

In this Issue...

CTS Abroad: Interim in Greece	... 1
Worship Symposium	... 2
Book Review	... 3
Red Chili Recipe	... 3
Archbishop Elias Chacour	... 4
Editor's Corner	... 5
Worth Fighting For	... 6
Dividing Blood Brothers	... 6

NEWS

CTS Abroad: Interim in Greece

Changes abound in the 2009-2010 academic year

by Nate Van Denend

Turkey and Greece. Twelve seminary students. Two professors. One Reverend and his wife. Three Calvin students. Ten thousand pillars. Welcome to the ruins of the Roman Empire. On January 6, 2010 the first ever Calvin Seminary January term off campus program began. The itinerary was simple in concept and demanding in practice: see as many sights related to Paul and the book of Revelation as possible within a twelve day period. The list of sights included Smyrna (modern day Izmir), Sardis, Philadelphia, Didyma, Laodicea, Colossae, Ephesus, Assos, Pergamum, Troas, and Canakkale and that was only the Turkey part. In Greece the pace slowed down some and the sights included Philippi, Thessaloniki, Berea, Vergina, Meteora, Delphi, Olympia, Corinth and Athens.

While different sites struck the travelers in different ways, several sites stood out. Ephesus was a definite highlight. Acts 19 describes a riot in the theater at Ephesus. Being able to stand in the theater and read the text brought much more depth to an otherwise obscure passage of scripture. The temple to Apollo in Didyma and the temple to Artemis in Smyrna stood out as well. Both are massive structures. One could imagine Paul declaring that the gods worshiped in these visually impressive temples were no gods at all. No wonder Paul says the gospel is "foolishness to the Greeks!"

The group did not spend its whole time among the ruins. Meetings were arranged between evangelical pastors in both Turkey and Greece. The pastor in Turkey told a profound story about his conversion and arrest 10 months after. The words to him during interrogation symbolized the difficulty the gospel faces in Turkey, "You're a Turk, that means you are a Muslim. Turks cannot be Christians." He described being forced to say the *shahada* by his interrogators, opening his mouth to renounce his faith in Jesus, and then being inexplicably unable to speak. His church is growing slowly. Converts face losing their family ties and even death at the hands of family members.

The pastor in Greece told a remarkably similar story. While the Greek tour guide told us that Greece is 90% Christian, the Orthodox faith and the ethnic identity as a Greek go hand in hand. It is difficult to communicate the Christian message to a group which assumes they are Christian already. The Greek evangelical pastor was once arrested for proselytizing and most protestant groups are not recognized by the Greek government. His work is centered in Athens and his church is growing among the immigrant communities there.

Through the testimony of these two pastors the group was able to catch a glimpse of what life would have been like for Paul. Paul also was a representative of a minority religion and preached against the dominate religious structures and faced obstacle after obstacle.

The exegetical and historical insights of Dr. Weima added much to the experience. Frequently, the group would be alerted to a menorah carved into a stone or some other engraving which would indicate the presence of a Jewish community. This was significant because some scholars dispute the historicity of Acts by claiming that it over plays Jewish opposition in places where there were not Jews. The group also was able to experience Dad Weima when he heroically rescued his daughter from falling into a pit.

In sum it was a powerful experience for all who traveled on the trip. Kristi Buurma summed the experience up this way: “Ephesus was the most memorable place, walking down the street seeing the library and the houses. Being in the place where the biblical events took place described in Acts was profound. Little things, too, like traveling to the place where Paul got his hair cut (Acts 18:18) made it very meaningful. The Bible seems way bigger, especially passages you might read over. Unless you see the power of the imperial cult, you may read over some of those passages.” Everyone who went on the trip could relate to that statement: The Bible does seem way bigger.

Travelers were Andrew Vis, Adam Nordyke, Dan Kinnas, Sarah Meekhof, Gayle Doornbos, Nate Van Denend, Andrew and Ingrid Zomerman, Nick Bierma, Aaron Greydanus, Matt Borst, Alison Christians, Jeff Weima, Bob Eames, Justin Eames, Meghan Eames, Kristi Buurma, Michael Walton, and Juli Stuelpnagel.

NEWS

Worship Symposium

by Bryan Van Soelen

One of the many perks of studying at Calvin Seminary is the free access to the many great events offered on the Calvin campus. I have been aware of the Calvin Symposium on Worship and the Arts for a few years, but this was my first engagement with it. My anticipation had been building for some time leading up to the event - not only had I registered to hear some great presenters, it was also a few days off from my normal academic routine.

The first day was a madhouse as I navigated through the field house, talking to fellow seminarians, seeing friends and former professors from college, and entering the Van Noord Arena. The captivating vocals of Kristyn Getty filled the Arena as the attendees filled this designated sanctuary, and the experience of the Symposium began.

Worship was exuberant and robust, even at 8:30 in the morning, and each worship service was equally wonderful gathering of a very diverse group of people and worship styles. Worship services were enhanced by dramatic scripture presentations, engaging pastors, and well-planned liturgies. The final worship service which included a service of Communion was unlike any I've experienced before. To have some 1,000 people walking down the aisles to receive the body and blood of Christ shed for his people was an awe-inspiring moment. To me, this event was a sneak peak into the heavenly kingdom where all people will be gathered to Christ in celebration and unending praise – it was a beautiful service.

The rest of my days outside of the worship services were whirlwind and non-stop as I quickly learned my way around the college campus, soaking up as many great presentations as I could. From small classrooms packed well over capacity, to larger spaces like the college chapel, I took in a number of great events and presenters. Jaime Smith helped me look at the ways which in look to engage in worship by focusing on theories from his new book. Jeff Barker from Northwestern College (IA) and Tom Boogaart from Western Theological Seminary enlightened me on the dramatic reading and presentation of scripture, scripture memory, and the benefits of acting out a passage to shed new light on the narrative. Musical inspiration from composers Keith and Kristyn Getty, and musical genius such as Jeremy Begbie reflected the deep impact music has on corporate worship and the intentionality used to create new music for the church. Lively discussions from Syd Hielema and Mike Graves kept me captivated, and the charitable and humorous interaction of our own President Plantinga and Dr. Richard Mouw kept the whole room in good spirits as the intensity of the last few days began to wear on our minds and bodies.

Overall, the Symposium was a fantastic experience. Great presentations from a massive variety of speakers kept me scrambling the whole weekend to get to every event I could. A big thank you is due to all of those who were involved in some way, and a standing ovation for those who spearheaded this whole event. And for those of you who missed it for one reason or another, be sure to keep your calendars open for next year – this is not an event to be missed.

FEATURES

Book Review

Origins by Deborah and Loren Haarsma

by **Alex Snider**

Many questions arise in discussions of Genesis 1 and 2. Were the seven days twenty four hours long? How, exactly, was the world created? Did it just pop into existence or did God create processes by which the world formed into what we experience today? Do humans share a common ancestor with other mammals? Were Adam and Eve really the first humans? How do we reconcile traditional religious views with the conclusions of modern science? These and many other questions are the subject of the book *Origins: A Reformed Look at Creation, Design, & Evolution*. This book was written by husband and wife Loren and Deborah Haarsma, both professors in the Calvin College Physics and Astronomy department. This book serves as a great overview on the topic of origins but it is not meant to be persuasive one way or the other.

The book can be divided into two parts. The first half of the book covers the origins of the Earth. It explains Young Earth Creationism and Old Earth Creationism and the different variants on each position. The authors give the scientific and theological evidence all sides of the argument and goes into a bit of detail on how some of the scientific evidence was obtained. The second part of the book addresses human origins. It states some competing arguments on this issue and gives some evidence for and against each one.

I liked this book. I thought that the Haarsmas did a great job presenting the issues at hand and not choosing sides. Coming from a geology background, I thought they laid out the issues of the age of the Earth very well and presented the evidence clearly. That being said, this book is intended as an overview. It doesn't go into a lot of detail and even remains quite shallow on some areas. I saw this happen particularly in the part on human origins. I think that this is a much larger issue than is presented in this book. Although, I suppose that if it really is such a big issue of debate, it might not have been appropriate to cover everything in such a broad overview.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who is going to ministry of any kind. I think that at least knowing something about this topic is good. Even if you're not prepared to debate someone after reading this book, you'll at least get thinking about your position on the issues of origins.

RECIPE

Red Chili

by **Sara Bosscher**

A hearty meal for a blustery winter day. Serves 1-6 people. Great with a crusty bread or rolls.

1/2 lb grd. beef (or less if that's all you have on hand)
1 - 15 oz. can dark red kidney beans
1 - 15 oz can white beans (cannellini or great northern)
1 - 15 oz can light red kidney beans
1 large onion, chopped
1 can diced tomatos (not drained)
3 c. tomato juice
1/4 t. pepper
1/2 t. sugar
2 T. Chili powder
1/2 t. salt
1 bay leaf (1/4 crushed) (optional)

1 - Brown ground beef on medium heat with onion until no longer pink. Drain.
2 - Rinse the three cans of beans in a strainer and add with all ingredient to a large pot. Stir well.
3 - Bring to a boil on high heat. Cover and simmer on low for 1 hour,

stirring occasionally.

4 - Serve immediately or reheat for later. This recipe is even better the next day!

Tips:

- This is a cheap recipe (especially for the nutritional value!) and you can use any type of ground beef, turkey, or tofu.
- Buy a full jug of tomato juice, you can freeze it in plastic ziploc bags for later use.
- Put the onion in the freezer for a couple hours to bother your eyes less.
- The recipe makes quick and easy future dinners. Freeze individual servings in ziploc bags. To reheat you can just peel off the bag and throw it in a bowl in the microwave. Delicious!.

COLUMN

Archbishop Elias Chacour

by Micah Schuurman

In the short amount of time that I have been involved in learning about the Arab/Israeli conflict, I have been blessed with several opportunities to meet Elias Chacour, the author of *Blood Brothers* and a speaker at the January Series and Worship Symposium this past January. I first met Rev. Chacour in 2006 at the school that he founded in Ibilin. A year later, I met him in Wheaton while he was touring the area, speaking about the conflict. Furthermore, I have had several opportunities to talk with people who have spent significant time learning from Rev. Chacour.

This familiarity with his perspectives enabled me to see a few interesting patterns hidden in the subtext of the talks that he gave last month. I would like to share some of these patterns with you.

One of the patterns most likely to disturb evangelical Christians surfaced in his discussion of his education at the Sorbonne. He said, "I learned many things while in Paris and I forgot them all except for two: God is love and God does not kill." This second principle is a motto of Chacour's and it often shows up next to his name when he signs books. The principle seems quite harmless (though perhaps somewhat naive) until one presses Chacour to explain his perspective on the book of Joshua in the Old Testament. In brief, Chacour believes that Joshua fabricated the entire book in order to give a divine stamp of approval to the genocide that took place in Canaan.

This principle also came out in his lecture at the seminary. Chacour mentioned a story about a pastor friend who spoke at a synagogue about Moses. This friend praised Moses for his journey up Mt. Nebo. According to Chacour's friend, Moses climbed to the top, looked over and saw that the land of Canaan was populated and said, 'I stop here. I want nothing to do with this,' and there he died.

As Evangelical Christians who believe in the authority of scripture, we cannot condone the liberties that Chacour takes with the Old Testament narratives. We believe that all scripture is inspired by God... even the book of Joshua.

However, this shouldn't stop us from trying to understand the reasons for Chacour's strong stance on killing of any kind. He is a resident of a piece of land which has known more than its fair share of holy wars. In the name of the God of Abraham, blood has been spilt by Joshua, the Judges, the Kings of Israel and Judah, the Zealots, the Muslims, the Crusaders, the Muslims again, and now, most recently, the Zionists and the Islamic Fundamentalists. Given this long history of holy war, it is hard to blame Rev. Chacour. He is incorrect, but all the same, he speaks out of a profound understanding of terrible ways in which people can use faith to justify great evils.

Another aspect of Chacour's beliefs that lay hidden in the subtext was his perspective of forgiveness and reconciliation. In his books, Chacour talks at great length about reconciliation. Yet, in his lectures, he spent a significant time decrying the injustices visited upon his people. At a dinner, I had the opportunity to ask him to expound upon the issue of anger as it relates to reconciliation. "Should we be angry at the injustices that are happening or is that anger a hindrance to reconciliation?" When I asked this question, Chacour gave me a quizzical look and asked, "Do you want me to be joyful at what is happening?"

Chacour went on to explain that his favorite model for reconciliation comes from the Bedouin people. Among the Bedouin, when a man kills another man, his life is forfeit. The murderer has three options. He can flee for the rest of his life, he can wait until the family of the murdered catch up to him to kill him or he can seek reconciliation. The first step in reconciling is to admit the wrong. The murderer has to repeatedly testify to the fact that nothing can undo the terrible crime and that no amount of money can "pay back" what was taken. The next step is for the murderer to offer a huge sum of money in repayment, all the while admitting that money is a worthless substitute. The final step is for the family of the deceased to reject the blood money and accept the apology of the murderer.

After telling us this, Rev. Chacour explained that the first step in true reconciliation must be recognizing guilt. The Palestinians must admit the wrong that they have done through acts of violence against civilians. The Israelis must admit the wrong that they have done through violence and systematic injustices in the form of oppression and ethnic cleansing. Similarly, Americans must admit the wrong that they have done by taking one side in a way ultimately detrimental to all involved. Until these sides begin to admit their guilt, all talk of reconciliation is relatively empty. That at least is the opinion of Rev. Chacour as he tries to make sense of his two roles as someone working for peace and as someone denouncing the injustices that press in on his people.

Another theme in Chacour's thinking is that he clearly feels deep anxiety for the future of Christians in the Middle East. The church has died out completely in Lybia, the homeland of St. Augustine. Furthermore, Turkey, once at the very center of Christendom, has only a handful of Christians left. The Palestinian church is now in the odd position of having more parishioners living abroad than in living in the Holy Land. When I asked Chacour directly about this phenomenon, his expression became very grave. He admitted that the trend was deeply troubling. But, he went on to insist (without offering any justification for his assertion) that there would always be Christians in the Holy Land.

I have shared three patterns hidden in the subtext of Chacour's writings and lectures. There are dozens of other themes. Naturally, this list is not meant to be comprehensive. But, I do hope that it can prove helpful to anyone wishing to unpack some of the sayings of this wise, controversial, troubling, complex man from Galilee.

EDITOR'S CORNER

Lenten Reflections

by Kory Plockmeyer

Lent is upon us once again this year, a season of expectation and waiting. Lent captures both ends of the emotional spectrum, allowing joy and sorrow to exist in tension, finding its expression most clearly on Good Friday.

We mourn the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus on Friday. Throughout the season of Lent, we reflect on our responsibility for the suffering and death of Jesus.

Yet, we cannot spend the whole of Lent in lamentation for our sin, for Good Friday looks ahead to Sunday morning and the empty tomb. On Sunday morning, we say with the church throughout the ages, "He is risen! Hallelujah!"

As we move through the weeks of Lent, I ask this question of our community: does our worship and life together reflect the tension of joy and sorrow inherent in Lent?

COLUMN

Worth Fighting For

by Braden Kok

In 1998 Disney released a movie titled *Mulan* and in the movie there was a song that was called, 'A Girl Worth Fighting For'. I am sure that most of you have seen the movie, but for those who have not, there is a group of fresh recruits who are marching off to battle and after a while they are getting tired and worn down. They begin to sing a song that is inspiring them, as they go off to battle. It is what gives them their motivation to fight and to have the strength to get through. They sing about a girl who will make them food or a girl who thinks that they have no fault, they all want a girl worth fighting for. The song ends with these lyrics, "What do we want? A girl worth fighting for! Wish that I had... a girl worth fighting for! A girl worth fighting... for!"

You might wonder what this has to do with anything or maybe that I am just a fan of Disney movies. This song came to my mind after a conversation I had with a good friend of mine. As many of us know the church has a problem when it comes to people in the age group of 18-30 attending church. The problem is that they are not attending church and some statistics say that up to 90 percent of 18 year olds will leave the church. Of course some return when they are older or have children, but still it is quite a problem. I am a youth pastor and the friend that I had this conversation with, is also a youth pastor who has a gift for reaching those who are distanced from the church. We were talking about this problem in the church and how we see it in our youth. How there is no conviction behind them, how they are not excited to come to church, instead church has become a burden to them. He said that he believes that the problem is that we have not created a faith that is worth dying for.

So many churches have become the church that writes checks to solve problems; our biggest struggle in our church is whether the drums and guitars are a 'holy' instrument, or whether or not we can hang new banners in church. Too often we have turned our churches into a country club offering every sort of activity you could want from the knitting club, to the motorcycle club. Last time I checked I am not willing to die for my country club membership. A groups priority is easy to find when you look at how they spend their time and where their money goes. Have we spent our time and money on seeking the least, the last, and the lost? Have we actively as a church given our all to spread the message of the Gospel and trying to end injustice throughout this world? Have we sought to bring heaven down to earth? If we have, have we done it in a way that our youth are able to see and to become involved in?

Have we created a faith that is worth fighting for? A faith that we are willing to die for and give everything that is within us. So just like in *Mulan*, what do I want? A church worth fighting for. Wish I had... a church worth fighting for.

OPINION

Dividing Blood Brothers

by Professor John Bolt

I am grateful for the encouragement to read Elias Chacour's *Blood Brothers* and for the three panelists who helped us in our reflections at the Town Hall Meeting on November 19. What is so moving and powerfully encouraging about the book is Father Chacour's profoundly Christian heart-posture to his blood brother Jews: "Do not demonize the Jews!" After our hour-long town hall I left disquieted because I was not sure we had been faithful to that spirit--the conversation moved increasingly to an assumed anti-Israel, pro-Palestinian stance. A good part of the reason for that was an apparent desire to distance ourselves from dispensational schemes that give preference to the State of Israel as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy and even a sense that evangelical Christians are the major determiners of American foreign policy which is exclusively pro-Israel. I fully agree that Darbyite interpretations of biblical prophecy have no place in our judgments of international law and the conduct of nations; only proper principles of justice and law may do that. Israel as a nation must be judged with the same standard that all nations are judged; she has no divinely appointed special privilege. My own sense, which is debatable and discussable, is that Israel is not judged in the same way as other nations but that the standard set before her is impossibly high and one to which she will never measure up, indeed cannot ever measure up. Essentially, my own view is that we should not be simply pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian but even-handed in our desires and prayers for justice, liberty, and peace. Let me briefly outline why I think we have a long ways to go beyond the direction we were headed in the town hall meeting.

1. The Middle East is a mess when it comes to land claims and counter claims. In fairness it is necessary to acknowledge that at least as many Jews were forcibly exiled from their homes in Arab lands with much more in property assets taken from them than was taken from Palestinians who fled the territory of what became Israel after 1948.

2. Israel became a homeland for these exiles and they were fully incorporated into its national life. The Arab states surrounding Israel did not embrace the Palestinian refugees they had encouraged to flee but put them into refugee camps.

3. Israel does have a policy of return for Palestinians and has enfolded those who remained in 1948 into its national and civic life. Today there are 16 Arab members of the Knesset. No such reciprocal response has ever taken place in the Arab states. Israel has never attempted to eliminate all Arabs from the state of Israel as Jordan did in the West Bank and as Israel's neighbors have done to Jews.

4. When the six Arab states attacked Israel in 1948 with the intent to destroy Israel, they strongly urged Arabs to flee and the Jordanian army occupied Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), expelled all the Jews (many who had roots there going back to biblical times) in order to make it a *Judenfrei* territory. This attitude toward the Jews remains a policy of Palestinian organizations.

5. When the Arab states again attacked in 1967 (and 1973) they were defeated and Israel took over control of the West Bank (from Jordan) and Gaza (from Egypt). Israel then resettled Jews in those areas; the land resettled was either appropriated (with recompense) or purchased. Who owns what, who is properly settled and where etc., is a very complicated matter and not as simple as usually portrayed. To claim that the "settlements" issue is the major obstacle to peace seems overly simplistic.

6. In the many years (since the Carter presidency especially), the "peace process" has seen Israel make "land for peace" concessions repeatedly with no reciprocal action on the part of the Palestinians; instead each overture is met with escalations of violence (Intifadas). To suggest that Israel is the obstacle to peace seems one-sided; it is just as fair to say that Israel has tried and the Palestinians have been found wanting.

7. Our world is awash in increasing and increasingly aggressive anti-Jew hatred; our times remind one of the 1930s. While no one should defend Israel's IDF *if* it engages in activity that violates international *rules of war* (not international opinion!), it is fair to wonder about a double standard for Israel and the jihadists devoted to destroying it, and it is fair to ask whether Israel or Islamofascism is the greater threat to world peace. In sum, I am concerned that we as Christians who are concerned about justice in our world do not once again make the fateful error that has been made far too many times in the twentieth century of letting our utopian dreams get in the way of addressing the real dangers we face and of taking sides (in the name of the oppressed) in a way that really indirectly supports totalitarian evil. (The parallel is with Christians who sided with the Soviet Union and its proxy states [Cuba, Nicaragua] out of social-justice concerns combined with anti-Americanism.)

Kerux Staff 2009-2010

David Bosscher, Staff Writer

Sara Bosscher, Staff Writer

Julie DeGraaf, Staff Writer

Mitchell Dick, Staff Writer

Braden Kok, Featured Columnist

Jonathan Moore, Staff Writer

Kory Plockmeyer, editor

Micah Schuurman, Featured Columnist

Alex Snider, Staff Writer

Nathaniel Van Denend, Staff Writer

Interested in writing for *Kerux*? Contact the Editor