

REFORMATION TODAY



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Websites www.reformation-today.org
The editor's personal website is <http://www.errollhulse.com>
<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



SETIA students at prayer – see news



Pastor Jeff Pollard and his wife Myra. Jeff followed Lee Roy Shelton Jr as an elder of Mount Zion Bible Church in Pensacola. He and fellow-elder Steven Frakes oversee the publishing work of Chapel Library. Chapel Library have agreed to act in America as agents to receive gifts for books for Indonesia, see News.

Front cover picture – Some students relaxing at Trinity Theological College, Perth, Australia. John Campbell who teaches in the college has written the IFRB (International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists) newsletter for November December. In it he describes the ministry of the College and shares some news from Australia.

Editorial

By Martin Holdt

The editor of *Reformation Today* has asked me to devote this editorial to the importance of reading. It is clear from recent issues of *Reformation Today* that among several subjects our knowledge of the history of biblical Christianity in China and France has been enriched. Further chapters on France and China in this issue confirm this. My wife Elsabe is manager of the Augustine Bookroom. She is from Huguenot background. Here in South Africa the Huguenots have contributed massively to the well-being of our country. Du Plessis, de Villiers, du Preez, Fouché, Malan, Viljoen, Blignaut, du Toit, Durand, Fourié, Joubert, le Roux, Malherbe, Meyer, Mouton, Naudé, Retief, Terblanche, Marais, de Klerk, and Jordaan are some of the names that come to mind.

Every believer ought to be an avid reader, first of the Bible, and then of good books. When the Apostle Paul was in prison and expecting at any time to be executed, he desired to spend his last hours reading. In his last letter to Timothy Paul wrote: 'When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments' (2 Tim 4:13). And in the same letter he informs Timothy, 'The time of my departure has come.' (2 Tim 4:6). Of course by 'departure' he meant death. Still, Paul's desire was to spend the brief remaining time of his life reading!

Why is it that when we may well be spared for several years we do not improve ourselves through reading materials which are designed to be of great profit to us?

Ron Brett, the manager of a Christian Bookshop in Johannesburg, told me that he noticed that those who most frequently bought books and read them and then came back for more were the ones in whom he could see visible evidence of dynamic spiritual growth. One pastor said that the book tables in his church from which people could purchase good Christian books were such an asset that it was like having an associate pastor! I have observed in the church where I am the pastor that those most eager to read sound Christian literature are those in whom one can see visible evidence of spiritual advance.

For two and a half years I pastored a church in Hermanus, a town in the Western Cape. The membership included a high proportion of retirees. I made

sure that the book table was well stocked with the best books. One evening, before commencing with the Bible study I shared with the congregation that many of them had said to me that they had never been as busy as they were since they had retired! However in recommending the books that were on display on the table I suggested that when they had their daily private devotions and when they had read the Scriptures and prayed they need only spend fifteen minutes a day working their way through a valuable Christian book. I promised them that the difference that they would experience would be enormous. Unbeknown to me one of the men present went home and asked his wife for the egg timer. The following morning, once he had read the Scriptures and prayed, he set the clock for 15 minutes and began to read a book. Before the end of the week he was so hooked on reading a good book that he set the clock to 30 minutes! His spiritual growth was renewed and before he died he was experiencing accelerated interest in the knowledge of God which made such a difference to his home-going.

Clearly, there is one kind of addiction we need not be afraid of, and that is the love of sound literature. The English-speaking world has never been so blessed as it is now with the abundance of wonderful books including commentaries, biographies and books on a variety of relevant subjects. By reading ourselves we are better placed to recommend and place vital books into the hands of others.

The Augustine Bookroom to which I have referred was born out of the need for sound evangelical literature. This Bookroom started operating from the premises of the Constantia Park Baptist Church in 2001 and is named after the greatest of the Church Fathers. He was converted after he heard the chanting of a child, 'take up and read...take up and read.' We believe these words are as urgent in our day as they were then. For even in this electronic age the printed word is still the best means of communicating truth. At Augustine Bookroom we are dedicated to serving readers across denominational boundaries and to build up the body of Christ by promoting biblical understanding and godly living. Our aim is to make available good, sound literature to suit the needs of all, ranging from children to the most theologically advanced readers. We also cater specially for homeschoolers.

I recommend two or three books at every Sunday service of which we have two in the morning to accommodate the people who come to worship, and one in the evening. The fruit of this has been evident. It has been wonderful to observe many become enthusiastic readers whose lives have been enriched and whose walk with God has been strengthened.

The Value and Use of the Psalms

David G Preston

Part one

The Book of Psalms has been described as ‘an anatomy of all the parts of the soul’. Indeed it is the uniquely inspired song book of the Bible, which represents experiences of every kind and the emotions of the soul from deep depression to exultant joy.

Here on my desk is a little old hymn-book, 6 x 3.5 inches, 1819. Title page, preface, list of contents, index, 12 pages in all. Then 276 pages of text. Nothing else, no names, no tunes, no dates, just the words: 65 Psalms, 218 Hymns and 34 Spiritual Songs.

The hymns are addressed to God ‘in one or more of his sacred and Co-equal Persons, either of Praise or Prayer’, concluding with ‘occasional’ hymns for morning, evening, harvest, the Lord’s Day, etc. The spiritual songs are reflection, exhortation, spiritual experience, such as ‘A debtor to mercy alone’ and ‘There is a fountain filled with blood’.

Like Spurgeon’s *Our Own Hymn-Book*, pride of place is given to versions of the Psalms, in keeping with the universal Church’s age-long use of them in worship. The 65 pieces include versions of such well-known Psalms as 19, 23, 51, 84, 100, 121, 130, 148 and 150. The words are clear and simple, sometimes from Isaac Watts or his imitators or a mixture of sources, all unacknowledged in that early era of hymn-books.

Why did evangelical Christians value the Psalms and use them in worship in the 18th and 19th centuries? Why are they less used among us today?

To answer the second question first, they have fallen out of use for at least two major reasons. One, we read our Bibles less and know them less well than our forefathers in those times. Many had one or two or a mere handful of books in the house, certainly not dozens, nor were they besieged by the plethora of media whose demands today we frankly cannot altogether

avoid. They read and re-read their Bibles – the Authorised Version with its sonorous, memorable phraseology – and that included the Psalms with their Old Testament background (e.g. ‘A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away and he departed’ (Ps. 34, title). They did not need to leaf through 1 Samuel to check the reference! And they appreciated their New Testament fulfilment (‘At present we do not see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honour’ – Hebrews 2:8-9). They knew the Psalm reference, and when reading or singing the Psalm knew its Christian significance. They read the Psalms with a Christian mind, perhaps more easily than we do today; and could use them intelligently in public worship.

A second factor might have been the great changes that have occurred in the English language since the end of the 19th century, possibly in conjunction with a growing sense of distance from the great Scottish Psalter of 1650 with its (now) uncomfortable verbal gymnastics. People might well have concluded that metrical Psalms were no longer singable, despite the survival of 23 and 100 in our hymnals. Indeed, we still have survivors from Tate and Brady of 1696 (34, 42), Isaac Watts (36, 72, 90, 92, 98, 117, 122, 146), John Newton (19), James Montgomery (72) and H F Lyte (67, 84, 103). These, however, are sung as hymns without much awareness of their scriptural base, and in most cases cover only part of the Psalm.

Congregational Praise (1951) contained a section of sixteen extracts from the Scottish Psalter, nearly all comprising four or five common metre stanzas. Only 23 and 93 appeared in full. Dr Lloyd-Jones regularly included one as the second hymn on Sunday mornings.

What, then, is so special about the Psalms that they once enjoyed a regular place in evangelical worship? Does it matter that they are neglected and comparatively little known in many quarters today – quite apart, of course, from their eminent status as part of the God-breathed Scriptures?

I should like to highlight three particular features that render them so important: their presentation of God, their doctrinal value and their range of spiritual experience. My threefold analysis made for convenience defies, of course, that essential union of these factors, found in varying

degrees in virtually every Psalm. The presentation of God involves doctrine, as does spiritual experience. Doctrine springs from God's being and character, and our grasp of these truths affects how we live. Experience is our response in our varying circumstances to what we know of God, and to his dealings with us. So that I may not appear to be exaggerating the importance of this part of Holy Scripture, let me point out a remarkable statistic: the Index of Biblical References in the McNeill-Battles edition of Calvin's *Institutes* contains far more references to the Psalms than to any other Old Testament book – in fact more than the next two, Genesis and Isaiah, put together. It even contains more than any New Testament book except Romans; otherwise only Matthew comes anywhere close.

God is, of course, the great object of our worship. The Hebrew word for Psalms, *tehillim*, means Praises. God is presented in all his greatness and majesty, the utterly fit object of our worship:

Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised! (48:1)¹

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable. (145:3)

For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be feared above all gods. (96:4)

O LORD my God, you are very great!
You are clothed with splendour and majesty. (104:1)

and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD,
for great is the glory of the LORD. (138:5)

For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods. (95:3)

Hence his kingly power, i.e. his sovereignty, over this world and all that is:

The LORD reigns. (93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1)

For God is the King of all the earth;
sing praises with a psalm!

God reigns over the nations;
God sits on his holy throne. (47:7-8)

Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases. (115:3)

Whatever the LORD pleases, he does,
in heaven and on earth,
in the seas and all deeps. (135:6)

He reigns over history, most obviously that of his people Israel (78, 105, 106), but also over the human race and its fortunes (33:10-17). He rules over armies (48:4-7; 76:3-6) and over that least manageable of all our earthly circumstances, the weather (48:7; 77:17,18; 107:23-30). Remember the hapless Canaanites and their state-of-the-art war machine that suddenly turned into a disastrous liability (Judges 4:3)? Deborah's song tells us how the LORD defeated them (Judges 5:19-21).

He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth,
who makes lightnings for the rain
and brings forth the wind from his storehouses. (135:7)

He moves people into and away from positions of honour and influence:

For not from the east or from the west
and not from the wilderness comes lifting up,
But it is God who executes judgement,
putting down one and lifting up another. (75:6-7)

He will even bring humanity worldwide to bow to him:

All the nations you have made shall come
and worship before you, O Lord,
and shall glorify your name. (86:9)

Francis Schaeffer's favourite hymn, I am told, was the famous version of Psalm 100, 'All people that on earth do dwell, /Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice', in truth a great missionary Psalm. (Have you ever sung Psalm 100 on a missionary Sunday?)

The Psalms also present God as holy, like Isaiah naming him the 'Holy One of Israel' (71:22; 78:41; 89:18). His holiness speaks of his 'otherness', far exalted above all his creation, including his image-bearer,

mankind, so that he is *not part of* the universe in any sense, or in any degree. He is ‘exalted in the earth’ (46:10), his name and word are ‘exalted above all things’, ‘the LORD is high’ (138:2,6), exalted in his strength (21:13), he has ‘set [his] glory above the heavens’ (8:1).

His holiness also includes his utter moral perfection: ‘God is light,’ says the New Testament, ‘and in him is no darkness at all’ (1 John 1:5). So the Psalmist asks:

LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary?
Who may live on your holy hill?
He whose walk is blameless
and who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from his heart. (15:1-2, NIV)

The question repeated in 24:3 is given the answer, ‘He who has clean hands and a pure heart.’ Yet God also displays his holiness in the redemption of his people: ‘Your way, O God, is holy... You with your arm redeemed your people’ (77: 13, 15). So his holy name is a cause for praise (30:4) and for trust (33:21). It is also a cause for ‘blessing’, that is to say that we are to *speak well of* our God; as the Oxford English Dictionary explains the word, ‘to hold or call holy; to exalt as holy (see Isa 6:3, Rev 4:8), divine, gracious’, and a little later, ‘with an added notion of thanksgiving or acknowledgement of gracious beneficence or goodness.’² Perhaps the most comprehensive presentation of God’s holiness is found in Psalm 99 which brings together both God’s otherness and his moral perfection. Think about using it, next time you preach on the holiness of God.

That brings us to God’s goodness. Not only are we urged to ‘bless’ the LORD, as in the opening verse of Psalms 34, 103, 104, 134 and 145; the last concludes, ‘Let *all flesh* bless his holy name for ever and ever.’ Why? ‘For the LORD is good’ (100:5), ‘for he is good’ (136:1), ‘he... gives food to all flesh’ (136:25). In fact he gives liberal blessings to ‘the children of mankind’:

They feast on the abundance of your house,
And you give them drink from the river of your delights. (36:7-8)

Enjoy Psalm 104 as a lyrical celebration of God's goodness to his created world: 'you water the mountains... you cause the grass to grow for the cattle and plants for man to cultivate... The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God... These all look to you, to give them their food in due season.'

Surprisingly God's goodness to his creation is ascribed to his 'steadfast love' (36:7; 136:25), the word used for God's covenant love, rendered variously in the NIV, most happily as 'love unfailing', and in the AV sometimes as 'mercy', sometimes by the beautiful old word 'lovingkindness'.³

So we are to give thanks to God because 'he is good' (106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1). We are told that the LORD's *name* is good (54:6), and we are invited in 34:8 to 'taste and see that the LORD is good!' That is the same word 'good' as we find throughout Genesis 1 of the Creation before the Fall. Even in old age his people repeat, 'There is no unrighteousness in him' (92:15). In him there is *no* darkness, *no* shadow-side.

Because he is good, he is faithful. The great revelation of his name, given to Moses in Exodus 34:6, is repeated a number of times in the Psalms:

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

It is recalled in 86:5, 15; 103:8; 145:8. His faithfulness is immense, it extends to the clouds (36:5), so we may 'trust in him, and he will act' (37:5).

The Psalms tell us of God's eternity:

Of old you laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

They will perish, but you will remain...
you are the same, and your years have no end (102:26-27).

Isaac Watts' famous version of Psalm 90, 'Our God, our help in ages past' captures that simply and perfectly in its third stanza: 'From everlasting thou art God, /To endless years the same, (90:2).

Not only is he the eternal living God, he is also the true God. He is contrasted with 'the gods of the peoples' which are 'worthless idols'. The LORD is the Creator, the God of splendour and majesty, strength and beauty (96:5-6). Idols, after all, are 'the work of human hands' (115:4; 135: 15), dumb, blind, deaf, static. Don't make the mistake of thinking that the LORD, like them, cannot see what is going on in your life:

He who planted the ear, does he not hear?
He who formed the eye, does he not see? (94:9)

On the contrary, he sees everything: 'The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man... and observes all their deeds' (33:13, 15). He sees into the heart of the unbeliever: 'The LORD looks down from heaven... to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God' (14:2). In a word he is omniscient:

You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. (139:2-4)

Though we read that he looks down from heaven, and have earlier noted that his holy 'otherness' means that he is utterly distinct from all that he has created, he is nevertheless present amid the whole creation, omnipresent. From Exodus to 2 Chronicles the emphasis is on his special presence amid his covenant people Israel in the tabernacle and later in the temple. David sang:

O LORD, I love the habitation of your house
and the place where your glory dwells. (26:8).

In one of the best-known Psalms the writer mourns his exile from God:

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God? (42:2)

Yet Solomon understood, even as the temple was being dedicated, 'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!' (1 Kings 8:27). Jonah found out that there was no escape from God. This is not a theme that occurs frequently in the Psalms. The 'Through all the changing scenes of life' Psalm ascribes the delivering presence of God to 'the angel of the LORD [who] encamps round those who fear him' (34:7). But it is given most memorable expression, again in Psalm 139:

Where shall I go from your Spirit?
or where shall I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me. (139:7-10)

Proverbs 8:22-31 gives a singular representation of wisdom as God's 'supreme agent' in the work of creation: 'This is simply a poetic way of describing God as "the only wise God".'⁴ The Psalms portray God's wisdom in all that he does, without naming it, except once. They speak of his 'thoughts': 'You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts towards us; none can compare with you!' (40:5, see also 139:17). It is the beautiful Psalm on God as Creator and Sustainer which alone gives us:

O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all. (104:24)

God's holiness and goodness are manifested also in his righteousness. 'Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne... The heavens proclaim his righteousness' (97:2,6), 'for the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds' (11:17), 'He loves righteousness and justice' (33:5). God is the guarantor of all moral norms: we do not live in a universe that is morally neutral, or even perverse and malevolent, where the human race decides what is right and wrong by force or by majority vote. God our Creator is law-giver and Judge, meting out justice to his image-bearers: 'For you will render to a man according to his work' (62:12), 'God is a

righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day (7:11), ‘the heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!’ (50:6).

But to the honest man such a judge is an intolerable thought: ‘Enter not into judgement with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you’ (143:2). How does the Old Testament get over that? Have the Psalms any hope to offer the sinner aware of his condition, such as New Testament believers enjoy in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? The answer, of course, is Yes, though it looks forward in time to it, hinting, sketching, promising. Perhaps it looks rather more than that to those who enjoy the perspective of New Testament revelation.

The hope arises amazingly from God’s justice and is encapsulated in that most precious word, *hesed*, steadfast love, which we glanced at earlier. ‘He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD’ (33:5); ‘Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful’ (116:5). His covenant name may be pleaded, ‘O God, save me, by your name... I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good’ (54:1, 6). David under deep conviction of sin, aware that his sins could be met under the law by nothing other than the death sentence, cried out to God for mercy on the basis of his steadfast love:

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant
mercy
blot out my transgressions. (51:1)

Yes, the day would come, and for some already was, when ‘Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other’ (85:10). How could this be? The Jewish sacrifices gave the clue, but not the full story. This much was grasped by David in a most remarkable Psalm:

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit. (32:1-2)

I need not remind readers that it is from these verses, together with Genesis 15:6, that the Apostle Paul spells out the pivotal doctrine of justification by faith alone in Romans 4.

There is, of course, much more to say on the multi-faceted presentation of God in the Psalms. He is Saviour of his people (106:21), Shepherd (23m 80) and Guide (77:20), and as we have seen with respect to his steadfast love, he is a God of grace in 106, 107, 136 – among the longer Psalms; and a faithful God (89, an even longer Psalm). Such thoughts delight the Psalmist:

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
To declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night. (92:1-2)

But we cannot conclude this brief survey without returning to God's greatness, majesty and kingly power, manifestations in time and in eternity of his glory. The Psalmist urges us to 'declare his glory among the nations', and calls on all people to ascribe glory to the LORD, bring him an offering, worship him and tremble before him (96:3, 7-9). He prays, 'May the glory of the LORD endure for ever' (104:31). Scarcely a prayer that is necessary, you might think; yet it is necessary for us, and indeed all who love God, to harbour that desire and pray fervently. Psalm 29 calls him 'the God of glory' (v.3), and calls on all creation to cry 'Glory! to God' (1-2); and as his power is demonstrated in the more extreme forces of the created order, 'in his temple all cry, "Glory!"' (v.9). Turn to that Psalm when this planet's most awesome natural forces are unleashed, and also make this your daily prayer: 'May the whole earth be filled with his glory!' (72:19).

In a further article I will explore God as Trinity in the Psalms and highlight some of their doctrinal riches including the important theme of covenant, and some of their devotional content, including Psalms of repentance and prayers for revival, before offering some practical suggestions for including Psalms in our public worship.

¹ All quotations from the ESV unless otherwise stated.

² OED 2nd edition, vol 2, page 281.

³ For a good brief discussion of the word, see J I Packer, *18 Words*, Christian Focus 2007, chapter 7. (formerly *God's Words*.)

⁴ Eric Lane, *Proverbs*, Christian Focus 2000, page 71.

What is Holiness?

Following the death of the leading priests Nadab and Abihu the Lord said to Aaron, 'You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean' (Lev 10:9-10).

The background to this exhortation, 'to distinguish between the holy and the common', is the disobedience of Nadab and Abihu. Different suggestions have been made as to why the sentence of death was so severe. What did Nadab and Abihu do to deserve so terrible a punishment? One suggestion is that they were drunk when attending the duties of their holy office. This idea is based on the stipulation made above for the sons of Aaron to refrain from alcoholic drink. As John Currid observes in his excellent commentary on Leviticus¹ there is nothing to suggest in Leviticus 10:1-7 that Nadab and Abihu entered the tabernacle in a state of drunkenness. Their sin was that they scorned the command of God and substituted their own wisdom in place of God's command and thereby were deliberately disobedient. They imposed their own will on the service of Yahweh. For this they paid the supreme penalty. The same fire that 'came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar' (Lev 9:24), consumed Nadab and Abihu.

This severity is not confined to the Old Testament. At the time of the birth of the Christian Church a couple called Ananias and Sapphira thought that they could deceive the apostles by pretending to give the whole value of some property they sold to the Lord's work, when in fact they conspired together to keep part of it back for themselves. For this deceit they were both struck dead. Holiness is comprehensive. It applies to every part of human behaviour.

At the dawn of human history our first parents Adam and Eve sinned and drew death not only on themselves but their entire progeny (Rom 5:12). Noah survived the flood but soon after that fell into the sin of drunkenness. A further shock comes very soon after the emergence of Israel as a nation. When Moses was long absent in the mountain of Sinai the people dragooned Aaron into making a golden calf which they then worshipped. 'So priestly trespass emerges immediately upon priestly ordination.'²

The saga of the dramatic death of Nadab and Abihu is part of distinguishing between the holy and the profane or common. Israel was set apart as a nation to serve Yahweh. They were a holy nation. In their service of the tabernacle with sacrifices and a priesthood they were set apart and made different from

all other nations. 'Whoever belongs to God must have the essential character which accompanies such a relationship.'³

The words that are used for holiness

Qadōsh in the Hebrew clearly means 'set apart, distinct from or unique'. The holiness of the Triune God is entirely unique. Another way of expressing this is that he is 'wholly other'. 'God is supramundane, exalted, incorruptible, absolutely unique.'⁴ The supreme faultless purity of God demands from mankind a corresponding purity. The question is, Does *Qadōsh* in the Hebrew suggest the idea of purity? In Arabic and Persian the root is *kada* (Farsi/Persian holiness is *Taghados*) which means pure. Assyrian *kuddushu* means clear or brilliant.⁵

The word 'holy' occurs about 650 times in the Bible. The first time the word is used is in Genesis 2:2. 'God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.' He set that day apart from the other days. When Moses was confronted by the LORD in the burning bush he was told to take off his sandals from his feet because the ground upon which he was standing was holy ground (Ex 3:5). Israel was to be a holy nation, that is set apart for God (Ex 19:6). When the children of Israel came out of Egypt a tabernacle was established in the centre of the camps of the twelve tribes. The tabernacle was called holy (Ex 26:33). At the end of the tabernacle, separated by a curtain, was 'the holiest of all' which was where the ark of God was kept. Holiness meant separation for the service of the Lord.

The usage of the word in the different biblical settings provides material to build up the idea of God's holiness as something which is brilliant, glorious and beautiful. The fact that all God's attributes are holy is irrefutable. Also God is immutably (unchangeably) holy. He is incomparably holy. He is exclusively holy. He is transcendent in his holiness. There is nothing relative about God's holiness. It cannot be improved or added to. The extraordinary acts of redemption which display Yahweh's power and holiness evoke our worship. 'Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you - majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?' (Ex 15:11).

This song of Miriam arose out of profound gratitude. No one was like Yahweh who glorified himself by showing that he was holy. He revealed his holiness in the punishment of sin on the one hand and in the redemption of his people on the other. The phrase 'majestic in holiness' literally translated means holiness glorified (*qadōsh adar*). 'God had glorified himself in holiness through the redemption of his people and the destruction of his enemies.'⁶ The psalmist comments on this extraordinary event in biblical history: 'Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God? You are the God who performs

miracles; you display your power among the peoples. With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph' (Ps 77:13-15). This comment demonstrates that we are to learn about God's holiness by his redemptive acts in history.

Psalm 29:2 reads: 'Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to his name; worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness.' At first sight this looks like a description of God's holiness, that is that he is glorious in holiness. However it is uncertain whether the splendour is a reference to God himself or to the splendour of the vestments in which the priests were to be dressed. An almost identical phrase is used in Psalm 110:3 translated 'arrayed in holy majesty'. This gives support to worship in the splendour of the vestments as the correct translation in Psalm 29:2. 2 Chronicles 20:21 provides us with a clear mandate to worship Yahweh in the beauty of holiness.

The popular hymn expresses admirably the sentiment of worshipping the LORD in the beauty of his holiness.

*O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
Bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
With gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,
Kneel and adore him; the Lord is his Name.*⁷ (J S B Monsell)

The New Testament

As stated above 'Whoever belongs to God must have the essential character which accompanies such a relationship.' To that end the purpose of the three Persons in the Trinity is to transform the people of God into a holy people. This not only makes them consistent with the faith they profess but prepares them for their ultimate end of perfection for the eternal kingdom that is being planned for them (John 14:3; Rev 21:2).

In the New Testament there is one word for holy (*hagios*)⁸ which carries the same basic meaning as the Old Testament word *Qadōsh*. In English we use two related nouns, namely, holiness and sanctification.

Whenever we speak of sanctification we think of it as a process by which believers are gradually transformed in heart, mind, will and conduct. Many texts express clearly this gradual progressive work. For instance Paul exhorts us to purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (2 Cor 7:1), and prays, 'May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thess 5:23).

There are about twenty-five references to 'saints' in the Old Testament. An example is Psalm 116:15, 'Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.'⁹ About eighty references to saints occur in the New Testament. These are explicit references to definitive sanctification, to a single event that has taken place. For instance the believers at Corinth are addressed as 'those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy' (1 Cor 1:2). Later in the same letter Paul reminds the Corinthians that they were washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor 6:11). This demonstrates that conversion is a stupendous event. Regeneration, definitive sanctification and justification take place in one act. When Paul refers to believers in Acts 20:32 and 26:18 he describes them as those 'having been sanctified'.¹⁰

The primary passage describing definitive sanctification in the New Testament is Romans 6:1 to 7:6. Having expounded the doctrine of justification by faith, the apostle Paul turns to the subject of sanctification. In so doing he demonstrates that union with Christ simultaneously affects both justification and sanctification. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer on account of union. That same union achieves new life. Positionally the believer has been placed into spiritual union with Christ. That is a definitive act. The ongoing result is a vital living union whereby the Christian possesses spiritual life and holiness. That is why it is utterly incongruous to suggest that a Christian should entertain the idea of sinning. We know that these great realities of justification and adoption are simultaneous; nevertheless if we are to think of a logical sequence then positional sanctification precedes justification and adoption because it would not be possible for the Father to justify the sinner unless he were first joined to Christ. *Editor*

¹ John Currid, *Study Commentary on Leviticus*, EP, 2004, page 125.

² *ibid*, page 123.

³ Schaff-Hertzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge, vol 5, page 316.

⁴ *ibid*, page 318.

⁵ The Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon gives the general meaning of the word Qadōsh to be holy and says it is the same in all cognate (descended from a common ancestor) languages. The ancient language used in Ethiopia is Amharic and the words used for Holy Bible are *Metshaf Q'dus*.

⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, vol 2, page 53.

⁷ *PRAISE!* 194.

⁸ *hagiazō* to make holy, *hagiasmos* holiness, *hagiasthētō* to onoma sou hallowed be thy name.

⁹ The Hebrew word often used and translated saints is *chasid* meaning devoted, pious or faithful.

¹⁰ These verbs are perfect passive participles.

Christianity in China to 1800 AD

by Bob Davey

The first definite introduction of Christianity to China was achieved by Nestorian missionary monks and traders.

The Nestorians (Assyrian Church of the East)

Nestorius (381-451 AD) was a famous preacher/monk in the biblical city of Antioch in Syria. He became patriarch of Constantinople in 428 AD but was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD for heresy and banished. Nestorians held that Christ had not only two distinct natures (divine and human) but was also two distinct persons, a divine Son of God indwelling the human son of Mary. The orthodox insisted that Christ had the two distinct natures yet these were united in the one person, Jesus Christ. Nestorius died in exile, but his views found favour with churches in Assyria and Persia (modern day Iraq and Iran). Their churches also repudiated the worship of Mary as the 'mother of God' and the use of images. The Nestorians with missionary zeal diffused their doctrines and monastic practices along trade routes as far as Arabia, India, Scythia, Mongolia and China from the fifth century AD onwards. The system of belief and practice of the Nestorians was fundamentally biblically weak because all the contemporary Christian confessions of faith of that era lacked any clear statement on the doctrines concerning the nature and the way of salvation, such as for instance, justification by grace alone through faith alone. It was this failing that contributed much to the growth and popularity of the monastic and ascetic way of life in the Christian Church.

Tradition has an early date, as early as late apostolic times, for the entrance of Christianity to China but for this there is no evidence. The third-century Christian writer Arnobius (c.400 AD) mentions a people known as the Seres who are taken by some to refer to the Chinese, as having been evangelised by his time. The first plausible date for the entrance of Christianity into China points to about 505 AD with the arrival of Nestorian missionary monks in China. It was they, it is said, who first brought back silkworm eggs to Constantinople in 511 AD. The first definite evidence showing a Nestorian presence in China is a monument still standing in the ancient capital Sian (Xian) in the province of Shensi (Shaanxi). It dates from 781 AD and reviews the history of Nestorianism in that part of China from its introduction in 631

AD. It also contains a summary of their doctrines and practices. There is little trace of the survival of Nestorianism in China from these early times. Nestorianism seems to have died out in China by 900 AD after a period of severe persecution and proscription of all forms of monasticism in China.

Nestorians under the Mongols and thereafter

Nestorianism had taken root in Mesopotamia and central and north-eastern Asia. In 1007 AD the Keraites, a Turkish tribe living south-east of Lake Baikal, became Christian. Nestorian Keraites were in the high service of Genghis Khan (c1162-1227) and his successors. A Kereyid Nestorian princess, Sorghaghtani (c 1198-1252) was married to the fourth son of Genghis Khan. She was the mother of three brothers, Mongke Khan, Hulagu Khan (who overran much of West Asia, conquered Baghdad, and founded a dynasty in Persia) and Kublai Khan who became Emperor of all China in 1279. Sorghaghtani became the moving spirit behind the throne and responsible for much of the trade openings and intellectual exchanges made possible by her place in the largest contiguous empire known in the whole of world history to date. She was the most competent and powerful woman in the Mongol Empire.

The Yuan dynasty in China (1271- 1368) was established by Kublai Khan but lasted less than a hundred years. Under the Mongols the Nestorians found favour. By 1289 it is recorded that there were 30,000 Nestorians in Cathay (China). Monasteries and churches were recorded in at least five provinces. A Nestorian metropolitan or archbishop had his seat at Khanbaliq (present day Beijing).

But when the opportunity came, the Chinese threw the Mongols out. In 1368 the Mongols were replaced by the native dynasty of the Mings. Since the majority of Nestorians were of Mongol stock, they too were evicted. The native Christians remaining were severely persecuted and curtailed. By the late sixteenth century there were no Nestorians left in China.

Travels of Marco Polo

With the rise of the Mongol dynasties, travellers, traders and diplomats arrived at the courts of the Khans in central Asia and north China. The Italian brothers Maffeo and Nicolo Polo set out on business affairs from Constantinople in 1259. They eventually arrived in 1266 at the seat of the Grand Khan at Khanbaliq. They returned bearing letters from Kublai Khan to the Pope asking for a hundred teachers of science and religion to be sent to instruct the Chinese in the learning and faith of Europe. In 1271, armed with letters from the Pope,

the Polo brothers returned to China accompanied by two Dominican monks and Nicolo's seventeen-year-old son Marco Polo. The monks however turned back because of the dangers. The family stayed in China for seventeen years. Marco Polo took service with Kublai Khan and was entrusted with diplomatic missions and travelled extensively in China. He was even made Governor of Yangzhou for three years. On the return of the Polo family to Venice in 1295, Marco Polo published a delightful narrative of his experiences, which was soon translated into many European languages. A heavily annotated copy of the book was in the possession of Christopher Columbus on his voyage of discovery to America. He was aiming for China.

The first Roman Catholic mission in China

A Franciscan monk, John of Montecorvino, arrived in Khanbaliq in 1294 with a letter from the Pope. He was kindly received and stayed until his death around 1328. He was allowed to build two churches in Khanbaliq and claimed to have baptised about six thousand converts by 1305. The Pope sent further help and also appointed him Archbishop of Cambulac (Khanbaliq, Beijing) with a diocese of much of East Asia! By his death it was claimed he had 30,000 converts. The Great Khan sent to the Pope for a replacement legate. John of Marignolli did not arrive until 1342. He returned with a glowing report of progress after three years. In Europe the plague of the Black Death distracted attention and lessened manpower available for distant missions. On the fall of the Mongol dynasty in 1368 their successors, the Chinese Mings, destroyed both the Nestorian Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Christianity completely disappeared from China.

The second Roman Catholic mission in China- its establishment (1601-1700)

Ironically it was under the later Mings (Ming dynasty 1368-1644) that in the year 1601 at Peking (Beijing) a new Roman Catholic Jesuit mission was established in China. The approach was not as before from the landward route but by sea. Navigation of the eastern waters was now under the control of the Catholic countries of Portugal and Spain. In 1560 the Portuguese occupied the peninsular of Macao (Macau) in southern China. This foothold in China became the only European settlement allowed by the Chinese in all China. Nearby Canton (Guangzhou) became the only port through which trade with the Westerner was permitted until the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Jesuit Francis Xavier died on his way to China on an island just off the coast of China in 1552. Alessandro Valignani became the superintendent of Jesuit missions in the East and went to Macao in 1579. He recruited the Italian

Jesuit Matteo Ricci who managed to settle in Chaoch'ing (Zhaoqing) on the mainland in 1583. A remarkably talented and prudent man, by 1601 he had moved in stages to Peking. Ricci had made himself very proficient with the Chinese classics. He dressed as a literary man and gained much influence with court scholars with his display of Western scientific learning and technology. He translated Euclid's Geometry into Chinese and won approval by his skill in repairing clocks, making maps and compiling reliable calendars. He gained an official position. He also had a number of converts. Ricci restated Christianity in Confucian thought and terminology while opposing Buddhist and Taoist concepts.

When Matteo Ricci died in 1610 his able Jesuit successors, such as the German Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1599-1661) and the Belgian Ferdinand Verbiest (1623-1688), continued his eclectic programme. Between 1620 and 1629 nineteen Jesuits joined the staff and they had missionary centres in six provinces. Schall was appointed Court Astronomer in the new Qing (Ching) dynasty (1644-1911) and Verbiest, the most influential of all, was President of the Board of Mathematics and also Court Astronomer. By the time of the death of Verbiest in 1688 it was reckoned that there were more than 300,000 Roman Catholic proselytes living in 1200 communities in spite of some periods of persecution. In 1692 the Emperor Kang Xi granted toleration for Christianity by an edict. This increased the opportunities for missions. The future looked very bright for Roman Catholicism.

The rites question and the downfall of the second Roman Catholic mission in China (1700-1800)

What destroyed the Roman Catholic mission in China was jealous rivalries of the Jesuits with the Spanish Dominicans and Franciscans who had made their way to China from the Philippines toward the middle of the seventeenth century. The Dominicans and Franciscans were not slow to accuse the Jesuits of compromising the faith. They objected to Matteo Ricci's contention that the ceremonial rites of Confucianism and ancestor reverence were primarily social and political in nature and could be practised legitimately by converts. To them all these rites were idolatrous. This controversy became known as 'the Rites Question'.

In 1697 the Pope asked the Inquisition to look into the Rites Question in order to bring it to a conclusion. However, the Jesuits in China believed they already had papal authority to do what they thought best and they approached the Chinese Emperor Kang Xi for his opinion. He confirmed and backed the Jesuit position. This was disastrous because in 1704 the inquisition found against the Jesuits and this was confirmed by papal bull in 1715. This reduced

the issue in China to a simple matter of supremacy, Pope or Emperor. The Emperor expelled the Papal Legate and ordered out all missionaries who did not follow the Jesuits' position. Later in 1724 edicts of expulsion and confiscation of property were issued against the whole Roman Catholic Church, the four churches in Peking excepted. Chinese Christians were ordered to renounce their faith. These and subsequent decrees were not enforced with equal vigour over the entire empire. Comparative failure of the Roman Catholic Mission up to this time was due to the dominant role of the foreign priesthood, the emphasis on political patronage and social status, its permission of Chinese religious pagan ceremonies which made it less hard to convert (and thus easier to fall away) and above all, because its primary allegiance was to a foreign authority. This last was anathema to any Chinese Emperor. After 1724 heroic priests stayed on as best they could, always in grave danger. In spite of all, the Roman Catholic Church still survived in China and in 1800 it is reckoned there were up to one hundred and fifty thousand baptised Roman Catholic community members in China. This was half the number that there had been in 1688.

Postscript - Roman Catholics in China today

The French Revolution and Napoleonic wars (1789-1815) threw Europe into confusion and crippled any efforts of Roman Catholic missions toward China. Only after 1840 were recruits in any large number sent to China from Europe. Roman Catholicism's story in China then roughly paralleled that of the Protestants during the missionary era, except they did not experience any of the spiritual revivals that stemmed from faithful gospel preaching. Today Roman Catholics number around sixteen million in China and are known as *Tianzhu jiaotu* (Lord of Heaven religion followers). The system of belief and practice of the Roman Catholic Church has always been fundamentally unbiblical, especially in the doctrines concerning the nature and the way of salvation and the doctrine of where authority lies for the Christian. The original Protestant missionaries onward from Robert Morrison in 1807 clearly believed this to be so and studiously distanced themselves from the Roman Catholics in their dealings with the Chinese authorities. So do evangelical Christians in China to this day.

Sources

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Book Review

An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs - Unveiling Islam

Ergun Mehmet Caner & Emir Fethi Caner, Kregel Publications, 251 pages

The well-qualified authors of this book, brought up in a Muslim home in Ohio, USA, display a marked absence of bitterness towards Muslims. The two brothers continued to hold their father in great affection and esteem to the end of his days, even though he remained a Muslim and had disowned them and another brother as a result of their commitment to Christ. The book, written with painful memories of their relationship with their father whom they held as a hero, gives a clear account of the phenomenal growth of Islam from the seventh to the sixteenth century and its contribution to civilisation. It was written under the shadow of 9/11 and provides valuable insight into the mindset of the perpetrators of the tragic events of that day.

The book is of particular help and encouragement to Christians who are surrounded by Muslims and feel unable or unwilling to share the gospel with their neighbours. The authors are both well-qualified academics. Ergun Mehmet Caner became Professor of Theology at the Criswell College in Dallas and his brother Emir Fethi became Assistant Professor of Church History and Anabaptist Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Both have travelled widely, lecturing and appearing on TV, but their

book pulses with affection for Muslims and it is far from being a merely dry, factual, academic treatise on Islam, even though it is crammed with a wealth of information. Readers will find a significant number of references at the end of each chapter. At the end of the book there are four appendices headed, 'A Topical Index to the Qur'an', 'Free will, Fatalism and the Qur'an', 'Christianity and Islam: A Comparison of Beliefs' and 'Glossary of Arabic and Islamic Terms'.

The crucial value of befriending Muslims is stressed using the experience of Muslims converted to Christ including the personal testimony of Ergun, who was 'loved to the cross' by his young teenage friend and members of the church that he attended. He then evangelised his two brothers who came to faith in Christ, experiencing great joy in their liberation from the fear that the scales of justice would bring about their condemnation.

Helpful attention is given to a comparison of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ and the prophet Muhammad, the latter shedding the blood of many whereas Jesus shed his own blood for many. The purpose of this section of the book is to point up the mutually exclusive claims of the Qur'an and the Bible, giving the reasons for rejecting the testimony of Muhammad. These reasons include his own self-doubts, which at times were prompted by uncertainty as to whether the revelations were divine or satanic,

his editing of his claimed revelations including the ‘Satanic verses’ and his life-style. (Although he had a stable helpful marriage to his first wife Khadija, he later descended into polygamy and in all had eleven wives and two concubines; one of his marriages was reported as consummated with Aishah, a girl of nine years old.) After he left Mecca for Medina, he lost his wealth gained as a merchant owning camel trains and turned to robbing the camel trains of others. He was a brilliant military tactician and succeeded in uniting the warring tribes of the Arabian peninsular.

Inspired by Muhammad’s sayings and example the book describes the growing military might of Islam. In time amazing military conquests brought the north of Africa, Spain and much of Eastern Europe under the control of Islam. Islamic rule of these lands was not altogether without benefits. The terrible, cruel Mongolian Genghis Khan, an enemy of Islam, attempted to conquer the Middle East but was halted by the Muslims. The book acknowledges Islamic learning and culture, especially the scientific, medical and literary excellence of Baghdad during the Islamic ‘golden age’ when papermaking was introduced from China. (Wikipedia confirms that in AD751 Islamic soldiers captured Chinese paper makers after the Battle of Talas and carried them into the Islamic town of Samarkand). The Caners make it clear that the expansion of Islam was by military means, inspired by the life and thoughts of Muhammad. They draw a clear contrast to Jesus who encouraged his followers to a life of love. They readily admit the

On October 8th 2009, the BBC published the results of an American study lasting over a period of three years. The report by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life made use of census data from 232 countries and territories. Its main conclusion was that 25% of the world’s population is Muslim.

Interestingly and perhaps surprisingly to many it revealed that only 20% of Muslims live in the Middle East and North Africa. The largest populations of Muslims live in the following countries:

- Indonesia 202.9 million people
- Pakistan 174 million people
- India 161 million people
- Bangladesh 145.3 million people
- Nigeria 78 million people
- Egypt 75.5 million people
- Iran 73.8 million people
- Turkey 73.7 million people
- Algeria 34.2 million people
- Morocco 32 million people
- China 21.7 million people
- Russia 16.5 million people

There is great value in reading books on Islam such as that reviewed in this issue of *Reformation Today*. When we meet Muslims we should ask them what they believe. Often one is surprised by the lack of knowledge that Muslims have of their religion. Dialogue is one way to open the way for the gospel. Most Muslims are more willing to talk about religious matters than secular westerners. It is often clear that they are concerned about the scales of divine justice not coming down in their favour.

wrongfulness of crusaders who engaged in great acts of cruelty during their fight with Islam, but point out that these military adventures were not inspired by Jesus Christ, but by those who called themselves Christians. The Caners cite verses from the Qur'an encouraging the violent overthrow of the enemies of Allah.

Many Christians are not aware of the fact that in theory the followers of Muhammad acknowledge the inspiration of the Bible as originally given, but believe that it was altered and corrupted by Christians. The Caners point out the inconsistency of the Muslim faith that the almighty God who inspired the Bible did not manage to preserve its truth. Perhaps the book could have made more use of the sorts of arguments assembled in the booklet 'Has the Bible been changed?' by E M Hicham of 'Word of Hope Ministries'.¹ The Caners drew attention to the inconsistencies between the Bible and the Qur'an, written in the seventh century and to internal contradictions within the Qur'an itself.

In addition to the Qur'an Muslims look to the Sunnah (basis for legal code in Islam) and Hadiths (narrations and sayings from the life of Muhammad). Ignorance of these has led Christians into difficulties as they have tried to befriend Muslims. The Caners mention rules on diet and appropriate behaviour that have caused stumbling blocks to Muslims and write; 'Virtually every action taken by Muslims, from how they approach your home to how they brush their teeth, has precedent in the Hadith.' It is a mistake to assume that all Muslims are equally zealous in obedience and the Caners helpfully

comment that it is wise to observe them and follow what they actually do.

Muslims claim unity but the authors repudiate this in their historic description of the great divides in Islam, especially the difference between Sunni and Shia and the differing sects that are around today.

An important theme is the works-based 'mathematical' righteousness needed to gain a better world after judgement and the chilling promise of complete forgiveness to those who fight for Allah against his enemies. This aspect of Islam should be seen in the historical perspective of Islam during its period of growth and the present troubled, violent countries in the world bordering the parts of the world dominated by Islam. The Caners present historical and theological arguments that the God of the Bible should not be equated with Allah.

The book shows how the five fundamentals of Islam (creed, prayer, almsgiving, fasting and pilgrimage) impact upon the lives of its adherents and in addition explains the place expected of women in Muslim society. The subtitle 'An insider's look at Muslim life and beliefs' is entirely appropriate as the two authors have themselves lived as Muslims from birth and know the importance of the verses they quote from the Qur'an and Hadiths. *Frederick Hodgson*

¹ www.word-of-hope.net

News



Pastor Stephen Nowark and Angela and children Elizabeth, Daniel and Elijah.

Indonesia

Persecution, Perseverance and Pythons.

This report by Stephen Nowak

I spent most of September in Jakarta. The three words above describe aptly what I witnessed there. Persecution has resulted in the added need to persevere. The pythons come into the equation because persecution has driven the SETIA students to live in tents. Outdoor life leads to sharing the habitat with reptiles.

The ministry of SETIA was started in 1988 to train and equip Christians to reach millions of unreached people in Indonesia. There are now 1,100 students studying in Jakarta. They are divided into

three groups each group specialising. All study theology. One group adds medical training and another concentrates on school teaching while the third major on church-planting. Outside Jakarta there are 35 campuses scattered around Indonesia. These vary from 30 to 200 students. A Master's program has begun. Most of the 58 students on that two-year program have to leave their families for four three-month stints to complete this two-year program.

In July 2008 Islamic extremists, typical in many countries today, attacked the college. Several students were injured. They were forced to leave their building. Since then they have been living in impoverished circumstances.

The largest group of 600 students live on a campsite outside of Jakarta. The toilet, washing, cooking, sleeping and classroom facilities are shockingly poor and the standard of living is very basic. During August in the space of one week three large pythons invaded this SETIA campsite. When I expressed my shock the response was one of surprise. To them python steak is a luxury! The skin of one of the pythons sold for fifty US dollars.

The 600 on this campsite have been threatened with forced eviction. Their situation is vulnerable. They have no books, only their Bibles. Unless we rectify the position many of these students will graduate and go into full-time Christian work without working libraries.

The other 500 students live on two different sites, which are not much better. The students eat rice and vegetables three times a day and only get a small piece of meat once a week and fish once a week. Fruit is provided once or twice a month.. While I was there at the beginning of September the 70 staff in Jakarta had only received half of their wages for July and no wages for August. Near the middle of September they had received the rest of July's wages and a small portion for August. The staff and workers outside Jakarta are even poorer.

Thanks to generous donors just over £6,000 was given for SETIA before I left. This donation paid for 3000 copies of the 1689 Baptist Confession in Indonesian. In addition about three thousand books in Indonesian by authors such as John Owen, A W Pink, Prof John Murray, Jonathan Edwards, J C Ryle and other authors were distributed to the students. These were received with joy. The students were required to write a review on each book they received. One hundred and twenty students lacked mattresses to sleep on. They were provided with the money to meet that need. Also modest

gifts of cash were given to some of the poorest pastors who are church planting. Money was left to pay for their first journal, as the teaching staff want to expose the dangers of liberal theology and fanatical charismatic teaching.

The serious setbacks and testing conditions have not made the SETIA staff or students pessimistic, depressed or discouraged. Worship during the chapel services before lunch and in the evenings are filled with thunderous worship, humble testimonies and attentive listening to the Word preached. I had opportunity to teach two classes in the morning, preach the chapel service before a late lunch, two classes in the afternoon and if my translators still had breath evening services were arranged at the students' instigation. They are hungry for Reformed expository preaching which has doctrinal fibre and clarity as well as experimental and practical application. In spite of the hot, humid conditions with no air-conditioning, no tables and only canvas covering attention was excellent. I was amazed by the spiritual discernment revealed in the question time. To observe the earnestness of some of these young men so zealous to get to grips with Bible teaching was deeply moving. The evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit exceeded anything I have seen.

During my three-week stay I had the opportunity to give nine lectures on Reformed Baptist Distinctives on three consecutive Saturdays to a group of full-time workers. Those who attended came from Baptist, Pentecostal and Independent churches. Some had only heard of the 1689 confession of Faith but had never read it. When I gave them copies they returned the next week and asked for copies for all their church members. These were gladly given. The request followed for copies to give to other churches in that part of Java. Some of these pastors travelled four hours to

come to these lectures. The church which hosted these meetings is a Reformed Baptist church. The pastor is aware of the need to organise a Reformed Baptist Association in the future. A conference for pastors was proposed for next year with the desire to give as many copies of the 1689 away as can be used and to provide poor pastors with the books they could never afford.

What can readers of *Reformation Today* do to help? First we must pray. God's ways are not our ways. The testing conditions I have described are designed to produce students who are trained to endure hardness. Very few Indonesian Christians are willing to dare, as these students are, to enter dangerous regions to reach many unreached people groups in Indonesia. Minds and wills have to be trained to be resilient and persevering.

We can support this work by giving to the book fund. My desire is to keep going once or twice a year and provide many more books so that every student by the time of graduation will have basic literature materials which are essential for the ministry. You can do this by sending cheques made out to Montpelier Place Baptist Church, c/o Stephen Nowak, 22 Windmill Close, Hove, East Sussex BN3 7LJ. Those in America who wish to contribute can do so through Chapel Library (see front inside cover).

Belarus

Theological Education in Belarus: A New Project of Evangelical Press.

Report by Slava Viazovski

Belarus is a former republic of the Soviet Union which became independent in 1992. It is situated on the western border of Russia. The population of the country is 10 million, with about 2 million living in the capital Minsk. Most of the

Belorussian people speak Russian. That is why when *Evangelical Press* started translation and publishing of Reformed books in the Russian language in 1997 the work could be based in Belarus.

Only in the past 6 years (2003-2008) EP has published about 40 different titles with the total print run of 140,000 copies. The books are distributed at subsidized prices mainly in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The recently published books include the bestselling titles by Spurgeon (*Treasury of David*, 6 volumes), John Blanchard (*Where is God when Things Go Wrong?*), Sharon James (*God's Design for Women*), and Iain Murray (*The Forgotten Spurgeon*).

Along with the publishing ministry EP put significant effort into conferences for Russian-speaking pastors. Since 2000 nine annual conferences have been held in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine with a total attendance of 900 men. EP had the privilege of ministry of such people as Stuart Olyott (three times), John Blanchard (twice), Iain Murray, Geoff Thomas and several others. The conferences have been a powerful instrument of introducing Russian-speaking pastors to Reformed theology.

In 2003 I began to work with EP as the general manager of the Russian office helped by my wife Anya and by a small but committed team of three other Christians. I am an assistant pastor in a Reformed Baptist church in Minsk since 1997. He is a graduate of the Belorussian State University and also holds a MA in theology from Reformed Theological Seminary.

If readers have contact with Russian-speaking congregations outside Belarus, Ukraine and Russia please provide us with details of whom to contact if there is the prospect of book sales. It is staggering to think that English is the official language of about 30 percent of the

nations of the world. About four out of every hundred in the world can speak Russian and thirty out of every hundred can speak English.

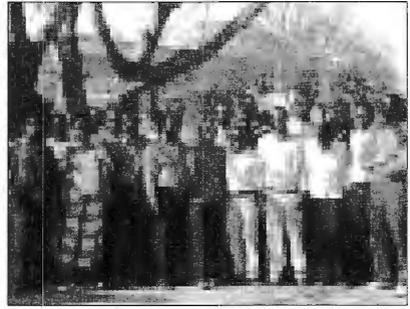
South Africa

African Pastors Conference, Limpopo, October 2009

Polokwane (previously Pietersburg) is a small and thriving city in the north of South Africa. As you leave the city going westwards and on the main road pass the squatter camps and a larger township, you see in the distance, rising above the plains, some small volcanic-looking hills. Twenty miles on, passing the first hill you take a right turn towards a second hill and find yourself in the tribal area of Molatje. All around you are extraordinary rock formations - large golden rocks piled precariously on top of each other, reminiscent of the Matopos National Park in Zimbabwe a couple of hundred miles north. It was there in the Molatje Moshate Tribal meeting centre that the first Limpopo APC took place in September 2009.

25 or so pastors and the visiting team met for 48 hours to consider the topic of 'The responsibility of the Biblical Pastor'. Dr. Victor Nakah is the President of the Theological College of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo and he spoke on the Pastor's responsibility to Christ, to himself, to his flock and to his family. Irving Steggle, Pastor of Birchleigh BC in Kempton Park and a Director of APC spoke on the Pastors' responsibility to the word of God and his responsibility to persevere. There was a vibrant question session and the Conference ended with Sechaba Legoete preaching powerfully on Ephesians 4: 11-16.

Among the delegates there was a group from Limpopo Bible Institute, a small college to train African pastors right out in the bush about 70 miles further north.



Group photo at Polokwane

This is another important work to fulfil the aim of training biblical pastors to lead biblical churches. It is faithfully led by two American missionaries Seth Meyers and Paul Schlehlein, both of whom provided helpful contributions in the discussions.

Most of the pastors were working in the rural areas which presents many challenges, particularly to avoid syncretism with African traditional religion. There is also a revivalist tendency among these men who just love putting up their tent and conducting a campaign. Only sustained teaching of those who really want to be biblical will purify the church in these areas. The good supply of excellent books was much appreciated - with pastors spending their little money on fine books.

The Conference was organized locally by Pastors Gilford and Philemon. Gilford is a member of the royal family - Irving was invited to meet with the King (Chief) who had kindly provided the facilities: sadly he did not have a jacket and tie which would have been needed for the audience! We thank God for the kind provision of food and accommodation for the Pastors organized by the people in the local church and Gilford's wife. The only cost to APC was the travelling expenses of speakers and the transport of books. We acknowledge God's grace in a gift which covered these. *Irving Steggle*

Epaphras at Prayer

By Don Haddleton

Among the list of co-workers mentioned in the concluding remarks of Paul's letter to the Colossian believers, Epaphras, a Colossian saint, and a 'slave' of Christ Jesus, is highly recommended (Col 4:12-13). Epaphras was the one responsible for planting the church at Colossae. In particular Paul highlights Epaphras' intercession, and his 'deep concern' for the Colossian Christians.

The word Paul uses to describe Epaphras' intercession for the Colossian brethren is *agōnizomenos*. It is the verb from which our English word 'agonise' springs. *agōnizomenos* can also be rendered *struggling*, or *striving*.

Paul illustrates Epaphras' prayer-life by using a verb that describes the physical effort expended by wrestlers in the Colosseum as they struggled to gain supremacy over one another in a hard fought match, putting forth all their skill, and muscular strength to subdue their opponent. Epaphras was *wrestling* in prayer, he was *agonising* in prayer, he was *fervently* expending emotional and spiritual energy in his intercession for the Colossian saints. How very different from the apathetic and superficial 'conversation' that passes for prayer today.

Are all believers then meant to pray as Epaphras did? Are we also to wrestle in prayer, to agonise in our intercessions, to strive and struggle when we pray to our Father in heaven? Must we also pour out all of our strength into our petitions, and intercessions? Indeed is it even possible for us to do so?

To answer the last question first. It is neither possible for us - nor is it even advisable to attempt - to 'wrestle' as did Epaphras *every time* we pray. Our minds, emotions and physical bodies could not daily sustain such intense periods of 'all out' prayer. We would surely soon suffer 'burnout'. But having said that, we must not assume that there will never be times when we must set aside everything else, and give ourselves up to 'wrestle' in prayer. Epaphras' prayer life is an example, an encouragement and a stimulus for us to reconsider our prayer lives.

We must of course remember the context in which Epaphras prayed. Heretics, legalists, and errorists who were denying the centrality, the uniqueness and the preeminence of our Lord Jesus Christ were infiltrating the Colossian fellowship (Col 2:11,16,18,21-23). And there was a very real danger of the Colossian saints being seduced by this syncretistic mix of legalism, asceticism and mysticism that was being proffered to them. It was not that these 'wolves' were denying Christ, rather, they were insinuating that something extra, something additional, to faith in Christ alone was a necessity to ensure a clearer spiritual 'knowledge', and more assured salvation. It was the news of this attack upon the simple gospel faith of the Colossians that drove Epaphras to his knees in agonizing prayer.

It was Epaphras, not Paul, who brought the gospel to the Colossians (1:7). These embattled saints were Epaphras' spiritual children. The main concern for Epaphras was that his spiritual children would stand firm, rooted and grounded in the gospel doctrines which he had preached to them, and which they had already - by faith - received (Col 1:4-8). Epaphras was anxious that the Colossian believers would remain utterly convinced that in Christ their salvation was complete and that thus they could be assured of their eternal security. Thus motivated by his love for Christ Jesus, and his deep concern for the spiritual safety of those whom the Holy Spirit had brought to faith through his gospel preaching, Epaphras began to wrestle, strive, struggle and agonise in prayer, pleading with God that the saints at Colossae would not jettison their simple faith in Christ, and, in its place, swallow the honey-dipped poison of the heretics and thus be everlastingly lost (Gal 5:1-2).

There should be times in our own lives when we are constrained to wrestle in prayer, times when our hearts and minds become so burdened that we can do nothing but fall upon our knees before our great, glorious, and loving heavenly Father, and agonise in prayer. That burden may be for the spread of the gospel in all of its truth and purity, or for the growth of the Church in knowledge, understanding and wisdom, or for the conversion of family members and friends, or for the steadfastness of those undergoing persecution for their faith in Christ. Whether or not we feel 'burdened' to pray as did Epaphras, his example should at least encourage us to be 'real' in our own intercession. Careful and considered investigation concerning the situations and folk for whom we pray will go a long way to - at least - make us more earnest in our prayer lives.

The Church in the Wilderness

Frederick Hodgson

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One... The One enthroned in heaven laughs: the LORD scoffs at them.... "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill" (Ps 2:2-6).

The persecutions of the Huguenots by the Jesuit-influenced Louis XIV, culminating in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, led to the king boasting that there were no longer any Protestants left in France; there were simply Catholics and New Catholics. The Huguenots had been subjected to the vicious bullying and by raids known as 'the Dragonnades'. These were the royal dragoons who had been billeted in their houses. Many had either fled or were forced to convert to Catholicism. Although many Huguenots had fled from the country, many were caught escaping. The men were forced to labour in the galleys or sent to work as labourers in Canada and the women were committed to prison. Huge numbers of men and women lost their lives. The article 'Whatever happened to the Huguenots?' in RT230 described how the Huguenots had lost their passion for evangelism and their earlier doctrinal purity under the influence of Arminian ideas imported from Holland. Some leaders had simply returned to Catholicism as a result of erosion of their theology.

Louis imperiously believed that the evangelical witness had died out, having been defeated by his measures. This sad state of affairs raises a serious question. Did Louis XIV defeat God? Psalm 2 tells us that the kings of the earth defy God in vain. Romans 8:31 - 39 reminds us that in suffering for Christ's sake believers cannot be separated from the love of Christ. However, there were signs that many Huguenots had lost their earlier passion for him, having turned aside for intellectual, agricultural, industrial and trading pursuits and in these things they grew rich. Could they be described as Laodicean in attitude? If this is correct the lessons for us are stark. But the history of the period following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes shows that God had not left France without a testimony to his grace.

The Jansenist influence in France

A Catholic theologian, Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638), born into a humble home in Holland, investigated the writings of the early Church Fathers whilst

studying at the Catholic university of Leuven (Louvain) in Belgium. In particular he studied the writings of Augustine and came to believe in the depravity of human nature, the inability of man to save himself and the need for divine intervention. He believed in predestination and justification through faith. He opposed the powerful Jesuits, who accused him of being 'almost a Calvinist'. However, Jansen did not leave the Catholic Church. He still maintained some of its superstitions and had a strong mystical bent. The growth of Jansenism was a factor in the partial loss of influence of the Jesuits who had such a hold in France during the seventeenth century.

The Abbey of Port-Royal sited to the south-west of Paris was renowned for being a centre of educational excellence. It had several schools in its grounds and exercised a great influence. In 1634 Jean du Vergier de Hauranne, Abbé de Saint-Cyran, became spiritual director of the convent; he was a companion and encourager of Jansen and the implementer of Jansenism in France. From that point forward the convents and schools of Port-Royal became intimately associated with that school of theology. Antoine Arnauld, whose ancestors had for centuries been associated with Port-Royal, was a brilliant scholar in the Sorbonne and fell under the influence of du Vergier. He wrote against the Jesuits. Following censorship by the Sorbonne he was forced to go into hiding. He was ceremonially degraded in 1656.

A famous follower of Jansen and friend of Arnauld was the renowned mathematician and physicist, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662). In 1654 he ceased his mathematics and science studies and pursued theology and philosophy, engaging against the Jesuits. Deriving many of his arguments from the intellectual base of Port-Royal, Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales* (Provincial Letters) were written anonymously and published secretly. These purported to be reports from a Parisian to a friend in the provinces. These reports concerned moral and theological issues and impacted intellectual and religious circles in the capital. Pascal was an enthusiastic Jansenist and wrote with wit and intellectual polish. The letters were popular as a literary work and had widespread influence. They enraged the Jesuits and this resulted in Louis XIV's ordering that the book containing the letters be shredded and burned in 1660. The schools in the grounds of Port-Royal were closed down. In the same year the monastery was forbidden to receive novices. The monastery was closed in 1709 and destroyed the following year.

The Lutherans in Alsace and Lorraine

The French had recently gained Alsace from the Germans. The Lutherans in this part of France were allowed to practise their faith in peace, because of internationally recognised conventions. Alsace and Lorraine often changed

hands between France and Germany and even up to the present evangelical churches are more easily found in this part of France than elsewhere.

Continued persecutions of the evangelicals elsewhere

Louis cruelly opposed the remainder of evangelicals in France whenever they stood up for the truth. Wylie wrote, 'When the first stunning shock of the edict had spent itself, there came a recoil. The more closely 'the new converts' viewed the church into which they had been driven, the stronger became their dislike of it. Shame and remorse for their apostasy began to burn within them. Their sacrilegious participation in the mass awoke their consciences; thousands resolved, rather than lead a life of such base and criminal hypocrisy, to abandon the communion they professed to have espoused, and return to Protestant worship. They withdrew from the cities. They sought to live in the wilderness and forests and practised their worship in caves, in deep ravines and sometimes on the tops of mountains. They promised one another to live and die in the Reformed faith.'

This defiance led to a furious response from the king which consisted of worse cruelties than before. Believers were tortured until they renounced their faith. Failing this they were imprisoned. M. Lefèvre was imprisoned in the foulest part of the dungeon for fifteen years without visits. Nonetheless he wrote, 'The love of the truth prevails in my soul; for God who knows my heart, and the purity of my motives, supports me by his grace.' A distinguished scientist, M. de Marolles, also imprisoned for his faithfulness to the Lord, found himself on the brink of insanity, but on calling upon the Lord was able to testify, 'He makes the days of affliction pass speedily away ... with the bread and water of affliction, he affords me continually most delicious repasts.'

The general government policy was to wear down recalcitrant Protestants, rather than kill them off directly. The use of prison, exile and sending Protestant men to the galleys was the preferred choice. Being sent to be an oarsman on a French galley was a miserable experience. These warships had fifty oars, each of which was fifty feet long and powered by five men each. The oarsmen were chained to their rowing stations and were forced to work hard by a non-commissioned officer who stood over them with a whip. Sleep at night was to be had by the side of the rowing benches among the filth and vermin. Most oarsmen were criminals and it was hard for the believers to live and work in these conditions. Some reported being comforted and strengthened in these dire conditions. Baran de Salgas said, 'It is the happiest time of my life. I live among brigands, but my Saviour died between two thieves.' A Roman Catholic priest, Jean Bion, who was chaplain on one of the galleys, was impressed by the graciousness of the evangelical prisoners and was converted. He went to London where he published an account of the sufferings of the Huguenots.

At that time Protestants were denied legal marriage ceremonies and registration of marriage and similarly denied registration for the christening of their children.

The population of the Cévennes, a mountainous region in the south of France, was almost entirely Protestant. The population went to live in the woods and in the absence of ordained pastors appointed their own people to preach and lead their services. Exiled pastors returning to minister from their safe havens joined these *prédicants* (preachers). If the patrolling soldiers caught these pastors they were imprisoned. The soldiers were sometimes outrageously cruel to congregations of such worshippers. Numerous massacres of worshippers were enacted. In June 1686 many were killed, wounded or driven into water where they drowned near St. Germain in the Cévennes. In 1689 the dragoons at one meeting butchered more than three hundred. The bloodthirsty soldiers slaughtered women and even babies. The man responsible for sending many pastors back to minister in these dangerous situations was Claude Brousson.

The amazing labours of Claude Brousson

Brousson was born in Nîmes in 1647 and became a lawyer in Toulouse. He eloquently spoke up for Protestants in the courts, as they became prey to the Jesuit-inspired policies of Louis XIV. This was a dangerous thing to do and he eventually had to flee for his life. He visited Berlin and Amsterdam with the purpose of obtaining support for the Huguenots suffering in France. He also upbraided the exiled pastors for leaving their flocks in France. This aroused some degree of antagonism and Brousson himself was impelled to go back to France and pastor the people who were lacking in effective leadership. Alan Clifford wrote of Brousson's courageous and sacrificial return to France in 1689 as being driven by his heart bleeding with 'Christ-like compassion for pastorless souls who, under the most diabolical pressures of persecution had in considerable numbers abjured their faith'. He wrote, 'Brousson's pastoral labours probably have no parallel in the seventeenth century. In the English-speaking world, even the work of Richard Baxter is not on the same scale... Fifty years before the Methodist Revival, Brousson's itinerant activities anticipated those of Whitefield and the Wesleys, the Huguenots' being conducted in far more hostile conditions.'

Clifford described the appalling conditions experienced by the believers. In the Cévennes and Lower Languedoc, there were five regiments of dragoons who rode throughout the region. Day and night they searched for worshipping Protestants. Almost every night there were secret services, starting at midnight. Brousson ministered, both by preaching and leading the singing of Psalms, three or four nights a week. He travelled around the country

sometimes only finding a sleeping place under a hedge, in a cave or in bushes, in mountain retreats, woodpiles or manure heaps. Occasionally he would have a bed in Nîmes when staying with friends. Otherwise he did well to have fresh straw for a bed. His health deteriorated as a result of his strenuous efforts, but he was encouraged by a strong assurance of the love of God, especially when he was preaching or praying or administering the Lord's Supper at the secret assemblies of the believers.

Brousson spoke privately to his English friend Quick and told him of an occasion in a province of western France when five thousand people knelt on the ground 'with streaming tears, deep sighs and heart-cutting groans', after his exhortations. The people lamented over their return to Roman Catholic worship, which they renounced and vowed that they would never again return to its ways, determined to 'hold fast the profession of their faith, and the true religion through the grace of God without wavering, and persevere immovably in it unto the end'. Thousands were reclaimed to the gospel in other provinces in France. In our western world we are perhaps surprised by the emphasis of the ministry of Brousson, which was that of turning the believers back to a life of suffering for Christ in the face of mortal danger. In this sense his passionate concern was similar to that of Calvin who urged those he called Nicodemites to be separate from Rome and form churches true to biblical principles (RT223). Like Calvin he saw the spiritual danger to individuals and the cause of the gospel in France that compromise would bring.

Brousson was against the Huguenots taking military retaliation against the dragoons and had to urge his zealous friend, François Vivens, to consider that 'the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, and that he should use none other sword but the sword of the Spirit...that is to say the gospel shall be preached with a spirit of sweetness and love, and it will be by this means that God will convert the nations and will perfectly set up his kingdom in the whole world.'

The saintly Brousson was protected from the powerful enemies that opposed him until 1698 when he was arrested and within a few days martyred at Montpellier on November 4th. He was executed before a crowd of perhaps twenty thousand people. As he made his way through the distraught crowd to the scaffold, he was observed to be prayerful, mild, self-composed and courageous.

Phenomena, Retaliation and Restoration of Discipline

From 1685 some Protestants in the south of France heard angelic voices singing Psalms in the middle of the night and on other occasions the sounds of drums and trumpets associated with armed marching men. Prophets and

prophetesses spoke about the destruction of the enemies of God and the restoration of the church. One of the prophets, a young baker by the name of Jean Cavalier, became the leader of the armed struggle of a group called the 'Camisards' against the King's forces. Louis sent his best general, Marshal de Villars, against the Camisards and peace was made in 1704. Cavalier was allowed to leave France with a hundred of his men and eventually went to England and finished up as Governor of Jersey. This was the last armed struggle of the Huguenots. It did have the effect of making the authorities less aggressive in their intimidation of believers.

Meanwhile in the midst of all the confusion caused by persecution, prophets and untrained, untaught exhorters, many of whom were women, God was raising up a leader. His name was Antoine Court who was born in 1695 in the village of Villeneuve-de-Berg in Ardèche. He read some old evangelical books including one by Richard Baxter. His mother took him to a meeting of prophetesses where he read the Scriptures and led in prayer. He became an itinerant preacher at the age of seventeen and quickly came to suspect the 'inspired' persons were 'dupes of their own zeal and credulity'. He decided that the small communities of believers should be organised into properly constituted churches. At the age of about twenty he turned a secret meeting of preachers into a synod, ordaining two elders. This synod at Monoblet (Gard) insisted that Scripture should be the sole rule of faith, that preachers should discipline each other and that women preachers should not be permitted. 'Pretended' revelations were condemned at the synod. The first Protestant church to be organised after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was in this village of Monoblet. Court and his friend Corteiz contacted a minister called Jacques Roger and they ordained elders wherever possible. Corteiz went to Zürich and was ordained and on his return to France officially ordained Court. The latter circulated the news to Protestants in various parts of Europe that the reorganisation of the church in France was in progress. An appeal for aid for student pastors and prisoners was made to Protestants in other countries through the 'deputy-general to the Protestant powers' called du Plan. He travelled widely advertising these needs.

In 1724 Louis XV prohibited the secret exercise of Reformed religion and imposed severe penalties, particularly against pastors. The persecutions had limited effect in suppressing the church in the wilderness and a secret national synod was held in 1726. New churches continued to be founded under the care of ministers who risked death if they were discovered by the authorities. The congregations of these churches were not immune to persecution and risked imprisonment or being sent to the galleys. Antoine Court did not encourage violent resistance to the authorities but during this period the churches started to hold baptisms (infant) and marriage ceremonies, even though these had no

legal significance in a country which officially held that all citizens were Catholic. Certificates of Protestant baptisms and marriages were issued and a register of these kept by an elder in each church.

A price was set on the life of Court and in 1730 he fled to Lausanne in Switzerland. With the aid of some of the Protestant princes he established a theological seminary called 'Le Séminaire de Lausanne' and stayed there for the remaining thirty years of his life. This college sent pastors into France for many years and the churches grew. In 1744 Court was present at a meeting of ten thousand people. Court was active in promoting sound church growth and had a comprehensive grasp of the history of Protestantism. He planned to write an account of this but died in 1760. However many of his collected manuscripts have been preserved in the public library in Geneva.

Growth of freethinking and rationalism

In the midst of these helpful developments in the French Reformed Church, there were also movements arising among French thinkers that ran counter to biblical principles and were destructive of spiritual life. Their influence has filtered down to modern times. Antoine Court had a son who was a Protestant pastor for a time and this man, Antoine Court de Gébelin (c.1719 - 1784) after his ordination moved into France in 1754. He continued to profess to be a Protestant and advocated freedom of conscience, taking an interest in a wide range of academic studies. In particular he studied and wrote on the development of language, publishing *Natural History of the Word, or a sketch of the origins of language and of universal grammar* in 1776. His interest was drawn to Tarot cards and he has been described as the 'grandfather of much of modern occultism'. His book *The Primitive World, Analysed and Compared to the Modern World* included an essay on Tarot cards. He was involved in the Freemasonry movement and joined the lodge Les Amis Réunis in 1771. He subsequently joined the lodge Les Neuf Sœurs and welcomed Benjamin Franklin as a lodge brother there. He became an interested supporter of American independence as a result of this connection. One of the people that influenced him greatly was the German astrologer and physician Mesmer, and it was this interest in Mesmer's theories of animal magnetism that led to his death from an electrically induced heart attack. The sons of pastors do not necessarily follow their fathers' faith.

Growth in acceptability of Protestants in France

Paul Rabaut (1718-1794) was destined to become the successor of Antoine Court in leading the newly organised French Reformed Church. In 1738 he was recognised as a preacher by the Synod of Languedoc and in 1740 went to

the seminary at Lausanne founded by Court in order to complete his studies. In 1741 he became the pastor at Nîmes and was vice-president of the general synod in 1744. Between 1745 and 1752 he was forced into hiding, and after a brief respite a price was placed upon his head in 1753. Periods of persecution and toleration followed up to 1760. By this time French Protestantism became well established and Rabaut, his son Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Etienne (1743-1793) and Court de Gébelin worked hard for its recognition by the law and government. One major reason for this was that although the elders of the churches had registered marriages and baptisms, the government refused to acknowledge the validity of the marriages.

During the 1760s and 1770s two serious miscarriages of justice occurred. One involved a Protestant merchant called Jean Calas who was accused of murdering his son because he became a Catholic. Calas was executed for this in 1762, but later it was found out that the depressive son had taken his own life. The philosopher Voltaire investigated the case and through his influence Calas was cleared posthumously. Voltaire also intervened when Pierre-Paul Sirven, a Protestant at Castres, was accused of drowning his daughter. The result was the acquittal of Sirven. By 1775 many magistrates had begun to help the beleaguered Protestants and the last Protestant prisoners were set free in that year. Chapels, called 'houses of prayer', were built, though in some cases they were pulled down. Despite this it is not clear how healthy the churches were. Frank Orna-Ornstein maintains that towards the end of the eighteenth century the churches were becoming more philosophical than Christian.

France supported the Americans in their War of Independence and sent troops to America. The character of Washington impressed General Lafayette and when he returned to France he strove to obtain greater liberties for the Protestants. Lafayette made contact with Rabaut and his son Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Etienne and the latter was sent to Paris to confer with the secretary of state, Malesherbes. The eventual outcome of this was that Louis XVI signed an edict of tolerance in 1787. This edict allowed Protestants to be married by a magistrate and marriages conducted by the Reformed Church over the previous fifty years were legalised. Protestants were legally allowed to be traders and have professions. However, they were not allowed to have official posts in the government.

The violent reaction to centuries of oppression

The violent French Revolution started in 1789 with a quest for an acceptable constitution. In 1791 Protestants were delighted when the National Assembly decreed that everyone should observe the form of worship to which they were

attached. A key figure in working for this arrangement was Rabaut Saint-Etienne who was by this time president of the Assembly. The Revolution was complex and parties were divided. There was a series of events which involved constitutional chaos, war and threat of war, the deaths of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette and eventually the reign of terror, ushered in by Robespierre in which possibly up to 40,000 were to die by the guillotine. Robespierre was a deist and worked for the 'salvation of the people'. His idea of virtue was a morally united people. Throughout his *Report on the Principles of Political Morality* Robespierre in his thinking showed that there was not enough that could be done fast enough to push the Revolution forward, and that the only rational way to do that was to defend it on all fronts. The *Report* did not merely call for blood but also expounded many of the original ideas of the 1789 Revolution, such as political equality, suffrage, and abolition of privilege.

However, a secular, atheistic movement gained the ascendancy. This was initially a reaction against the Catholic Church that was seen to be too wealthy and many had associated it with previous cruelty against Protestants. The extremist Jacques Hébert lashed out against anything that he perceived as being Christian. He was responsible for installing a programme of dechristianization in France. This programme involved the deportation of clergy and the condemnation of many of them to death. Churches were closed, religious monuments destroyed and public and private worship, along with religious education were outlawed. A law passed in 1793 made all suspected priests and all persons who harboured them liable to death on sight. The climax of this secular movement was reached with the celebration of the goddess 'Reason' in Notre-Dame Cathedral on 10 November. Similar celebrations took place in a carnival atmosphere in other parts of the country. During this period Rabaut Saint-Etienne, a political moderate, was sent to the guillotine in Paris. His father who insisted on being pastor to his people in Nîmes was sent to prison for seven weeks along with his two brothers. He died shortly after his release.

In 1795 churches and state were declared separate and each town was allowed one place of worship to be shared between Protestants and Catholics. The Protestants did not always accept this arrangement.

Conclusion

As the Eighteenth century reached its conclusion the conditions for evangelicals in France improved. The main focus of attack upon the purity of the churches shifted from the superstitious beliefs of Catholicism to the

scepticism of the rationalists. The deadening effect of the latter infected the churches, but different superstitious beliefs started to infiltrate France as illustrated by the activities of Antoine Court de Gébelin. The following century was to see more freedom of worship and even revival and some missionary outreach into parts of Africa, but fragmentation of evangelicalism was to occur. The eighteenth century closed in violence and the beginning of the nineteenth century was dominated by Napoleon. He had an immense impact upon the whole of life in France and much of Europe. Ripples from the Revolution and its aftermath spread out widely from France even into North America. Catholic priests who fled from the carnage appeared in New France. Meanwhile the Catholic Church that remained in France was subdued, having lost much of its power. A great watershed had occurred and the changes in the churches that emerged after these momentous years will occupy our attention in the future as we move forwards in an attempt to understand the religious condition of the Francophone world of today.

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