

## *Calvin's Refugees: Remembering Christ as a Fugitive*

— *By Julie Canlis*

One of the lesser-known champions of refugees was John Calvin, that stigmatized Reformer of the 16th century. Under Calvin's leadership, the city-state of Geneva became a haven for refugees fleeing religious persecution, with the population doubling during Calvin's stay alone. Calvin, himself a refugee, knew the terror, loneliness, and disorientation of exile. Recalling his flight from France as a young man, he recollects in a poignant letter to a friend, "I wanted to die to be rid of those fears."

The 16th century was, for Europe at least, an unprecedented period of mass migration. The accompanying tide of anti-immigrant feelings were on the rise as well, and threatened to swamp the continent in a flood akin to that of Noah's day. An ark was needed.

This ark was not in the form of a physical vessel to spirit away those who were facing such tremendous odds. It came in the form of a doctrine that gave believers a sense of identity regardless of physical location or communal approval. The ark to which these refugees flocked was that centuries-old and modernly-confusing belief in election and predestination.

For those who were biblically literate, they found great comfort in identifying with the great refugees of the Bible. It certainly did not escape the notice of these people that the great heroes of the Bible were often on the run. They had been outcasts too, despised, and seemingly un-elect by all measurable standards of their society. And what was the hope in this? It boils down to the fact that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *self-identified* as a God not of a particular place (or temple, or sacred haunt), but of people on the move. Calvin's existential focus was on that unmovable point that, regardless of one's location, could ground him. Home him. On earth, that unmovable point was the portable Scriptures — and the God of these Scriptures. These Scriptures pointed to another home that awaited him and others who had been so mercilessly cast off by society.



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### IN FOCUS



## *Refugees*

— *By Amy Wilson, Editor*

Many of you who follow CCTI and our Barnabas Letters closely may see the focus of this issue and ask, "Didn't CCTI just write on refugees at the beginning of 2016?" Well, you would be correct! However, because the challenges to address the needs of refugees is ever-growing, we are delving once again into this important issue.

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As a pastor (who also wore the hat of refugee-crisis-director, coordinating the effort to find food and shelter to people in need), Calvin worked tirelessly to organize the flood of immigrants and give them spiritual direction in their time of transition. Not surprisingly, Calvin's lasting influence was on those who had no home. "Yet for the children of God," Calvin wrote in a letter to a group of English refugees, "who know that they are the heirs of this world, it is not so difficult to be banished. It is in fact even good for them, so that through such an experience they can train themselves in being strangers on this earth." His theology was specifically geared for those who had lost their fatherland, but who had gained a loving Father. A Father would go with his children wherever they landed — America, South Africa, wherever.

So ironically, what we generally see portrayed as arrogant Calvinism today began as an underground movement in refugee congregations. It was a message for the disenfranchised who had lost everything. Its austerity was embraced by those accustomed to the harsh conditions of displacement, and who had experienced the other side of justice. **They** had a Father. **They** were the ones who, circumstances notwithstanding, were the chosen of God. **They** might be scorned today but they were holding fast for a truth that lasted longer than a lifetime, and a homeland that outlasted the beloved land that they had been forced to leave behind.

Exile had radicalized them. They forged new identities, certain even under the most daunting of circumstances that they were led by the hand of God. Every shred of evidence that their opponents seized upon as proof of their having been rejected by God — poverty, isolation, martyrdom — only served to buffer this identity as chosen, rather than erode it. In fact, under such circumstances, it wasn't too hard to believe that God had not only chosen them, but had rejected those in the mainstream who caused such suffering.

From this crisis — both personal and societal — Calvin resuscitated the biblical doctrine of predestination (with his own addition of double-predestination) as a supreme comfort for his society's rejects. Regardless of its caricature today, predestination must be appreciated as a biblically-faithful comfort for the persecuted people of Calvin's day. In fact, this doctrine is perhaps only properly understood by a suffering church. The church today, however, needs to face up to how the tables have turned: more often than not, it serves not to comfort those on the

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## IN FOCUS

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What you may notice is that this issue is delving deeper into this issue to look at our response regarding the refugees. Some of these individuals may suddenly be becoming our neighbors. God calls us to "love our neighbor as ourselves" (Matthew 22:39). How can we do this? A refugee often comes to a new land being unable to speak the language and not knowing how the cultural norms of daily life work in the new country such as shopping for groceries, paying for bills, etc. This person is often lonely and fearful of all the new things he or she faces. God has called us to, "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up," (Romans 15:2). I speak from personal experience of knowing how one friend can make a huge difference when you are new to an area, and I can only imagine how much more significant having someone like that may be to a refugee in a new land!

I have often written about being the hands and feet of God. Helping a new person learn a new area is a very tangible way to live this example out so that they may see God and His love in action. As you will be reminded in our Caregiver's Time Out, refugees want the same things we all do: shelter, provision, love, protection, a sense of belonging. May we all be able to come along side one another, be there for one another in our times of need, and be able to say that, "My soul takes refuge in You; and in the **shadow of Your wings** I will take refuge, until destruction passes by" (Psalm 57:1). On behalf of all of us at CCTI, we thank you for taking the time to read this issue, and we pray that you are greatly blessed, encouraged, and equipped to respond! ■

Serving Him Together,  
Amy Wilson, Editor

## *Calvin's Refugees: Remembering Christ as a Fugitive*

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### ***About the Author***

*Julie Canlis lives in  
Wenatchee, Washington  
and holds*

*a PhD from the University of  
St. Andrews in Scotland.*

*For her work on John Calvin, she won a*

*Templeton Prize and  
a Christianity Today  
“Award of Merit.”*

*She and her husband Matt  
started their family and  
ministered in the  
Church of Scotland  
for thirteen years.*

outside, but to put a fence around those on the inside. When it ceases to live in relation to existential life, as Reformation scholar Heiko Oberman reminds us, it can become “distorted beyond recognition.”

The influx of refugees today is both threat and opportunity, but for Christians in North America in particular, the greater threat is that ***we forget the context from which we came***. We have a power and position that we cannot even begin to understand (but which would have been called idolatry by our Reformation ancestors fleeing the easy power and unacknowledged position of their contemporaries). We hold onto doctrines which served a pastoral crisis five hundred years ago, but which now could be guilty of hardening our hearts.

Calvin is the only reformer known to have painted Christ as a ***fugitive***, traveling with Christians through their own experience of wilderness and exile. Along with the reformers of Geneva, and the Israelites of the Old Testament, we have the opportunity to practice — rather than distort — the command that is our scriptural heritage “love the stranger; for you [yourselves] were strangers.” ■





## *Rebuilding Home and Future—Torn Between Staying and Returning*

*\*This article is from a friend of CCTI and is anonymous for security purposes.*

Refugees from Syria have fled to the Kurdish region in Northern Iraq since 2011. When the Islamic State (IS) entered Iraq in 2014 and announced their caliphate in the city of Mosul, an enormous number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) were added. The total of initially almost 2 million refugees consisted of several groups: Syrian Kurds, Muslim Arabs, Christian Assyrians and Yezidi Kurds.

By July 2017, the Islamic State has lost most of their occupied territory in Iraq, including the main part of the city of Mosul. For the sake of political stability, it would be essential that the IDPs return to their hometowns as soon as possible. This bears its own challenges for each people group. The following example shows how we try to support them.

Some **Yezidi families** have built a settlement in the outskirts of our city. In cooperation with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), we support them in generating their own income. They have started to produce soap and do beekeeping and sheep breeding. They do not know yet what their future holds as there is an offer for them to go to Canada. But if they decide to move back to their hometowns, they will be able to continue and make a living.

A border town in the mountains has received many **Syrian Kurds** in the past years. The vital local church has made a big effort to accommodate them. Among the refugees are 50 orphans who are cared for by believing families. Even though many of the caretakers are poor themselves, they strive to offer them a real home and have a heart to make their Heavenly Father known to their new children.

In our city, refugees are offered Kurdish language courses. What seems “normal” in many Western countries is a big step here. Kurds and **Muslim Arabs** are historical enemies, but now small bridges are built and a way to reconciliation is opened. It was a very special moment, when an Arab student commented at his first Kurdish exam: “We are very thankful to the Kurdish people who are ready to share their language, culture and life with us in order that we can find a new home in Kurdistan. We have found true friends among the Kurds and also among the Christians.”

Qaraqosh was a dominantly **Christian** town in the Nineveh plain with around 60`000 inhabitants. Since October 2016 the town has been freed, but only 250 families have returned so far. The government pushes the reopening of schools and hospitals, and priests take the lead in organizing the return, much like Nehemiah did. They encourage the people and lead them to decisions on the rebuilding of the town. NGOs help with finances for moving, building and restarting businesses. But there is one major stumbling block. A visitor worded it as follows: “I don’t know how they will get the hatred out of the place.” Let’s pray that God will fill it with his deep and boundless love and that he will give them a home and a future. ■

### ***\*About the author***

*For more than 10 years the author and her family lived in Iraqi Kurdistan. Their heart’s desire is to see the Kurdish church grow strong and worship the Lord from the depth of their heart. By sharing daily life, they saw the challenges of the refugee crisis and started to help the community and the church to get involved.*



# OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES



*Dedicated to children who hear their Father's voice*

## *Out of the Mouth of Babes*

— By *Atticus Jones*

This summer my mom and I went to Canada with a small team to serve at a kids' day camp for Muslim refugees. Every day the kids would come to the camp while their parents went to an ESL (English as a Second Language) class. We started each day with some games in the gym, some of the kids' favorite games were Duck-Duck Goose and Tug of War. After game time, we went into another room and did crafts. The crafts we did were a paper mache globes and a travel Tic-Tac-Toe game. We also took them to three or four parks and saw a dog show at one of them. The kids enjoyed seeing the different breeds of dogs. We saw some of the kids outside of the kids' camp while we were in Canada. We had dinner at some of their homes and I roasted hotdogs and marshmallows at a bonfire with them as well.

I feel that the kids at the camp seemed to appreciate the day camp more than kids in the US would. The kids seemed just like other kids, they liked to play games, do crafts, and have fun. The biggest struggle they had may be that they have to learn a lot of new things, like a new language, so sometimes there was a language barrier. This trip was a good experience and I am glad I was able to show God's love to these kids. ■

*Atticus in Canada holding milk in a bag (he heard in a song that Canada has milk in a bag and he was so excited to find out that Canadians really do buy milk in a bag instead of a jug).*

### **Biography:**

*Atticus is 14 years old and lives in Tomball, Texas. He loves Star Wars and most things that have to do with advanced technology. He loves attending Bible study, church, Youth Group, & enjoys serving on mission trips. He has been on local mission trips in Texas, to Mexico to build houses for needy families, and now to Canada to serve the refugees.*





## *A Place of Refuge*

— By Val Downs

During the Ebola crisis in September of 2014, I returned to live in the USA after 21 years living in Tibet and northwest China. At that time, the Holy Spirit was highlighting to me Psalm 91, especially verses 1 and 4: “He who dwells in the **shelter of the Most High** will abide in the shadow of the Almighty ... He will cover you with His pinions and under His wings you may seek refuge” (NASB). I have been amazed and inspired again and again since then to discover how often the Psalms repeat this theme in beautiful poetic language. The verses below have meant so much to me as a caregiver of my 94-year-old mother. I often struggle with exhaustion (emotionally more so than physically). Now I invite you to search it out for yourselves and see what He will show you in your own everyday challenges.

Hide me in the **shadow of your wings** (Psalm 17:8 NIV).

And the children of men take refuge in the **shadow of your wings** (36:7 NASB).  
I will take refuge in the **shadow of your wings** until the disaster has passed (57:1 NIV).  
Let me take refuge in the **shelter of your wings** (61:4 NASB).  
For you have been my help. And in the **shadow of your wings** I sin for joy (63:7 NASB).

The Hebrew word for **wings** is *kanaph* (also *gaph*) and is used more than 100 times, referring to: **wings** of eagles (Exodus 19:14; Deuteronomy 32:11; Proverbs 23:5; Isaiah 40:31; Jeremiah 48:40, 49:22; Ezekiel 17:3,7; Daniel 7:4-5), cherubim and seraphim (Exodus 25:20, 37:9; 1 Kings 6:27, 8:6-7; 1 Chronicles 28:18; 2 Chronicles 3:13, 5:7-8; Isaiah 6:2; Ezekiel 10:5, 8, 12, 16, 19, 21, 11:22), garments (Numbers 15:38; Deuteronomy 22:12; 1 Samuel 15:27; 24:4-5, 11; Haggai 2:12; Zechariah 8:23), wind (2 Samuel 22:11; Psalm 18:10; 104:3; Hosea 4:19; Zechariah 5:9), ostriches, hawks, storks and doves (Job 39:13,26; Zechariah 5:9; Psalm 55:6; 68:13), dawn (Psalm 139:9), and living creatures (Ezekiel 1:5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 23-25; 3:13). Fascinating!

Jesus spoke of longing to gather Jerusalem and her children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her **wings** (Greek *pteryx*), but Jerusalem was unwilling (Matthew 22:37; Luke 13:34). How tragic! (See also Revelation 4:8, 9:9, 12:14 for more uses of the word “wing.”)

Whenever you feel sick, stressed, exhausted, fearful, anxious, insecure, and the like, just imagine yourself under the healing, restoring, protecting, and comforting wings of our Father God. I would like to bless you with these beautiful and inspiring words to encourage your hearts as they have mine:

May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the **God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge** (Ruth 2:12 NIV).

But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with **healing in His wings** (Malachi 4:2 NKJV). ■

### *About the Author*



Val Downs, seen here to the left of CCTI Director Rosemary Sabatino and Barnabas Editor Amy Wilson

Valerie grew up in Ohio and graduated from Cleveland State University in 1987. She worked 5 years as a physical therapist in a hospital and skilled nursing facility in rehabilitation. During that time she learned about the unreached people groups of the world where there are no churches and often no believers. The Lord then confirmed His calling to join a team focused on church planting among Tibetans of West China, where she lived, studied Tibetan & Chinese, and worked among the Nomadic people for 21 years, from 1993 -2014. Always it was the children she was drawn to, especially the orphans and poor. She is now living in Charlotte, NC with her elderly mother & niece while involved as a new staff worker at CCTI.

## *Jesus: the Refugee*

— *By Laila Risgallah*

According to Webster dictionary, a refugee is a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

And yet, Jesus was a refugee who was forced to leave His country not because of war or persecution but because of love.

***“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” Mt 8.20.***

These are words Jesus said about Himself.

One of the most divisive subjects even among Christians today is the subject of refugees: should we let them in? Should we keep them out? How should they be vetted?

Coming from the Middle East- specifically from Egypt- and ministering among refugees both in Egypt and in the USA I tell myself: “Minister faithfully to those who are already here”.

The pain and suffering of refugees in the USA is beyond imagination: the loss, not only of material things but of their very identity. Losing friends, family, status, home, education. Starting from scratch in a country where they do not speak the language or know the culture. The confusion of having Christians helping them when they have been told that Christians are infidels creating feelings of love, hate, guilt and treason to their religion all mixed up together.

Many have suffered and seen things many of us will not see or experience in a hundred lifetimes, things that no human being should go through. Fear, post traumatic stress, abandonment, rejection and insecurity just to name a few.

The United States is the world’s top resettlement country for refugees. For people living in repressive, autocratic, or conflict-embroiled nations, or those who are members of vulnerable social groups in countries around the world, migration is often a means of survival and—for those most at risk—resettlement is key to safety.

***The U.S. admitted 84,995 refugees in the fiscal year ending in September 2016, the most in any year during the Obama administration.*** An additional 31,143 refugees have been admitted to the U.S. from Oct. 1 through Jan. 24, including more than 1,136 refugee admissions since Trump became president on Jan. 20.

Yet looking at refugees as mere numbers is not our focus here.

God is bringing the nations to North America. The Great Commission opportunities for the local church are unprecedented. The Harvest is plentiful, but are we prepared?

The world is becoming more diverse and urban all the time. If we are going to win a lost and dying world with the message of Christ, we need to develop more effective ways of ministering to churches who are or will be ministering to refugees in America’s overflowing cities.

Many churches are willing to minister to refugees with a lot of love but with little knowledge about the different refugee cultures and the ways to help them intelligently. Some good intentions might actually backfire or cause refugees to shun Christ or to close the door on church efforts. They need people to come alongside them and take them to doctors’ appointments and social security appointments yes; but they need more real friendships. They need those who will willingly love them unconditionally and listen to their plight. And who can do this better than the church?

Sarah is a 14 year old veiled refugee from Syria. When she drew herself she drew herself totally bound with her hands tied and her hair overflowing. She is shouting to whoever will listen that she has no say in what happens in her life.

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## Jesus: the Refugee

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As for Majid, 10 years old, he draws himself as a robot. When I asked him why? He said I cannot show my feelings: it is not manly.

Omar, a five year old boy hides under the breakfast table screaming every time he hears an airplane. It reminds him of the bombings he experienced back home.

Samy, 15 had to leave school to help his father since the USA government only provides help for six months and they are paying \$1200 in rent every month for a two bedroom apartment for his family of 7.

These people are not numbers, they are real people. But before we minister to them, we need to be trained on how to understand how they think; what is acceptable and what is offensive.

For example in the Middle Eastern culture, a man should never look into the eyes of a woman when he is speaking to her, or vice versa: it is considered obscene. Little changes to the big hearts ministering among refugees could make a big impact on the outcome.

This is a time to question ourselves: why do we want to minister to refugees? Are we willing to humble ourselves and learn, maybe from a person from the very culture we are ministering to? It's time for the nations to experience the love of the One who shed His blood for them whether they decide to accept Him or not. Are we willing to take that risk?

### About the Author:

*Laila Risgallah is a pediatrician, passionate about children and their welfare. She has a Masters degree in Pediatrics, and a PhD in childhood studies. In 2009 she decided to equip herself to abolish sexual abuse in Egypt. She studied the Middle East Sexual Abuse Related Pastoral Counseling Diploma and graduated in 2012. Laila is known for her Christian youth TV program Han3ishasa7 (We Will Live our Lives Right), a program targeted for youth that has shown all over the Middle East and North Africa area tackling all youth issues and problems. This program brought hundreds of youth to Christ. Laila is founder and President of Not Guilty with a goal to abolish sexual abuse and bullying in Egypt and the Middle East. She is an Ashoka Fellow. Laila started Not Guilty Inc in the USA to minister to traumatized and sexually abused children and adults.*

*Laila published her book The Silver Box in 2015 about girls who have been sexually abused. She also launched an anti sexual abuse app for kids: S.K.I.T in 2016. She also compiled an anti sexual abuse, anti bullying curriculum for schools in Egypt.*

*Laila accepted Christ at the age of 16 and never looked back since. She has been in the ministry of church planting, training and teaching and women's ministry for over 40 years. Laila is married to Wahid Wahba and has two sons.*



**Resource Link:** <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>



### For Information On:

#### • CCTI Curriculum—

**Offering Healing and Hope  
for Children in Crisis**

#### • Other Resources

**Go To :** [www.crisiscaretraining.org](http://www.crisiscaretraining.org)



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