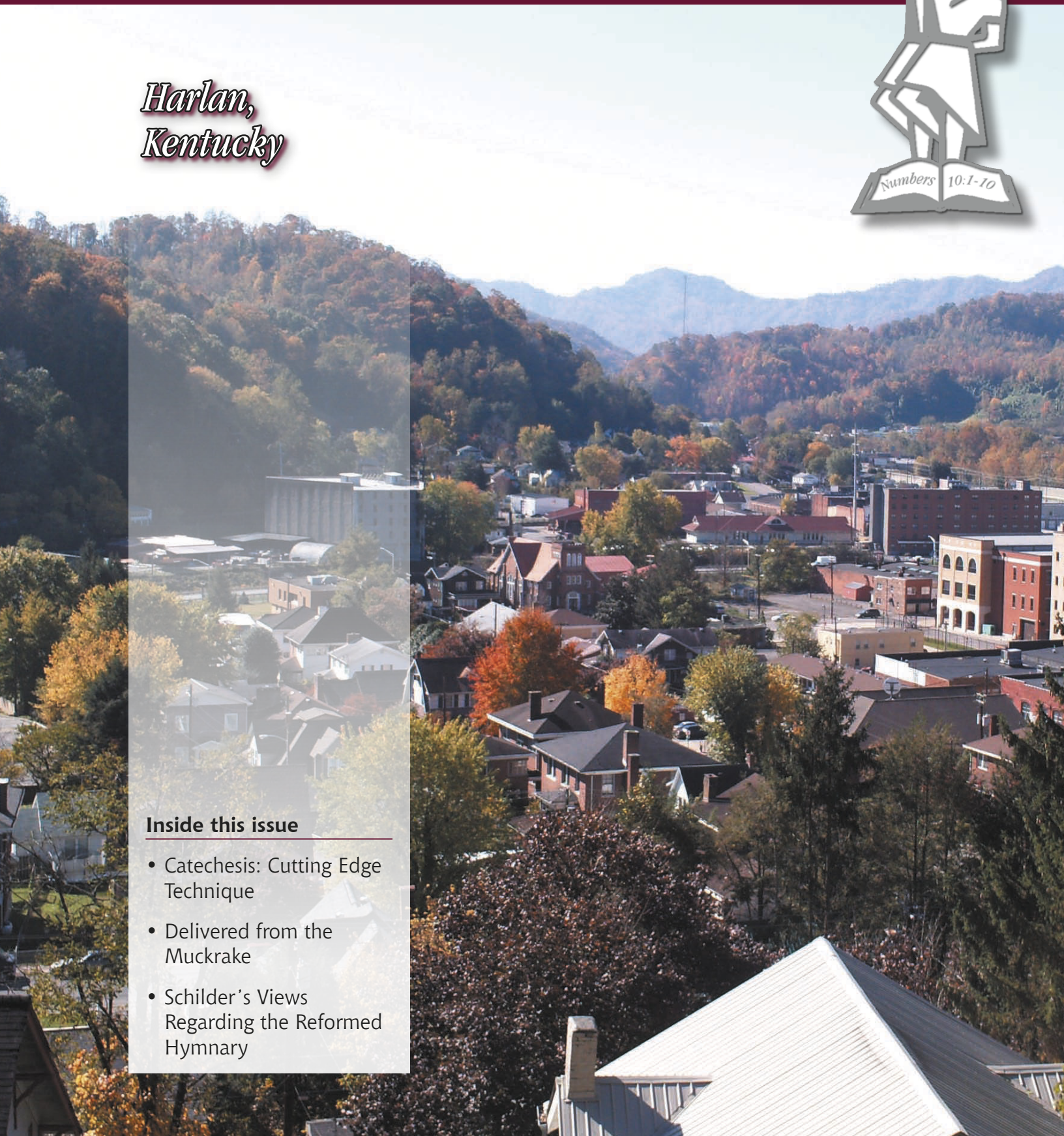
Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE • Volume 59, No. 10 • May 7, 2010

Harlan, Kentucky



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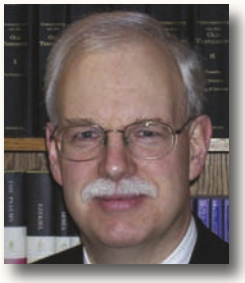

Catechesis: Cutting Edge Technique

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Catechesis is really the wielding of the two-edged sword of the Word of God

To stay competitive, businesses are constantly looking for the latest cutting edge technology or techniques. The use of cutting edge technology will help a company stay a step ahead of the competition.

As familiar as the term *cutting edge* may be from the business world, it is not a term we tend to associate with Canadian Reformed church life. If anything, Canadian Reformed church life seems to be marked more by outdated technology and techniques. An example of what might be considered an outdated technique would be the practice of catechesis. Catechesis is the instruction in Christian doctrine to both the youth in catechism classes as well as the whole congregation via catechism preaching.

There was a clearly defined body of doctrines long before there were the New Testament Scriptures

Some articles in a recent issue of *Christianity Today* (March 2010) served as a reminder that our practice of catechesis puts us on the cutting edge. The cover had as title "Light for the Soul: Why a heady dose of doctrine is crucial to spiritual formation." One article drew attention to the disastrous effect upon the life of the church when, in the early nineteenth century, theology shifted from doctrine to spiritual experiences and feelings. Especially under the influence of men like Friedrich Schleiermacher, feelings became the yardstick for doctrinal relevance instead of doctrine being the yardstick for human feelings. In a side bar, there was an excerpt from a new book by J.I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, entitled *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way,* which stressed the important role of catechesis. It also mentioned the detrimental effect of the Sunday School movement of the nineteenth century because of the way it substituted Bible stories for grounding in the basic beliefs and practices of the church. A second article dealt with a number of churches rediscovering the importance of doctrinal instruction.

It is encouraging to see this rediscovery of the importance of doctrine. It encourages us also to hold on to our practice of catechesis, knowing that it is cutting edge. At the same time, the ultimate reason for us to hold on to catechesis goes deeper. It is not because it is the latest cutting edge technique but because it always has been the cutting edge of the Spirit's method of gathering the church bought by Christ's blood. Catechesis is really the wielding of the two edged sword of the Word of God that "penetrates even to dividing the soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

Catechesis and the apostles

It is good to elaborate on this point since at times one can hear the suggestion that catechesis is at odds with preaching and teaching the Bible directly. The fact is that there was catechesis before there was preaching from Bible passages. This is immediately obvious if we reflect on how the gospel went to the nations. The apostles travelled and preached long before they wrote accounts of our Lord's life and letters to various congregations. The gospel consisted of a certain set of doctrines concerning Christ crucified as the fulfillment of the Scriptures and how the kingdom of God had been established through his ministry.

Some examples from Scripture will bear out that there was a certain set of doctrines concerning Christ and his work. Jude wrote to his readers that his initial plan was to write about "*the faith* that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (v 3). In Paul's letters to Timothy, we find mention of the *sound doctrine* (e.g. 1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3). He also wrote of those who would abandon *the faith* (1 Tim. 4:1) and of being brought up in the truths of *the faith* and *the good teaching* (1 Tim. 4:6). In chapter 6:20 he told Timothy to *guard what had been entrusted* to him. In his second letter to Timothy he told Timothy to guard the *good deposit* that had been entrusted to him (2 Tim 1:14). To Titus he said that elders must "hold firmly to the *trustworthy message* as it has been taught, so that [they] can encourage others by *sound doctrine* and refute those who oppose it" (Titus 1:9).

What we see then is that there was a clearly defined body of doctrines long before there were the New Testament Scriptures. In other translations, we may come across the word "tradition." Tradition simply means something that is handed down from one person to another. The word "entrusted" has that aspect of being handed down so they in turn may pass it on (cf. 2 Tim 2:2).

Samples of catechesis

There are a few places in Scripture where we find summaries of this doctrine, this faith once for all entrusted to the saints. A clear example is found in 1 Corinthians 15:3-6 where Paul wrote, "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve." Another example is found in 1 Timothy 3:16 where Paul wrote, "He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory." In short, what has been handed down, entrusted to the believers, is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God come into our human flesh to die for our sins, and that through faith in him we might have life in his name.

Clarion
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd.,Winnipeg, MB

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One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202
Subscriptions: clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca
Advertisements: clarionads@premierpublishing.ca
Website: www.premierpublishing.ca

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

Subscription Rates for 2010

	Regular Mail	*Air Mail*
Canada*	$49.00	$ 85.00
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	$65.00	$ 90.00
International	$95.00	$145.00

*Including 5% GST – No. 890967359RT
Advertisements: $17.00 per column inch
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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

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Agreement No. 40063293; PAP Registration No. 9907; ISSN 0383-0438

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The New Testament testifies to the fact that the apostles had been catechizing, that is, giving instruction in Christian doctrine. The New Testament books are an elaboration, clarification, and defence of this faith and an inscripturation of this doctrine. In none of the writings, however, do we get a comprehensive doctrinal package. This is so because the letters responded to particular questions and difficulties that arose. The closest we might get to a comprehensive exposition of the gospel is Paul's letter to the Romans. In this letter, Paul deals with human sinfulness, the work of Christ as redeemer, and the response of Christians in godly living. The structure of this letter finds an echo in the structure of our Heidelberg Catechism. Yet, even that letter was shaped by the context of the believers in Rome. All this does not take away that when the Scriptures are taken together, they testify to the existence of a comprehensive package of doctrine. All the points of doctrine are confirmed and supported in the Scriptures.

Four elements of catechesis

It was, therefore, fully in keeping with the manner of teaching by the apostles that in due time the churches developed instruction manuals. A very ancient document from the second century is called the *Didache* meaning, "Teachings." [1] It is said to contain the teachings of the twelve apostles. The need to teach the basic Christian doctrines also led to the development of the twelve articles of faith. As time progressed, the consistent elements of catechesis were the twelve articles of faith, the sacraments, the law and prayer. Though catechesis fell into great neglect for many centuries, the Reformers revived the practice of catechesis, developing new catechisms to accomplish this purpose. The introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism points out how the motivation was the instruction of the youth and the guiding of the pastors. In the year 1548, John Calvin wrote in a letter to Lord Somerset, the advisor to young King Edward, about the need for a catechism and catechizing. He wrote,

> Believe me, Monseigneur, the Church of God will never preserve itself without a Catechism, for it is like the seed to keep the good grain from dying out, and causing it to multiply from age to age. And therefore, if you desire to build an edifice which shall be of long duration, and which shall not soon fall into decay, make provision for the children being instructed in a good Catechism. . . This Catechism will serve two purposes, to wit, as an introduction to the whole people, so that every one may profit from what shall be preached, and also to enable them to discern when any presumptuous person puts forward strange doctrine. . . .[2]

Catechesis then has a long history. It was practiced by the apostles. The Scriptures testify to this. It is a false dilemma to put catechesis over against preaching from the Bible. Catechesis is preaching from the Bible. In terms of the ebb and flow of history, it would seem that right now, as Canadian Reformed Churches, we are on the cutting edge with our emphasis on catechesis. In terms of Scripture, the persistent emphasis on catechesis is only maintaining the cutting edge of the Word.

[1] See http://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers/Page_171.html

[2] John Calvin, *Selected Works of John Calvin Tracts and Letters*, ed. Jules Bonnet and transl. David Constable (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), Vol. 5, 191. C

George van Popta

MATTHEW 13:52

Delivered from the Muckrake

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"Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. . . not on earthly things."
Colossians 3:1, 2

"Oh! Deliver me from this muckrake!" So cried Christiana in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Part two of the book describes the pilgrimage of Christian's wife Christiana, their four sons, and the maiden neighbour Mercy. After her conversion, Christiana comes across a man with a muckrake who could only look down at the ground. Someone was holding a celestial crown above his head, offering to give him the crown in exchange for the muckrake. But the man did not look up or notice the crown; instead, he moved around the muck at his feet, being careful to rake out the bits of straw and small sticks.

Christiana tells Interpreter she thinks she knows who the man is, "A man of this World." Interpreter confirms what Christiana says and explains the vision. The muckrake of the worldly man shows his carnal mind. The worldly man would rather pay attention to the straws, sticks, and dust at his feet than to the celestial crown held out to him by Christ.

This, continues Interpreter, shows that to some people heaven is but a fable and that the things they see around them in the world are the only things substantial. Muckraker could only look downwards, for when earthly things begin to exercise power upon men's minds, their hearts are carried away from God.

It is at this point that Christiana cries out, "Oh! Deliver me from this muckrake."

In Colossians 3 the Apostle Paul tells us to throw away the muckrake. We are to set our hearts above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, and not on the earthly things. The church commemorates the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ on the fortieth day after Easter (this year, May 13). Because Christ, with whom we by faith have been raised, is in heaven, we need to look away from the earthly things and to seek the heavenly things.

One of the earthly things that Paul mentions from which we are to look away is greed, which he calls idolatry. Greed is lust for more things. We all need things, but we are quick to make the stuff of this life into a god. We do well to pray the prayer of Proverbs 30:8, which Christiana added to her plea for deliverance from the muckrake, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread."

Recently we received a thank-you note from a young couple for the wedding gift we gave them. At the end of the note they wrote, "We know it's only 'stuff.'" Yes, only stuff, stuff that will not last forever and so not worth holding onto too tightly. In 1 John 2:16-17 the Apostle wrote, "For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."

Do not forget the lesson of the Parable of the Sower. The deceitfulness of wealth can choke the good seed of the Word of God and can make it unfruitful. Keep a very loose hold on the things of this world. Throw away the muckrake and receive from Christ the celestial crown. Keep singing and praying to Christ above:

We revere Thee, Lord and
Saviour;
We implore Thy grace and love.
Hear our prayers and help us
ever
Seek the things that are above.
(*Book of Praise*, Hymn 32:2) C

Arjan de Visser

Schilder's Views Regarding the Reformed Hymnary

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This article is a revised version of a speech delivered together with Rev. George van Popta at Office Bearers' Conferences in Ancaster, ON and Yarrow, BC (November 2009 and March 2010 respectively).

In a previous article we discussed the views of Dr. Klaas Schilder regarding the Reformed psalter. In this article we look at his views regarding the Reformed hymnary. As the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) are in the process of updating and modestly expanding their hymnary, it will be instructive to listen to the voice of Dr. Schilder. After all, his views had considerable influence on the thinking of the first generation of CanRC immigrants as they put together the *Book of Praise*.

Let us start by putting Schilder's contribution in historical perspective. It is well known that the matter of hymn singing has often caused discussion and even dissension in the Reformed tradition. Calvin favoured the singing of psalms and initiated the production of the Genevan psalter. Yet, he did not defend an "exclusive psalmody" position. From early on canticles such as the Song of Zechariah were included in Reformed church books. Already Calvin himself included a "free stanza" at the end of the versification of the Ten Commandments (see Hymn 7:9 in the *Book of Praise*).

The fathers of the Secession of 1834 were divided on the issue. Rev. Hendrik de Cock was vehemently opposed to the singing of hymns. Other leaders, such as Rev. Anthony Brummelkamp and Dr. Lucas Lindeboom, wanted the Reformed churches to have a collection of good, biblically grounded hymns. Among the leaders of the Doleantie of 1886 the situation was similar. Dr. Abraham Kuyper changed his position a few times during his lifetime: As a young man he had no qualms about singing hymns. After his conversion to the Reformed faith he was opposed. Later on he adopted a moderate position, on the one hand warning that hymns often lack the spiritual depth of the psalms, on the other hand stating there was an "urgent need" for the church to adopt more hymns.[1]

Expansion

By the time Schilder as a young minister started to write about liturgical issues (1920s), the Dutch churches were going through a process that is quite similar to the one the CanRC is going through at the moment. The churches had a small collection of twelve hymns and there was a strong feeling that the hymnary should be expanded. For two decades virtually every synod dealt with the issue until the Synod of 1933 adopted a new hymnary that contained twenty-nine hymns. The collection included popular hymns such as *"Een Vaste Burcht"* ("A Mighty Fortress") and *"Ere Zij God"* ("Glory to God," the songs of the angels, Luke 2:14). Before and after 1933 there were debates in the church magazines with some arguing pro and others arguing contra expansion of the hymnary.

In his magazine *De Reformatie* Schilder came out strongly in favour of adding more hymns to the collection. In response to those who had "principial" problems with the singing of hymns, he wrote: "There is nothing wrong with the singing of hymns as long as they fit in the Reformed worship service."[2] In another article he observed that the churches had been singing free hymns for decades and that there is no real difference between singing many hymns or just a few: "If someone has 'principial' objections against hymns, he must reject every number of hymns, whether large or small."[3]

It is instructive to note why Schilder was such a strong supporter of the singing of hymns. He approached the matter from a covenantal perspective: The worship service is a meeting between the Lord and his people. During this meeting the Lord speaks

through Scripture reading and proclamation of the Word, and God's people respond in prayer and singing, etc. In order for the congregation's response to be a real *response* it should not be a *repetition* of God's Word. We expect our ministers to pray "free" prayers (not taken literally from the Bible). Similarly, we should expect the congregation to sing "free hymns." Guided by God's Word and God's Spirit the congregation should formulate its own answer to God's Word. Only then may we speak of covenantal fellowship.

Schilder was not impressed by the popular argument that it is wrong to sing hymns because they are "uninspired."

Schilder was not impressed by the popular argument that it is wrong to sing hymns because they are "uninspired." During the 1880s Dr. Abraham Kuyper had coined a phrase for this sentiment: 'In God's house only God's Word.' Schilder considered this to be a thoughtless slogan (*"een ondoordachte leus"*).[4] Of course, in the preaching only God's Word should be proclaimed. But in prayer and singing the congregation should respond. As much as God's Word should *resonate* in this response, it should be the *congregation's* response. It would even be presumptuous to claim that congregation's response could be God's Word.

Practical

Based on these principles, Schilder's contribution to the debate during the 1930s was practical, level-headed, and at times almost pragmatic. A few examples will illustrate this. First, although Schilder defended the possibility of "free hymns" being added to the hymnary, he advised the churches to look especially at *adding canticles* (hymns that are based on poetic passages in the Bible outside the book of Psalms).

Second, Schilder observed that *we will never have a perfect hymnary* and that we should learn to live with that reality. Although he supported the proposed expansion of the hymnary in the early 1930s, he also made it clear that it contained some hymns which he would have left out and that it missed some hymns which he would have included. Summarizing his feelings, he wrote: "I am not really enthusiastic, but in all soberness and fairness, I believe that we should accept the proposed hymns."[5] In this context it is interesting that Schilder was willing to accept a hymn even though he had certain reservations about the wording. Point in case was the hymn *"Ere Zij God"* (Glory to God) which had a line that was based on questionable exegesis (*"vrede op aarde"* – peace on earth). Even so, Schilder said, if I preached on Luke 2:14 and my sermon was based on the better exegesis, I would still ask the congregation to sing this hymn with joy after the sermon. To which he added the remarkable words: "Singing is always a compromise."[6]

Third, Schilder felt that *ecumenical considerations should play a role* in the process. He was critical of the tendency of Reformed synods to modify and mutilate hymns in an effort to make them "more Reformed" by changing the wording of certain phrases. This is problematic, not just because a synod is not a gathering of poets, but also because it sets the Reformed churches apart from other churches who are singing the same hymn. Quote: "We are already going to have our own particular Book of Praise. If we are to have our own versions of well-known hymns as well, we will be even more 'particular.'"[7]

As we noted in the previous article, Schilder never outlined his liturgical views in a systematic way.[8] Much less do we believe that he has spoken the final word on these issues. At the same time it is refreshing to listen to his voice.

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[1] Abraham Kuyper, *Our Worship* (transl. Harry Boonstra; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2009), 37-42. The original Dutch book, entitled *Onze Eeredienst*, was published in 1911.
[2] Translated from K. Schilder, "Voorstellen inzake den kerkelijken liederenschat (1)," *De Reformatie* 13:8 (25 Nov. 1932), 58-59.
[3] Translated from: *De Reformatie* 13:9 (2 Dec. 1932), 66.
[4] De Reformatie 13:9 (2 Dec. 1932), 66.
[5] Translated from *De Reformatie* 13:9 (2 Dec. 1932), 66.
[6] Translated from *De Reformatie* 13:8 (25 Nov. 1932), 58.
[7] Translated from *De Reformatie* 13:8 (25 Nov. 1932), 58.
[8] Dr. Jan Smelik has summarized Schilder's liturgical views in the article "Schilder, de kerkdienst en het kerklied" in George Harinck (ed.), *Alles of niets: Opstellen over K. Schilder* (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2003), 47-77.

Wes Bredenhof

Inerrancy – Lessons from History

(Part 5 of 6)

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In this series, we've begun looking at what Christian Reformed Church (CRC) did in the 1960s and 1970s with its doctrine of Scripture. Serious concerns had been expressed by some of the churches and so eventually, in 1969, a CRC synod appointed a committee to study the matter. As we saw last time, the committee consisted mostly of men who had studied at the institution where these problems originated: the Free University of Amsterdam. Consequently, the concerns about the doctrine Scripture were co-opted by CRC progressives to promote a looser (or latitudinarian) view of Scripture and its authority.

Report 36

After being appointed, the committee started its work in earnest. By 1971, a report had been produced for the synod of that year. Report 36 was a preliminary form of the Report 44 that would go to Synod 1972.

One of my seminary professors often told us that the Reformed way is always the "*via media*" – the middle road. Sometimes this is true, but not always. Previous CRC synods had discussed reports on Scripture. In 1961, for instance, the report entitled "Infallibility and Inspiration in the Light of Scripture and our Creeds" came down in favour of inerrancy and verbal plenary inspiration. This was more the "high view of Scripture" found with such CRC stalwarts as Louis Berkhof. Yes, there were already reasons for concern in 1961, but ten years later, with Report 36, we don't find a "high view of Scripture" at all but a view that was more "middle of the road." The tumultuous 1960s had taken their toll on the CRC.

There are at least three important things to note about Report 36.

First, Fruitland CRC had expressed a pastoral concern about concrete teachings from specific individuals. The report decided to deal with "methods and not persons." Confrontation with particular Reformed theologians and their writings was avoided. Louis Praamsma, in an article in the November 1971 issue of *the Outlook*, expressed his disappointment that this approach was taken, thereby not really addressing the pastoral concern.

Second, we can take note of the statement, "Synod urges the churches to acknowledge that the redemptive events recorded in the Bible are presented as prophetic and kerygmatic history." At first glance, this sounds fine. The Bible does give us the history of redemption. However, many Reformed ministers' antennae will perk up at the mention of "kerygmatic history" because of the association of that term with liberal New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann. While the report insists that the biblical message is rooted in the historical trustworthiness of the events in Scripture, it does seem to leave the door open a crack when it says, "It is possible in certain instances to distinguish, partially at least, between an event as it actually happened and the way that event is recorded in Scripture." Would that statement leave room for asserting that Jericho was not really destroyed as described in Scripture in Joshua 6?

Finally, Report 36 offered two formulations on biblical authority. The first was good, excellent even: "The nature of biblical authority is simply and solely that it is divine. God speaks and therefore Scripture has divine authority." This came to be known as Formulation A. Then there was Formulation B: "The divine authority of Scripture is manifested only through its content as the saving revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and that therefore the authority of Scripture is always concretely embedded in its redemptive message."

These two positions are irreconcilable. One posits that Scripture has authority because it comes from God. That's the position of the Belgic Confession in Article 5, dealing with the authority of Scripture. Formulation B, however, posits that Scripture has authority because of its redemptive content. This emphasis on the redemptive purpose of Scripture might at first glance seem to reflect the concern of the Belgic Confession in Article 7. However, Article 7 is not dealing with the authority of Scripture, but its sufficiency.

Report 36 went to Synod 1971 and from there was sent out to the churches for their scrutiny. It was published as a booklet and the committee received

much correspondence about what they had written, both positive and negative. However, it seemed clear that there was no going back to the doctrine of inerrancy mentioned in 1961.

Report 44

Report 44 came late to the CRC in 1972. In fact, there were two overtures to Synod 1972 to postpone discussion of it because of its late arrival. They wanted more time to study it. However, for some unknown reason, the synod decided to go ahead and discuss the report and then later adopted it.

It was claimed that Report 44 attempted to take into account some of the criticisms that had been levelled at Report 36. For instance, Formulation A and Formulation B were both affirmed as "two inseparable aspects of the Reformed view of Scripture." Of course, that did not satisfy those who saw them as irreconcilable. With regards to the naming of specific figures, the "Introductory Observations" mentions Kuitert and Lever (their views are implicitly rejected by the report) and notes that the body of the report interacts with theologians such as Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, G. Ebeling, and E. Fuchs.

Surveying the report, one finds good statements and bad statements, but more than anything else a lack of clarity. The average regular member in the CRC would have scratched his head over most of it. Ambiguity and double-speak were characteristic. Bones were thrown to conservatives; for instance, verbal plenary inspiration was affirmed. Doors were cracked open for latitudinarians: "Synod reminds the churches of our brotherly obligation to respect such freedom of biblical interpretation as falls clearly within the bounds of our creedal forms of unity, while recognizing, of course, that in all things we are bound by the Word of God." Or: "While the entire Scripture speaks with divine authority, this divine authority is understood concretely and specifically only when one takes account of what God said, how he spoke, to whom he spoke. . . ." Within a year, the Calvin Seminary student publication *Stromata* published an article by a "Christian homosexual" arguing that what was true in Paul's day is not necessarily true in ours. CRC conservatives were quick to draw the connection between Report 44 and this manner of reasoning. In their view, Report 44 had opened the door. Writing in the March 1976 issue of the *Reformed Journal,* latitudinarian Harry Boer affirmed what everyone already knew: Report 44 clearly evidenced the influence of higher criticism.

There were other serious theological problems with the report. The first point of the pastoral instruction said, "Synod calls the churches to a wholehearted recognition that Scripture, which is the saving revelation of God in Jesus Christ, addresses us with full divine authority and that this authority applies to Scripture in its total extent and in all its parts." CRC conservatives and others objected to this formulation because in saying "saving revelation" it failed to acknowledge that there are also parts of Scripture that plainly accuse unbelievers (see John 5:45, 12:48-49, 2 Cor 2:15-16). This terminology was imported into the CRC from their sister churches in The Netherlands and especially from G. C. Berkouwer.

For our purposes, there are two other noteworthy points about Report 44 and its reception in the CRC. The first has to do with an appeal to pastoral care of the youth. Speaking about the "new theology" (or "latitudinarian impulse" as we're calling it), the report stated:

> The conviction with which they speak arises from their attempt to gauge the pulsebeat of Christian living today. Their claim to a hearing is based upon their professed attempts to meet the spiritual crises especially of today's Christian youth, whose confidence in the authority of Scripture is being threatened by the eroding influences of modern science. They therefore regard the so-called "new hermeneutics" as a positive contribution to meeting the felt or unfelt, yet very real needs of the church.

Here again is another example of how Fruitland's conservative pastoral concerns were co-opted by a latitudinarian agenda. It also shows that there is nothing new under the sun. Today we continue to hear about how young Christians feel threatened by modern science and how we need to respond in some other way than by encouraging them to simply believe our Father's Word which will never lie.

Finally, Classis Pacific Northwest submitted an overture to Synod 1972 on "The New Hermeneutic." They appealed to the position adopted by the CRC in 1961 and asked the synod to judge that the "new hermeneutic" is precluded on that basis. They provided as one of the grounds this: "Synod in 1959 adopted the Reformed Ecumenical Synod Conclusions regarding inspiration, including the conclusion that '. . .Scripture in its whole extent and in all its parts is the infallible and inerrant Word of God.'" From the Acts it appears that Classis Pacific Northwest's overture was not even given consideration. They adopted the recommendations of Report 44, stating that these were an answer to the Classis (and others), thereby skirting the issue of inerrancy and related matters. The CRC had left 1961 behind for good.

According to one eye-witness report, under the chairmanship of Clarence Boomsma, the synod "proceeded as a well-oiled steamroller, and objectors looked like boys trying to stop it with a slingshot." Combine that with a stacked committee, a late report, and ambiguous language and it wouldn't have taken a prophet to predict the approval of Report 44 and the CRC's continued slide away from inerrancy and a high view of Scripture. In the years to come, Report 44 would often be the appeal of many a latitudinarian in the CRC.

Next time we'll look briefly at the case of Allen Verhey.

C

Peter Holtvlüwer

Friends with Benefits

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It is no secret that we live in an age of casual sex, at least in the western world. Ever since the sexual revolution of the 1960s, what used to happen behind closed doors has more and more come out into the open. Today there are few secrets and little shame. Sex before marriage, sex outside of marriage, sex with multiple partners are all quite common and expected, even if not always appreciated by those caught in the middle. Heterosexual affairs, homosexual relationships, and even bi-sexual liaisons have all hit the main stream. Not only is their "shock value" lost on a bombarded generation but worse these behaviours are becoming *normal*. Just watch any of the top ten TV sitcoms to see any and usually all of these relationships cast in a positive light.

Friends. . . with benefits

All of this is sad and distressing to Christians but it is not new. What is new, relatively speaking, is a very insidious, seemingly harmless version of casual sex that has been called, "Friends with Benefits" (FWB). This can be defined in different ways but basically it is two persons who use their friendship for some form of sexual *activity* without developing any form of a loving *relationship*. There is an understanding going in that it's just physical, merely pleasure, and nothing more. There is no commitment of any kind. The sex is strictly voluntary with no strings attached. In street language, it is referred to as "hooking-up" for purely sexual satisfaction. All feelings for the other must be checked at the door. The idea is that friendship gets "extended" to include free sexual liaisons (i.e. the "benefits") without any of the so-called baggage that comes with a regular, romantic relationship.

In the church

While we might be appalled at the immoral depths to which the world has fallen, we would do better to have a talk with our own teenagers and young adults about this matter. There is every indication that this worldly practice is seeping into the church, especially among our high-schoolers. Our young people are not only increasingly familiar with the FWB relationship but some of them are in the process of adopting a form of it they deem suitable for Christians.

Yes, as disturbing as it may sound, some think that FWB can be done in an acceptable Christian manner. The reasoning goes along these lines: so long as FWB does not include actual sexual intercourse, it is not unbiblical. There is a kind of sophistication in the argument. All young people in the church know that the Bible clearly condemns sexual intercourse outside of marriage (fornication) or having sex with someone other than your spouse (adultery). But Scripture does not out-rightly condemn things like sexual stimulation, petting, mutual masturbation, or oral sex. If the FWB relationship is limited to these and similar sexual activities, no biblical injunction is broken, it is thought. It appears that this "grey area" is being tapped for self-justification, to help ease the conscience of those who desire to engage in FWB.

A grey area?

But is the Bible really silent about this, shall we say, "peripheral" sexual activity? Such specific acts may not be itemized in any biblical list but numerous times God condemns perverse sexual behaviour *of all kinds* under the terms *lewdness* (e.g. Mark 7:22), *sexual sin* (e.g. 2 Cor 12:21), *debauchery* (e.g. Gal 5:19), and

impurity (e.g. Eph 4:19). Any English dictionary will indicate that a wide-range of sexual acts are included in these terms.

More to the point, behind each of these English translations stands a separate Greek word. Having at least four words for sexual immorality tells us that the Greeks knew a lot about sexual activity, especially the perverse kind. The temple of Diana in Ephesus was known in biblical times for its cultic prostitution. Aphrodite's temple in Corinth was famous for its thousand prostitutes. The sexual looseness of the Greeks in Corinth was such that people turned the city name into a verb ("to Corinthinize" meant "to fornicate.")

There is every indication that this worldly practice is seeping into the church

The activity condemned in these four words is not limited to merely sexual intercourse. It includes everything that could be expected of prostitutes. Prostitutes have always had many ways to satisfy their customers and the New Testament writers were aware of them from the surrounding culture. One Greek term, *porneia*, from which we get the English *pornography*, was a common, general term for any sexual sin and is repeatedly condemned in the Bible (e.g. 1 Cor 5:1). The command to refrain from even a "hint" of sexual impurity shows the high standard to which God calls his people as Paul makes clear in Ephesians 5:3, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people." We need to see clearly that the sexual acts of FWB not only fall far short of God's benchmark but, if not repented from, leave us exposed to God's wrath (Col 3:5, 6).

Lust

But going beyond the various "activities" of FWB, is not the root of it also clearly spelled out by the Lord as a poison to be shunned? For what is going on in the heart of a man or a woman who wants to engage in sexual activity without any strings attached? Is it not lust? Is it not the self-centred and selfish desire to gratify one's cravings? True, the desires of the partner will also be satisfied but as nothing more than a necessary completion of the agreed-upon transaction of pleasure between the "friends." If one only takes and does not give, one will soon have no FWB. The bottom-line is that FWB is all about getting what you want, satisfying the lusts of your own flesh in the first place.

About lust the Bible is very clear. The Lord Jesus spoke of it in Matthew 5:48 as equal to adultery and thus damnable, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." The Apostle Peter pictures lust as part of the world's way but totally alien to that of the Christian, "For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do – living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1 Pet 4:3-5). Notice too the warning that for all such activities and thoughts of the heart there will be a day of reckoning.

Sexual enjoyment

For all the apparent sophistication of the argument for FWB, it falls flat in the clear light of Scripture. The reasoning also loses all value when it is admitted that the "benefits" desired are entirely *sexual* in nature. All these desired activities are sexual activities and from the beginning God has placed all things sexual inside *one* relationship and *only* one relationship: marriage! They might be "peripheral" to intercourse, they might lead up to it, prepare for it or even be a substitute for it but all such activities are inherently sexual. For that reason, if they have a place anywhere, then in God's eyes that place can only be inside the bond of holy marriage.

Church News

Declined the call to the church of Vernon, British Columbia:

Rev. D. de Boer
of Dunnville, Ontario.

Rev. Wes L. Bredenhof has been awarded the degree Doctor of Theology, following the successful defence of his dissertation, For the Cause of the Son of God: The Missiological Relevance of the Belgic Confession. The defence took place on April 9, 2010, and the degree is awarded by the Reformation International Theological Seminary. The dissertation challenges the negative judgements of many theologians and church historians concerning the missiological relevance of the Belgic Confession in the seventeenth century for the missionary work of the Reformed church at the time. Rev. Bredenhof also examines the missiological relevance of the Belgic Confession for the twenty-first century.

But then sex can be and should be enjoyed there! Our young people should be taught to refrain from sexual impurity of all kind but also to save their sexuality and anticipate its joys as God's wedding gift to them and their future spouse! Let's not let the world by default educate our children about sexuality through the media and the street, but let's get to them first with a wholesome, God-pleasing explanation of the both the *beauty* of sex and the *place* of sex. The entire Song of Solomon is an ode to the pleasures of sexuality celebrated and enjoyed inside the marriage relationship. God gave sex for different reasons but one of them is certainly the enjoyment of husband and wife and this should be held out to our youth as a gift to cherish and look forward to!

We need to speak with our teens and young adults about both preventing this sin and turning away from it

Consider these sexual metaphors and allusions from Proverbs 5:15-20 and see how they promote pleasure within marriage: "Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer – may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?" The Bible is not Victorian (prudish) any more than it is post-modern (loose). It is respectful in speaking about sexuality but it is also very real and so should we be.

Repentance and renewal

At the moment, FWB is not being discussed at too many dinner parties or *coffee klatsches* but we parents need to change that. We need to speak with our teens and young adults about both preventing this sin and – if they are caught up in it – turning away from it. In the latter case it is important that we also share information with each other as parents and deal with this matter together. The young people involved in FWB do so together, supporting and influencing each other in this lifestyle. The negative, destructive group dynamic among such friends needs to be overcome by the positive, edifying team dynamic among parents seeking to guide them out of it. Parents must resist the urge to be protective of their child and jealous of the family reputation by choosing to deal with the problem internally only. It is far more effective if all parents involved can get on side and deal openly, decisively and constructively with their children. What is at stake here is the souls of our children and the glory of our God.

I would like to emphasize that our dealings with our children be *constructive*. It would be easy (and quite natural) as a parent to react to our child's sin solely in anger, disappointment, shame, and embarrassment. We might take drastic action to discourage them from ever doing this again and guilt them into submission. But let us think beyond curbing the action to the greater need of converting the heart of our child. Let's walk them through what God reveals about sexuality and lead them – by God's grace – to repentance. Guilt should not be used as a weapon to keep the child "under thumb" but rather as a tool that drives the sinner into the arms of the Saviour to experience forgiveness.

And if God should grant repentance to our children, then we also have the opportunity (and the obligation) to lead them in the renewal of their life-style! We need to walk beside our son or daughter and point the way forward in sexual purity for the glory of God. Let's not despair about the depths of sin but let us cling to God's promises. The blood of God's Son is more than sufficient to cover also the sins of FWB and his Spirit more than powerful enough to overcome the lustful desires of the heart. C

Leo Buitenhuis

Flamborough's SWAP Trip – Harlan, Kentucky

In the wee hours of October 24 a team of twelve Flamboroughites set out for Harlan, Kentucky to participate in SWAP (Sharing With Appalation People). After a long night of travel we awoke to the beauty of the Appalachian Mountains of West Virgina and Kentucky and a final stop high on the ridge of Pine Mountain at the SWAP camp just outside of Harlan. For most of our group this was a new experience, but we all shared a common goal for the upcoming week: showing our love for God by helping in the needs of others.

The need for help in this region became quite apparent as we drove slowly through the winding roads. Tired looking trailers and homes were prevalent in an area otherwise overflowing with the beauty of creation in the hills, streams, and trees glowing in full fall colour. As we later learned the coal belt area of Kentucky and West Virginia has been an impoverished area for many years and has suffered even more with the economic downturn and further mechanization of the coal industry, meaning even fewer jobs. With an

unemployment rate of thirty percent we were left to wonder why people would stay in such an area. The week ahead would offer some explanation and provide us with a lasting feeling for the people in this part of Appalachia.

Upon arrival at the SWAP camp, we met the staff who would provide instruction and direction for our work. Carrie Billett and Michelle Norman work directly for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and will stay either at the camp or in Harlan for up to a three year term. They organize work and accommodations for as many as sixty teams a year from all over the United States and Canada including our own Faithworks teams who traditionally come during the March break. The camp itself is a former State Forest facility which has been donated to SWAP to help fulfill the need. Much of the impressive supply of tools and building supplies have also been donated or provided at a reduced rate by local businesses. SWAP staff takes applications from various homeowners and assess need based on income, age, and family situations.

After a restful Sunday and worship we were ready on Monday morning to take up our task for the week. Our group of twelve was broken into two teams and assigned two homes for general repair. The homeowners were Harlan born and raised and lived in homes that were quite typical for the area, run down and in need of various upgrades and repairs. It was quite shocking to find out that more than a few people still lived without indoor running water and toilets as did one elderly woman in her family home atop Pine Mountain. Doors were sagging and drafts were plenty through cracks and unprotected raised foundations. Teams quickly got to work as the list of work was long. All were eager to provide as much help as possible during our relatively short stay. Days seemed to fly by as the tasks were completed and improvements became apparent.

Evenings at camp were partially spent in information sessions provided by SWAP staff to give us a further understanding of the area and its history as well as the current situation and even a surprise visit from a local Christian folk music family. The week also provided an opportunity for bible study and devotions in a unique group setting different than our usual study groups back home. Evenings without the usual business of home allowed time for fellowship among team members and a strengthening bond of the communion of saints.

As our week ended, the overwhelming sense of need grew as our Flamborough team saw more of Harlan County and had the chance to meet and speak to the people of Eastern Kentucky. It also became apparent that the majority of the citizens were also very proud of their heritage and would never leave their homes among the Appalachians. The overwhelming beauty of the mountains and trees was always at the forefront during our week. We were able to witness the grandeur of our God's creation right up to the last trip down the trail and out of camp.

Our thanks go out to the staff of SWAP in Kentucky for a week that will always be remembered by the participants. It is our hope and prayer that the people of Kentucky will continue to be blessed through the efforts of SWAP and that the region will be able to see hope both spiritually and physically in future years. C

Marcel Sikkema

St. Albert says Farewell to Rev. R. Bredenhof and Family

St. Albert Canadian Reformed Church was instituted in June 2003 and was blessed with the arrival of the R. Bredenhof family in October 2004. The St. Albert congregation received her first pastor; Rev. Bredenhof began to serve his first congregation. When they arrived there were only three; Reuben, Rebecca, and young Abigail. Through the ensuing years our congregation has been blessed by the work of Rev. Bredenhof in our midst; his faithful preaching every Sunday, compassionate pastoral work in the congregation, and admirable catechetical instruction to the youth in the congregation. During their service in St. Albert the Bredenhofs were blessed with the birth of twins Kyra and Sasha in March 2006 and then Tori in April 2009. The church at St. Albert experienced phenomenal growth including forty-five new births throughout this time as well as a great number of weddings. In the late summer of 2009 Rev. Bredenhof accepted a call from the Canadian Reformed Church at London. It was with sadness that we prepared to say farewell to our pastor, and with thanksgiving that we looked back on the past five years, knowing that although our under-shepherd was leaving, Christ would continue to care for his church here in St. Albert.

Farewell evening

The evening of Friday October 30, 2009 was the chance for the St. Albert congregation to come together to formally say farewell to the Bredenhof family. The emcees for the evening opened with a reading from 1 Thessolonians 2, focusing on verse 8 which reads: "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." A fitting theme indeed! The evening was filled with presentations from various study societies, groups, and individuals reminding the Bredenhofs

of many memories and friendships that were made during their time in St. Albert. The preschool and kindergarten children sang songs of praise and also gave gifts to the Bredenhof girls by which they could remember their time here in St. Albert. Several study societies came forward to entertain us with games and stories. As a token of their appreciation for his work among them the Young People's Society gave Rev. Bredenhof an empty box in which to pack his belongings and a Tim's Card to use on the drive back to Ontario. There were kind words spoken by a couple of ministers from Classis Alberta thanking Rev. Bredenhof for his service and friendship over the years. The chairman of council then came forward to thank the Bredenhofs for their service in St. Albert; for the faithful proclamation of the Word of God, for his pastoral work in the congregation, and his teaching of catechism classes among other things. Council, on behalf of the congregation, also presented the Bredenhof family with gifts including a painting of typical St. Albert scenes and a scrapbook for which each family had put together a page to express their thanks to the Bredenhofs. At this time the Bredenhofs addressed the people expressing their gratitude first

to God for calling them to serve in St. Albert and for blessing their work here. They also thanked the congregation for the wonderful experience they could have in serving this congregation, for the friendship that was offered.

Farewell sermon

November 1 was the last Sunday that Rev. Bredenhof preached in St. Albert. In the morning worship service he led us in the celebration of the Lord`s Supper for one final time. For his farewell sermon in the afternoon he spoke on the final chapter of 2 Corinthians, where Paul says farewell to that congregation. He spoke about how Paul rejoiced in the

weakness of the servant, affirmed the strength of the congregation, and offered a prayer for her protection. The congregation was reminded that our faith rests solely on Jesus Christ and on God's power – and not on the work, the words or the wisdom of any servant of good. Paul boasted only in his weaknesses so that all the glory goes to God. Paul follows this by calling the Corinthians strong; by being the bride of Christ they share in his power. Despite our sinfulness and failings we are being built up as the church of Christ. Paul does not forget the congregation at the end of the letter but would always remember them. He says that he will pray that the church may be perfected, that they reach the goal God has set out for them. Rev. Bredenhof called the members in St Albert to grow in holiness, to increase in godliness, to mature in faith. There is no reason to delay.

The church at St Albert thanks the Bredenhof family for their years of faithful service to our congregation and wishes them the Lord's blessings as they take up their calling in London. We also extend a hearty invitation for them to visit us at any time. C

Ronn VanAndel

Special Needs and the High School Setting

Ronn VanAndel is vice principal at Guido de Bres High School in Hamilton, ON

It is our hope that this report regarding Guido's practices may serve as an opportunity for all school communities to ask themselves if the needs of all covenant children in our schools are being appropriately met.

Introduction

Do you remember your high school years? If you have a clear and good memory of those days, chances are you were a good learner, worked your way with relative ease through the curriculum offered over those four (or five) years, and didn't think too much about those who had some academic struggles. Why would you? Their struggles were not yours and their efforts in school went by largely unnoticed.

The topic of helping those with special learning needs was not high on the agenda. Students were assigned to either advanced or general classes. Occasionally, a basic level course was provided for a student when required, but beyond that, most students were on their own. Few accommodations took place and special needs were infrequently recognized. Testing for specific concerns rarely took place. In fact, by the time many of those students who needed some help hit their sixteenth birthday, they were busy in or preparing to enter the working world, toiling at one of the many jobs freely available to an unskilled labourer.

So has anything changed? We all know that most of our students remain in school through to graduation. Very few in our Christian schools drop out early, prompting the question: what has changed in schools today? I'd like to take you on a brief tour through the new high school today. Change has certainly given a new face to how we deal with our learning disabled and challenged students at Guido de Bres Christian High school in Hamilton.

The beginnings of change

In 1992, the school board recognized that more help needed to be supplied for students who had a diagnosed learning problem. A qualified Educational Assistant (EA) was hired and a well defined program was developed and began to grow and flourish.

In fact, today a well-publicized policy is in place and provides an extensive program. To quote from the present handbook:

> The service of the EA will be provided in core and academic subjects for every student in Grade 9 and 10 who has a diagnosed learning disability. The EA will work with these students right in their classroom, or take these students out to a separate room when needed. Students with special learning needs in grades 11 and 12 meet with the EA in a special room several times per week. The EA is supplied with a separate room that contains reading materials, organizational charts, and computers for these students to use.

In addition, streaming provides some academic adjustment for students with learning difficulties. Increasingly, teachers who have a high degree of specialized knowledge request EA help as to how content evaluation and methodology should be adjusted. Regular meetings are organized with all teachers to help them deal with learning disabled students.

How many students receive some form of assistance? That's a difficult one to answer accurately, since assistance for some may be the occasional prompt or guide, while for others, it is daily intervention. It is fair to say that at any one time in the course of a normal school day, between twenty and twenty-five students receive extra assistance. Some of that will be formal assistance by an EA with the help of an Individual Education Plan (IEP); much of the help will be provided by the regular classroom teacher. In addition to all this, more and more knowledge of how computer programs can help certain students has permitted us to purchase and learn how to use adaptive and assistive technology with some.

Planning for special needs students

So, how do we actually provide assistance and accommodation in our courses today? It really begins before a student even reaches Guido. During the last

months of grade eight, parents, teachers, and principals of those students who have specific learning challenges are asked to submit the results of testing, assessments, and any other information that would be relevant to ensuring proper placement. Together with face-to-face contacts and registration forms, we design the classes that will best suit each student. The excellent bond with feeder schools allows for regular contact between staff and administration at both levels.

Great strides have been made in our contacts with the many students who need assistance

There are a number of options for students with learning difficulties. For the more academic subjects, placing such students in classes with a full-time EA makes a tremendous difference. This EA will not only help to explain more difficult concepts, but also assist in note-taking, organization, and even modification of quizzes and tests if required. We also offer a math essentials course for those students who received so much remediation in their elementary school that they are not able to keep up with an applied level program. Finally, we also provide accommodations to these same students in several of the more "open" courses such as Bible studies, computer technology, and art, so that each student enrolled has a reasonable chance at success in every course in which he is enrolled.

Verify and communicate

How do we know if such accommodation and modifications are working successfully for students? Teachers of applied level classes meet three times a semester to discuss progress, share ideas, and hear how they can better reach their students. This time also allows for the EAs to make suggestions. Meetings are also arranged with the teachers, EA, and vice-principal in charge of this department to discuss the particular needs of students. This personalized assistance is regularly communicated to the parents. They receive regular feedback by phone and/or email as well as a regular written report put together by the child's teachers giving an anecdotal response to how well the student is doing. This is provided as frequently as parents, teachers, or vice-principal feels is necessary.

Teachers will also have received an IEP for each student who has an identified learning disability. These are prepared by one of our EAs, and include specific recommendations that teachers should be using in their instructions. For example, a more general recommendation might be "to use review sheets after each unit" while a specific, student-directed recommendation could read, "rewrite all instructions at a lower reading level." Not only do these IEPs greatly assist the classroom teachers in assisting all students, but is a requirement for any grade ten student who might need some accommodation in order to successfully pass the provincial literacy test. Such a document is also required (and very helpful) for any student with a learning disability who hopes to go to college. Colleges have developed a wide range of measures that assist all students with identified disabilities and we want to make sure that any of our graduates with a recognized disability can still have a good chance at success in college, given there is a needed course, proven motivation, and proper assistance.

With regular and frequent reviews, this routine continues through grade ten and into the senior grades. We do attempt to limit our active, EA-in-class intervention to grades nine and ten, but realizing that some students will continue to need that extra help, we give them an opportunity to leave the regular class for periods of time in order to seek some extra help in the language assistance (or resource) room. There, the student will receive one-on-one help from the EA.

In addition to formal intervention approaches, many other activities, from peer tutoring and coaching, to providing flexible evaluation, to giving specific help and advice to parents in helping at home, add to the total educational assistance package.

A day in our classroom

When a teacher receives an IEP for a particular student who will be in her classroom, several parallel systems kick into "go." Not only is there external help by means of an educational assistant, that teacher is now aware that the education of this student or students must be consistent with the abilities of the student. A teacher who is expecting students with specific educational needs has already taken the time to sit down with other teachers in the educational special needs department to review the needs of each student. At least one meeting has been attended focusing on the specific needs of a number of students. So she goes into the classroom knowing what can be expected.

Seating plans take into account vision concerns, hyperactivity, hearing loss, and any other distractions to normal learning. Her plan for the period/day has been written on the board in clear sequence, so that all students have a very clear idea of what is expected of them. Instructions for retrieving books, having pens, opening to the assigned page in the text, and printing preliminary information like title, date and page numbers in the notebook, are all slowly and clearly

communicated. The observant teacher notices that she will need to go through each instruction carefully (and again) and slowly enough that each point can be completed before the next one is listed. As she begins to speak at the beginning of a period, it will be noticeable that a solid review is provided allowing the student to remember something of the previous day's lesson. A constant and daily routine encompasses the instruction in this classroom.

Her lesson plan is not only clearly laid out on the board – it also provides good variety (and of course, interest!) so that students with short attention spans are regularly brought back to the work, or introduced to something new. Transitions are carefully considered and appropriate strategies are employed. Textbook pages are clearly mentioned and time is given to ensure that all students are at the correct page as the lesson is about to begin. The anxious student is reassured by the information on the board or overhead that everything that day can be done, while the disorganized student has a guideline for where his work should be placed in his binder. We know that it is often in the successful integration of routines that a learning disabled student can shine.

A good learning assistance program takes into account that fair evaluation does not mean "same" evaluation for each student

There is a minute or two left in the period. The teacher ensures that any work not completed is properly reviewed so that it can be completed for tomorrow. Realistically, the homework load for such students is not heavy. Little new work is assigned for homework, since the explanation of the teacher is required for true understanding. However, specific instructions are given for preparation for the next day. Any longer term work is broken into smaller segments which can be nicely managed over a number of periods.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a normal part of any course. A good learning assistance program takes into account that fair evaluation does not mean "same" evaluation for each student. A regular test will need to be modified for certain students so that the same material can be evaluated for knowledge or comprehension, but with a different format. Short-essay questions may be written in the form of a matching terms or fill-in-the blanks section – with maybe a word bank (of all relevant vocabulary words) listed below, from which students can draw their answers. As well, students who struggle with learning know that their exams will be structured in such a way that we can test what they know – not just what they don't know! And that EA or teacher is always nearby – ready to give an extra prompt or key word to help the student over the "small mountain" which he has placed before himself.

What a teacher does in the classroom of learning disabled students makes an important difference in their lives. You'll understand that not every period goes quite this smoothly. In fact, precisely because some of our students learn at a different rate means that even our best planned lessons fall flat. But our students will know that we have each individual's best interests in mind as we plan, execute, evaluate, and report. And that makes all the difference!

The future

Having outlined what is done for students with special learning needs, are we satisfied with our program? Yes and no.

Any program that rests on its successes is going to struggle when a challenge comes along. We attend various conferences for EAs and teachers who have to deal with learning challenges in their classrooms. In this way, the information that is out there can be brought to the staff – and ultimately, into the classrooms. Board and staff have also made a commitment to increase our professional development time to focus on matters such as special needs and education in our school. As professionals, we must want to do the best for each of our students. Just being a teacher to students is not enough; we have a personal interest in the well-being of our "brothers and sisters." It is incumbent, therefore, upon each teacher to be properly prepared for the learning challenges of every student he will meet that year.

I hope you have received a good idea of how the special education program functions at Guido de Bres Christian High School. The next few years will likely see more changes. An ad-hoc committee has been appointed by the board to investigate how we can even further integrate students who may not be able to achieve the full number of credits needed to receive a high school diploma. That investigative work is continuing and its results are for another report.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion *or to Otto Bouwman obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us.*

Letter to the Editor

As I read some of the articles written by those who consider that theistic evolution might be an acceptable theory, I notice a phrase that constantly reappears. It is this: God reveals Himself in creation. The way I understand the argument is that because God reveals Himself in creation, we can look at creation and read what God reveals. Therefore, since some of the scientific evidence shows that the earth is very old, we can deduce that perhaps God took a little longer than six days to create the universe.

This brings me back several years ago to 1991 and 1992 to when I took a couple of education courses with Dr. Oppewal, professor emeritus in education from Calvin College. These were summer courses in curriculum and philosophy of education offered at Redeemer College. During these courses it became clear that within the Christian Reformed Churches there were three accepted ways of dealing with the apparent tension between God's revelation in Scripture and God's revelation in creation.

The first is that Scripture is accepted as the authority over all. An example would be that since Scripture says that God created the world in six days, that is exactly what happened, regardless of what science says.

The second is that since God reveals Himself in creation as well as in Scripture, if there is a discrepancy between the two, you just keep searching to find answers. An example of this would be that theistic evolution might be an acceptable theory.

The third is that God's revelation in creation has just as much authority as does God's revelation in Scripture. An example of this might be that since God created some women with excellent leadership qualities, they should be permitted to hold office in church.

It seems that some of us have at least accepted the second way of thinking. But what is it exactly that God reveals in creation? Two Scripture passages come to mind immediately: Romans 1:20, "For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities– his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made." Psalm 19 reads: "The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

So we see that God's eternal power, his divine nature, and his glory are seen in creation. Nowhere in Scripture do we read that we can find out from creation God's will, or how long He took to create the earth, or whether or not He wanted to have women in office. For answers to these questions we need simply to go to the Scriptures that He has so graciously given us and that contain everything we need for salvation. If God, in Scripture, states that He created the world in six days, we are not allowed to question that. Could God not have created the world to look exactly the way He wanted it to (old or young) in six days? There can be no discrepancy between what God reveals in his Word and what He reveals in creation. God Himself is the creator. How can there be discrepancies?

God is so powerful and great and holy. How could we (weak sinners that we are) ever presume to understand what He has done? Job 38:18 says, "Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know this." Are we willing to trust Him even if we don't understand?

Teresa Boisvert

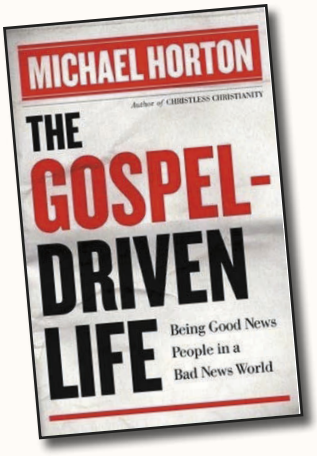
Editorial Comment:

We thank all of those who have written us about the matters of creation and evolution, but are drawing this discussion to a close.

Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication. Submissions need to be less than one page in length.

reviewed by Wes Bredenhof

Rev. Wes Bredenhof is pastor of the Providence Canadian Refomred Church at Hamilton, Ontario.
wbredenhof@bell.net



The Gospel-Driven Life: Being Good News People in a Bad News World, Michael Horton, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009

Additional Information: Hardcover, 271 pages, $19.99 USD

Last year saw the publication of Michael Horton's influential *Christless Christianity*. That volume was a surgical exposé of how much of North American Christianity is in danger of losing sight of Christ and the gospel. By its nature it was a negative book, but Horton did promise a sequel in which he would present a positive alternative. *The Gospel-Driven Life* is that sequel and Horton delivers on his promise.

According to the Introduction, "The goal of this book is to reorient our faith and practice as Christians and churches toward the gospel: that is, the announcement of God's victory over sin and death in his Son, Jesus Christ" (11). Since the gospel is "good *news*," the book attempts to follow the model of a newspaper. Though this seems forced at points, it does capture the thrust and intent of the biblical gospel: it is supposed to be headline news.

There are commendable things to be said about *The Gospel-Driven Life*. Above all, Horton ably expresses the gospel and all its riches. Man's problem is sin and the wrath of God that sin arouses. God's solution is Christ and his obedient life, death, and resurrection. The gospel is what every believer needs every day. Says the author, "No less in the middle and at the end than at the beginning, the believer clings to Christ's righteousness as the only appropriate attire in the presence of a holy God" (70).

Though this book is intended to be the positive follow-up to *Christless Christianity,* critique of various religious trends is not absent. For instance, Horton interacts with Richard Foster and his emphasis on spiritual disciplines. He makes the helpful observation, "This trajectory of the spiritual disciplines leads us to a host of means of grace besides Word and sacrament, and these other means are actually methods of our ascent rather than God's descent to us in grace" (157). Elsewhere, with a glance at Rick Warren, he notes that it was Christ who lived the purpose-driven life so that we would be "promise-driven people in a purpose-driven world" (141).

If I would make one critical notation, it would be with regards to this sentiment: "Christ's kingdom is its own culture: holy rather than common. That does not mean that it is an alternative subculture. In other words, there is no such thing as Christian sports, entertainment, politics, architecture and science. In these common fields, Christians and non-Christians are indistinguishable except by their ultimate goals and motivations" (249). This requires a lot more elaboration to be convincing. For instance, is it true that there is nothing distinctive about the way a Christian would be involved with politics aside from his ultimate goals and motivations? While I can agree that *the church* has no place in the realm of politics, that does not necessarily mean that there is not a Christian way of doing politics, a way guided by the Word of God.

Any blogger knows that the negative posts always get more attention than the positive. Our nature is drawn to the negative. For that reason, I suspect that *Christless Christianity* will be better remembered than *The Gospel-Driven Life*. Moreover, to be honest, the first volume was the more engaging read. *The Gospel-Driven Life* features some new material from Horton, but there also seems to be some recycling. The usual suspects make their appearances: Dorothy Sayers, C.S. Lewis, Martin Luther, and G.K. Chesterton. If you listen regularly to the White Horse Inn or have read his other books, this one may seem rather repetitive in places. While I enjoyed it and can certainly recommend it, it was not the best work that Horton has done. C

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1960 ~ May 28 ~ 2010

I lift up my eyes to the eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1, 2

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Best wishes only please

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55th Wedding Anniversary

1955 ~ May 27 ~ 2010

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Him be glory forever. Romans 11:36

With great thankfulness to the Lord we would like to announce the Anniversary of our dear parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

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We thank them for all their love and encouragement and pray that God would continue to guide and keep them.

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Dr. David Schriemer, Board Chair
Home: (403) 293-4770, dschriem@ucalgary.ca
Mr. Ed Hoogerdyk, Principal
Home: (403) 285-4680, ehoogerdyk@efirehose.net

Applications can be sent to:
Eric Veenendaal, Secretary of the Board
6124 18 Avenue NE, Calgary, AB T1Y 1P1
eric.veenendaal@gmail.com

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For further information please contact the Principal,
Mr. John Jagersma
Phone: (780) 444-6443 (school); (780) 987-5557 (home)
jjagersma@parklandimmanuel.ca

Applications should be directed in writing to the school:
Henry Baker, Chair of Personnel Committee
c/o Parkland Immanuel Christian School
21304 35 Avenue, NW, Edmonton, AB T6M 2P6

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QUALIFIED TEACHERS

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Applications and resumés may be faxed directly to the school at (905) 957-2342, to the attention of the Principal, or addressed to:

The Education Committee c/o Mr. G. Tenhage
3411 Mountain Street, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

Obituaries

January 28, 1932 – March 26, 2010

Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living. Psalm 116:7-9

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E-mail: asikkema25@hotmail.com or
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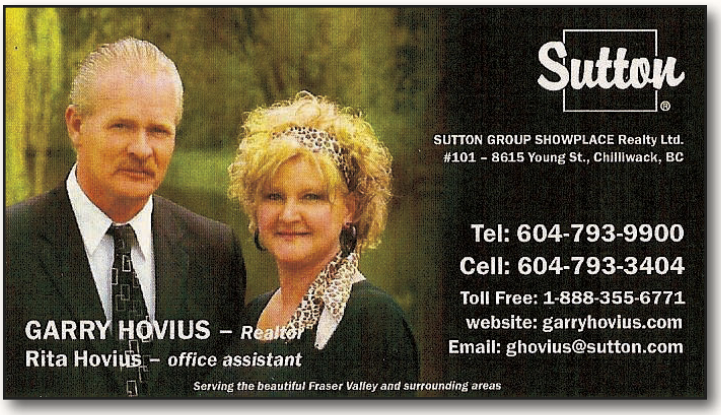

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Henry Heyink Construction Ltd.

is a diverse general contracting and civil construction company that provides excavation services in the commercial, industrial, and municipal sectors.

We are accepting resumes for the following position available immediately:

DIRECTIONAL DRILL OPERATOR

for a 2009 Vermeer D20x22 Series 11

Requirements:

- Valid Class A Ontario Licence
- Mechanical knowledge of drill equipment
- Relevant experience and working knowledge of directional drilling
- Experience working around utilities an asset
- Resume outlining work history complete with references

Duties:

- Layout and completion of horizontal directional drilling
- Load and unload equipment and materials
- Drive truck and trailer equipment to job sites
- Liaison with utility companies and clients
- Operation of skid steer, mini-excavator and backhoe an asset
- Assist with hydro vac utility locates
- Grease, cleaning, and small maintenance of equipment.
- Communicate equipment issues to shop foreman

If you have a minimum of five years industry related experience performing in the advertised role, then submit your resume with references for an opportunity to join our team.

Competitive wage complemented by full benefits package available for the ideal candidate. Interested candidates should forward resume, specifying the position applied via fax **(519) 354-9191**, e-mail to **info@heyink.on.ca**, or hand-deliver to 275 Colborne Street, Chatham.

Henry Heyink Construction appreciates all applications, however only successful candidates will be contacted for interviews.

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