospel? Was he a Solomon in the house of David?

We cannot and should not make a definitive or black and white choice here. In fact, we must judge Melanchthon very carefully. While we would have wanted more from him, he remains with Luther a *path breaker*, a

vanguard. We should not forget that Melanchthon was, perhaps more than his contemporaries, a very medieval man. He retained his beliefs in astrology up to the end of his life, and he saw bad omens everywhere. He was a man of the first hour, and so he must be judged and understood. While he added the rest and quietness necessary to steer the Reformation in a solid direction, he nevertheless lacked the depth and precision and fortitude to strengthen it further. A path breaker is one who opens the way. And being at the vanguard, you will understand that he longed for the return of a *united* church. It was only the progress of the Reformation itself that made him see this would not happen in his lifetime. So we can only say, he is neither model nor misguide. If anything, he's both: in some things his is an example from which to learn. We all should cultivate the irenic spirit, and not seek to impose our vision unilaterally on others. There must be a willingness to seek each other out and find in each other in the faith of Christ. On the other hand, where Melanchthon pursued excessive reticence, we have in him no guide. The truth must be spoken and it must sound clearly from the lips of those who are called to maintain it. Otherwise the Reformation principles are doomed to die.

**All should
cultivate the irenic
spirit, and not seek
to impose our vision
unilaterally on others.**

How do we pursue church unity today? The figure of Melanchthon, along with all the other reformers as well, tells us that we at the least must be active in promoting it. To let sleeping dogs lie is not an option! Whether full understanding can be gained is another matter. But the pursuit of the goal should involve us all. We should not rest content in a superficial denominationalism which sweeps all the differences under the carpet, or pretends that they do not exist.

On the other hand, there are limitations to keep in mind. If there are extra-confessional distinctives as a part of our ecclesiastical baggage, things we

have picked up from our tradition, but which are matters of tradition and not Scripture or confession, those are matters about which we may enjoin individual freedom, or personal preference. There is room for moderation! There is room for a divinely inspired reticence, that is, that Christians do not bind each other over and above Scripture.

It's a hard and challenging road to follow. But the reformers, including Melanchthon, were the leaders in this regard. They at least dared to walk it. Anyone who upholds the principles of the Reformation today will also give this cause his best effort. Let us pray for it and work for it, looking forward to the day when we will also meet the workers of the first hour in heavenly glory.

¹Text of a speech given on October 31, 1997 in the Covenant United Reformed Church of Wyoming, ON, commemorating the great Reformation.

²This was at the signing of the Smalcald Articles in 1537, see R. Stupperich, *Melanchthon*, (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1965) 108.

³In the 1559 edition of the *Loci*, we read: "When we begin from the Word, three causes of good actions come together – the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the human will, which does not oppose but assents to the Word of God." But Melanchthon here means the will "as moved and supported by the Holy Spirit," and did not mean to deny the divine predestination. See P. Rogness, *Philip Melanchthon. Reformer Without Honor*, (Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1969) 128.

⁴The lengthy discussion on free will in Ursinus' commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism shows its indebtedness to his teacher Melanchthon, see Z. Ursinus, *Het schatboek der verklaringen van de Heidelbergsche Catechismus* (new ed., J.P. Van den Tol, Dordrecht, 1980) Vol. I, 77-87.

⁵H.H. Kuyper regarded the Concordat of the four cities as a weaker document, hiding the differences rather than treating them.

⁶The original article read: "De coena domini docent quod corpus et sanguis Christi vere adsint et distribuuntur vescentibus in coena domini et imporbant secus docentes," thus including the rejection of Zwingli. The new article read: "De coena domini docent quod cum pane et vino vere exhibiantur corpus et sanguis Christi vescentibus in coena domini." The idea of impanation has disappeared, as well as the rejection of the spiritual view of the real presence.

⁷So C.L. Manschreck, *Melanchthon, The Quiet Reformer* (Abingdon, New York, 1958) 241.

⁸Cf J. McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism. The Ecumenical Spirit and its Persistent Expression*, (John Knox Press, Richmond, 1964) 207. 

Guido's Portrait

By J. Faber

On the occasion of the Graduation Exercises of Guido de Brès High School on Friday October 24, 1997.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Principal, Esteemed audience and especially you, graduating class of 1997.

The topic of my commencement address is the portrait of Guido de Brès or in short "Guido's portrait." When Dr. Helder approached me with the honourable request to address you tonight, he did so for historical reasons. He reminded me of the fact that I was involved in the establishment of Guido de Brès High School two decades ago and that I functioned as the first chairman of its Education Committee.

At first we rented the dilapidated and nevertheless glorious Central High School downtown and then – o wonder – we received as a gift of God's mercy a brand new building here on Stone Church Road. Tonight we celebrate your graduation with the first festive reception in the spacious new addition to our facilities. It is again a historic moment for our Guido community and especially for you, graduating class of 1997.

Allow me at this occasion to tell you a story about the entrance of our school building.

The late brother Adri van Egmond was a member of the building committee and at a certain moment he approached me and said: "At the opening of the new facilities we as building committee want to present a portrait of Guido de Brès and we want to have it hung in the hall at the entrance. Could you please provide us with a portrait of Guido?"

Alas, I had to disappoint our enthusiastic brother. A portrait of Guido does not exist. We do not have a picture of the author of our Confession. Or rather let me qualify this statement. We do not have an original painting or drawing. We do not have a sixteenth century etching that portrays the author of our Belgic Confession. We do have what I call two "wanted posters" that give us a

visual impression. You know, Guido de Brès, the "glorious heretic," worked "underground" in a manner similar to what we did in Europe during the second world war. He was a fiery preacher of the gospel in a dangerous period in the sixteenth century, when true believers were being persecuted by the Spanish inquisition. He took another name and called himself not Guido but Jerome. He changed his appearance time and again. One night in the year 1561 he threw his printed confession and a handwritten letter in a package over the walls of the castle at Doornik. On 15 November of this same year someone gave a description of Guido to the commissioners in

***All things serve
man to the end
that man may serve
his God.***

Doornik. Then on December 24 the government in Brussels wrote a letter to several towns and commanded that Guido be arrested. Again a description of the wanted preacher was attached. The broader written portrait begins with the words: "Description of a certain heretic preacher, formerly called Guy and now named Jerome." Let me give you, graduands, the authentic French words: "Description de certain here-tique predicant, par ci-devant appele Guy, et presentement nomme Jerome."¹ Then the description follows: Said person is between 36 and 40 years of age. He is tall. He has a long, meagre and pale face. He has a beard, more reddish than black. He wears it sometimes long, sometimes short. He has high shoulders and wears a black coat with a worn collar. He often changes his address, his name and his clothes.

Today police would distribute a wanted poster with the sketch of the sus-

pect drawn up by an artist. I could have given a description of Guido to the building committee and they could have ordered a fancy portrait. But it would still have been the product of fantasy.

Therefore, I proposed that the building committee would not present a *virtual* impression but a *spiritual* one, for instance, a quotation. A quotation can give you a sudden insight into a person. Sometimes certain words make an impression in your mind; they immediately click, so that you say: "Indeed, this is the way he or she was." The spoken or written word gives you a sharp spiritual portrait of the person himself. Therefore we chose a quotation from Article 12: ". . . that man may serve his God." In those words you hear Guido de Brès, the student of Calvin, and what is even more, here you see Guido, the Reformed confessor. How many times, graduands, did you not see these words on that wooden plaque at the entrance, now even more splendidly displayed in the new addition?

Let us think for a moment about those words in the context of our confession of God's creation and providence: "We believe that the Father through the Word, that is, through His Son, has created out of nothing heaven and earth and all creatures, when it seemed good to Him, and that He has given to every creature its being, shape, and form, and to each its specific task and function to serve its Creator. We believe that He also continues to sustain and govern them according to His eternal providence and by His infinite power in order to serve man, to the end that man may serve his God."

Here you see the pyramid of creation: God created all things and sustains them in order to serve man. Man is the climax of God's creation. Think of Genesis 1 and Psalm 8: man created to be God's image, His vice-regent to have dominion over all things. But the top of the pyramid of creation points to the Creator Himself. All things exist in order to serve man. But this is not the

In the process of transmitting and receiving knowledge we may never forget that it should be serviceable knowledge.

ultimate goal, that all things serve man but this order is created *to the end that man may serve his God.*

You know, the word “man” here is generic; it means male and female, boy and girl, man and woman. “God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen 1:28). Male and female, boys and girls, are called to serve God. “To serve” indicates that God is our Lord and Master. He has the say over us. We shall obey Him even into death, as Guido did when he died the death of a martyr in 1567. And “to serve” means to serve Him with all our heart. This service implies love. We may love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind.

“. . . that man may serve his God.” Let us underline also the word “his.” God is not a tyrant; He is no stranger, He is our God, the God of the covenant that is now the covenant of grace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

“. . . that man may serve his God.” It is the first word of the covenant: that man may know the only true God, trust in Him alone, submit to Him with all humility and patience, expect all good from Him only, and love, fear, and honour Him with all his heart. In short, that he forsake all creatures rather than to do the least thing against His will.

“. . . that man may serve his God.” It is Guido’s spiritual portrait. They were his words, but it is also our confession.

Graduands, we put those words at the entrance of our building as a mission statement. Teachers and students should know the purpose of Reformed education. When you entered the building, you and your teachers were daily reminded of the goal of teaching and learning. In the process of transmitting and receiving knowledge we may never forget that it should be serviceable knowledge. We seek knowledge that serves ourselves and helps us to serve our neighbour but in and above

this, we strive for knowledge that makes us serve God, our God, the God and Father our Lord Jesus Christ.

Graduands of 1997, an entrance is also an exit. If you leave tonight your festive commencement reception, it means you leave Guido de Brès High School. Look once again at the wooden plaque at the exit: “. . . that man may serve his God.” Man – that was the first Adam. But thanks be to God, man – that is also the last Adam. Jesus Christ came not to be served but to serve. He became the Servant of the Lord who suffered for our sake. Man – that was Guido who followed his Master. Man – that is I and that is you, graduand of

1997. We let you go tonight with heartfelt congratulations. Well done, ladies and gentlemen. God has blessed your endeavours. But we do not let you go without a prayer for your entire life. It is this prayer: “. . . that you may serve your God.” Thank you.

‘See for the two descriptions E.M. Braekman, *Guy de Brès, I. Sa vie* (Bruxelles: La librairie des eclateurs unionistes, 1860), 135f. The first description is quoted from L.A. van Langeraad, *Guido de Bray, Zijn leven en werken* (Zierikzee: S. Ochtman en zoon, 1884), 38; the second from W. Brulez, ‘Nadere bijzonderheden over Guy de Bray’ in *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 66/2 (1953), 295. 



The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches

Funding the Challenge

By J. Visscher

During the Convocation on September 11th, the Board of Governors announced a funding program intended to raise \$500,000 needed to expand the College building. The program will depend on the generous support of members of the churches in Canada, the United States of America, and in Australia because the required amount may not be raised by increasing the assessments per communicant member. Furthermore, construction may not commence until 80% the necessary funds is in hand, either in cash or in pledges. The Board hopes to reach this goal well before the May 31, 1999 construction target date.

The proposed expansion plan

The largest part of the proposed expansion involves the construction of an actual library. A total of 6702 square feet of additional space is planned. Of this space, 6250 square feet are devoted to the library and the remaining 452 square feet are comprised of washrooms and an elevator. This should be compared to the current library size of 2368 square feet.

The College will gain considerable other benefits. The present library room will be left largely intact, with some minor changes. Its acoustics will be put to good use every week in the sermon and chapel sessions. As well, the room will be able to serve as a large lecture room for workshops and public lectures. A part of the space will be used up for a small meeting room and lounge for the professors. An extra office will also be built to prepare for the eventuality of a fifth professor. With the construction crews on deck, it is most economical to construct this all at the same time.

For the first time the College will also be accessible by wheelchair. The back entrance will be improved by constructing a ramp and lowering the present lobby so that the building can be entered from the parking lot by wheelchair. An elevator will be added so that



people easily can move from one floor to the other. A wheelchair accessible washroom also will be constructed.

Library layout

The library will be constructed on the side of the property that features a substantial grade, so that people entering from the front will automatically find themselves on the upper floor. This floor will accommodate the majority of the various information gathering functions of a library. The library's computer catalogue, the indexes, and reference works will all be located here, as will be the commentary collection and part of the periodical collection. In addition, there will be an office and a workroom for the librarian and the volunteers so that the processing of books no longer needs to be done in the library itself.

A separate room on the first floor will contain the College's archives and special items of the library. Some examples would be the personal papers donated by some of the retired ministers (valuable from an historic point of view) and some of the rare books which have been donated over the years.

The lower floor will house the remaining periodicals and books. There

will be several individual study desks and a table and this will also be the quietest floor. Another advantage of new construction is that, should the library need to expand yet again after twenty years, the possibility of compact shelving could be considered. The floor would be strong enough to support this type of shelving and it would forestall the need to undertake a large construction project. Stairs will connect the two floors, but each floor will also have access to the elevator.

Professional consultation

The plans presented by the Board are the result of many meetings. After initial discussions at the Board and staff level, an architect was consulted. The plans were also shown to several librarians at other colleges who had recently been involved in expansion projects and input was sought and received. The Board is confident that the new library would serve the College well and alleviate many of the current inadequacies.

Funding

The estimated total cost of the expansion is \$680,000 roughly broken down as follows:

Additional floor space	\$512,000
Alterations of existing building	25,000
Handicap elevator and ramp	45,000
Permits, fees, testing	45,000
Parking allowance	20,000
Landscaping allowance	10,000
G.S. Tax (3.5%-College is rebated)	23,000

Over the years, the Board has been able to set aside close to 30 percent of the required funding. This was made possible by the generous donations of the Women's Savings Action and by private donors.

To assist in raising the remaining \$500,000 the Board has appointed a Promotion & Fund Raising Committee. It has regional representation from across North America and from Australia. All the work is being done by volunteers. The most important of these are the designated members in each congregation who will ask all members to participate according to their means. This being a cause that touches the hearts and minds of the individual church members first and foremost, our program will focus on them through the churches. Besides, we do not have sufficient resources to approach all business enterprises in our communities. It stands to reason that, should a business person – for tax or other reasons – prefer to participate through a company, such gifts are most welcome. A brochure has been developed with a response form and self-addressed envelope for convenience and to ensure confidentiality.

As most people know, Revenue Canada continues to encourage charitable giving. The limit to which one may make donations and claim a tax credit has been increased to seventy five percent of net income. In this way tax payers get reimbursed by the government at a rate of more than 40 cents per dollar donated.

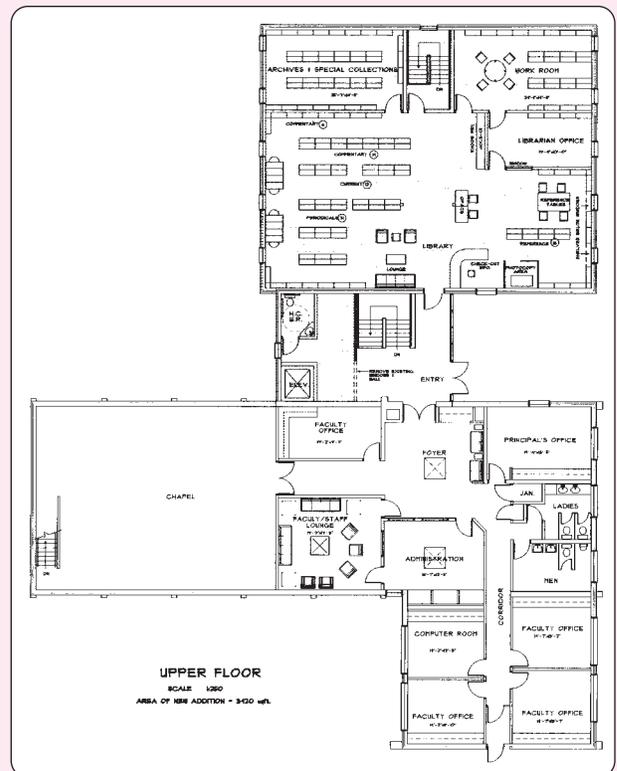
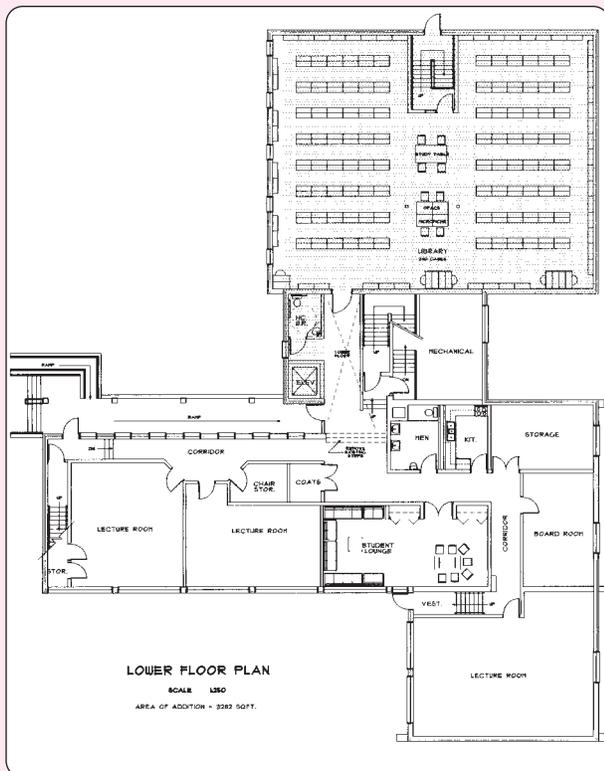


Thy word is my light. Ps.119:105

Conclusion

Over the past twenty-nine years the College has been richly blessed. Sixty-six students have graduated and the majority of these are serving the Canadian and American Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Under the Lord's blessing, and with your generous response when the request comes for your participation, the College will be able to position itself well for the foreseeable future, and the faculty will be enabled to continue to serve the churches by educating the shepherds and teachers of tomorrow.

Dr. J. Visscher is chairman of the Board of Governors of the Theological College. He pastors the Canadian Reformed Church in Langley, B.C.



Is peace, with church divisions, really better?

By C. Van Dam

When speaking about the need for church unity, one can sometimes hear the remark, "Well, as far as I am concerned, it is not really that necessary. It is better to keep the peace in our own church federation than pursue these unity goals which are potentially divisive."

Prof. W. van't Spijker, emeritus professor of church history at the Theological University of the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken in Apeldoorn reacted to this type of sentiment in a recent article in *Nederlands Dagblad* (August 15, 1998). His comments are worth noting also on this side of the Atlantic. What follows is a more or less loose paraphrase of his article.

Who sets the churches' agenda?

In response to the comment that "as far as I am concerned the unity of different churches is not really that necessary," Van't Spijker notes that in such a comment one can easily hear the attitude of those who don't want to oppose those who do think it important to seek ecclesiastical unity with other like-minded churches, but they doubt the sense of it. One of the arguments is that it is better to live in peace beside and separate from each other as churches than to fight in one ecclesiastical house.

This type of reasoning goes diametrically against the teaching of Prof. K. Schilder that we have to be ready to struggle earnestly for years for such a unity, also within one church federation, so that ultimately the unity of the congregation of Christ can be realized.

The saying "As far as I am concerned it is not that necessary" actually betrays a type of subjectivism. Subjectivism is the trend of our times. People like to tell about their experiences and listen to those of others. "What I think" or "what I experience." But with this sort of talk one cannot make progress in the church! After all, in the church it is not a matter of what we think or expe-

rience that is normative. But in the church the revealed insights and desires and activities of the King of the Church, Jesus Christ, are determinative.

It is pure Reformed to say that Christ is the King of the church who by his activity makes effective the blessings of his priesthood. Christ has to say what He thinks is necessary. This reality excludes giving any priority to what I may think is so necessary and important. Christ sets the agenda and we need only obey.

"Do we want to be a denomination or church?"

In this connection we should remember what Hendrick de Cock said when asked why he led a secession from the Dutch Reformed Church. What was in it for him? In response, De Cock took his confession and read the articles about the church. He acted according to his confession. He obeyed the call of his confession without fearing the unknown future. Calvin would have said: We do not have to know if we will succeed, as long as we are faithful and begin to do what needs to be done.

Church or denomination?

There has been much struggle in the church. But there is a struggle which is worth the battle; the struggle for the unity of the church. After all, it concerns the true unity and at the same time the one truth of Him who said that He is the Truth?

The disciples argued amongst themselves and were severely reprimanded for that by our Saviour. One could say, at least they interacted with each other. However, those who today give up on brothers in another faithful church and say, it is better that they live under that

roof and we in our dwelling, such people can no longer rely on the comfort of the Psalm which says: "You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety" (Ps 4:8). The question of the dwelling has then in fact become a question of whether we want to be a denomination or church.

There is a descending order: church, denomination or association, group or club, and sect. We must be careful not to slide down from the one to the next in descending order. If we say that we love the confession but have no difficulty going our own way by maintaining a status quo of ecclesiastical separation then we should realize that we are not doing what is pleasing to the King of the church.

"There is too little eschatology or looking to the future in the life of the churches."

People say: we must stay realistic. Better to be separate and live in peace than together under one ecclesiastical roof with difficulties and worries. The question is, however, What kind of peace are we speaking of? Also, what are we actually fighting for and against? There is no better or higher ideal than to take up the struggle together, not against each other, but for the truth, also the truth concerning the unity of those who love the same hope of the appearing of the imperishable glory to be revealed. There is too little eschatology or looking to the future in the life of the churches. Without that looking ahead, churches run the danger of devaluing themselves to denominations or even lower, with all the sad consequences of that.



The Ordination of Rev. Yonson Dethan

By Mary-Lynn De Boer

A few months ago I had the privilege of witnessing the ordination of my fiancé, Yonson Dethan, in Kupang, Indonesia. This joyful event took place on the morning of Sunday, June 28, 1998. Yonson, a graduate of the Theological College in Hamilton Ontario, thereby acknowledged the call of the Lord to serve there.

Yonson began studying theology at the Reformed Theological College in Sumba. (Sumba is one of the many tropical islands of Indonesia.) There he was a student of Rev. A.J. Pol, who is now the minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Guelph, Ontario. After Yonson completed his studies in Sumba, the Australian Free Reformed Churches decided to sponsor him to study in Canada. However, before he went to Canada, the deputies of the Australian churches invited him to go to Perth, Western Australia, for three months orientation. During this time of orientation Yonson was studying Greek under Rev. W. Huizinga, and English under Miss. Elsina Ten Haaf. From Western Australia, Yonson went back to Kupang to continue his practical work in the Reformed Churches in Indonesia. There he served as an evangelist for approximately two years. Then, on January 26, 1994, Yonson finally arrived in Canada. Having lived all his life in hot, tropical weather, Yonson was now greeted by one of the coldest winters of southern Ontario.

Before going to the Theological College, Yonson studied English for six months at the Columbia International College in Hamilton. After this, he spent three years studying at the Theological College (also in Hamilton). During this time he stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Krikke in Burlington, Ontario. Then, thanks be to God, on September 6, 1997, he received his Master of Divinity. Only a few days later Yonson said good-bye to the many friends he had made while in Canada, boarded the plane, and began the trip back to Indonesia.



On May 9, 1998, after a long but safe trip overseas, I myself arrived in Indonesia. There I was greeted not only by Yonson but also by a fairly large group of family, friends, and other church people. I spent an amazing two months there, getting to know Yonson better and experiencing the Indonesian culture. Yonson and I were both extremely happy that during that time I also had the opportunity to witness Yonson's ordination as minister of the Word. I would like to share with you in greater detail this joyful event.

Yonson was ordained at the Galilea Church in Kupang, West Timor, Indonesia. This Church is a part of a federation of churches called the GGMM (Gereja-Gereja Masehi Musyafir = The Pilgrim Christian Churches). The GGMM is a sister church of the GGRI (Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia = The Reformed Churches of Indonesia), which is a sister church of the Liberated Churches of Holland and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. The

GGMM at this point only has contact with these churches.

The Rev. E. FangidaE led the ordination service. The sermon was based on John 10:1-20. Rev. FangidaE spoke about Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd, who loved the sheep, cared for them, and was even ready to lay down His life for them. He also referred to the Pharisees and the Scribes as the bad shepherds, who did not care about their sheep very much and even added daily to their burdens by enforcing many unnecessary rules. The minister of the Word is supposed to follow Jesus' teaching and example as the Good Shepherd.

Rev. FangidaE continued the service by reading the form for the ordination. This part was very interesting to see. It is not only that this event was connected with my fiancé, but also that this was my first experience witnessing a minister being ordained. Rev. E. FangidaE came down from the pulpit and, along with him, Rev. Remi FanggidaE and a number of elders all laid their hands on Yonson. While they did this, one by one they quoted a verse from the Scriptures.

This event brings to mind 1 Timothy 4:14, where the apostle Paul talks about the laying on of hands by the elders to Timothy. I guess at this point, we should no longer say "Yonson" but "Rev. Dethan." No, sorry, that would be "Pak Pendeta Dethan!"

After the laying on of hands Rev. FangidaE passed to Rev. Dethan each of the instruments for the sacraments (i.e. the baptismal bowl, the wine cup, and the bread plate). He instructed him to use the sacraments as they were intended, namely, for the edification of the flock of God. Finally, he also passed to him the Holy Bible, and reminded him to base all his preaching and teaching only on the Word of God.

At that point, Rev. Dethan ascended the pulpit for his inaugural sermon, which was based on Mark 10:46-52.

We see there the amazing work and love of Jesus Christ extended to Bartimaeus. The Pharisees, who read the Scriptures every day, were spiritually blind for they rejected Jesus as the Messiah. But by the work of God, Bartimaeus (who was physically blind) actually saw because he believed that Jesus was the Messiah. We can already see Bartimaeus' strong faith when he addressed Jesus not as the one "of Nazareth" but as "the Son of David." Thus, Bartimaeus saw Jesus not only as a man but also as the promised Messiah. It is also amazing that Jesus took the time to heal Bartimaeus, even though He was very busy going to Jerusalem to fulfil His Father's command, to suffer and die on the cross. God also wants to hear our prayers,

even though He is busy protecting His Church and governing the whole world.

We congratulate Rev. Dethan on this joyful occasion. Above all, we thank our Father in heaven, who was with him while he traveled to a different country, adjusted to a new culture, and studied at the College. We also thank God that he could now finally be ordained as minister of the Word. We pray that God will continue to be with him and give him all the strength, wisdom, love, and patience that he needs to be a good shepherd to God's people. It is wonderful to see God gathering, defending, and preserving His church from the four corners of the earth. As Rev. Dethan always says, "amazing!"

Mary-Lynn De Boer lives in Smithville, Ontario.



Urban Mission Project in Greater Hamilton

By G.Ph. van Popta

By the grace of God, an urban mission project was inaugurated on Sunday, September 13, during the afternoon worship service in Ancaster, Ontario.

The desire for such a project is not new. Three years ago, *Fellowship* Church in Burlington had some correspondence with *Cornerstone* Church of Hamilton about the possibility to place a home missionary in the Greater Hamilton area. Much study was done as to where and how to undertake such work. Rev. J. van Vliet and Mr. Richard Bultje, then both students at the Theological College, and both actively involved in outreach work in Hamilton, did a lot of the research and provided much advice.

In 1997, the church at Ancaster became involved in the discussions. Consensus built that we ought to strive for an urban mission project that would be coordinated by a non-ordained man who would give himself full-time to the work. Ancaster would be the supervising church working in close conjunction with *Fellowship* Church of Burlington. *Cornerstone*, while very interested in the work and supportive of it, has more than enough work, with its foreign mission in Brazil, to be involved in a formal way.

Not only did the Lord pave the way for the churches to cooperate in planning the project; he also provided a man to direct the project. In August 1998, Mr. Richard Bultje was appointed. To the joy of both congregations, he accepted the challenge. Mr. Bultje graduated from the Theological College this September with the degree of Diploma of Theological Studies. He is a native of Chatham, Ontario, and a member of Ancaster Church.

Mr. Bultje already has numerous contacts in the Greater Hamilton area having been heavily involved in the work of evangelism during his years as a student at the College. He hopes to build, under the Lord's blessing, upon this work.

Although many members of the local congregations, including students of the Theological College, have been involved in many forms of outreach in the community, September 13 marked the beginning of a more formal effort.

The Rev. George van Popta, minister of Ancaster Church, preached on Matthew 16:18 where the Lord Jesus said to Simon son of Jonah: *And I tell you that you are*



Mr. Richard Bultje

Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Builder of the church; however, He uses us in his great work. As we work with Him and as He works through us, we must always and only point to Him. As we point to Him, we build upon the bedrock of Simon Peter's confession that the Lord Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Christ will then take our pointing and make it into mortar to build his church. Christ will make us powerful. So powerful will the church be that the gates of Hades will not overcome it. When the powers of darkness pour out of the gates of Hades and seek to destroy the church, they will not succeed. When the church wages an *offensive* battle against the gates of Hades, the gates will not be able to withstand the attack. The gospel in the hands of the exclusively Christocentric church will be like a battering ram demolishing the gates of Hades. The gospel will set the prisoner free. Dead rocks will be made into living stones built into the spiritual house founded upon the bedrock of the apostles' confession and which has Christ Jesus himself as the Cornerstone.

After the sermon, the congregation prayed that the Lord would be pleased to bless the work undertaken by the two churches and Brother Richard Bultje. In prayer, we commended Brother Bultje to the Lord begging God to give our brother the strength, wisdom, faithfulness, diligence, love and courage for this great work to which he has been appointed.

After the worship service, a few people spoke. On behalf of the Ancaster consistory and congregation, Rev. George van

Popta congratulated Brother Bultje on his appointment and wished him the Lord's indispensable blessing for his work. Mr. Herman Faber spoke on behalf of *Fellowship* consistory and congregation. He made the point that not only does Burlington Bay lie between our two congregations, so does a vast mission field. He expressed the wish that the Lord would use Brother Bultje and our congregations to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ into that field. Mr. Ben Har-sevoort, chairman of the Mission Board, also addressed us. He urged the congregations to be faithful in this work we have undertaken and faithful in supporting Richard Bultje. In speaking directly to the new mission worker, he reminded him of his three-fold office of prophet, priest and king, and encouraged him to do the work to which he has been appointed in the strength of that office. Finally, Brother Bultje himself ascended the pulpit. He thanked all for the support he had received in the past and pleaded for continued support. He expressed the hope that the Lord Jesus Christ would be pleased to use us to continue gathering for Himself a church in the Greater Hamilton area – a church gathered out of people from all walks of life and the different ethnic communities.

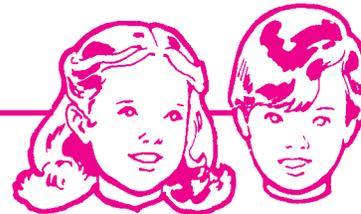
After we sang Psalm 134, the song of blessing, we enjoyed a time of fellowship and conversation over a cup of coffee.

It was a beautiful Sunday – a time for celebrating the mighty works of God in redeeming for Himself a people chosen out of all peoples, nations and tongues. The Lord builds his church by granting children to the families of the congregation – children who are raised to know and love their Father in heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord also builds by bringing in converts from paganism, atheism and false religions. This was marvelously clear that Sunday afternoon. Not only was an urban mission project begun and Richard Bultje set aside as mission worker, but Caleb James Wieske, infant son of Brother and Sister Gary Wieske, received the sign and seal of God's everlasting covenant promises.

Pray with us that the Lord will bless this work to the end that God's elect in this city may be gathered into the church. May the Lord bless us all – recent converts and long time members – to a thousand generations. 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

Holiday are over and you are now back at school. You have been back there for the past few weeks. Do you have interesting things to do there? Are you enjoying it again? Have you got some new friends this year? Or are they all the same ones as last year?

It is also starting to get a little colder. That means that summer is over and winter is on its way. Right now, the trees are starting to change colour and soon all the leaves will be falling off. This is a beautiful time of the year, when you can really see how mighty God really is, that He can cause leaves to turn from their beautiful green to a just as beautiful yellow or red or even orange. Yes, fall is such a wonderful experience, and every year, it is just as wonderful as the last. Enjoy it, while it is here.

Have a wonderful year at school!!

Love from Aunt Betty

EVERY OTHER ONE!

Every other letter, sometimes starting with the first, sometimes with the second, has been removed from proper names of the kind indicated. The number of letters in the complete word is shown in brackets after each group of letters left. What are the names?

A MOUNTAINS

- 1 CRE (6) _____
- 2 IED (6) _____
- 3 PRI (7) _____
- 4 MRA (6) _____
- 5 EII (7) _____

B RIVERS

- 6 JRA (6) _____
- 7 HRA (7) _____
- 8 KSO (6) _____
- 9 EPRTS (9) _____
- 10 ANN (5) _____

C TOWNS OR CITIES

- 11 UCT (7) _____
- 12 AYO (7) _____
- 13 EHSS (7) _____
- 14 OORH (8) _____

BY ARRANGEMENT

Each of the persons named in List A has a brother in List B. Can you pair them correctly?

LIST A

Joseph
Moses
Cain
Jacob
Hophni
Peter
David
James
Mahlon
Shem
Alexander
Herod

LIST B

Aaron
Abel
Andrew
Benjamin
Chilion
Eliab
Esau
Japheth
John
Philip
Phinehas
Rufus

HIDING PLACES

In each of the following sentences, the name of a place mentioned in the Bible is hiding. The letters are in the proper order. Which are the places?

1. Elizabeth said a long poem perfectly.
2. King Azariah reigned fifty-two years, but he was a leper.
3. This place is not wholly strange to me.
4. In adversity, remember 'God is a present help in trouble'.
5. Try not to be rash; do dare to be true.
6. His thinking ended in a dilemma usually!
7. We will take the Metro, as it will be quicker.
8. They caught the tram ahead of us.
9. Olga thought the scenery was beautiful.
10. I would rather have a lot to do than remain idle.

UNIQUE ITEMS

Sometimes a possession makes a person stand out. Match the unique item with the person who owned it.

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. A hole in the ear, Exodus 21:6 | a. Paul |
| 2. A crippled limb, Genesis 32:24-25 | b. Jesus |
| 3. A thorn in the flesh, 2 Corinthians 12:7 | c. A lifetime slave |
| 4. Empty lamps, Matthew 25:3 | d. Solomon |
| 5. A colourful coat, Genesis 37:3 | e. Jeroboam |
| 6. A seamless robe, John 19:23-24 | f. Hebrews |
| 7. Long-lasting shoes, Deuteronomy 29:7 | g. Joseph |
| 8. Sightless eyes, Judges 16:21-22 | h. Jacob |
| 9. Seven hundred wives, 1 Kings 11:3 | i. Hosea |
| 10. Five husbands, but not one, John 4:18 | j. Samson |
| 11. A harlot wife, Hosea 1:2 | k. Foolish virgins |
| 12. A withered hand, 1 Kings 13:4 | l. Samaritan woman |

