

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 58, No. 17 ■ August 14, 2009



*How wonderful to use our career as an opportunity to glorify God.*

**Inside this issue**

- From Missionary to Minister to Missionary
- Complication of Being Born Again
- The Voyage that Shook the World





R. Aasman

# Complication of Being Born Again

Rev. R. Aasman is minister of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church at Edmonton, Alberta  
[raasman@telusplanet.net](mailto:raasman@telusplanet.net)

*Becoming a Christian means a whole new way of thinking and living*

As pastor of a city congregation I often see unfamiliar faces in the worship services. After the service you get a chance to meet these visitors and have a chat. You learn that they were in the neighbourhood and just dropped by to see what church is all about. They have no church background and they are not Christians. Often there is an emptiness or problem in their lives that has drawn them toward spiritual healing. It is gratifying to have them in our worship service and it is even more gratifying to see them return. They are placing themselves in the workshop of the Holy Spirit, and as a result, the miracle of faith might be worked in them. This is one of the most gratifying things that can happen in the life of a believer and congregation: to see God's grace bring a person from darkness to light.

---

*It is breath-taking freedom to be redeemed in Jesus Christ and to be born again*

---

Naturally this leads to many discussions and visits between a pastor and a newcomer to the faith. These discussions are not without difficulties. The fact is it is a huge transformation to become a Christian. People have told me that they were overwhelmed by the changes demanded of them. There are the obvious things of course: Sunday as a day of rest and singing from the *Book of Praise*. Those who grow up in the faith see it as natural and a blessing. However, for someone coming into the church this is foreign. But

that is only part of it. Becoming a Christian means a whole new way of thinking and living. Someone once said to me: it is complicated becoming a Christian. Before this my life was so easy. I did what I wanted. Now life is complex. This person had not been a bad person in the sense that he was a murderer or bank robber or pornographer. But attitudes and practices regarding authority, sexuality, marriage, acquiring material possessions, and talking about other people were governed strictly by what he felt like doing. Life became complicated by the clear teaching of Jesus Christ that a person needs to be born again. There has to be a radical, life-transforming change in everything a person thinks, says, and does.

## **Need to be born again**

In John 3 Jesus Christ said to Nicodemus, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." It is clear from the way the Lord Jesus says this that it is not negotiable. It is absolutely necessary to be born again. Without it a person cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus goes on to explain that this is the miraculous and gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

Being born again is a second birth and it is a spiritual birth. Everyone has a first birth which is a physical birth from a mother. The second birth is a spiritual birth brought about by the Holy Spirit. Paul describes this in great detail in Ephesians 2 where we read:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

**EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:**

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal  
Coeditors: R. Aasman, E. Kampen, Cl. Stam, C. Van Dam

**ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER:**

Clarion, 57 Oakridge Drive South, St. Albert, AB T8N 7H2  
E-Mail: [veenendaal@shaw.ca](mailto:veenendaal@shaw.ca)

**ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:**

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.  
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5  
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

**Subscriptions:** [clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca](mailto:clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca)

**Advertisements:** [clarionads@premierpublishing.ca](mailto:clarionads@premierpublishing.ca)

**Website:** [www.premierpublishing.ca](http://www.premierpublishing.ca)

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

**Subscription Rates for 2009**

	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$49.00*	\$ 81.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds	\$62.00	\$ 80.00
International	\$90.00	\$135.00

\*Including 5% GST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$16.00 per column inch

Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch

We reserve the right to refuse ads.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, Canada through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

**Cancellation Agreement**

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

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

**Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.**

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

**Useful Link:** [www.canrc.org](http://www.canrc.org)

work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Paul is addressing the Ephesians but it holds true for the entire human race: all are dead in their sins and following their master who is the devil. All are by nature objects of God's wrath. But then Paul continues:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

This work of God the Holy Spirit is a wonderful, radical transformation of our life. When we are led by the Holy Spirit rather than the evil one, our lives can live to the praise and glory of God in all good works. The entire Scripture is our guide for such renewed, holy living.

**Is this complication?**

On the one hand we know that we need to be born again: our entire life in thought, word, and deed needs to be radically transformed. On the other hand we know that this is a beautiful, exhilarating experience and therefore we delight in this rebirth. It is breath-taking freedom. Paul said that apart from Jesus Christ we are dead in our trespasses and sins. In Jesus Christ we are made alive in Jesus Christ and

**In This Issue**

Editorial – Complication of Being Born Again  
— R. Aasman .....402

Treasures, New and Old – A Masterpiece (2)  
— R. Ijbema .....405

God: The Architect of Evil? (2) — W.L. Bredenhof .....406

Ray of Sunshine — C. Gelms and P. Gelms .....409

From Missionary to Minister to Missionary — A. Smid .....410

Forty-Sixth Annual Fraser Valley Women's League Day  
— L. Bredenhof .....412

Education Matters — K. Sikkema .....414

Letter to the Editor .....418

Book Reviews — Reviewed by DongWoo Oh,  
Reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof .....419

are made the workmanship of God. For someone coming into the faith that may seem complicated at first. It seems such a radical departure from life as it was once lived. But it is departure from a dead life and an entrance into a new life.

The culture of our secular world glorifies such things as sexual freedom, use of alcohol and drugs, materialism, and the general pursuit of whatever makes a person feel happy. If that means having multiple sexual partners, getting divorced, smoking pot, striving to be rich, and so on, then people are encouraged to do exactly that. Is this freedom? Is this happiness? Is a man who divorces his wife, has a new girlfriend every few months, and smokes pot really free? He may think so. But it is the empty life of a narcissist, that is, the pursuit of pleasure without regard for the true wellbeing of oneself or others.

---

*As church of Jesus Christ we have a lot to offer someone who comes off the street*

---

It is breath-taking freedom to be redeemed in Jesus Christ and to be born again so that we are led by his Holy Spirit and produce the fruit of the Spirit. This affects lifestyle. How wonderful it is to be dating a boy or girl and remain holy in the relationship, growing closer to each other in the Lord. How wonderful it is to have a career where we make an income that allows us to provide for our family without turning money and material things into a god. Being born again also affects one's world view. Life is seen as an opportunity to use all of life to the glory of God. Education, politics, and social needs are opportunities for people who are filled with the Holy Spirit to advance the kingdom of God so that God's Name is glorified and people may live peaceful, decent lives.

## From death to life

It is understandable that newcomers to the faith often see challenges and complications in living the new life of a Christian. Those of us who profess to be Christians may struggle with the same thing when our old nature pulls us toward a sinful lifestyle. But eventually, by God's grace, they will see that this is not a complication at all. It is a sweet blessing and freedom. It is a blessing to be free from the power of the evil one and be led by the Holy Spirit in a life that loves both God and neighbour. That is how God originally created us. It is what we are destined for. It is what we can experience in a preliminary way right now.

As church of Jesus Christ we have a lot to offer someone who comes off the street and is looking for some meaning or direction in life. We should not feel embarrassed or reluctant about the gospel. We should feel proud of what God has given us and what we can share with others. Equally important is that the unbeliever who comes into our midst looking for answers does not just hear the gospel from us, but sees the gospel in us as we joyfully live as children of God who have been washed in the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ.



## Special Event Submissions

Submissions covering special events should be sent to the Copy Manager within two months of the event's date; there is a maximum length of 1000 words. If pictures of the event are available, please submit them (with a recommended digital size of 1200 x 1500 pixels or larger) with the article.

R. Ijbema



Rev. R. Ijbema is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Chilliwack, B.C. [r.ijbema@hotmail.com](mailto:r.ijbema@hotmail.com)

## A Masterpiece (Part 2)



**MATTHEW 13:52**

*The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic.*

Psalm 29:3, 4

The world is a masterpiece. We can come to that conclusion not only from nature itself, but from Psalm 29 as well. The world is a masterpiece – may all glory be to the Lord!

But sometimes there may be another voice in your heart. Not even the voice of the evil one, but a voice from within yourself. You know the Lord, you share the awe for his creation, you acknowledge Him as the Master. Yet is this world really a masterpiece? In this world of ours, is there not so much darkness that you can hardly see the hand of the Master? The beauty of the Rockies is astonishing and there you can sense the power of God. But do you remember Hurricane Katrina, some years ago? That was even more astonishing perhaps, but was it the power of the Lord? Sometimes the world doesn't seem to be a masterpiece. The world is a broken world, broken into dark pieces.

Now listen again to the message of Psalm 29. When we think of creation's beauty, we might picture fields of flowers on the hillsides and sunsets at the sea. Yet David hears the voice of the Lord in the thunder, in fire, in earthquakes, and the like.

And David does, because the Holy Spirit wants to make us think deeper when it comes to light and darkness in this creation. No, the Bible does not say the Lord started

it all by saying, "Let there be darkness," and there was darkness. But the Holy Spirit teaches us that God is God enough to be light and to give light and yet not to be absent in the darkness. When the thunder rolls and the earth is shaking, you still can hear his voice. The Lord of light rules over the darkness.

But how can the Holy Spirit depict the Lord as being the Mighty One, even over the dark sides of creation? How can God keep his holiness and righteousness when He is also called Lord of the storms? How can He be the good Master of all when evil strikes?

The first thing to say is that for David, this must have been a matter of believing more than of seeing. He had been shepherd in the hills of Judah in his younger days. He must have hidden during thunderstorms more than once. His heathen colleagues told him, "Hear the power of Baal!" But David knew it was the voice of the Lord. "But how can your God, the Good and Almighty One, have a hand in this awesome darkness, David?" And David may not have known how exactly, but he knew that God did. He is Master, even when the darkness surrounds us.

The Lord of the light maintains his power in the dark. And there has been a Son of David who could relate to that. His name was Jesus Christ and He was not only

the true son of David, He was also his Master and Lord. He was crucified – and all the lights went off and the earth was shaken. There is a tension between the almighty goodness of the Lord and all the dark misery in the world. But we believe that God mastered this tension on Golgotha. And just like David, I cannot find the words to say how exactly it happened, but with more certainty than David I can say that it did happen. The eternal Good One goes under in the darkness and He rises up again.

Where does that leave us? The Bible calls the world a masterpiece and Psalm 29 claims that you can even hear the voice of the Lord through the darkness. That leaves us to apply that truth to ourselves and in our own lives. And that's a hard one. In a way, it's much easier to ascribe the world's misery to the negative powers surrounding you. Or to pretend that what happens to you happens by accident. But to see the Lord, who is working through both the darkness and the light in your life, is not easy to believe. Of course you cannot say that a destructive hurricane is a masterpiece, nor is the death of a loved one. But the point is, are we willing to hear the voice of the Master, who says that He knows the way in the darkness? Do we hear the voice of the Lord?





Rev. W. L. Bredenhof is co-pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church at Langley, British Columbia  
[wbredenh@telus.net](mailto:wbredenh@telus.net)

# God: The Architect of Evil? (Part 2 of 2)

In the first instalment, we noted that the problem of evil is real and it must be taken seriously. It is one of the foremost objections brought to the Christian faith and one which we will also encounter regularly in our conversations with unbelievers. Apologetics is the discipline that looks at the Bible for guidance in how to address these sorts of problems.

Basically, the problem of evil boils down to this: if God is all-powerful, then He must be able to prevent or remove evil if he wants to. If God is all-good, then certainly He wants to prevent or remove evil. Yet no one can deny that evil exists. Thus, unbelievers will say that there is a problem in our worldview, our way of looking at the world, including the place, character and existence of God. They'll say that there is a logical defect in the Christian faith.

## Addressing the problem: Defining good and evil

How do we address this? As noted last time, we should first openly acknowledge that evil is indeed a serious problem. We must never be glib about it or minimize it. But then where do we go from there? We have to recognize something about the unbeliever.

The fact is, he or she acknowledges the existence of evil, and on the flip side, the existence of good. So, we need to ask the question: what does the unbeliever mean by "good"? By what standard does the unbeliever determine what is good or what is evil? What are the presuppositions, or most fundamental and unquestioned beliefs of the unbeliever, that allow him or her to make any moral judgments at all?

Perhaps you'll meet unbelievers who say that "good" is whatever most people think is good. But just because a large number of people think that something is good, that doesn't automatically make it good, and even unbelievers can see that. The best example is the one from Antony Flew's youth. The majority in Nazi Germany believed it was "good" to exterminate the Jews. So, is it good? The vast majority of unbelievers you'll meet will agree that the Nazi holocaust was patently and absolutely evil.

On the other hand, perhaps you'll meet unbelievers who say that "good" is whatever you think is good. If that's the case, I can punch you in the nose and that's good because I think it's good. You might not think it's good, but it doesn't really matter. I think it's

good, therefore it's good. Or we could think of abusing children again. The parents of that poor Russian child in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* thought it was good to abuse her, to rape her, and to torture her. If they think it's good, who are we to impose our standards of morality on them? You see, when pressed most unbelievers will be forced to admit that good and evil are not determined by our opinions, but by some objective standard outside of ourselves.

The problem of evil is a problem for the unbeliever. It's a problem because he or she cannot account for the existence of objective good and evil in the world. Unbelievers can talk glibly about good and evil being relative, but when they're faced with atrocities like war, rape, and torture, they'll usually back down. They'll begin agreeing that morality, that good and evil, are in fact, absolute and objective realities. However, the problem is that they cannot account for these things within their way of looking at the world, their worldview. With the unbeliever's worldview, there is no valid reason for saying that anything is evil in itself, instead it all becomes a matter of personal feelings, or perhaps the

agreements of a society to live a certain way.

We can be thankful, then, when unbelievers get upset about evil and about suffering. In order to get upset, they have to presuppose or assume the reality, the truth of the Christian worldview. They have to assume that there is in fact an absolute standard of good and evil, even if they can't identify it as being God's law. With their arguments they reveal the truth of what we read in Romans 1 and 2, namely that unbelievers know in their hearts that God exists and that He will judge in righteousness, but they suppress this truth. They live in self-denial. On the one hand, they speak as if some things are inherently evil (for instance, child abuse), but on the other hand they'll talk as if good and evil are a matter of your own personal choices. We have to call unbelievers on this inconsistency. In order to argue against the Christian faith, they have to secretly borrow certain truths from the Christian faith. To put it in Greg Bahnsen's words, "Antitheism presupposes theism to make its case."

And so the problem of evil is a problem for the unbeliever rather than the believer. As Christians we can make perfect sense out of our disgust and hatred for things like child abuse. The non-Christian cannot. Our moral outrage fits with our worldview, our way of looking at the world, it fits with the Christian faith. The unbeliever's worldview simply cannot account for the existence of evil.

## Defending the Christian worldview

But that still leaves us with this supposed problem in the Christian worldview. To remind you, the problem looks like this:

God is all-powerful.

God is all-good.

Evil and suffering exist.

The unbeliever has a problem with the third premise or statement. However, from the unbeliever's perspective we have a problem holding to all three of these truths together. There appears to be inconsistency and incoherence in the Christian worldview.

---

*The unbeliever's worldview simply cannot account for the existence of evil*

---

However, if we presuppose or assume that God is perfectly and absolutely good, as the Bible obviously teaches us, then we have to evaluate everything in the light of that presupposition. So, when the believer sees evil events or things or suffering in the world, and thinks about it, he has to be consistent with that presupposition or assumption of God's goodness. In other words, we infer that God must have a morally good reason for the evil and suffering that exist. If we hold to all four of these truths or premises, then there is no logical contradiction or



*Most unbelievers will be forced to admit that good and evil are not determined by our opinions.*

inconsistency in the Christian worldview. It is part of our growth in the Christian faith, part of our sanctification, that we come to see that whatever evil and suffering exist, exists for a good and just reason, even if we can't know what that reason is.

## Two biblical illustrations

To illustrate this, we can point to two examples from the Bible. Think of the great injustice and evil done against Joseph by his brothers: throwing him into a well and then selling him to slave-traders. Imagine doing that to your own flesh and blood, your own

# Church News

Called by the church of Denver,  
CO, USA:

**Candidate R. DeJonge**

---

Classis Ontario West of June 17,  
2009 extended:

**Candidate Stuart Harsevoort**

permission to speak an edifying  
word.

---

Called by the church of Vernon,  
British Columbia:

**Rev. R. Bredenhof**

of St. Albert, Alberta.

---

Called by the church of  
Glanbrook, Ontario:

**Candidate R. Vermeulen**

---

**Change of email address:**

Rev. and Mrs. C. & R Bosch  
cbosch1@cogeco.ca

brother! Joseph ends up in Egypt and then, again through no fault of his own, he ends up in prison. There's injustice and evil done against an innocent man. But in Genesis 45, when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, he tells them that it was God who was behind all of this. God sent Joseph on ahead and allowed him to suffer all this injustice and evil so as to preserve life. Then in Genesis 50, after Jacob dies, Joseph reassures his brothers. His brothers think that since Jacob their father is dead, now Joseph is going to try and get his revenge. But note what Joseph says to them, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."

That's a good example, but it's not the best one. The best one is the greatest crime in all history. I said

that Joseph was an innocent man, but that's not completely true, is it? He was still a sinner in God's eyes. However, there was a man who was completely and totally innocent, also innocent in God's eyes. Our Lord Jesus suffered and died, though He was, of Himself, totally righteous. The greatest evil ever perpetrated happened two thousand years ago on Golgotha. Lawless and wicked men put a truly innocent man to death and made Him suffer in horrific ways. Yet, what does Peter say in Acts 2:23? He says that our Lord Jesus was handed over "by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God." He says that God ordained this and he brought it about for a good purpose: the salvation of all who believe in Christ.

---

*We infer that God must have a morally good reason for the evil and suffering that exist*

---

You see, the problem of evil is not actually a problem for the Christian. It's only an *apparent* problem. When considered in the light of all that the Bible teaches, we can make some sense of evil and suffering in the world. No, we won't understand why every instance occurs and we may struggle with that. We may struggle with the suffering and evil that we've experienced in our lives. But in the end we can trust our heavenly Father that He always does what is best. He always does what fits with his righteous and good character. As Abraham says

in Genesis 18:25, "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

The problem of evil boils down to whether or not we will trust God and his Word, or whether we place faith in our human thinking, abilities, and values. It's a question of faith. It's a question of ultimate authority. That takes us back to the Garden of Eden and the question that the serpent asked Eve, "Did God really say. . .? Come on Eve, you can judge for yourself, you don't need the Word of God." Should we take God and his Word in faith or should we judge God on our own grounds and on our own terms? In the words of C. S. Lewis, do we dare to put "God in the dock"?

This is what we need to gently and lovingly drive home to our unbelieving friends, co-workers, and fellow students. We need to demonstrate that the Christian worldview makes sense of the world. We need to tear down the non-Christian worldview and bring unbelievers to see that without Christ, and without his Word, nothing makes sense. Moreover, we need to be able to winsomely and persuasively share the good news of our Saviour with them.

---

**NOTE:**

I gratefully acknowledge Greg Bahnsen's treatment of this subject in *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith* (Texarkana: Covenant Media Press, 1996). There are other ways of approaching the problem of evil. For one alternative approach, see my article "Conversation on a River," *Outreach* 10 (April 2001), 6-7. This article is available on-line at [www.reformedevangelism.com](http://www.reformedevangelism.com) – look under the "Library" tab.





# Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Patricia Gelms

Hello, my name is Mary Vandeburgt. I was born September 11, 1956. I was born with a hole in my heart; but it is still filled with love and laughter. I would love to tell you about my life ... it's busy!!! Monday morning I go to a Bethesda fellowship group, we do lots of singing and praising God and sometimes I have to help and clean up dishes, but that's ok, since I will just talk to all of my friends.

On Tuesday mornings I go to the Abbotsford Canadian Reformed Bible study group; it's really nice. I love to make sure I do all my questions, but I don't always get a chance to talk. Oh well, that's ok. On Tuesday nights I sometimes join a group of ladies who help me do Bible study with Wilma Vandrongelen. That's when I get to talk a lot.

Wednesday mornings I pack my lunch and I go to help at John Calvin School and help the teachers. They love it when I bring baking, but that only happens on my birthday. I have been helping at school so long that I know lots of kids. I have seen them all grow up and all of them are taller than me. That happens when the kids are in grade 5 or 6 but because I help at school lots of people know me, and wherever I go, someone will say "Hi Mary." On Wednesday nights I like to make cards. Some ladies from church teach me how to make the nice scrap booking cards. I'd love to send you one of my cards that I made if you write me and tell me when your birthday is.

On Thursdays I stay home to clean my house and do laundry, but if the weather is nice, I'll forget my work and walk to the mall to pick up the things that I need.

On Friday mornings I go to the Bethesda office and make sure that it is nice and clean. I vacuum, and water the plants, do lots of dusting, and make sure that the washrooms are clean. It's busy but I don't mind. Every other Friday is my fun night, with a group from Bethesda. We love to go bowling, watch a fun movie, or even go out to Vancouver and have lots of fun there. Carrie is my leader and we are always laughing.

Saturday is the day that I have to do my housework, especially if I was gone on Thursday. When I am all done my work, I am allowed to go to Tim Hortons and I always see someone I know.

On Sunday I am allowed to visit different families of the church and I have lunch and sometimes dinner at

their house. It's always nice. I have to let you know that I live at a new house now, it's a very nice basement suite. I have two bedrooms now, but that's ok, because I can make puzzles or crafts without cleaning it up. That's fun!!

So I am busy every day, I love to keep busy, and I always have time to laugh. I used to love a coffee or two but the doctor says I can only have one a day, but that doesn't matter. Please come by and see my new place sometime and we'll have a coffee (or tea).



With love,  
Mary Vandeburgt

## Birthdays in September

- 8 **MARSHA MOESKER will be 32**  
6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 11 **MARY VANDEBURGT will be 53**  
32555 Willingdon Crescent, Abbotsford, BC V2T 1S1
- 14 **JERRY BONTEKOE will be 45**  
Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 22 **NICK PRINZEN will be 37**  
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 29 **PAUL DIELEMAN will be 40**  
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

Congratulations to you all who are celebrating a birthday in the month of September. We wish you all God's rich blessings and a wonderful day, as you celebrate God's goodness to you. Best wishes and till next month.

*If you have somebody to add to our birthday list or contact information needs to be changed,*

*please let us know:*

548 Kemp Road East, RR 2,  
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

Phone: (905) 563-0380, email: jcorgelms@porchlight.ca

# From Missionary to Minister to Missionary

At an enjoyable May 29, 2009 farewell evening, Rev. Henderik Versteeg and his wife Sr. Rita Versteeg said goodbye to the congregation at Chatham after a faithful service of twelve years as minister of the Word and as help meet. It was a sad-happy evening as Chatham lost its minister but the mission fields in Papua New Guinea gained a missionary (and nurse, Sr. Rita). Three of their five children including seven grand children could be present, the youngest one being only two days old.

Master of Ceremonies Br. Andy Beintema opened with the reading of Psalm 89:1-18, expressing God's greatness and his love and faithfulness towards his people. That love and faithfulness was also evident in Chatham's past, beginning as a Protestant Reformed immigrant congregation to the Canadian Reformed Church of today. The nearly full-house gathering at the Eben-Ezer Canadian Reformed Church then sang Psalm 47: 1 and 3 in jubilant tones. After prayer and a word of thanks to Rev. and Sr. Versteeg for all the work done in and for the congregation, the program went into full swing.

*The Versteegs with their three sons – quiz time.*



Photo by Menco Wieske

"Who knows the congregation/minister better, the minister's family or the congregation?" was the challenge put on by the Teen Society. This was followed by the singing "This is the day that the Lord has made" both in English and Tok Pisin, the language of PNG, by the children of the Eben-Ezer School – much appreciated by the minister and Sr. Rita. Other greatly enjoyable pieces were a piano duet by two Eben-Ezer school children, a beautiful organ-piano duet, an excellent violin solo with piano accompaniment, a singing duet all interspersed with singing, mission poems, and with speeches both serious and humorous by men's and women's societies.

Several skits were presented including one by the young people showing the many hats (self-made with lettering) the minister wears in church and in the federation all wearing fake beards to imitate, or rather impersonate Rev. Versteeg, of course. Then there was a "Couples Chronicle" – how they met – Study Weekend. "Teaching de Dominee how to farm," a Yankee-Dutch poetic skit complete with hoes and pitchforks and with reference to no-till planters causing a lot of laughter.

All ended up thanking the minister and Sr. Rita for all the work done in the congregation and wishing them the Lord's indispensable blessings (ref.



Isaiah 52:7 and 1 Corinthians 3). One of the men's societies presented Rev. and Sr. Versteeg with a painting with the text Amos 5:24. On behalf of the congregation, Council Chairman Br. Rene Tamminga presented Rev. Versteeg (and Sr. Rita) with a video



camera as a farewell gift with the comment – “a picture is worth a thousand words” wondering if she could now match Rev. Versteeg’s being a man of many words. When back on furlough we may yet benefit from that video camera. After thanking Rev. and Sr. Versteeg for the blessings received through them and Rev. and Sr. Versteeg thanking the congregation for the wonderful surprise evening, we sang Hymn 65 in praise and thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father. The evening was completed with prayer followed by refreshments.



# Forty-Sixth Annual Fraser Valley Women's League Day



On a nice sunny morning, the forty-sixth annual Fraser Valley Women's League Day convened in the Free Reformed church building in Chilliwack, B.C. After our cup of coffee and treat, visiting with old friends and making new ones, our chairlady for the day, Mrs. Kirsten Blom, on behalf of the Chilliwack CanRC, opened the day by inviting us to sing Psalm 128:1, 2, and 3. After prayer she welcomed everyone and introduced the discussion chairlady, Mrs. Alida VanderHorst of Willoughby CanRC, and our guest speaker, Rev. Jason VanVliet of Surrey Maranatha CanRC. Kirsten then read from Genesis 1:24-31 and 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. Rev. VanVliet was given the floor to present his introduction, but not before explaining to us his three options as to how he

determined where the correct meeting place was, as it was obviously not the Chilliwack CanRC building! After some help from the caretaker's son, who called his mom on a cell phone and printed a computer map showing how to get to the correct place, thankfully Rev. VanVliet arrived at the right place still on time!

Rev. VanVliet's topic was titled: "Calvin and *La Querelle Des Femmes*: Reformed Answers to Gender Questions." Since this year is the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin, we would see what Calvin's understanding was of this gender issue. *La Querelle des*

*Femmes* literally translated means "the debate (or quarrel) about women." This was a movement that began in the fifteenth century, even before Calvin's time. In the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, there were over 900 publications debating the issue of the position of women, ranging from not even being human to being superior to men! Even the Roman Catholic Church at that time said women were not created in the image of God. Calvin was aware of this dispute and so preached sermons on 1 Corinthians 11 and Genesis 1. He addressed the particular problem of hair covering





in the Corinthian church where the women worshiped with their hair uncovered and the men with elaborate coverings as if trying to look like women and "so change the order of nature." In creation there was a clear distinction between the sexes and this was "very good," and still today there should be a beauty and glory in the *distinctive genders*, also in fashion. Calvin also dealt with the four "ranks," God, Christ, man, and woman, and showed that as it was not a negative thing that Christ was "subject" to the Father for our salvation, so in the same way can women give thanks for the supremely *ordained headship* of the man over the woman. Even though men and women were equally created in his image, (Calvin's later sermon on Genesis 1:27) and equally restored in the image of God through Christ, our attitude should still be shaped by the "order" given in creation. And so also in the church there must be a well functioning order where men and women have distinct but vital and complimentary functions. Calvin's sixteenth century voice directed the people back to Christ and to creation. As 1 Corinthians 11 brings us back to Genesis 1, so we too can go forward today and find our direction with our focus on our redeemed position through Christ *and* our distinctly ordained position instituted at creation. Rev.

VanVliet had shown us clearly that the issues of gender, headship, fashion, etc. that were present in the church in Calvin's time are no different than the issues that still affect us today. "There is nothing new under the sun!"

We then sang Psalm 8:4 and 5 after which all ladies were invited to gather into discussion groups. After a half hour of discussing a couple assigned questions, we reconvened into the one large group and sang Hymn 54:1-5. Kirsten led the lunch devotions by reading from Philippians 2:1-11, leading in prayer, and then explaining the lunch procedure. The Chilliwack ladies hosted a lovely luncheon of delicious buns, many varied salads, and a huge dessert buffet.

After feeling refreshed, we reconvened for the afternoon session. Mrs. Michelle vanderBoom, on behalf of the Surrey Maranatha ladies, read a humorous tongue-in-cheek list of everyday situations of life in the

1550s, such as: most people got married in June as they had their annual bath in May! We learned of the origins of such expressions as "don't throw the baby out with the bathwater," "mind your own beeswax," and "losing face." We can be very thankful that we don't live in those times! We then sang Psalm 112:1, after which Alida opened it up to a general discussion on the morning's topic. The results of the morning's discussion groups seemed to focus on the issues of husband/wife, headship/submissive relationship, and on Christian fashion. Rev. VanVliet did an excellent job of answering these sometimes very difficult questions. After the introducer and chairladies were properly thanked, we sang Psalm 89:3. General business was dealt with, then after a closing prayer and the singing of the traditional Women's League Day song, another very enjoyable and learning day had come to an end.



Keith Sikkema

Mr. Keith Sikkema is principal of Dufferin Area Christian School in Orangeville, Ontario  
[ksikkema@istop.com](mailto:ksikkema@istop.com)

# The Voyage that Shook the World



This year is a commemorative year for two people of interest in Reformed education: John Calvin (1509-1564) and Charles Darwin (1809-1882). Calvin laid the foundation and identified the purpose for Christian education. Darwin's theory of evolution is dominant in public education. Among others, Christian education wants to arm students with an antidote to secular evolution belief. The International Apologetics Project (IAP; <http://covenantteacherscollege.com/iap.html>) has an active debate on this topic. Meanwhile, tolerance for a wide (and even disturbing) range of origins interpretations and its implications can be found at [www.reformedacademic.blogspot.com](http://www.reformedacademic.blogspot.com). This article reviews some differences between Calvin and Darwin, introduces Creation Ministries International (CMI), and reviews its Darwin documentary, *The Voyage that Shook the World*.

## Calvin and Darwin

Calvin's and Darwin's lives took some ironic turns. Calvin first trained to be a lawyer – but, by God's acknowledged grace, he became a preacher and defender of the truth about God. Darwin was preparing to be a parson, when naturalist interests qualified him to join the *Beagle* on a survey mission (1831-1836) – a trip which

led him to propose a theory in which "the Creator" at best set life in motion. Calvin lies buried in an unknown grave in Geneva – where the largest scientific instrument ever (CERN's LHC) is now expected to shed new light on "the origins of mass," "dark matter," and "the God particle." Darwin lies buried with England's illustrious in Westminster Abbey, where the Westminster Standards were drafted in the 1640s.

---

*Christian education wants to arm students with an antidote to secular evolution belief*

---

Both Calvin and Darwin led during great paradigm shifts. Through his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), Calvin led many to turn away from man-made religion and to give God the glory due Him. He defended that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, that the heavens declare God's glory, and that without his Word we know not how to know Him from creation (*Institutes* 1, VII; see also BC, Art 2). With his *The Origin of Species* (1859), Darwin epitomized the breakthrough of a proud secular

science, rejecting what God's Word said about origins and denying the Creator his due glory. He concluded that the Creator had breathed life into but a few forms, or into just one, and that all others "have been and are being evolved" from this. "Although much remains obscure. . . I can entertain no doubt. . . that the view. . . that each species has been independently created. . . is erroneous" (*The Origin of Species*, Introduction; Recapitulation and Conclusion). CERN's deep quest for origins probes along Darwin's lines of thought and misses what Calvin noted 100 metres above, a mere 450 years ago. Much of the ongoing debate on origins concerns ways in which science and Scripture might be reconciled.

## CMI

Creation Ministries International (CMI) has its Canadian head office in Kitchener, Ontario and wants to "support the church in proclaiming the truth of the Bible and thus its gospel message, and provide real-world answers to the most-asked questions in the vital area of creation/evolution, where the Bible is most under attack today – Genesis." CMI has a distinct mission-oriented perspective and uses its focus on origins and science to teach how great God the

Creator is and that salvation only exists through Jesus Christ. These are recurring themes on the CMI website and in its popular magazine, *Creation*. *Creation's* Christian perspective is a breath of fresh air compared to *National Geographic's* blatant evolutionist stance. CMI also helps one to not gullibly accept interpretations of scientific discoveries in the media, as it questions the credibility of whatever secular writers may present as proven fact. There is much in what CMI espouses that can be endorsed and a visit to their website is time well spent (<http://creation.com>).

Like many evangelical organizations, CMI works with a "Statement of Faith," which operates like a creed. Some articles from CMI's statement of faith are given in the sidebar to this article, including a few questionable positions. To state, for instance, that the authority of Scripture includes its assertions in such fields as history and science requires explanation. All too easily, CMI authors will take Bible texts as proof for a certain interpretation of data. As the account of God's plan of salvation, we should be careful to not read the Bible as a handbook on questions of science and history – even if it provides much that is of scientific or historical interest. The Belgic Confession (Art 5) simply refers to the intent of Scripture: *for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith*. CMI's outspoken stance that there was no death at all *before* the fall implies much about how life must have changed at the fall – which raises many other questions. The Belgic Confession (Art 14) limits speaking about physical and spiritual death

as a result of sin *to people only*. CMI can help in the discussion about origins, but its statement of faith would bind consciences beyond the confessions and creeds of the church. While CMI maintains that it has a better story of origins than evolution theory, one should not uncritically assume that everything CMI says is scripturally sound. On the continuum from Calvin to Darwin, however, it sits far from the latter and close to the former.

### The Voyage

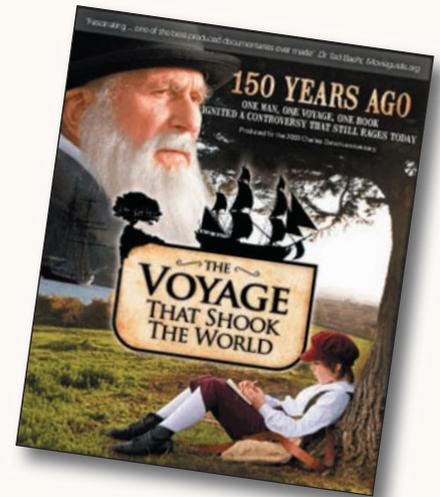
On June 27, 2009, CMI organized a gala fundraiser and the Canadian premiere of its Darwin documentary, *The Voyage that Shook the World*. There were over 100 people in attendance and CMI staff effectively prepared and ran

---

*The viewer is left questioning the validity of Darwin's theory and wondering whether there is a better "grand narrative" with which to understand life and origins*

---

the event. CMI geologist Dr. Emil Silvestru presented the film's history from conception in 2006 to production in 2008. For its production, CMI established a subsidiary, *Fathom Media*, which helped reduce negative bias and discrimination during interviews and in organizing the shoots.



With too little time to retrace the *Beagle's* entire voyage, the CMI team focused on the Santa Cruz River in Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and the Galapagos Islands. Dr. Silvestru pointed out evidence of a great flood that Darwin missed along the river – in part because he was not looking for it and in part because the *Beagle* turned around well before reaching its source. As a result, he never saw the massive glacier which feeds the river. Dr. Silvestru elaborated on Darwin's mistaken understanding that Fuegian natives, as a less developed class, could not be civilized. Evolutionary thinking has viewed one class of people as superior to others, killing millions in the twentieth century: Nazism, Bolshevism, Maoism, the Khmer Rouge, the Rwandan genocide, and abortion. Dr. Silvestru now dreams about preparing many people for "receiving the gospel" through Christian geography, history, and discovery channels. Some key people in the production of the documentary addressed the audience by video, including Joe Boot of the Ezra Institute for Contemporary Christianity, Rod Hembree of the Orangeville Good Friends Fellowship and CMI founder Dr. Carl Wieland.

## Documentary

The documentary presents Darwin as a youth who liked to ask questions and fabricate stories and who grew up in a Church of England environment of Unitarian and free-thinking humanists. It was his interest in geology and botany (rather than his theological studies at Christ's College, University of Cambridge) that qualified him to keep captain FitzRoy company on the *Beagle*. While sailing the Atlantic, Darwin

read Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*. In it, Lyell rejected the Genesis account of origins and argued that the earth's history was recorded in millions of years of gradual erosion, sedimentation, uplift, and subsidence – as shown in subsequent layers of rock. This was formative for Darwin's preconceived notions, with which he would interpret the data he collected along the way. Along the Santa Cruz River, Darwin held that layers of rock had been deposited over eons – and missed the

evidence that they must have been deposited rapidly in fast flowing water. Darwin also missed the possibility that continental uplift could occur quickly, as he was looking for "deep time."

Darwin did not see God as the creator of many species or kinds and held that people developed from more primitive forms. The Fuegians were more primitive than the English, he believed. On the Galapagos Islands, marine and land iguanas are found to hybridize – which indicates that

Some articles from CMI's statement of Faith

- The scientific aspects of creation are important, but are secondary in importance to the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as Sovereign, Creator, Redeemer and Judge.
- The sixty-six books of the Bible are the written Word of God. The Bible is divinely inspired and inerrant throughout. Its assertions are factually true in all the original autographs. It is the supreme authority, not only in all matters of faith and conduct, but in everything it teaches. Its authority is not limited to spiritual, religious or redemptive themes but includes its assertions in such fields as history and science.
- The final guide to the interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself.
- The account of origins presented in Genesis is a simple but factual presentation of actual events and therefore provides a reliable framework for scientific research into the question of the origin and history of life, mankind, the Earth, and the universe.
- The various original life forms (kinds), including mankind, were made by direct creative acts of God. The living descendants of any of the original kinds (apart from man) may represent more than one species today, reflecting the genetic potential within the original kind. Only limited biological changes (including mutational deterioration) have occurred naturally within each kind since creation.

- Death (both physical and spiritual) and bloodshed entered into this world subsequent to, and as a direct consequence of, man's sin.
- All things necessary for our salvation are set down in Scripture.

Members of the board of CMI also hold the following:

- Scripture teaches a recent origin for man and the whole creation.
- The days in Genesis do not correspond to geologic ages, but are six consecutive twenty-four hour days of creation.
- The Noachian Flood was a significant geological event and much (but not all) fossiliferous sediment originated at that time.
- The "gap" theory has no basis in Scripture. Nor has the day-age idea (so-called "progressive creation"), or the Framework Hypothesis or theistic evolution.
- The view, commonly used to evade the implications or the authority of biblical teaching, that knowledge and/or truth may be divided into "secular" and "religious," is rejected.
- By definition, no apparent, perceived, or claimed evidence in any field, including history and chronology, can be valid if it contradicts the scriptural record. Of primary importance is the fact that evidence is always subject to interpretation by fallible people who do not possess all information.

they are, in fact, not different species. Although deep time should have led to a blurring of differences between them, this did, in fact, not happen – proving the islands' relatively young age. For lack of time spent in the area, Darwin could not see the rapid changes of beaks among successive generations of finches. In the end, he had to define his theory and use his collection to see how the data supported it. Darwin also struggled with the reality of evil and found that the "survival of the fittest" gave an answer to his questions. When three of his children died, he did not believe that "a good God could let that happen" and his resulting theory supports a worldview that resists the existence of God. Just like he liked to fabricate stories as a child, Darwin created a "grand narrative" that explained the world for people, but avoided the scriptural origin of life.

Throughout the documentary, interspersed with beautiful footage of the places to which it refers and several re-enactments, leading evolutionist and creationist scholars present their understanding of Darwin's challenges in excerpts from interviews. As a result, the viewer is left questioning the validity of Darwin's theory and wondering whether there is a better "grand narrative" with which to understand life and origins. The documentary does not give the answer to those questions, as it does not present itself as a Christian or creationist production. The very pronounced stance CMI takes on points of hermeneutics

and theology does not come to the surface and its strong belief that it offers a better "grand narrative" remains in the background in the documentary proper. As Richard Fangrad, CEO of CMI Canada explained, it is rather an outreach tool for non-believers. It assumes that the Bible is true, but shows this *softly*, so it would not stir up too much negative controversy.

### Recommendation

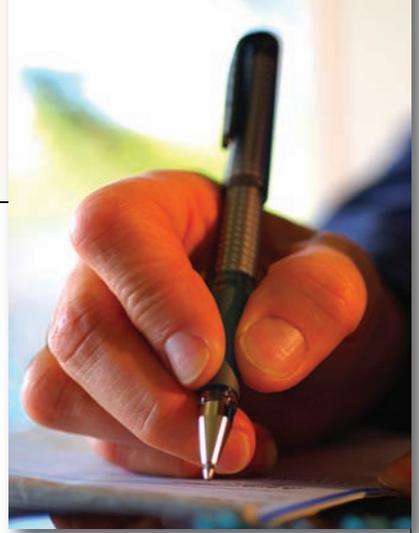
*The Voyage* can serve well as a discussion starter in the context of an apologetics or science class dealing with origins. It is too challenging for elementary school age viewers. Students who (are about to) go to college or university, their parents, and those with similar interests can benefit from discussing the documentary – and should count on delving deeper into the issues it presents. It may also serve in same pre or post confession classes if the topic comes up.

*The Voyage* (52 minutes, HD) will be released in September, 2009, as DVD (\$25.95) and Blu-ray (\$39.95). It is available at <http://creation.com/> or 1-888-251-5360. Public screenings of the documentary may require a license fee or the presence of a CMI presenter.

---

*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](mailto:obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us)





Dr. Visscher in a recent *Clarion* has written a wonderful and well deserved thank you to Free Reformed Dr. Maris for his work and experience he delivered to our Theological College. It is certainly gracious of Dr. Visscher to recognize and thank Dr. Maris.

Dr. Visscher writes, "We have learned once again that the ties of faith and the Spirit are greater than the ties of pen and ink (BC, Art 27)." I find that a surprising combination, pulling Article 27 into the picture. I recognize the superseding work of the Holy Spirit but I also recognize the duty to defend and maintain our doctrine. Dr. Maris' appointment to our college happened due to a setting aside of our college's governing rules, which were put in place and specifically clarified by Synod Smithers 2007, Attercliffe Council clarified that an appointment must be derived from among our church or a sister church.

Article 27 does not speak of denominations, pluralism, or an alliance of Reformed churches, etc. The very rule that was overlooked indicates the intent of Article 27 BC. What our church has in its confession I believe is in accordance with the Word of our Lord. The pen and paper referred to in Article 27 is our Canadian Reformed Church's confession, it is our Church's testimony, it is my confession, my testimony. I can acquire an "attestation" indicating this.

We compound the oversight in his appointment and diminish our confession's intent if we like the "Modernists" before the Doleantie present a confusing idea that the Spirit should be greater than doctrine. The Modernists felt confessional doctrine was in tension with the Holy Spirit. To join their spirit filled church regardless of which protestant church you attended they proposed you need only give up your church membership and be a Christian.

Now I am in no way saying Dr. Visscher is condoning non-confessional membership, but I do think Article 27 should not be presented in part or in full as justification of Dr. Maris' position at the college. There should be no suggestion that there is tension between our confessional doctrine and the work of the Holy Spirit. The overlooked rule in his appointment has specific intent that is derived

from Article 27. To leave the impression that pen and paper of Article 27 BC are less than the sense of unity experienced in this appointment would put in question why many martyrs filled with the Holy Spirit died for the truth of that article.

Tom Bosma

### Reply

I thank Br. Bosma for expressing his concerns and appreciate his desire to maintain doctrinal integrity. All I was suggesting with the reference to Article 27 of the Belgic Confession is as follows. Article 27 is saying that the catholic church is united not in the first place by common knowledge or formal ecclesiastical relations but by faith and the Spirit of God. What unites the believers is not that they know and recognize each other, first of all, but that they are known by God and have a common faith in Him. It is on the basis of that unity through the Spirit that the Belgic Confession goes on in articles 28 and 29 to speak about the need to draw the practical and necessary ecclesiastical consequences.

Sometimes, however, even when the consequences have not been drawn out ecclesiastically, we can still experience that unity of faith and the Spirit. Br. Bosma himself refers to that in his last line with a reference to the martyrs - many of whom died united with us by faith and the Spirit but not by a formal ecclesiastical relationship. So too in this instance. Sadly, the Free Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches have not formally recognized each other (though their European sisters have). That does not take away from the fact though that as Dr. J.W. Maris was among us to teach our students we experienced a profound and wonderful unity, by faith and the Spirit. That is what I, as principal of the Theological College, wish to acknowledge publicly.

Blessings,  
G.H. Visscher

*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 DongWoo Oh

***John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life,*  
Herman J. Selderhuis. IVP  
Academic (March 2009).**

**Additional Information:  
Paperback, 287 pages  
ISBN-10: 0830829210**

You think you know about John Calvin. . . ? Here is a book that will challenge your knowledge of this great reformer.

As Reformed believers, it is hard to miss the fact that 2009 marks 500 years since the birth of John Calvin. At the same time, we cannot dispense the hunch that John Calvin is more easily spoken of than known among us. We hear of him a lot but we cannot confidently say we know him. For that reason, it must be good to pick up a book written by him or a book about him to know who he was and what he thought. In terms of a book written by him, most of us would wisely grab his *Institutes*. When it comes to books *about* him, the amounts of available material can overwhelm anyone who attempts to master the subject. I would suggest that for a Reformed believer, the best possible choice is *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life* by Herman J. Selderhuis. The following reasons illustrate why this book is beneficial for any Reformed believer to read.

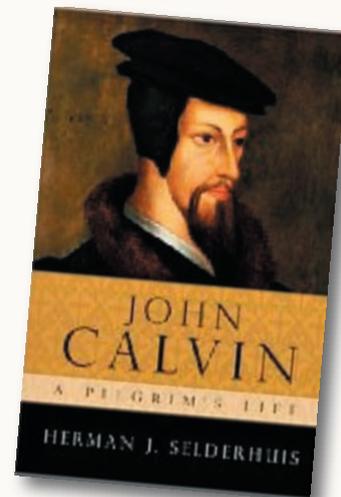
### **Perspective**

There are many ways to understand a single man. The same man can be a hero or a tyrant, depending on the perspective. I remember reading a book which compares Calvin with Vladimir Lenin, the Russian Communist leader. An interesting comparison, but I am not sure how good it is to describe a man who was a preacher of the church in this way. On the other hand, Selderhuis depicts Calvin as a

godly man who strived to serve the Lord despite his many weaknesses. According to the author, after Calvin's "conversion," his life can be summarised as God's advocate (p 22): "He would devote every minute of the rest of his life to the defence of God and of his cause." At the same time, the author does not simply embellish Calvin. Frequently, Calvin's mistakes and weaknesses are pointed out without any reservation. The most classic example is the author's frank disappointment concerning Calvin's idea of "witches" (p 139-140). At the end of the book, the author even expresses his difficulty with the efforts of Calvin scholars to defend Calvin from criticism (p 259). Why defend, argues the author, since Calvin himself expressed his weakness and failures? The net result is that we understand Calvin as a typical Christian who aspired to serve the Lord better, yet struggled with his weaknesses just like any of us.

### **Source**

The reason why the perspective presented by the author seems to be convincing is largely due to where he derives most of his information, namely, Calvin's own correspondence. Apparently Calvin himself believed that we learn most about people from their letters (p 8, 165). Calvin in his letters would certainly shatter whatever wrong caricatured images we have of him. Somehow, I thought that Calvin was a man without much emotion; anger seems likely, but love or friendship doesn't fit. Calvin's image to me was more or less that of an eccentric old professor who lived in his own world. I want to learn from him, but I do not want to be close to him. However, his letters show that Calvin was not only a man of head but also a man of heart. Particularly when I read the letters



he wrote to his friends about his wife's death, Calvin is not an eccentric professor any more. Rather, he comes across to me as a friend whom I'd like to comfort even with a hug. Using correspondence as the main source of information, Selderhuis portrays Calvin more accurately as a "normal" man not only with a brain but also with a heart – no more and no less.

### **Arrangement**

Selderhuis, in his use of sources, shows his superior knowledge of them. As a biography, the book presents Calvin's life in ten sections as follows: 1. ORPHAN (1509-1533), 2. PILGRIM (1533-1536), 3. STRANGER (1536-1538), 4. REFUGEE (1538-1541), 5. PREACHER (1541-1546), 6. VICTIM (1546-1549), 7. WIDOWER (1549-1551), 8. PATIENT (1551-1554), 9. SAILOR (1555-1559), 10. SOLDIER (1559-1564).

Meanwhile, as one endorsement acknowledges, in this biography the events in Calvin's life are not simply narrated. Rather, Selderhuis "weaves those events into a story of a man on a geographical, theological and spiritual pilgrimage." In such a way, as one of the finest Calvin scholars, the author exhibits a thorough knowledge of his main source, the works of Calvin.

## Readability

Even though this book is a work by a world-renowned scholar in Calvin study, the work is very easy to read. As a matter of fact, it is fun to read. In that aspect, we can see the excellence of the translation. Such a good work in translation does not come as a surprise to those who know the translator, Albert Gootjes, a graduate of the Theological College in Hamilton. In the translation, Albert shows his outstanding knowledge, not only of the materials but also of the Dutch and English (as well as Latin and French) languages.

## Reappreciating being Reformed

This fifth reason, although the last, is the most important one for why Reformed believers should read this book in order to understand Calvin. As a minister of the one of the Reformed Churches, the author knows well the customs of the Reformed churches in general. What is interesting in the book is the connection the author makes

between Calvin and the Reformed beliefs and customs. The intention in making such a connection is to show that the Reformed churches are the true "heirs" of Calvin (p 249). John Knox was not in the same line in understanding the role of a woman (p 174). As to the concept of Sunday, Calvin cannot be called a Puritan (p 224). Meanwhile, there are many resemblances between Calvin's ideas and the practices of the Reformed churches: the Dutch-Reformed believers being pilgrims (p 43), to pray before and after the meals (p 161), the typical image of the ministers in the Reformed churches (p 126). Apart from these minor examples, more can be found. Meanwhile such information certainly enables us to appreciate the biblical grounds as well as the beneficial elements of spiritual life entailed by the customs in our Reformed churches. We have many, if not all, customs not because we are "dutchies" (as my surname might prove!) but because we are Reformed. For that

reason, reading this book can drive us into deeper consideration of the customs in our churches.

If I may mention one of the drawbacks in the book, that would be the author's use of some events in Calvin's life to explain Calvin's theology. By doing so, the readers might have a wrong impression that such events, not the Bible, were the determining factors in shaping Calvin's ideas. It can be the case that the events of his life affected Calvin's ideas, but as the author also acknowledges, the Bible had the final word in formulating his thoughts.

If you would like to know more about Calvin you would benefit greatly from reading this gem. After reading this book, you will have a greater understanding of the "real" Calvin. He will appear just like an old friend, someone you would like to talk with, as the author indicates at the end: "If I am to end up there [heaven] myself, there are some things that I would really like to talk to him about" (p 259).

## Book Review

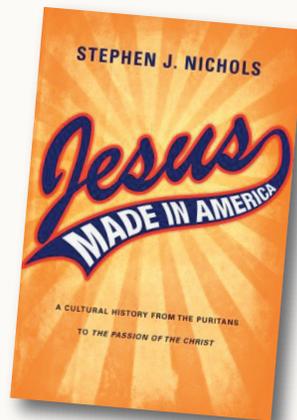
Reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof

***Jesus Made in America:  
A Cultural History from the  
Puritans to the Passion of  
the Christ.***

**Stephen J. Nichols, Downers  
Grove: IVP Academic, 2008**

**Additional Information:  
Paperback, 237 pages, \$24.99**

Whether we like it or not and whether we realize it or not, our culture often affects everything about us, including how we perceive the Saviour. Culture is where we live and how we think and it tends to colour everything.



Stepping back from the culture and critically analyzing trends and patterns is both difficult and necessary. This book sets out to do that very thing, examining how Jesus has been portrayed in American Christianity from the seventeenth century till today.

Stephen J. Nichols is Research Professor of Christianity and Culture at Lancaster Bible College and the author of several books. This is one of his best. Written well and amply illustrated, Nichols exposes how American Christianity has re-imagined Jesus and how these efforts often fail to do justice to what the Bible actually says about Him.

As the sub-title indicates, Nichols begins with the Puritans. Nichols gives a fair and balanced treatment, demonstrating how the Puritans valued both Christ's humanity and his deity, both theological precision and piety. Unfortunately, things deteriorate

*Rev. W.L. Bredenhof is co-pastor of  
the Canadian Reformed Church at  
Langley, British Columbia  
[wbredenh@telus.net](mailto:wbredeh@telus.net)*

from that point forward with precious few bright spots. From the deism of the founding fathers to the Victorian feminization of Jesus to the moralistic Jesus of theological liberalism to the "Jesus-is-my-boyfriend" image of Contemporary Christian Music, there is not much good to be said for what America has done with the Saviour. WWJD, Veggie Tales, and other trends come under the microscope.

Nichols also engages how American cinema has portrayed Jesus. From the earliest attempts of Hollywood to *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *The Passion of the Christ*, Nichols demonstrates how film-

makers need to resort to various forms of creativity to fill in the gaps left by the biblical account. The one exception Nichols mentions is the *Jesus* film. He allows that this could be a helpful evangelistic tool. Unfortunately, Nichols stumbles at this point since the second commandment prohibits images of Christ. God wants people to be taught "by the living preaching of his Word," not by images, moving or otherwise (HC, LD 35).

Aside from that point of concern, I highly recommend this book. While the historical material is interesting and demonstrates some patterns, it's

especially helpful for the arms-length analysis of contemporary "Christian" trends and cultural artifacts. Anyone who engages the broader Christian sub-culture on a regular basis needs to read this book. So, if you spend time at the local Christian bookstore, this book is for you. If you spend a lot of time listening to Christian radio (talk and music), this book is for you. At the end, we all need to be challenged to keep going back to the Bible alone for our understanding of who the Lord Jesus is. Nichols provides that challenge.



The Fortieth Anniversary Meeting and the  
Thirty-Fifth Convocation of  
***THE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE***  
of the  
***CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES***

will be held, D.V., on  
**Friday, September 11, 2009 at 8:00 p.m.**  
at Redeemer University College

*Dr. A.J. De Visser will speak on the topic:*  
**"Church Music in Calvin's Tradition"**

*Receiving the Master of Divinity Degree will be:*  
**Mr. Ken Bergsma B.A. Mr. Ryan De Jonge B.A.**  
**& Mr. Rodney Vermeulen B.A.**

*The choir of Covenant Christian School Flamborough will perform.*

An Open House at the Theological College  
to view the new chapel organ  
will be held Friday, September 11, 2009  
from 2:00 pm. to 4:00 p.m.

All are welcome.