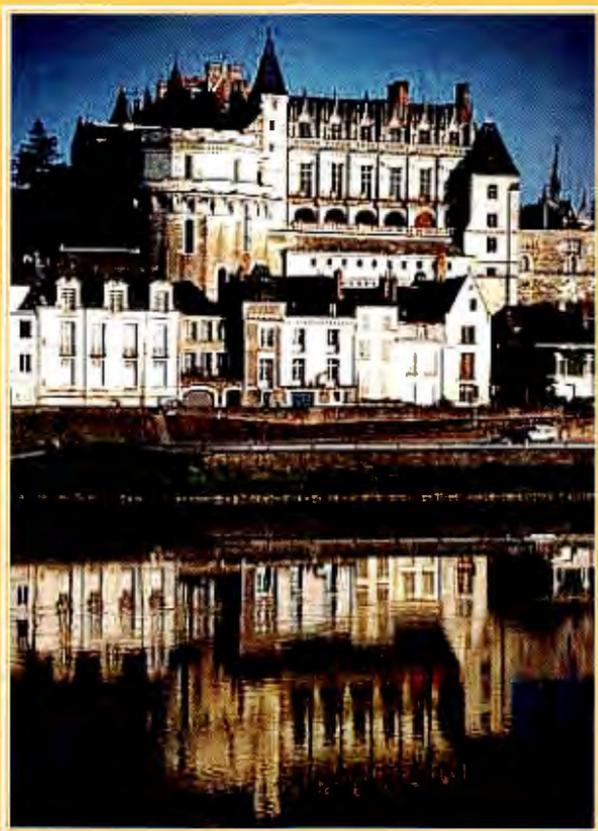


REFORMATION TODAY



MARCH - APRIL 2008

222



You are invited to look at the newly created website www.africanpastorsconference.com Seven conferences have just been completed, one in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, and six in South Africa. The first African Pastors' residential Conference in East London is being planned for April. Other organisations such as Pastors, Training International and the Langham Partnership are doing a similar work, though there are differences in character. African Pastors' Conferences are intended to be African style and with mainly African speakers and as far as accommodation is concerned nearer 1 star rather than 5 star in order to make the conferences affordable. They are heavily subsidised and books are sold

at substantial discount (vouchers are given so all pastors can have some books free of charge for themselves). The need throughout Africa is colossal. In South Africa in particular the proportion of African peoples is reflected in the languages spoken, Zulu 23.8 %, Xhosa 17.6 %, Afrikaans 13.3 % (which is the language not only of Afrikaners but of a considerable constituency of coloured people in the Cape), Sepedi 9.4 %, English 8.2 % and Sesotho 7.9 %. There are several smaller groups with other African languages. The pastors come from various Bible-believing denominations. The future of the gospel cause in Africa depends on these men. They welcome and need the training and books the conferences can provide. We pray the website will also develop as a useful training resource for them.

Delivery Problems in United States

We apologise to subscribers in the United States who have not been receiving their magazines that they have paid for. As far as we can tell, at least one of the carriers used in the US has been unreliable. We are grateful to our subscribers who have reported the problem, originating with RT219. Changes have been made in our distribution system and we want to assure US subscribers of our intention to provide replacements for the lost magazines. Please contact either Tom Lutz in the US or Frederick Hodgson directly. (Addresses are on the back inside cover of the magazine)

Front cover picture – *Castle of Amboise where Francis I spent the 'Night of the Placards'. Even his bedroom door was used to display one of the posters!*

Editorial

The urgency of evangelism and church planting

From the time of their inception Particular Baptists (now referred to as Reformed Baptists) demonstrated their whole-hearted commitment to evangelism and church planting. To them these two activities were inseparable. Also from the time of their inception Particular Baptists combined the principle of the independency (self-government) of the churches with working together with other churches of the same confessional order. This was achieved by way of regional associations. These proved effective in uniting resources to implement church planting.

In 1649 the Glaziers' Hall church in London held a day of prayer to 'seek the Lord that he would send labourers into the dark corners and parts of this land'. The very next day John Myles and Thomas Proud appeared in their midst concerned for the needs of Wales. Within a fortnight they were sent back to Wales for the purpose of church planting. Their set purpose was the conversion of souls to Christ and the gathering of those souls into churches. That same year the Ilston church was organised and by October 1650 there were 43 members. Soon two more churches were formed.

There are other instances of aggressive evangelism and church planting at that time. The well-known Hanserd Knollys, pastor of a church in London, sent Thomas Tillam to Hexham in Northumberland. Within seven months sixteen individuals were baptised and a church was formed.

The same policy of forming associations was followed in America. The Philadelphia Association was initiated in 1707 and was instrumental in establishing hundreds of churches. Likewise the Sandy Creek Association which began in 1758 was instrumental in the planting of hundreds of churches in the south. Church growth was sometimes rapid. In a short period the church led by Shubal Stearns grew in membership from 16 to 606 and it was from there that revival spread in the south. (See review THE BAPTISTS by Tom Nettles.)

There was no compromise with regard to doctrine as can be seen from Grassy Creek church from whose minutes the original covenant of Sandy Creek is taken:

'According to God's appointment in his work, we do hereby in his name and strength covenant and promise to keep up and defend all the articles of the

Faith, according to God's word, such as the great doctrine of election, effectual calling, particular redemption, justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, sanctification by the Spirit of God, believers' baptism by immersion, the saints' absolute final perseverance in grace, the resurrection of the dead, future rewards and punishments – denying the Arian, Socinian & Arminian errors, & every other principle contrary to the Word of God.'

During the last forty years confessional churches holding the Second London Baptist Confession (the 1689) have emerged all over the United Kingdom yet there is no overall national association representing their interests and at the same time actively promoting evangelism and church planting. Why is this? The first reason is lack of leadership. One energetic leader like C H Spurgeon with loyalty to the truth combined with a love of Christian unity could soon by the power of the Holy Spirit bring about a great change. A further reason for the lack of associational life is the fear of denominationalism and another is a distorted view of independency. Of course churches must be self-governing but that should never hinder the forming of associations and co-operation with other churches in evangelism and church planting. The excellent work of the FIEC (Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches) is pleasing to many Reformed Baptists. Why have a Reformed Baptist Association while we can be affiliated to the FIEC? The answer to that is that the FIEC holds a broad evangelical basis of faith which is no guarantee for the future. Of course it takes more than doctrinal orthodoxy to preserve a church but a specifically Reformed doctrinal foundation is vital for a church. That is a subject which can be demonstrated from church history.

In this issue Phil Arthur from his own experience describes what is involved in planting a Reformed Baptist church.

In Zambia such churches have multiplied and further church planting continues in other countries in Southern Africa and in many other parts of the world. Laban Mwashekele of Namibia uses the radio for evangelism and mostly by that means now has direct contact with twenty assemblies all over Namibia. Some of these are numerically strong but he refuses to call any assembly a church until there is a pastor in oversight. Laban himself is the pastor of the Montevista Church in Windhoek and is supported by fellow elders in that church.

While in South Africa I asked Martin Holdt about his experiences as a church planter. He was appointed by the Baptist Union of South Africa (evangelical and not liberal like some Baptist Unions) to be a church planter. Through his ministry four new churches have been established. The most recent is Constantia Park, Pretoria, which now has 230 members and seven elders, four

of whom are full-time. This church has planted a further four Reformed Baptist churches and also sustains a generous support of missionaries in other countries.

Martin testifies that Satan is ferocious in his opposition to church planting. He maintains that every new work must be born out of sustained united prayer. Such is the spiritual conflict involved in church planting that Martin has often resorted to fasting 36 hours every week. At the beginning he learned an important lesson which was that the same spiritual preparation of prayer and study must be put into preaching for three people as for 300. In his first church plant on the second week only his wife and two other people were present. Absolute determination and perseverance are essential in church planting. In his view a personal call from God to the ministry is essential in the heart of the pastor and verified by an assembly. A further matter of importance is that the ties to the mother church must not be severed until the newly planted church is secure and stable.

John Piper and his research team have produced some startling facts about church planting in the USA. I conclude this editorial with their observations on this important subject.

Observations on Church Planting

1. There are 195 million non-churched people in America, making America one of the top four largest 'un-churched' nations in the world.
2. In spite of the rise of mega-churches, no county in America has a greater church population than it had ten years ago.
3. During the last ten years combined communicant membership of all Protestant denominations declined by 9.5 percent (4,498,242), while the national population increased by 11.4 percent (24,153,000).
4. Each year 3,500 to 4,000 churches close their doors forever; yet only as many as 1,500 new churches are started.
5. There are now nearly 60 percent fewer churches per 10,000 persons than in 1920.
 - In 1920 27 churches existed for every 10,000 Americans.
 - In 1950 17 churches existed for every 10,000 Americans.
 - In 1996 11 churches existed for every 10,000 Americans.
6. Today, of the approximately 350,000 churches in America, four out of five are either plateaued or declining.
7. One American denomination recently found that 80% of its converts came to Christ in churches less than two years old.
8. Hence the claim of many leaders: 'The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches' (Peter Wagner).

The Ascension of Christ

‘After he said this, he was taken up into heaven before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee”, they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” ’(Acts 1:9-11).

The very first message of the ascension is provided by the angels: ‘This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’ He will return in the same manner as they saw him ascend, a fact described in Revelation 1:7:

Look, he is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and all the peoples of the earth will
mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

When he comes again as he left he will not be alone. He will come again ‘with all his holy ones’, that is with all the angelic host (1 Thess 3:13). It will not only be an event visible to all, it will be an event audible to all because it will be ‘with the trumpet call of God’ (1 Thess 4:16). It will be the time of the universal resurrection of the dead (1 Thess 4:16).

The ascension should be viewed as a historical event and then appraised for its doctrinal significance.

First we view the ascension as a historical event.

The time – when he had finished all his work on earth
the place – the Mount of Olives
the destination – to his Father in the heaven of heavens
the witnesses – his disciples
the manner – literally translated from the Greek ‘he was taken up, and a cloud received him from their eyes’
the ministry of – he blessed his disciples as he ascended
the attendants – two angels



Typical shanty-town in South Africa – see News page 33.

The doctrinal significance of the ascension can be summarised as follows:

1. The ascension is the endorsement of our Lord's resurrection. He ascended to heaven in his raised physical body in which he had eaten fish and honey.
2. The ascension is the beginning of the exaltation. The ascension was the highway to coronation. The monarch of England on the day of coronation rides with appropriate accompaniment to Westminster Abbey. We can be sure that our Lord was accompanied by angels on his way to his enthronement.
3. The ascension is the inauguration of the ministry of intercession. The session at the right hand of God the Father was secured by the ascension. He now took on the role of our great high priest who ever lives to intercede on our behalf.
4. The ascension marks the end of our Lord's great work of his incarnation to live for us and to die for us. That work was now complete. He will come again not for any other purpose but to inaugurate the eternal kingdom.
5. The ascension was followed ten days later by the giving of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Peter explains this when he declares, 'Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear' and then he adds that 'God has made this Jesus whom you crucified

both Lord and Christ' (Acts 2:33 and 36). Also linked with this is the giving of gifts to the Church (Ps 68:18; Eph 4:8). When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men.

6. The ascension marks the opening wide of doors of access for all believers for prayer. 'Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need' (Heb 4:14-16).
7. The ascension demarcates the point between Jesus' ministry on earth which is past and his ongoing ever present work in heaven. There are countless sermons on what Jesus accomplished on earth and that is right but they need to be balanced with the biblical material and sermons on Jesus as our high priest working on our behalf now. The letter to the Hebrews is the book which brings this balance to the New Testament. When leaving us our Lord's hands were stretched out in blessing his disciples and he has never ceased from that day to this to bless and uphold his blood-bought people.
8. The ascension of our Lord highlights the Trinity. The second Person returns to the first Person and the first and second Person send the third Person to take over the work of extending the kingdom throughout the world. The ascension is a clear portrayal of the Trinity just as is the baptism of Jesus where the Father expressed audibly his approval and delight in his Son, and the Spirit descended on the Son to empower him throughout his coming ministry.
9. The ascension of our Lord decisively marks the end of our Lord's work on earth and the beginning of a new epoch in which the Holy Spirit is in charge of mission. It is correct to think of these last days as the last and final dispensation. There will be no reversal of functions. Jesus will not return to earth to take over the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the final age, 'The Age of the Spirit', because he is at work in regeneration and sanctification. He is at work in calling missionaries into service and in church planting (Acts 13:1-3).

Note Of the major events in the life of Christ, the ascension is the most neglected. In THE FINDER, the 328 page book of indices, there are only two entries for exposition of the ascension, one in the *Banner of Truth Magazine* and one in *Reformation Today*.

How to Pray for Missionaries

By Tom Wells

In an earlier article on missions in RT 218 I wrote about church missionary conferences. A friend pointed out that I failed to say much about prayer in that article. That was an important oversight. Let me take up that subject now. Both in conferences and in our private lives prayer for missionaries is not optional. It is vital.

Let me start by asking the question, ‘Who or what is a missionary?’ Some people would confine that title to those who cross from one culture to another to tell of our Lord Jesus. Others would include those who merely go across town or across the street. I don’t want to enter that discussion, but what I say here will usually apply to those who go to other parts of the world. I want to define missionaries in another way. I want to speak of them under three headings: as human beings, as Christians and as those engaged in Christian work.

1. Missionaries as Human Beings

Recently I have been preaching through the book of Colossians. One of the things that strikes me as I read the book is how human the author is. We are rightly used to thinking of Paul and the other apostles as very special people, and so they were. They were special then, and they remain special to us today.

It’s very easy, however, to transfer that ‘specialness’ into the idea that they were superhuman. That is a serious mistake. The humanity of Paul shows through Colossians loud and clear. For example, it’s clear that there is a bond of love between Paul and this church that he neither founded nor visited before he wrote his letter. There is nothing cold or formal about his words. He assures them of his prayers and gives thanks for them before God (1:3ff). He urges them to allow love and forgiveness to prevail among them (3:12-14). He sends Tychicus to encourage their hearts (4:8). He admits his own need for encouragement and comfort (4:11).

Regardless of whom you include in the word ‘missionary’, they are special as well. But they are also ordinary human beings with ordinary human needs.

I make this point to say that they struggle with the very concerns you struggle with. They must have food, clothing and shelter. It would be well to mention these things to the Lord on their behalf. These become very pressing problems for missionaries in western Europe for example, where such things as rent and clothing are not cheap. Also important for humans is the matter of health. Missionaries in Tanzania and many other places have often already had malaria. But if so, they are not done with it yet. It may flare up again and again until they die. They're also exposed to other serious dangers. Poisonous snakes and dangerous animals don't target missionaries because they are Christians or Christian workers. They attack human beings. Again, your concerns as humans are also theirs.

We must not neglect prayer for their children. If you are a parent in a familiar clime and culture you're concerned for your boys and girls. How much more are those far from friends and family. Their concerns, of course, do not weigh on them just because they are not at home. Think of the needs of your own children for education and physical development. You pray about these things. Remember the missionaries' children as well.

2. Missionaries as Christians

All men and women need the things that Christians have. But becoming a Christian brings a number of needs into focus that we were barely aware of before. Before becoming convicted of our sin we probably were unaware of the constant need for forgiveness. But as a Christian we are told to confess our sins. Yet at times all of us would gladly hide some of these things, even from God. If you experience this temptation you may be sure that missionaries struggle in the same way. Ask the Lord to help them!

Things like the need to study the Bible and pray are obvious to us as Christians. The ideas of Bible study and prayer are simple ideas. But we must never confuse the word 'simple' with the word 'easy'! As Christians we do not find these things easy at all. Some days seem to demand virtually all of our time and attention. We can't find time to pray and read. Often we struggle with wandering thoughts when we pray. In fact, though we don't often admit it, this seems to dog our footsteps the moment we decide to pray. If someone asks me how much time I pray, I'm at a loss to know how to answer, not because I fail to set aside enough time to do it but because my mind wanders again and again during that time. Do my missionaries have the same struggle? If so, I must ask the Lord to help them just as I ask him to help me.



Mission includes reaching the elderly like these two Indians in Mexico.

The things I've just mentioned bear on the wide area of the quality of my Christian life in general. Am I satisfied with that? Surely not! Are my missionaries satisfied with the quality of their Christian lives? I'm sure that they are not. What then can I do for those who are thousands of miles away? I can pray for them to our common Father to comfort them in their distress over their failures. I will not ask him to make them self-satisfied, but to grant them progress in their lives and an increasing recognition of his grace. To help me in this matter of grace I have a sign in my study that says to me and all Christians, 'Grace is not just God's occasional favor toward us. It's His policy!'

Once more, missionaries also have a need to pray for and to aid other Christians in their struggle to live Christian lives. To cite just one example: one of the major causes of missionaries leaving the field is an inability to work harmoniously with other missionaries. They must love those around them who profess Christ, including their fellow missionaries. In addition, due to the ease of communication in these media-saturated days, they too get constant requests for help, money and prayer. If you find this a problem, they do too. Remember these things when you pray for them.

3. Missionaries as Christian Workers

Under the previous two headings I've tried to cover things that we all wrestle with. Each of these should prompt us to pray for others as well as ourselves. Let me turn now to three things that are specially important to most of our missionaries.

The first is vital to all Christian work, the filling of the Spirit. What does it mean to be 'filled with the Spirit'? The phrase suggests the idea of the Spirit getting inside of us, but that is hardly its meaning. After all, the Spirit is present everywhere. He could never be closer to us spatially than he already is. Rather to be filled with the Spirit means to be controlled by him. (To illustrate this meaning of control think of a phrase we hear now and then, 'He was filled with wrath,' or its opposite, 'She was filled with compassion.')

The more deeply we are involved in Christian work, the more we need such filling or control by the Holy Spirit of God.

What I have written above, however, raises another question: aren't all Christians filled with the Spirit? Yes and no. The work of the Spirit by which he produces sanctification and godliness in the Christian goes on continually, so that we might say that the Christian is characteristically controlled by the Spirit. He does work in us to will and to do what God wants done. He works in us so that all things work together for our good and God's glory. I would not want to deny that.

However, it is also true that the Spirit fills us or 'controls' us for other purposes. One of those governs the missionaries' ability to do Christian work, and the extent of their success in it. This fact leads us to pray that God will fill them in such a way as to make them bold and successful in their work. We find this kind of filling or control mentioned in the Book of Acts. Listen to Luke in Acts 4:29-30 as he records a prayer of the apostles pleading against God's enemies. They didn't do this for their own profit. They did it as a prayer for the success of the gospel.

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

What answer did they get. Luke tells us in verse 31.

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.



The Pines proved to be an ideal conference centre for the first African Pastors' Conference in Welkom – see News.

We must plead with the Spirit to fill our missionaries in the same way. This is not incidental to their work, it is a pressing need. Of course we must pray for this to the extent that God wills it to happen. Some men and women on the mission fields of the world have laboured long and hard without seeing much in the way of visible results. That doesn't mean such labour had no purpose. It was part of God's discipline of them on their own spiritual journey. But like all Christian workers they long to be successful and to see the fruit of their sweat and tears. Can we blame them? If not, we must ask for this work of the Spirit in their lives.

A second thing that most missionaries need for their work is mastery of the language of the people they work with. This is a staggering task that requires an enormous amount of time and energy to accomplish. Some missionaries have to learn more than one language, a native language and the national language of the country. Still others have to work with a trade language. Would you feel keenly uncomfortable in these circumstances?

So do many of them. It is well to plead with God to help them in this task. I have found communication one of the most difficult things to do on an ordinary day among people who speak the same language as I do. I fear I would despair if I had to add another language to make myself understood.

There is a third thing that all missionaries must wrestle with, the mastery of the culture around them. This of course includes the language which we have seen is a major obstacle in itself. But in speaking of the culture we are also speaking of things that are not at all as obvious as the need to know the language.

Many years ago I read a book entitled 'The Ugly American'. As I remember it, it brought home to me something I had never thought much about. It pointed up the numerous blunders all of us commit when we visit another culture. These are not blunders we intend to commit. Not at all! It is simply a fact, that we do not know what to do in another culture. What is worse, we don't fully realize it! I read a story once of an English or American spy who was captured in Germany because he used his knife to cut his meat and then laid the knife down and used his fork with the same hand. That's what I do. Perhaps that's what you do. But it cost that man his life.

Few missionaries will face such consequences for that kind of error. But the people they are seeking to reach may mock them for their table manners or for the kinds of foods they eat or do not eat. If such things make them look rude or ill-bred, their gospel witness will be muffled to the ears and the hearts of the indigenous people they want to reach. This is not true only among unsophisticated peoples. It is an ever-present hazard wherever we visit another culture.

4. Conclusion. Your missionaries need and deserve your attention to them as human beings, Christians and Christian workers. Each of the things I've mentioned are crucial. Do you feel overwhelmed by the task? I have, as I've written about it. But we must not give up. On the one hand we as individuals and as churches must strive to remember our missionaries in prayer. On the other hand we must never forget two things. First, our God is their God and is in no way insensitive toward their needs. Second, the grace of God covers the shortcomings and failures of all his people. He gives this grace to us who are not sufficient for our responsibilities, whether we are prayer-warriors or missionaries on the front-lines of the world.

Costly Reformation in France

Frederick Hodgson

The night of the placards and its aftermath (Rev 12:17 – 13:1).

It is a wise man who understands the times in which he lives. John Calvin had been labouring as an evangelist in Paris, going from one door to another and sharing the gospel of God's grace. Public teaching was impossible owing to the intensity of the opposition. Calvin was called to be a teacher of the gospel and found his time consumed with visits, interviews and other business. Sinking under the load he determined to leave Paris in order to find time for personal study and discussion with other theologians. Towards the end of July 1534 he left the city and set out on horseback towards Strasburg with his friend Du Tillet.

At that time believers in Paris fell into two categories. Some, called 'Temporisers', saw much to encourage them. They took heart from the fact that King Francis I loved learning and progress and that he had indicated his dislike of the superstitions and lifestyle of the monks. His sister Margaret had already made it perfectly clear that she loved the gospel of grace. They were optimistic that he would join the Reformed princes of Germany and this optimism was fostered by the fact that his envoy Du Bellay was negotiating with them seeking their support against Charles, king of Spain. Their optimism



*Notre Dame Cathedral, location of
tearful speech by Francis I*

was buoyed up by the fact that the king was encouraging Melancthon to seek union between Rome and Lutheranism. Kings of France had assumed a special role in Christendom and the possibility of uniting the church by embracing the doctrines of the Reformation but under the Catholic hierarchy had been suggested to Francis I. This would have given great prestige to Francis. The 'Temporisers' believed that wisdom consisted in waiting for the completion of the work already begun. They felt it would be unwise to interfere with the course of events.

Another group, called 'Scripturalists', did not trust the king. They observed his lifestyle which was dissolute and were uneasy about his vacillating internal and foreign policies. (The king

was burning French Protestants one moment and the next moment he was seeking the friendship of the rulers of countries that embraced the Reformation). They did not believe that it was possible to unite Rome and Protestantism and were impatient to press on with reform as quickly as possible. They probably saw the duplicity of Francis was driven by his real policy of elevating himself in a united Christendom. The Scripturalists were impatient for the overthrow of the pope's power in France.

Both parties wanted reform but what should be done? Advice was sought from Farel in Geneva. They had confidence in this exiled French Reformer, who had demonstrated his sincere interest and longing for the progress of the gospel in France ever since he learned its truth as a student of Lefèvre in Paris about twenty years earlier. A trusted messenger, Feret, who was straightforward, pious and intelligent, was sent to Geneva. On arrival there he witnessed men like Farel, Viret, Saunier, Olivetan (Calvin's cousin), Froment, Marcourt, Hollard, Le Comte and others boldly preaching evangelical doctrines everywhere. He saw the fellowship of the new French Reformers and the Waldenses and was amazed at the way churches were being emptied of images and altars. The boldness of the Reformers in Geneva was in sharp contrast to the timid activity of the Reformers in Paris. In speaking to Feret, Farel insisted that the subjects of Francis should obey their ruler, but if the king of France commanded anything that the King of

Heaven condemned then they should follow the greater King. He returned to Paris with the advice that they should boldly press forwards with reformation as quickly as possible. In particular the Reformers should attack the Roman doctrine of the mass. They insisted that the mass was the root that nourished the tree of the papal hierarchy. This tree created the deadly shade that prevented the living seed of the Word springing up in the hearts of men. Placards and tracts printed in Geneva were to be displayed throughout the principal cities of France, including Paris denouncing the mass. The placards were to be nailed on walls and fences and the tracts scattered in the streets. The language actually used in the placards was provocative. Wylie described its message in these terms: 'It was no logical thesis, no dogmatic refutation; it was a torrent of scathing fire; a thunderburst, terrific and grand...'

The pamphlet was headed, 'True articles on the horrible, great, and intolerable Abuses of the Popish Mass; invented in direct opposition to the Holy Supper of our Lord and only Mediator and Saviour Jesus Christ.' It continued by talking of the world being 'totally destroyed, ruined, lost undone, seeing that in it our Lord is outrageously blasphemed, and the people blinded and led astray.' The wafer used in the mass was sarcastically described as a 'god of dough' that could be gnawed by vermin and the invective closed by an attack on popes, cardinals, bishops, and monks who hate the truth and are terrified by the truth. The provocative language, composed in the

relative security of Switzerland has often been attributed to Farel himself, but some suppose that the author was Antoine de Marcourt.

It would be a mistake however, to think that the placards were simply condemning of the mass. They magnified the work of Christ with wording, 'Yes, by the great and admirable sacrifice of Jesus Christ all outward and visible sacrifice is abolished. Christ, says the Epistle to the Hebrews, was offered once for all.' 'By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' Christ offered once and not often...If the sacrifice is perfect, why should it be repeated?'

Feret completed his risky journey back to Paris with his load of explosive printed material. When the French Reformers inspected them, some were apprehensive about their use. They saw that the likely effect of their display would be intense and bitter persecution. The majority of the Reformers were of the opinion that they should go forward boldly and the posters and papers should be used as quickly as possible because they felt that progress with reformation in France was slow compared to elsewhere in Europe. It was resolved that every man in France should be faced with the paper's denunciation of the pope and the mass. The country was divided into sections and different people were to be responsible for their section. The whole country would be faced by the condemnation of the mass simultaneously and the night of 24th October 1534 was chosen as the time to secretly strike the blow for truth. After

exhorting one another to 'pray to God with fervent zeal' the Reformers went quietly and stealthily about their work across the country. Wylie strikingly wrote, 'An invisible finger had, from side to side, covered it with a terrible writing – with prophetic denunciation of woe and ruin unless it repented in sackcloth and turned from the mass.'

Merle d'Aubigné commented, 'While conceding something to the times in which the placard was written and posted up, we may ask whether that act proceeded solely from a movement of the mind free from every tinge of human passion, and was one of the arms that the apostles would have employed. In any case it seems to us certain that more moderate language would really have been stronger, and more surely have attained its end.'

On the following morning the citizens of France greeted the placards with horror, amazement and anger and in some cases approval. Some affected horror but secretly delighted in what had happened as they saw opportunities for stirring up antagonism towards those who had espoused Lutheranism. Priests and friars circulated a rumour that the Protestants planned to murder Catholics as they went about their worship. Their accusation was, 'This placard is the signal; the heretics intend to fire the churches and palaces, massacre the Catholics, abolish the monarchy, and reduce the kingdom to a desert.' One particular incident gave the enemies of the gospel a great opportunity to strike against the Evangelicals. A poster had been put up on the door of King Francis's bedroom

where he spent the night at the Castle of Amboise. When the poster was handed to the agitated, affronted sovereign, he was so disturbed that he could not read it, but on hearing what it said, he was speechless for a moment and then fuming in wrath cried, 'Let all be seized and let Lutheranism be totally exterminated.'

His Catholic advisers, Montmorency and Cardinal de Tournon who read the pamphlet to him, stressing the words that gave maximum impact, fuelled his anger but an earlier incident had stuck in the king's mind. D'Aubigné reported that Francis had previously been warned by a papal nuncio that if he followed the example of Henry VIII of England and made the French Church independent of Rome, Francis 'would be the first to suffer; the religion of a people cannot be changed without their next demanding the change of the prince.'

Without giving his anger chance to cool or giving himself time to reflect, he called parliament to assemble and demanded his hatchet man, the lieutenant-general Jean Morin, find the perpetrators of the placards and bring them to account for disturbing and affronting the religion of both himself and the majority of his subjects. No one owned up to the audacity of posting the pamphlet on the king's bedroom door and it is not clear whether this audacious act was done out of a motive of misplaced zeal or desire to stir up trouble for the Reformers. However, a chorister of the royal chapel, known for his Lutheranism was blamed, arrested, put in chains and sent to Paris for trial

and publicly burnt several months later. Meanwhile, the crafty, cruel Morin, an opponent of the Reformation and a man of 'very dissolute life', zealously went about the business of seeking to exterminate Lutheranism. He needed no second invitation.

He seized a Parisian artisan who was known to be sympathetic to the Reformation and gave him the choice of being burnt alive or pointing out the homes of his believing brethren. Under this pressure the poor man caved in and agreed to the demands of the evil Morin. The latter arranged a procession of the Corpus Christi, with the publicly stated intent of making expiation for the widespread blasphemous affront to the 'Holy Sacrament'. In the procession incense-bearers and choristers followed a friar and priest carrying the host. Morin, his captive and soldiers under his command accompanied the procession, generally unobserved amongst the crowds. Whenever the humiliated, sad, shamed captive walked past the door of one of his friends, he was instructed to make a sign and the soldiers of Morin forced an entry of that house and arrested the inhabitants. Meanwhile the procession swelled in size as it completed its tour of Paris.

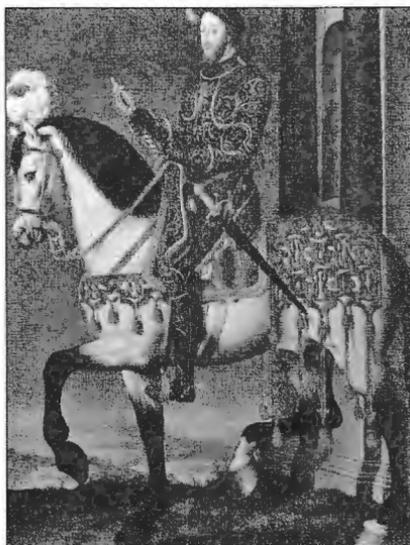
Morin took many Reformers, regardless of whether they were in favour of the placards or against them. Within a fortnight Millon, Du Bourg and Poille had been burnt on successive days in different locations of the city. Millon, a paralytic, physically incapable of distributing and fixing the placards, was the first to be burnt, but the temperature of the fire was allowed

to fall so that he suffered for a longer time. Du Bourg, a wealthy tradesman, had his hand cut off before being burnt and Poille, a bricklayer, had his cheek pierced and his tongue put through the hole and fastened with an iron pin so that he could not speak whilst he was incinerated. Despite their dreadful suffering all three men died with bravery, composure and peaceful countenances. Other burnings followed.

Not surprisingly terror fell upon many in Paris and many fled to exile. Onlookers were amazed as the gaps left in society indicated how many people identified with the gospel. Wylie recounts, 'Merchants vanished suddenly from their places of business; tradesmen disappeared from their workshops; clerks were missing from the counting house; students assembled at the usual hour, but the professor's chair was empty; their teacher, not waiting to bid his pupils adieu, had gone forth, and was hastening towards some more friendly land.'

Queen Margaret, the king's sister, was a believer and she effectively interceded for some of the preachers who had been incarcerated in prison. Roussel, Berthaud and Courault (the latter had counselled against the placards) were allowed to leave prison and avoided the stake owing to the queen's intervention, but there were some who urged that she should be executed as a heretic.

The Sorbonne, parliament and priests used the affair of the placards to their utmost advantage to stir up the populace of Paris to hate those of the Reformed faith. This tactic was



Francis I

repeated to even greater effect some decades later on St Bartholomew's Night in 1572. The enemies of the gospel also used the incident of the placards to urge the king to break off his talks with Protestants from other parts of Europe.

The king was persuaded that the whole nation was in crisis and he, as the eldest son of the Church, had the responsibility of restoring normality. On the 21st January 1535 he held a grand ceremonial and religious procession in Paris. People from all over the country flocked to observe the occasion. The city was packed with sightseers wishing to witness the spectacle.

The march started at the Louvre and was led by priests and monks carrying banners and crosses from different parishes. They were followed by bearers of supposed relics, bits of the

cross, the crown of thorns, the spear that pierced the side of the Lord and other religious artefacts and bones etc. Cardinals and bishops followed in their ceremonial robes. The Bishop of Paris carried the Host under a magnificent panoply supported by the king's three sons and another 'prince of the blood'. The king followed dressed in humble clothing, head looking down and carrying a lighted taper. He was the chief mourner in this national act of humiliation and sorrow for the affront of the placards. The march led to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, where the king made a moving speech in which he burst into tears. Participants swore an oath that they would make war against heresy and the spectators sobbed, 'We will live and die for the Catholic religion!'

The procession returned from Notre Dame to pass numerous scaffolds on which certain Protestant Christians were burnt and tortured to produce a slow painful death in full view of the marchers. The king returned to his palace well pleased with the propitiation offered to turn aside the wrath of the god of his sacrament. The people were delighted to believe the priests who said that such an event would lead to the death of the Reformed movement in France. The populace of Paris enjoyed their taste of blood, which would be repeated time and time again until the scaffolds of 1793. (Louis XVI was executed on January 21st 1793.)

Still full of fury the king and his advisers wanted more bloodshed. Seventy-three fugitives from France

could not be found and their goods were confiscated and they were condemned to be burnt as Lutherans if ever they were found and given up. One of them, the poet Marot, wrote to the king:

They call me Lutheran – a name
I have no right to bear.
Luther for me did not come down
from heaven;
For me no Luther hung on the cross
For all my sins; nor was I in his
name
Baptised, but in the name of Him
alone
To whom th'eternal Father grants
whate'er we ask-
The only name in heaven by which
the world,
This wicked world, salvation can
attain.

Such was the character of those who fled from the wrath of the king.

Cardinals Duprat and De Tournon had also poisoned the king's mind against his sister Margaret, Queen of Navarre, suggesting that she had been involved with the placards. As a consequence of his coldness and harshness towards her she retired quickly and heartbroken to her kingdom in the Pyrénées. Evangelicals joined her there as they fled for safety and her small kingdom prospered even though it was nestled between the powerful countries of Spain and France. Wylie describes how its 'laws were reformed, schools were opened, many branches of industry were imported and very successfully cultivated'.

The king's anger slowly cooled, even though the burnings went on well into 1535. He still needed support in his wars against the king of Spain and he again turned to Protestant princes for help. He had to stop his persecutions and attempt to explain his actions to enlist their interest. He portrayed them as seditious traitors and heretics. It was said that the king had 'behaved harshly to none but rebels, who desired to disturb the State under the cloak of religion'. Many in Germany believed the explanations offered by Francis and his friends. Meanwhile in France gradually more respite was given to the Reformation. Its citizens continued to be converted, not least because of seeing the patient endurance of the suffering martyrs.

Throughout the life of Francis I and afterwards the Lord who turns the hearts of kings was at work in his providence protecting the cause of the gospel. The Reformation in France was protected by the quarrels between the king of Spain and Francis. Francis was unable to carry the persecution forwards and exterminate the believers because he needed to keep on good terms with the Protestant nations of Europe. The renewed outbreak of war with Spain from 1536 to 1538 provided a period of rest for the Reformation to consolidate in France again after the fierce persecution of 1534-35.

Francis I was a man of learning and culture. He did much to encourage this in France. However, his learning and culture did not prevent him from behaving in a beastly, cruel way

towards some of his subjects. His learning did not make him more likely to turn to the gospel as the 'Temporisers' had hoped. Events proved them wrong in putting their hope in princes. The 'Scripturalists' were right in their assessment of their king.

After his short stay in Strasburg Calvin travelled to Basle where he received news of the tragic events in Paris. He heard of the tortures, cruel suffering and vilification of his close friends in Paris and was moved to write in support of them and their common faith. His keen sympathy with them led him to compose his most famous work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This was completed according to d'Aubigné on 1st August 1535¹, but not published until the following year. It was printed in Latin and French and Calvin made several additions to it that appeared in later publications. D'Aubigné stressed that Calvin's chief purpose in writing the Christian Institutes 'was to make known to Christendom, and particularly to the Protestants of Germany, the doctrines professed in France by the men whom the king was putting to death'. Calvin's work was to have a huge effect throughout the Christian world of his time and of later centuries.

The dragon described in Revelation chapter twelve was not able to destroy the work of reformation. Instead the flames of persecution wafted the gospel to cities and lands outside of France. The suffering martyred or exiled French believers illuminated many although at great cost. The Lord

preserved some in their suffering and others from the suffering of those days enabling the latter to continue the work of reformation from safer havens elsewhere. Centres like Strasburg, Basle and particularly Geneva became bright sources of light to the other parts of Europe in the sixteenth century and in particular Geneva became an inspiration for biblical study and reform in many countries throughout the world up to the twenty-first century. Simultaneously the fires of persecution in France acted as beacons warning of the danger posed by those religious doctrines that needed protecting by a policy of instilling fear.

Doubtless many sincere Catholics were fearful and desperate lest Christendom turned from its ancient faith. Desperate measures were called for. The preachers of the gospel did not have to resort to these desperate measures. Their confidence was in the authority of the Bible and the sovereign gracious power of God to save and to keep. As long as they maintained patient confidence in the God of grace, they experienced fruit through their preaching. The Catholic faith has a different view of the human heart and how grace is obtained. Ultimately faith determines practice.

Did the Reformers act on good advice when they covered France with the placards? Sturm, a scholar and friend of the Reformation, wrote in sorrow to Melancthon and described those who planted the placards as being rash and imprudent. He was of the opinion that 'the Reformation should make its way by a learned exposition of its doctrines, and not by attacking popular

superstition'. Twenty-first century communicators love sound bites. We also frequently see news clips on the TV in which angry people parade slogans in public demonstrations. Do slogans change the opinions of the ignorant without adequate explanation of the slogans? Sturm thought that the people of France were not adequately and patiently taught why the mass was wrong. Was it really surprising that their passions were so easily aroused by the enemies of the gospel? Is the gospel prospered by angry people with sandwich boards or placards denouncing the pope or Islam to crowds of people who are completely ignorant of the issues involved? Placards are also used in anti-abortion demonstrations. Do they have a power to persuade?

The affair of the placards has had a very significant influence on the history of the progress of the gospel in the world. Important lessons are to be learned by reflecting on the way it came about and its aftermath.

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¹ Beveridge's translation of the Christian Institutes published by James Clark & Co dates the introductory letter to Francis as 1st August 1536.

Church Planting in one Corner of England

Phil Arthur

Early Days

Ulverston is a small, attractive market town in the far north-west of England. Until the boundary changes of 1974 it was in the Furness district of Lancashire, but since that time it has been in the newly created county of Cumbria. It is the birthplace of Stan Laurel, one half of the comedy duo Laurel and Hardy and is just ten miles from the ship-building town of Barrow-in-Furness. It is also on the southern edge of England's famous Lake District. It is now the home of a small but growing Reformed Baptist Church, planted by the church that I have served as pastor since 1988, Grace Baptist Church in Lancaster. This church is itself comparatively young, having been constituted as recently as 1981.

It all began one windy January day when I received a telephone call from the late Rev. John Marshall of Hemel Hempstead, who told me that an American couple, Guy and Laura Smith, had moved to Ulverston in Cumbria, and were struggling to find a spiritual home. They were Reformed Baptists and knowing almost nothing of spiritual realities in that part of England, had supposed that in the land of the Reformation and the Puritans, there must surely be an expository ministry on every street corner. I immediately made contact and that very evening made the forty mile journey



Phil Arthur

around Morecambe Bay to call on the Smiths. (Guy was an engineer seconded to work on the British Trident Missile project at Barrow-in-Furness.) Within months the Smiths and a group of friends who met in their home for Bible study began to make the journey around the Bay in the opposite direction for worship at our church in Lancaster almost every Sunday morning. It was a great encouragement to have our numbers swelled by a committed body of believers who thoroughly appreciated all that they heard each Sunday but we keenly felt the sacrifice they made in undertaking a round trip of eighty miles every time they came. (Ironically the distance across the Bay is only ten miles as the crow flies and at low tide those who know the treacherous currents and quicksands sometimes attempt to walk across, but by road it is forty miles or thereabouts.) We therefore decided to begin evening services in a public hall in Ulverston September 1992 with a view to praying

and working towards the planting of a Reformed Baptist Church in the south of England's Lake District. This finally came about in May 2005 when the mother church in Lancaster withdrew its oversight and gave its recognition to the newly independent Free Grace Baptist Church in Ulverston. Readers of Reformation Today in other parts of the world may be forcibly struck by the sheer length of time involved in bringing a new church to birth in what is now a highly secularised and spiritually indifferent nation where, sadly, many people have a cynical and hard-boiled attitude to the claims of Christ on their lives.

In those early days we were determined to plant a confessional church. It seemed only rational to us that like begets like and as a church with a clear commitment to the 1689 Baptist Confession ourselves we wanted to see another such church grow up under our authority. We were convinced that we had gained from our confessional stance and that our daughter church would enjoy similar benefits too. To our minds it was not enough to be committed to Calvinistic soteriology and a programme of systematic expository preaching. We were convinced that the Scriptures enjoined both the historic Reformed Faith and Baptist Church order. One notable development in the last few years has been the rise of pan-denominational alliances in most of the regions of the United Kingdom with an avowed interest in church planting projects. A number of schemes have already been undertaken, often in university towns. It remains to be seen how many of these

have an explicit attachment to one of the historic confessions. Furthermore, since these regional alliances often involve both Anglicans and Baptists it will be interesting to see how they develop a form of local church polity that can include both in the same congregation.

For a dozen years or so we functioned as one church on two sites with a joint membership and a joint oversight looking after two congregations that met forty miles apart. As the work in Ulverston slowly grew and began to hold its own services on Sunday mornings as well as on Sunday evenings, the friends there began to travel to Lancaster only for the monthly gathering around the Lord's Table and the quarterly church meetings and little by little there were even separate Communion services with the shared eldership travelling back and forth to oversee them. At first there was some misunderstanding about our intentions in this regard. "Why should I join a church forty miles away?" Our intention was never to extend a little empire from Lancaster into another place but simply to provide oversight and help for a group of Christians without it until such time as the Lord raised up men within the local body with the necessary gifts and graces so that we could then withdraw our help and the relationship would change from one of mother and daughter to that of two sisters. There are examples of Particular Baptist Churches in 17th-century England which functioned in this way, where two congregations in different locations would share a common oversight and this seemed a

helpful model as we sought a way ahead. On reflection, now that our prayers have been answered and the church in Ulverston has no need of oversight from Lancaster we have sometimes wondered whether this might also be a helpful approach for churches that fall on hard times. Suppose a church finds its membership is reduced and its strength is small, is there not a case for asking a like-minded church in the region which is in greater health to provide oversight for a time until things are built up once more, on the understanding that when that does happen, it will graciously withdraw once the church that has received the help is better able to manage its own life once again?

What lessons have we learned?

I suppose no two church plants are exactly alike any more than parents raising children would find that their offspring have identical characteristics. Too many variables come into play between one locality and another to make exact comparisons possible at every level. We also have to reckon with the fact that a sovereign God works according to his own pleasure. The wind truly blows as it pleases and some of us serve the Lord during times of spiritual harvest; others must sow patiently and see little fruit. Nevertheless, I would certainly want to challenge one common assumption. It seems to be taken for granted that only very big churches can hope to plant other churches, that you need a certain critical mass before you can send out a proportion of your members to found a core group that will be the basis of



New church at Ulverston

another church without the morale of the sending church being so badly affected by the departure or the new church being so tiny that it will never get off the ground. The mother church in Lancaster had a membership in the low 60s when the Ulverston project began and something like a dozen people made up the core of the new church at first. We often had to reassure them that smallness is not so much the issue as the pathology of smallness. *'Nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.'* (I Sam 14:6). Equally we found as the sending church that there was a real cost to be borne when we lost almost a quarter of our congregation and when we often found our congregation was also lessened because we were regularly sending preachers around the Bay to serve our daughter church. Friends that we had grown to appreciate and value were no longer with us. We found that this happened at a time when our own congregation also dwindled for other reasons, when some church members moved south to find employment and we had to cry to the Lord to make up our numbers. Even now, we are not quite back to the size we were when the Ulverston project

began, although we have seen the ranks built up again to some degree. It has been thrilling to have a share in seeing another like-minded church grow in an area where none existed before, but there has been a real price to pay.

We also appointed two of our elders to oversee the embryo church in Ulverston. One of these was Guy Smith, the American engineer who had been involved with the project since its inception. In due course he has moved back to the United States and is now involved in a similar project in Bremerton in Washington State in the Pacific North-West. The other was Steve Wood, a former evangelist with the Open Air Mission who was preaching regularly at Ulverston. The group there approached the church in Lancaster and requested that Steve be set aside formally as full time elder to work in Ulverston. In agreeing that he be sent there, the Church in Lancaster sent one of its best workers, a man that it could not easily spare. We could still find work for him in Lancaster and would welcome him and his wife Pearl back with hallelujahs. There is always a cost involved in church planting. It ought to be said that the church received a considerable boost with the arrival of a seasoned and godly elder in the retired pastor of Newtown Evangelical Baptist Church, Chesham, Jack Jenner and his wife Alison.

Finally, it was to become apparent after a number of ups and downs that we had to settle in for the long haul. Growth was almost painfully slow, partly because some friends who were part of the initial core of the project had to move out of the area to find

employment. (That part of Cumbria is heavily dependent on one or two main sources of employment and jobs can be hard to come by. Even today, while the church is much better provided for in terms of spiritual gifts it still does not have enough members in paid employment to be financially viable without outside support.) Others aligned themselves with the church briefly only to recoil at the Reformed faith when they began to realise what it actually was in practice. Their arrival often had the effect of heartening a small fellowship and their departure had the opposite effect of leaving the friends deflated. There was a distinct period when the elders in Lancaster were often asked somewhat nervously whether we were on the point of pulling out. There was no doubt at all that we simply had to keep our nerve in the confidence that we serve a faithful God who would vindicate his cause. Church planting is not for the faint-hearted or for those who, having set their hands to the plough, take a lingering look back.

A few thoughts in conclusion

If the local church is truly '*the pillar and ground of the truth*' (1 Tim 3:15) the truth of Christ's gospel is now being held up for all to see in a part of the English Lake District where it was not visible before. I am thrilled to the core to think that this is the case. It is the Lord's doing. So that there be no triumphalism, it has also been a drain on the resources of the mother church as well as those on the spot. Nevertheless, if our resources in Lancaster were sufficiently replenished I would gladly seek the Lord's will to do it all again.

Pioneer Missionary in Persia

The Reality of Spiritual Awakening

A review article by Sharon James

A large number of rare books have been reprinted by Tentmaker Publications, a family business set up by Phil and Joy Roberts to support gospel ministry first in the Republic of Ireland, and more recently in Staffordshire. Books are selected for their devotional and spiritual value, as well as their historical interest. *Faith Working by Love*¹ is not only a fascinating account of missionary work, but also a valuable record of spiritual awakening among young people. It is the biography of a nineteenth-century American missionary, Fidelity Fiske, who ministered in Persia (now Iran) between 1843 and 1858.

Persia, one of the great empires of the ancient world, was occupied during the seventh century by Islamic armies. Prior to this the area had been Christian, part of the Assyrian or Nestorian church.² Educated Christians were useful to the Islamic regime, playing a key role in administration. The Qajar Dynasty was established in 1779, and Tehran became the capital. In 1848 Naser o-Din became ruler –



Fidelity Fiske

he wished to modernise Persia by introducing western science, technology and education. Hence some measure of toleration was extended to American missionaries.

Urmia³ (Orumiyeh) is a city in north-western Iran, the capital of the West Azerbaijan province, about twenty km to the west of Lake Urmia. It is ethnically diverse, including Azeris, Armenians and Assyrians. During the nineteenth century the city was home to large numbers of Assyrian Christians, and thus it was chosen as the base for the first American Christian mission to Persia in 1834. The

missionaries came in the first place to minister among the ancient Nestorian Christian community. They discovered a great deal of nominalism among this community; ethical standards were often low; bishops, priests and deacons often opposed real gospel work. There was also, inevitably, tension with Islamic leaders who opposed any extension of Christian influence. The American mission, including the school which Fidelia Fiske ran, could not have survived without the protection of the modernising elements in government, and yet its survival was often in question due to the virulent, sometimes violent opposition of others.

Fidelia Fiske was born in 1816. She was brought up by devout parents, and there was a strong missionary concern in her home. Evidently a gifted child, she showed signs of early piety herself, having read Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*⁴ and Timothy Dwight's *Theology*⁵ by the age of eight. Fidelia began teaching in local schools at the age of seventeen, but then, in 1839, took the opportunity to study at the new Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, South Hadley, Massachusetts.

Mount Holyoke, the first women's college in America, had been founded two years previously by

Mary Lyon. A rigorous routine was established for the students. The day began at 5am, and Lyon insisted on daily physical exercise. Seven courses in science and maths were compulsory for graduation. Twice a day students and teachers were given time for personal devotions, and each dormitory had two large 'closets' to give a private space for prayer. Mary Lyon was passionately concerned for the salvation of each of her students, and also concerned to promote missionary concern among them.

Fidelia graduated in 1842. Between 1840 and 1841 she had spent a year at home convalescing from typhoid fever. Forty students had succumbed to the disease; nine died. It had seemed that Fidelia too would die, but partly due to the devoted nursing of her mother she pulled through. However, her father and sister contracted the disease and died. Fidelia returned to Mount Holyoke and graduated. The trustees then appointed her as a teacher.

By this time one of the first American missionaries to Persia had published *Eight years' residence in Persia*. Reading this book, Fidelia was convicted that she should not be serving in the relatively well-served seminary at Mount Holyoke, while there were such desperate needs in the middle

east. The author, Justin Perkins, contacted Mary Lyon at this time, informing her of the need to provide a female missionary to pioneer schooling for girls in Persia. A meeting of the entire school was called, and those interested in the position were asked to send in a note. Many responded, most of them mentioning their many qualifications. Fidelia simply said, 'If am found worthy for the job I would like to go.' She was thus marked out as the one with the needed spiritual qualities.

Fidelia was passionate in her desire to go to Persia, but sought the wisdom of friends and family. All remembered the way she had nearly died of typhoid such a short time before, and counselled against going. They were sure that the rigours of missionary life would kill her. Fidelia submitted. The post was offered to another. But when this woman also stepped back from mission in view of strong family pressure, Fidelia was asked to reconsider. Fidelia agreed, on the condition that Mary Lyon would help persuade Mrs Fiske to give her blessing to the enterprise. That same day the two women made a thirty-five mile sled ride through thick snow, arriving at the Fiske home in the early hours. They spoke all night with Fidelia's mother, who by the morning had given her consent.



Present day Iran has approximately the same borders as the Persia known to Fidelia Fiske

Shortly afterwards Fidelia left for Persia, arriving in 'Oroomiah' (Urmia) in June 1843. She would not return home for the next fifteen years. While the Americans had started day schools among the Nestorians, hardly any girls had been allowed to attend. Fidelia soon realised that there would be little chance of achieving any real progress in a day school situation; she aimed to start a boarding school where girls could be immersed in a Christian environment. As her following description indicates, the culture in Urmia militated against any education at all for girls:

The Nestorian house was formerly a single large room, and there the work of the family was mostly performed. There they ate, and there they slept. Several generations occupied the same, each son as he married bringing his wife to his father's house. . . The

house was lighted by an opening in the roof, and the smoke went out at the same place. It had only a floor of earth . . . There was hardly a possibility of cleanliness. Vermin abounded in most of the houses. The inmates were covered, not only with fleas, but often with lice, which were found not only on the head, but on the entire body.

The women were regarded by the men as drudges and slaves, and were compelled to spend most of the time in outdoor labour, among the vineyards and wheat-fields, often going forth to their work carrying not only their heavy implements, but also their infants in the cradle. When, at evening, they returned from the field, however weary, they must milk the cows, prepare their husbands' supper, and wait till they had finished their meal, before partaking themselves. For husbands to beat their wives often and severely was a well-nigh universal practice . . .

Mr. Perkins tells us of a visit to a family in Kowry, where the principal room was given up to the guests, and in the morning he found that a little son had been added to the family, born in the stable. He supposed that he and his family had taken the place designed for the mother. But it was not so. Nearly all the Nestorian children begin their life in a stable. The mother almost invariably resorts to that place to meet her hour of sorrow; and there she often meets death.

Lying was almost universal among both men and women. 'We all lie,' was their frequent, self-justifying plea when reproved for the practice . . . Women and children, as well as men, were shockingly profane . . .

(Speaking of her early pupils) My little girls would swear and use the vilest language . . . The women, in their deep degradation, were naturally coarse, passionate, and quarrelsome. When you see a whole village of women engaged in a quarrel, their hair all loose and flying in the wind, while they are throwing stones, brickbats, and spoiled eggs at each other, with almost unearthly shrieks, you say, and justly, other women than these were 'last at the cross, and first at the sepulchre'. But *those* may once have been like *these*.

When the missionaries went to Persia, there was but a single Nestorian female who could read. The others were not only ignorant, but entirely content to remain so. When asked if they would not like to learn to read, they would reply, with a significant shrug, 'I am a woman' – 'I am a girl,' – 'Do you want to make a priest of me?' The prejudices of the mothers against the education of their daughters were stronger than those of the fathers (pp. 91-92).

Thus women were regarded as inferior in every possible way. Even Nestorian church leaders were deeply hostile to any efforts to teach their daughters, thinking that this would leave them unfit for their 'female duties' of keeping house and working in the fields. Fidelia was in no doubt at all that faithfulness to the Christian gospel meant that this culture had to change. 'Give me your daughters' became her motto. 'Her zeal for the improvement of her sex knew no bounds; it was a ruling passion with her. No obstacles were considered

insuperable in the prosecution of the work so near her heart' (p. 289).

Over the next fifteen years Fidelity Fiske effectively build up a 'Mount Holyoke' school for girls in Persia. At any one time she would have forty or so girls boarding; they would be trained in turn to go out and educate, evangelise, and disciple others. She insisted on high standards, and rigorous training particularly in Bible knowledge. The records of revival thus need to be seen in the context of a strong framework of scriptural understanding, especially of the holiness of God.

Three years after commencing her work, the American Nestorian Mission reported 'the first in that series of extensive and remarkable revivals of religion with which that mission has been so signally blessed. Years of toil and prayer were rewarded with an abundant harvest' (p. 120). The school for girls, headed by Fidelity, as well as the twin school for boys, headed by Mr Stoddard, were both affected. In 1846, Fidelity reported:

The first Monday of the new year was observed by the mission as a day of fasting and prayer. . . I went into my school as usual, at nine o'clock, and, after telling the pupils that many prayers would, that day, be offered for them by friends far away, I prayed with them, and then asked them to retire to another room, where they would study with a native teacher. All

but two passed out. As these two lingered, I said: 'Did you understand me?' They came nearer, and I saw that they were in tears. 'Have you heard bad news?' I inquired. They gave no answer; but, coming still nearer, whispered, 'May we have today to care for our souls?' One of them (Sarah) adding, 'Perhaps, next year, I shall not be here.' I had no private room or closet to give them, but the dear children would find a place. They went to the wood-cellar, and, taking sticks of wood, made their own closets; and there they spent that cold day, seeking the forgiveness of sin. Nor did they seek in vain; they were soon trusting in Christ, and we were led to hope for yet greater blessings.

Monday, the 19th, there were such marked indications of interest in my school, that I asked those who felt that they must now care for their souls to come to my room at five o'clock. I had been out of my school but a few minutes, when I found that a number of the girls had sought places of prayer. While asking for wisdom to guide the dear children, Mr. Stoddard came to the door, and said, 'I cannot stop, but I want you to know that four or five of my boys are much distressed on account of their sins'. How our hearts went up to Heaven in thanksgiving at that hour; and how were they filled with trembling and anxiety! I turned away from Mr. S., to meet five of my girls, who seemed to feel deeply their sinfulness. I cannot well describe the scenes of that week. One after another bowed under a sense of sin. Every place was occupied for prayer. . . The two schools hardly knew anything of each other's condition till Friday, when they met in the usual weekly prayer-meeting, in the room which Mr. Stoddard had asked might be 'wholly

consecrated to the Lord forever'. We felt that evening that the room was no longer ours, but the Lord's, and we all wanted it to be his forever. The boys sat on one side, and the girls on the other; and I never saw a company that seemed more fully impressed with eternal realities. The careless ones had stayed away, and those present were earnest seekers. . . . Souls were born there; and we do not wonder that many of our native friends think the place a Bethel.

For three weeks after the revival commenced we had but little company. The time seemed to be given us to labour expressly for our pupils, and it was to us like one continued Sabbath. Every place in our house was consecrated by prayer, and all our work was for souls.

At the end of three weeks, Nestorians from without began to flock around us, and now our dear pupils were true helpers. I often had as many as ten or fifteen women to pass the night with us. Then I used to gather together all the spare pillows, cushions, and quilts in the house, and make our sitting room one great dormitory. I often stayed with them till midnight, and then, from my room, heard them pray all night. I love to remember those nights of watching with the Lord Jesus for those precious souls. Oh, how easy it is to watch when he is with us!

On February 28th, Fidelia wrote to her sister:

The week on which my last letter to you was closed, was one of most striking demonstrations of God's Spirit in the conviction of sinners. On Saturday and the Sabbath almost the whole school seemed affected. The

close contiguity into which they were thrown led me to feel that while there was no doubt of the Spirit's presence, there was also much excitement among the younger ones. To avoid this, we separated them as much as possible one from another, recommended them not to speak at all to one another, and gave them much time to be alone with their God. Those deeply affected were soon manifest, and in our conversation and prayers with and for them, we sought to show them the wickedness of their hearts, their utter alienation from God, and their need of a change of heart, and thus lead them to the sinner's only Friend. From that time to the present, the interest has increased; and now there are only two in the school over ten years of age (including more than half the school), who have not been deeply affected. Many of these appear to be true Christians. Time alone can show the genuineness of their conversion. But I do believe that God is gathering to himself a precious band here. Several under ten years of age have appeared to be deeply convicted of sin, and seem now to love Him who delights to take little children in his arms and bless them.

I am often awaked in the morning by a dear child standing at my bedside with some inquiry in regard to the way of life. Their freedom renders it a delightful, and, at the same time, a responsible task to guide them. Oh, do pray for me, that I may be guided aright! I never felt so weak, and, at the same time, such tremendous responsibilities resting upon me.

Prayerfulness has thus far been strikingly exhibited in those hopefully converted. They love their closets, and it is one of their greatest trials that

they cannot have a closet as they wish. I have many little meetings for prayer with them. It is delightful at such hours to hear those who have but just begun to love the Lord, pleading for entire consecration to him, and also, with the deepest apparent feeling, wrestling for their impenitent friends. Can it be, I often think at such times, that these are indeed sisters in Christ, redeemed by his blood, and heirs of heaven? If so, what an inroad has been made on Satan's kingdom! God has brought to pass in a day what years of man's labour could never effect. To his name we will give the glory.

In nine villages besides Geog Tapa there are from one to four or five individuals for whom we hope. Most of these persons have been first awakened by visiting our schools, and seeing the tears, and hearing the penitential confessions of our pupils in prayer before God, and several have here hoped that they found the sinner's friend. I think that an individual now seldom comes into our yard without being urged to repentance, and prayed with by several individuals. These dear young Christians seem to have no disposition to go to heaven alone, and while we can see them humble and prayerful, we feel no desire to check them in their labours of love.

You will rejoice to hear that there is much interest among the middle-aged females here. Three of the girls' mothers we hope love the Saviour; others are interested. I find my labours almost as much out of school as in (pp. 121-124).

In May 1858 ill health forced Fidelia to return to America. She

wrote, on departing: 'When I came here there was no Nestorian female whom I could take by the hand and call a sister in Christ. How rejoiced was I when I saw one such! A few weeks since, on our communion day, I was allowed the privilege of taking ninety-three by the hand, and giving them seats in our chapel previous to coming to the Lord's table. Forty-two of these had been my own dear pupils; several others were detained from being present' (p. 233).

Mary Lyon had died, but Fidelia was invited back to Mount Holyoke, where she exercised a profound spiritual influence. During January and February 1861, between fifty and sixty of the young women professed conversion. Fidelia was, unsurprisingly, hugely influential in enthusing the students about foreign mission.⁶ She was also invited to speak to many different audiences on the opportunities of mission in Asia. Fidelia also wrote several books. But her health was broken, and she died in 1864.

The American mission continued to minister in Persia. By the end of the nineteenth century Christians composed at least half the population of Urmia. Most were forced to flee the area during the First World War; an exodus triggered by the massacres of Armenians and Assyrian Christians by the Ottoman Turks. The school established by Fidelia Fiske

continued to function until this forced departure of Christians from Urmia. Today, at least 95% of the population is Moslem.

The wonderful spiritual awakening in Iran should quicken our desires and our prayers for revival today. This biography is strongly recommended, not only for the accounts of revival in Urmia, but also for the depiction of Fidelity's character. After her death one of her colleagues wrote:

She ever radiated happiness on all about her. The sight of her made us all glad, from the little child to the oldest one in the family. While she stayed, our joy in her was unmingled, and, after she had gone, memory found no occasion for criticism.

Nor was this a higher state into which she rose now and then from a lower level. It was the steady outflow of her daily life . . . Christ abode in her and she in him. In her presence, Christ seemed not far off, and afterwards you felt like saying with some of old, 'Did not our hearts burn within us?' Yet, with all this, there was not the least affectation of superior goodness; no talk about eminent holiness, as though others did not know so much about it; but it was as if Christ's own love flamed from him through a human heart, that we might admire its beauty, and praise the Lord . . . When first brought to Christ, she was led to sympathise with his love to the whole world; and, in her after life, that sympathy was very practical. It was as if the fulness of love to all was poured on each object of it within her reach (pp. 297-8).

¹ *The Cross and the Crown; or, Faith Working by Love: The Life of Fidelity Fiske, missionary to Persia 1843-1858*. DT Fiske. Reprinted by Tentmaker Publications, 300pp. hardback, £13.95. For further information: Tentmaker Publications, 121 Hartshill Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, ST4 7LU. www.tentmaker.org.uk

² Nestorius (c. 386-451) was a pupil of Theodore of Mopsuestia in Antioch in Syria, and later became Archbishop of Constantinople. He was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431AD for teaching that the human and divine aspects of Christ were distinct natures (for example arguing that the human part of Christ suffered on the cross, not the divine.) His opponents accused him of dividing Christ into two persons. The Assyrian Church of the East gave refuge to Nestorius's followers, and thus the Assyrian Church later became known (especially in the West) as the 'Nestorian' Church. While it is true that there is some historical continuity with Nestorian Christianity, it is strongly debated as to whether their doctrine is in fact 'Nestorian'.

³ According to some historians Urmia is believed to be the birthplace of the prophet Zoroaster, the founder of Zoroastrianism

⁴ The title is Latin, but the book is in English, written in 1702. It is an account of the history of the Christian church in New England.

⁵ Timothy Dwight (1752-1817) was a Congregational leader in America during the Second Great Awakening, and President of Yale College. His mother was a daughter of Jonathan Edwards. Many of his sermons were published after his death, in five volumes, with the title *Theology Explained and Defended*.

⁶ By 1859 more than sixty Mount Holyoke students had left for the mission field; by 1887 one fifth of all female missionaries accepted by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had come from the school; and by 1900 a total of 248 Mount Holyoke alumnae had become missionaries.

News



Pastors Laban Mwashekele, Ronald Kalifungwa and Irving Steggles at question and answer time at the conference in Bulawayo

African Pastors' Conferences

The number of annual Conferences which fly under the name of Evangelical Press has now increased to eight. Recently there have been Conferences in Barberton, Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), Mseleni in northern Kwazulu, Hillcrest near Durban, Port Shepstone in southern Kwazulu, Port Elizabeth, one near Pretoria and Welkom in the Free State. Mseleni, Port Shepstone and Welkom were new Conferences.

A website has been set up to provide information and resources related to the Conferences. There are now downloadable materials from the Pretoria Conference. The address is www.africanpastorsconference.com

The expositions available are a series of three by Laban Mwashekele *The Healthy Church*, *The Healthy Pasture* and *The Healthy Pastor*. Raymond Zulu expounds *The Work of the Holy Spirit in Preaching* from 1 Peter 1:10-12. Conrad Mbewe's sermons are *The Pastor and Doctrine* (1 Tim 4:16), and *A Man Called of God* (Acts 26:12ff). There are two biographies, *George Whitefield* by Conrad Mbewe and *David Livingstone* by Erroll Hulse.

Please use the site for prayer.

Exploration is being made for further conferences in Limpopo (South Africa), in Botswana and in Swaziland. There is a conference, already planned, for East London (South Africa) in April. We thank our gracious God for all who have supported these strategic conferences in prayer and by giving.

African Pastors Conference at Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 11th-13th December 2007

It is impossible to overstate the pastoral needs in present-day Zimbabwe. Believers and unbelievers alike are suffering deprivation: people are dying of starvation (life-expectancy of men is down to 36 years), even a minor illness can become life-threatening, public and private transport have ground to a halt and for the Godless there is no hope. Yet Christians are convinced that God is at work and that the present situation is for the good of his people and the advance of the gospel.

There are wonderful indications of blessing; to mention just two: a renewed sense of urgency concerning spiritual things even among unbelievers for whom issues of life and death are so real; Christians have been drawn together in love for mutual care and support as in the manner of the early church they share things in common (whether it be salt, or fuel, or meat, or maize or toilet rolls!).

It is in this context that the African Pastors' Conference occurred in December. Until the last moment we were not sure whether there could be food available for this residential meeting, but by the grace of God and the initiative of his people, we ate well and were given inspiring hospitality by the Theological College of Zimbabwe. 50 pastors attended (the maximum that could be accommodated) and many more had to be turned away: because of transport problems we could only invite those from the Bulawayo area. Pastors came from all sorts of church and doctrinal backgrounds but with a great desire to learn to preach faithfully and minister biblically and effectively to their needy flocks.

Books are an essential part of these conferences, and the men were delighted to take away a package of free books which had been kindly sponsored by churches in England and America and the publishing houses. With turmoil everywhere there was deep concern about the arrival of a large consignment of books from EP, Banner of Truth, DAY ONE and IVP. Expository books are the lifeblood of expository preachers. Normally these books are heavily discounted to well below the normal price so that the African pastors can procure them. However Zimbabwean currency does not make sense anymore so the plan was to give about five substantial books to each attendee. Great relief and delight were experienced when we learned that the books had arrived on the very day the conference began and were cleared through customs by the intervention of a believer working in the appropriate Post Office department. Such is God's providence.



Dennis Hustedt, Conrad Mbewe, Raymond Zulu, Laban Mwashekele at the Koinonia Conference Centre

Ronald Kalifungwa of Lusaka Baptist Church, Zambia, spoke on *The Pastor and his Domestic Competence*: much of the teaching which so many of us have valued for years was new to many of these men. Laban Mwashekele of Monte Christo Baptist Church in Windhoek, Namibia spoke on *Establishing Biblical and Healthy Churches* helpfully emphasising the need for spiritual health in the pastor, the pasture and the flock. The Conference Sermon on 1 Peter 1 was delivered by Victor Nakah, the President of TCZW, who gave a fine exposition and included the telling sentence 'It is my greatest fear that Christians in Zimbabwe come away from the present situation spiritually empty-handed.'

We pray this conference will have helped that fear not be realised. Please pray for our brethren in Zimbabwe and especially those with the responsibility of changing individuals and a nation by rightly handling the Word of God.

African Pastors' Conference at Ora et Labora near Pretoria 17th-19th January 2008

Forty-three pastors from Gauteng, Limpopo and even Botswana attended this Conference. Several enthusiastic and faithful pastors from Swaziland were unable to come at the last moment because of transport problems. The speakers were Conrad Mbewe of Kabwata Baptist Church, Lusaka, Laban Mwashekele from

Windhoek and Raymond Zulu from High Wycombe UK, and before that in Newcastle, KZN, South Africa. Erroll Hulse also gave us a biography of David Livingstone. The talks are available on the website.

This was a group of mature pastors eager to learn and to minister biblically. For some, errors had to be confronted and we are especially grateful to our speakers for getting alongside the men and giving good pastoral counsel. Raymond Zulu in particular has openings as a fluent Zulu speaker. Big issues were addressed in the talks with faithful and powerful preaching. God gave the three main speakers physical and spiritual stamina – some had spoken 15 times over the recent few days of conferences.

Because of the kindness of the owner of the centre at Ora et Labora in not charging for its use and because of the faithful team of volunteers in the kitchens, the total charge to the pastors for 3 days was 50 rands each (under £4 or \$7) and the sponsorship could be used to offer great discounts on the excellent book table.

African Pastors' Conferences at Mseleni, Hillcrest (Koinonia Conference Centre), and Port Shepstone, all in Kwazulu.

As indicated above the one-day conferences at Mseleni and Port Shepstone were first conferences and both revealed great potential for the future. Mseleni is in a game reserve area. As you drive to this remote place you expect to see rhinoceros in the bush. Fifty spiritually hungry pastors greatly appreciated the books in Zulu available and the fine array of books in English at the reduced prices. Everything was translated into Zulu by Raymond. Shiloh Baptist Church was the venue at Port Shepstone. Here again Raymond translated throughout into Zulu.

First African Pastors' Conference at Welkom

The Pines Christian Care Centre for Children was an ideal venue for this conference at Welkom. The theme for the day was the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. Erroll Hulse expounded the meaning of Pentecost from Acts two, Raymond Zulu opened up the subject of Spirit-anointed preaching and Dennis Hustedt concluded with an exposition of Acts chapter three.

Each conference has its own distinct character. Much improvement by the organisers is needed at the book tables. For instance we need to pay much more attention to having books which match and back up the topics that are dealt with in the sessions. Books which deal with how to handle grief are needed. Almost every conferee has lost a relative or relatives in the AIDS scourge. Books for children are needed. We also need to have a stock of Bibles in all the indigenous languages. A NIV study Bible is pure gold in Africa but far too expensive for most of the people. *Irving Steggles*

Book Reviews

Spirituality and Social Change: The Contribution of FB Meyer (1847-1929), Ian M Randall. Paternoster, 2003, ISBN 1-84227-195-4, £24.99

F B Meyer was one of the most prominent evangelical clergymen of his day, both in Baptist ranks and in wider Free Church circles. His range of interests and activities was quite astonishing. Ian Randall in this book authoritatively reviews the extent of his ministry both local, national and international, from passionate evangelist who had been influenced by D L Moody, to social reformer and political activist.

Meyer is portrayed as a man at home with the working men in informal services and with people in open-air meetings as well as visiting prisons in Leicester and London, but also appreciated by people of his own social class in Regent's Park Chapel, London. His approach to theology was usually conservative in line with the evangelical Calvinistic Baptist heritage in which he was born, occasionally speculative, but certainly experiential and practical, in tune with the mood of the times. He had a mystical emphasis which received its fullest expression in the holiness theology of the Keswick movement. His understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit had some affinities with the newly emerging Pentecostal movement, but he was equally familiar with Quaker spirituality, in no small measure due to his Quaker grandmother Ann Sturt, as well as leading thinkers of other

Christian traditions. However, his theology was deeply earthed in everyday life as demonstrated by his campaign for equality for non-white races in South Africa during a visit there in 1908, and campaigns, for example, over temperance, the cause of prostitutes and better pay for poor workers at home. His books still in print today on devotional themes included other titles such as *On Making the Best of Things*, in which he gives advice on coping with an unfortunate marriage (personal experience here? see pp. 157-158), coping with sleepless nights due to toothache or noisy pets, which demonstrated something of the range of subjects covered in the sixty-nine of his books listed in the bibliography.

If readers want a theological history as in the approach Iain Murray would take in biographical writing then they might be disappointed. Readers are left to come to their own conclusions. However, the Meyer that everyone has heard of but few know is revealed in this book. Some facts are disturbing. Meyer's wife organised bridge parties on Sunday evenings while he went to church; she seemed to have little interest in his work. Did that come about because she was unsaved or because he was away from home so much in itinerant work that she and his children felt neglected? The references to his family on pp.157-158 are very sad and a warning to those of us who are pastors.

This is a most impressive piece of work and one of the best scholarly

biographies produced in recent years. It is highly commended. *Brian Talbot, Minister, Broughty Ferry Baptist Church.*

THE BAPTISTS, Key People involved in forming a Baptist Identity, Tom Nettles, Volume Two, Beginnings in America, 510 pages hardback, Christian Focus Publications, Scotland, 2005, £17.99.

What is a Baptist Church? What are the main features that constitute the identity of Baptists? This is the second in a three volume series which describe the Baptists as they have spread through the world. In the first volume Tom Nettles, who is professor of historical theology at Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, described the emergence from the English Puritans of Calvinistic Baptists known as Particular Baptists because of their belief in a definite atonement. Alongside them developed a different stream of General Baptists who were Arminian in doctrine. Accounts of leaders such as John Spilsbury, Knollys, Keach and Kiffin made up part of volume one. Leaders of the first generation of Particular Baptists compiled the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith now popularly known as the 1689 Baptist Confession. The Particular Baptists united in regional associations and so a very clear character or identity marked them which identity has re-emerged strongly in various parts of the world in the late 20th and first part of the 21st century.

There are several characteristics which are peculiar to Baptists. One of these is a belief in religious freedom, liberty of conscience and the separation of

Church and State. This is where Nettles begins in this second volume which he divides into three sections. He shows how John Smyth and Thomas Helwys contended that it is not for civil magistrates to minister the 'new creature'. Christ's Church is not created by force and by persecution. The Church is God's creation by the preaching of the Word. Helwys boldly petitioned King James I to give up his power to appoint bishops and archbishops. Christopher Blackwood sent a book to the press with the title *The Storming of Antichrist in his two last and strongest garrisons; of compulsion of Conscience, and Infant Baptism.* In young America Roger Williams and John Clarke were foremost in running with the same baton of religious freedom. Williams illustrated the ludicrous nature of religious coercion by pointing to the fact that under the Tudors each succeeding monarch imposed a different religion from Half-Papist to Protestant to Papist and back again to Protestant (p.43). Following were Isaac Backus (1724-1806) and John Leland (1754-1841) both from Congregational background and both leaders of exceptional preaching and intellectual ability who used their pens to effectively establish Baptist principles especially in the disestablishment of a state church. John Leland was privileged to witness powerful revivals. In one year alone he baptised 300.

Section two addresses the subject of unity and co-operation among Baptist churches as seen in the development of associations, the Philadelphia Association, the Charleston and the Sandy Creek Associations which bodies followed the Second London

Baptist Confession with a few minor variations. The account of these associations and their influence is woven round fascinating biographies of leaders, Oliver Hart, John Gano, Richard Furman and Shubal Stearns. Matters of lively and vital interest fill these fascinating short biographies. The striking overall feature is that these pastors possessed the gift of preaching to a remarkable degree. It was through their gospel preaching that extensive church planting was accomplished. For instance such was Gano's unction in preaching that some of the young preachers when they heard him remarked that they felt that they could never undertake to preach again. The leaders were Calvinists. They were clear doctrinal preachers. None were decisionists. They preached the necessity of repentance. Nettles describes in detail the confessional doctrinal teaching of Richard Furman. Eternal punishment is clearly defined as not a ruin which culminates in annihilation 'for the soul is declared to be immortal' (p.150).

Shubal Stearns moved south and planted a church at Sandy Creek which grew rapidly from 16 to 606. It was from there that revival spread all over the south. Stearns, born in 1706, was converted under the preaching of George Whitefield and adopted the New Light understanding of revival and conversion. One part of that was the conviction that it was impossible to reform established churches from within. It was imperative to start new churches. A favourite text was 2 Corinthians 6:17, 'Come out from among them and be ye separate.' And so the Separate Baptists were nick-named 'come-outers' or 'separates'. While

following the Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards and Whitefield Stearns rejected infant baptism. Fervent evangelism characterised the Separate Baptists. The preachers were revivalist preachers often evoking tears, trembling, screams, shouts and acclamations. There were some idiosyncratic practices which led Gano to use the word 'immethodical' to describe this group which belonged to the Sandy Creek Association which eventually split into three different associations. Specific conditions were described when women had the right to speak. One lady, a sister of Stearns, frequently melted a whole concourse by her prayers and exhortations. In defence of the Separate movement one wrote, 'Surely we ought to prefer a revival of religion, though dished with some irregularities, to the death-like coldness of mere orthodoxy and form' (p. 162).

In section three Nettles turns his attention to world-wide mission. The example of Adoniram and Ann Judson gripped the imagination of Baptists across America. Nettles explains the thinking of the distasteful and misguided reactions of the Anti-Mission Society Movement.

The story of the formation of the first Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is intertwined with splendid biographies of Basil Manly Sr and John A Broadus. Broadus never stopped labouring to improve the effectiveness of the Christian pulpit in America.

Manly's preaching was characterised as 'always marked by deep thought and strong argument expressed in a very clear style, and by extraordinary earnestness and tender pathos'. Manly

was gripped passionately by the subject of theological training and the provision of top rate preachers and pastors for the churches. 'Dull, careless sinners can never be built up by lifeless oration, dispassionate praying and theatrical reading of Scripture' (p. 263). In 1859 Manly co-operated with James P Boyce, William Williams and Basil Manly Jr in establishing the first theological seminary among Baptists in the South in Greenville, South Carolina. This seminary moved to Louisville in 1877 and today is the foremost Southern Baptist Seminary in America. We learn from these pages of the considerable enterprise, energy and funding necessary to establish an institution of this nature.

The life of Lottie Moon (1840-1912), famous single lady missionary to China is described in gripping style by Nettles. Her time of service was marked by terrible defections from the faith. She would have liked to marry Crawford Toy a brilliant academic who at one stage seemed heading for the mission field. Seeds of error were sown in his mind when he studied in Berlin. These germinated, he embraced liberal theology and eventually he gave up the Christian faith altogether. Lottie Moon, herself faithful to the end, often noted the destructive advance of the new theology which is a principal theme of Nettles' volume three on Baptist Identity.

The Southern leaders for reasons which to this reviewer seem pragmatic and unbiblical defended the owning of slaves. Nettles deals with this issue which bitterly divided America in perspective so the reader can make his or her own judgement.

The volume concludes with some descriptions of Baptists on the international stage with excellent biographies of Robert and James Haldane of Scotland and Gerhard Oncken (1800 - 1880) a German who for widespread effectiveness in church planting knows few equals.

The Baptist subject is so extensive that discipline is required to keep main issues in focus. Many talented leaders make up the story and it is not possible to do justice to them all. Thus Nettles has resorted to information boxes of a page or two each. There are 22 of these. In this way leaders are described such as Luther Rice, John L Dagg, Lott Cary, Jesse Mercer, P H Mell, David Bogue, Vasili Pavlov, Alexander Carson and John Jasper. The latter was a slave, the last of twenty-four children by his mother Nina. He drew both blacks and whites by his powerful preaching and his church grew to near 2000 members. A number of well-drawn portraits by Robert Nettles are included in the book which is highly commended and will be a valuable resource for years to come.

Editor

The Mourner's Comforter, C H Spurgeon, 150 page paperback

An attractive new edition of this helpful book has been published by Opine Publishing. E-mail info@opinebooks.com As in Spurgeon's day spiritual isolation, depression and doubts torment many. Comfort and joy is mediated to sufferers through exposition of Isaiah 61:1-3.

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CONTENTS**1. Editorial****4. The Ascension of Christ**

Editor

7. How to Pray for Missionaries

Tom Wells

13. Costly Reformation in France

Frederick Hodgson

21. Church Planting in one Corner of England

Phil Arthur

25. Pioneer Missionary in Persia

Sharon James

33. News**37. Book Reviews**