

BABINE BULLETIN

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“The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ was ‘in every respect...tempted as we are,’ that he “offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death,’ and that he ‘learned obedience through what he suffered.’ (Heb. 4:15, 5:7-8). How, we ask with wonder, does the spotless Lamb of God learn anything, let alone obedience? The mystery of it is so great that we tend not to believe it, focusing our attention instead on the defense of the Savior’s divinity and looking elsewhere for compassion and sympathy. Scholars argue that many Christians have fallen to the worship of Mary for this very reason; the notion of Christ’s divinity distances him from our experience.”

Those words come from the excellent book of Charles D. Drew, *The Ancient Love Song: Finding Christ in the Old Testament*. Drew makes the important point that many people have been led to the worship of Mary because they feel too distant from the Lord Jesus. He obviously had the Roman Catholic Church in mind when he wrote this. Informed Roman Catholics would emphatically deny that they worship Mary. Rather, they say that they “honour” or “venerate” her. They maintain that worship is only to be given to the Triune God. However, already nearly 500 years ago, John Calvin in the *Institutes* (1.11.11) showed that this was just playing with words. There is not a significant amount of difference between veneration and worship and in practice they are indistinguishable.

The worship or veneration of Mary is also

found in Fort Babine. You may remember that Fort Babine is almost entirely nominally Roman Catholic – so, when the nun comes to have a service here, her attendance is not much greater than what we see at our services. Yet, many of the people have and use rosaries regularly. Most rosaries include several Hail Mary’s and a Hail Holy Queen – all prayers to Mary.

Because this is so, my preaching and teaching tends to emphasize the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It seems that there is a relatively good understanding of His divinity. People know that He is the exalted Son of God. But His humanity has been overshadowed by the total humanity of His mother. In practical terms, this means that people will often pray to Mary before they will pray to or through the Lord Jesus. They are taught by the Roman Catholic Church that Mary really understands their lives and knows what it’s like to have trouble and suffering. Just like children run to their earthly mother (and not their father) when they are sick and hurt, so also Roman Catholics must run to their heavenly mother. She is the one who is their mediatrix (feminine form of ‘mediator’) and intercessor (cf. *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paras. 963-975). So, in light of this, we preach Jesus Christ, true God and true man, especially emphasizing the latter. We insist that the Lord Jesus knows their troubles and temptations, that He has their flesh and blood at this very moment as He is seated at the right hand of the Father. Slowly but surely and gently we also teach that the veneration of Mary is nothing but a veiled form of idolatry.

“Arise, shine; for your light has come!... The Gentiles shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising.” Isaiah 60:1,3

Let me now bring you up to date on the state of affairs on the mission field in Fort Babine. Some of the highlights of this past month were our summer camps. You should be able to read more about these in an upcoming issue of the *Mission News*. The youth camp ran from July 8-14 at Tyhee Lake, just outside of Smithers. As I mentioned last time, we had a number of kids from Fort Babine at the camp. Denise Stoffels (by the time you read this she will be Denise VanRaalte), the secretary of the Home Mission Board, has been responsible for organizing the summer camps the last few years. She does this job with zeal and professionalism. I was responsible for transporting the kids to and from Fort Babine, along with some other smaller responsibilities. I also preached during the morning service in Smithers on Ephesians 5:15-21, a text which includes the camp theme.

As I was driving the kids from Babine home on July 14, I had an interesting experience. I had a CD playing with some Christian country music. The kids were absolutely horrified by this genre of music and begged me to put something else in. I gladly obliged and put in a CD by the *Children of Asaph*. This is a beautiful collection from Calvin's Psalter. I figured they would be begging to have the country music back. Was I ever surprised... They loved the Psalms with the Genevan tunes! Some of the Psalms had been used in the worship services earlier that day and they tried to sing along. So, we listened to the *Children of Asaph* all the way back to Fort Babine. Isn't it amazing how others can help us to see and appreciate the riches we have as Reformed churches?

There was also a camp for the teen girls and a canoe trip again. This year, the canoe trip

was on the Nanika-Kidprice route south of Houston. Two teens from Fort Babine came along, as well as four teen boys from the Smithers area. I had originally planned to go as well, but my family and pastoral responsibilities in Fort Babine took priority this time. So, for the details of this canoe trip (and the teen girls camp), you'll have to wait for the *Mission News*.

As far as our worship services go, we've had some ups and downs. We had a few Sundays where the attendance was quite poor and one Sunday where only our family was there. With great thankfulness, I can tell you that over the last few weeks it has come back to normal and we are even seeing a few new faces in our services. The earlier problems with attendance should not be interpreted as indicative of a lack of commitment. We work with a small group of people and if several of them are on holidays or at the summer camp, then it's very noticeable. By the way, you may be interested to know that we are very much on track as far as meeting the goal of this phase of our mission work goes. That goal is to "establish a core group of some 3-5 members." We're nearly one year into Phase 2 and it appears that we are on our way to meeting and even exceeding this goal. We say that with thanks to God, for He alone deserves the credit.

Finally, our Fellowship Centre has been graced with a foosball table. This is a gift from the Credo Christian High School Junior Band. It has already been put to good use and it creates more opportunities to speak of the gospel. To our Credo brothers and sisters, we again say "*Tebee Misiyh!*" (Thank-you very much!). Till next time,

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