

**WHAT LIES BEHIND
THE PICTURE**

by **Vernon R. Wishart**
**Red Deer, Alberta: Central
Alberta Historical Society,
2006. 230 pages.**

Vernon R. Wishart is a retired United Church minister, who now lives in Edmonton, Alberta. In *What Lies Behind The Picture* he is not focussing on his ministry; indeed he barely touches upon it. His focus is on discovering his family history, the Cree ancestry that was hidden from his siblings and him, even into adulthood.

Wishart describes his youth and early adulthood as being that of a normal rural white Albertan, and reflects on the happiness and general satisfaction he had with it at the time. Only after becoming a minister and becoming more aware of the difficult conditions and endemic prejudice faced by Aboriginal Canadians did he gain awareness that the world was not the same for them. He was not aware of the secret that had been kept from him.

Wishart's sister, Shirley, had a chance encounter with a local historian in the area where their great-grandparents had lived. It was that story, and the Aboriginal medicine bag of his great-

grandmother, that brought a realization to them that they had native ancestry. That alone would not likely have been a huge story in and of itself, but what moved Wishart to look further was the fact that it had been carefully hidden from him by his parents. His search then became two-fold. The first was to discover the story of his ancestors back to his great-grandparents. Through some hard work and good fortune, he was able to identify the immigrants on both sides of his family who came to work in the fur trade in the last part of the 1700s. The second part of the story was to try and determine what had caused his parents to conceal that aspect of their history from him and his siblings.

The greater part of the book is what might be called a series of biographical sketches. He begins by tracing his great-grandfather's roots back to the first family member to come to Rupertsland (now Northern Manitoba). He gives some of the story of that person (who was murdered) and then goes on to the biography of a daughter of that relationship, and so on down to his great-grandfather. He then does the same on his great-grandmother's side.

The Wishart great-grandparents lived in the Red River Colony during the first Riel rebellion in 1870 (and apparently sided with the

white settlers against Riel), and then moved to Alberta in time to live through the 1885 rebellion. Throughout, there are thoughts and speculations about how their mixed blood might have affected their lives and the several moves that they made, though there is no resolution of those thoughts, since none is possible with what could be discovered in family archives.

Those biographies take almost the entire book. Wishart's own story, and his reflections on what he correctly refers to as our history of racial paternalism and outright racism, are mainly confined to a few last pages, as a near after thought. I was left seeking more of those discussions. The strength of the journey's description is in the fact that it is personal. I found it telling when Wishart writes of meeting several other people who also had their native ancestry concealed from them, as some sort of dirty family secret.

Any Christian reading of events and stories looks to hope. And as we see the pride and energy of those who are seeking out and proclaiming their native ancestries, we are left with hope. Attitudes amongst native, partly native, and white Canadians are changing. In some cases it is a difficult, slow change, and we can still hear mutterings about "privilege" and work ethic that mar the relationship

between the races still. People like Wishart, who stand between the two poles, can tell their story and hope to bring some of that relationship to a better place.

— Greg Parker

**SEEKING THE
IDENTITY OF JESUS:
A Pilgrimage
Beverly Roberts Gaventa
and Richard Hays, editors.
Grand Rapids: Wm. B.
Eerdmans 2008. Xiv + 345
pages. \$36.50**

This book originated from "The Identity of Jesus Project", undertaken by biblical scholars, church historians and theologians at the Center for Theological Inquiry in Princeton. It was produced partly as a response to the diversity of images of Jesus currently present in the church, academy and popular culture (p. 3). Readers of *Touchstone* were given a glimpse of the book's character and purpose in the article "Which Jesus", which was carried in the January issue. It was an adaptation of the Editors' Introduction to this present volume.

The focus throughout is on the theological identity of Jesus, with an eye to the Chalcedonian Definition of Jesus as fully human and fully divine, the two natures