



“I Shall Not Perish”

By Conrad Showalter

The Rosedale Chorale opened Friday evening’s Christian Education program. Following a time of congregational worship, RBC President Dan Ziegler shared an update on the new Student Center.

Jon Showalter, recently returned to Rosedale Bible College after several years in North Africa, gave the Friday evening address entitled “I Shall Not Perish: How Maximilian Died.” Maximilian was a twenty-one-year-old who lived in North Africa at the end of the third century; he was put to death for refusing induction into the Roman army. His story illustrated the dilemma faced by believers in every generation—how “followers of Jesus relate to the coercive power of the state.”

According to Showalter, Maximilian did not die for being a Mennonite or an Anabaptist. He died “because he had read the gospels, he had become a Christian” and “he concluded that he could not both confess Jesus as Lord and serve as a soldier in the Roman army.”

The story of Maximilian was contrasted with that of a more famous North African churchman—Augustine, important to the topic of peace because he developed the doctrine of “just war,” the belief that Christians may, and should, kill enemies when the cause is righteous and when directed to do so by civic authorities.

Historically, Conservative Mennonite Conference has

been aligned with Maximilian rather than Augustine. Many changes in the present, however, are challenging that alignment. We have changed, the world we live in has changed, and we have more interaction with a wide range of believers through current communication options. In relation to such interaction with other believers, we often ask whether a particular point of difference is a salvation issue. The question is rarely a helpful one, according to Showalter, since the implication is that whatever doesn’t qualify as a salvation issue is therefore not very important. Rather, “we must learn to hold firm, gracious convictions—and know why we hold them—even as we interact with Christians who see things differently.”

In looking at the future, Conservative Mennonite Conference will likely follow one of two options—we may reaffirm our commitment to following Jesus in the way of peace, or we may join the mainstream evangelical world in its support of Augustine’s doctrine of “just war.” Showalter concluded with the “hope that we reaffirm our conviction that Christ-followers do not kill their enemies, even when the government instructs them to,” with the hope and prayer “that a new generation of radical followers of Jesus discovers for themselves what expressions those convictions will take in their era...not primarily because it’s part of our history and must therefore be preserved,” but because “it’s the life Jesus invites us to.”

Seminars & Round Tables

In the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions, the conference was filled with round table talk, as well as several seminars, all focusing on various aspects of peace-making. Whether driving or gaming, business or friendship, the family or the church, religion or politics—every area of our lives needs to be filled with peace. Discussion was animated, and some conversations continued long after closing time.

