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Reformed Pastoral Theology under the Cross: John Quick and Claude Brousson

Dr Alan Clifford, who recently joined our panel of editorial advisers, is well known both as a student of the Reformation and its theology and also as an advocate of Reformed theology in the contemporary church. These two interests blend in a study of a little known Huguenot pastor.

I.

The year 1992 provided a feast of anniversaries: we remembered the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus (1492) and the commencement of the English Civil War (1642). Of more immediate interest to evangelical Christians was William Carey's zealous involvement in the dawn of modern missions (1792) and the home-call of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1892). If the importance of such events is incontestable, how can the publication of a little-known book justify our attention? For the friends of the Reformed Faith, its noble and evocative title-page surely explains why: 'SYNODICON IN GALLIA REFORMATA: or the Acts, Decisions, Decrees, and Canons of those famous National Councils of the Reformed Churches in France . . . Being a most faithful and impartial history of the rise, growth, perfection and decay of the Reformation in that kingdom, with its fatal catastrophe upon the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in the year 1685 . . . A record of very many illustrious events of divine providence relating to those churches . . . The whole collected and composed out of original manuscript acts of those renowned Synods . . . A work never before extant in any language . . . In Two Volumes . . . by John Quick, Minister of the Gospel in London . . . (1692)'.¹

¹ The author's claim 'A work never before extant in any language' is noteworthy. The French 'edition' of the *Synodicon* was a retranslation of Quick's work into French, i.e. Jean Aymon, *Tous les synodes nationaux des églises réformées de France* (The Hague, 1710). Unlike Aymon, Quick used hitherto unpublished source material; he collated and translated French MSS borrowed from Huguenot refugees (see *Synodicon*, i, pp. clxiff).

The author of these fascinating folios was a little-known Presbyterian minister from the west of England. John Quick² was born at Plymouth in 1636 and died in London in 1706. After graduating at Oxford in 1657 he was ordained at Ermington in Devon in 1659. Along with his illustrious Puritan brethren—a more famous contemporary John Flavel (1628–91) ministered at nearby Dartmouth—Quick exercised a faithful and courageous ministry. He served at Kingsbridge with Churchstow and then at Brixton. Undeterred by the Act of Uniformity (1662), he continued to preach. He was arrested during the Lord's Day morning worship on 13 December 1663 and imprisoned at Exeter. At his trial, he was nearly acquitted on a technicality. However, since he refused to give up preaching, he was sent to prison. After suffering for a further eight weeks, he was liberated by Sir Matthew Hale. The Bishop of Exeter, Seth Ward, then prosecuted Quick for preaching to the prisoners but the Lord's servant was acquitted, his unashamed 'guilt' notwithstanding!

Charles II's Indulgence of 1672 brought a brief respite for the persecuted Puritan brotherhood. Quick was licensed to preach at Plymouth. When restrictions were imposed again the following year, he was imprisoned for three months with other nonconformists at the Marshalsea prison in Plymouth. On his release, Quick left the west of England for London. He then travelled to Holland where he became a minister to the English church at Middleburg in 1679. Returning to London two years later, Quick gathered a Presbyterian congregation in a small meeting house in Middlesex Court, Bartholomew Close, Smithfield. On the eve of easier times, his London ministry—'successful to the conversion of many', says Dr Edmund Calamy³—was relatively undisturbed; the 'Glorious Revolution' and the Toleration Act of 1688–9 eventually brought persecution to an end. Known as 'a serious, good preacher' with a 'great facility and freedom in prayer',⁴ John Quick continued to serve his people faithfully until his death on 29 April 1706. His wife Elizabeth died in 1708. Their only daughter became the wife of Dr John Evans (1680?–1730) who completed the commentary on the Epistle to the Romans in Matthew Henry's immortal *Exposition*.⁵

² For Quick, see *Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1885–1900).

³ *An Account of the Ministers . . . Ejected or Silenced after the Restoration in 1660*, 2nd edition (London, 1713), ii. 333.

⁴ *Ibid.* 333.

⁵ J. B. Williams, *Memoirs of . . . the Revd Matthew Henry* (London, 1828; fac. rep. Edinburgh, 1974), 308.

Consistent with his personal courage and pastoral gifts, John Quick combined scholarship with zeal for the truth. The blending of these qualities explains his authorship of the *Synodicon in Gallia Reformata*. During his early ministry and subsequently, he became acquainted with the Huguenot refugees, some of whom landed at his native Plymouth from La Rochelle in 1681—the year the dreadful ‘dragonnades’ began. Accordingly, writes Calamy, Quick ‘was very compassionate to those in distress; at a great deal of pains and expense for the relief of the poor French Protestants, and his house and purse were almost ever open to them. He was a perfect master of their language, and had a peculiar respect for their churches, upon the account of their sound doctrine and useful discipline, and the noble testimony which they bore to religion by their sufferings’.⁶

Quick’s interest in the Huguenots did not end with the *Synodicon*. Besides a few published sermons of his own, he also prepared for publication a selection of fifty brief (some quite lengthy) biographies of eminent pastors, theologians and martyrs of the French Reformed Church, the *Icones Sacrae Gallicanae*.⁷ He also produced a similar selection of twenty Puritans, the *Icones Sacrae Anglicanae*.⁸ These ambitious ventures failed with the death in 1700 of William Russell, Duke of Bedford (the dedicatee of the *Synodicon*) who had offered to assist with the cost. Advancing illness also prevented Quick from collecting subscriptions for the work.⁹ Following the author’s death,

⁶ Calamy, *op. cit.* 333–4. ‘He was . . . exceeding compassionate to the distressed and laid out his pains and estate too very largely, especially to the banished French, for which nation he had a peculiar respect on the account of their sound doctrine, gospel-discipline, fixed adherence to Christ, and the kindness he had found among them in former times . . .’ (Daniel Williams, *A Funeral Sermon . . . of the Reverend Mr John Quick* (London, 1706), 36).

⁷ For the complete list, see *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society*, 2 (London, 1887–88), 257–9.

⁸ See A. H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England* (London, 1889), 468. In June 1694, Quick approached Matthew Henry for biographical material for his project. In a letter to his ‘venerable father’, dated 26 June, Henry wrote: ‘Last Friday, Mr Quick, of London, Minister, author of the *Synodicon*, came to my house, recommended to me by Sir Henry Ashurst. He tells me he hath now under hand a book which he calls *Icones*, intending an account of the lives of eminent ministers, our own and foreigners, never yet written: he casts for four volumes in folio, and obligeth me to furnish him with what memoirs I can get concerning any in this country. I refer further talk of it till I can see you’ (J. B. Williams, *op. cit.* 238).

⁹ See ‘Translated Abstracts from the Act Book of the Consistory of the Threadneedle Street [French] Church, 1693–1708’, entry for 6 March 1702–3: ‘M. Quick returned the 25s paid him as subscription for the book called *Icones*, which he proposed to give to the public, his indisposition compelling him to refrain from printing it’ (*Proceedings* 7 (1901–4), 40).

the manuscript volumes were eventually deposited at Dr Williams's Library in London.¹⁰

This brings us to the final biography in the French *Icones*, that of the famous martyr Claude Brousson.¹¹ Born at Nîmes in 1647, Brousson was trained for the bar, serving eventually as an advocate at Toulouse. He frequently defended Protestants with great eloquence against the ever worsening legal enactments issued against them by the Jesuit-inspired policies of King Louis XIV. His life and freedom threatened by the Roman Catholic authorities, Brousson fled to Lausanne. With their temples demolished and the flocks scattered, the mounting persecutions of Reformed believers following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 filled him with distress. After visiting Berlin and Amsterdam to arouse support for the persecuted—and in the face of antagonism from refugee pastors he had criticized for leaving their flocks, Brousson felt the call of God to return to France, not as a lawyer but as a pastor. Returning to the Cévennes in the summer of 1689, he commenced one of the most courageous and sacrificial ministries in the history of the Christian church. His heart bled with Christ-like compassion for pastorless souls who, under the most diabolical pressures of persecution had, in considerable numbers, abjured their faith.¹²

Living with constant danger, exhaustion, deprivation and the discomforts of cave and forest-dwelling in climatic extremes, Brousson's itinerant ministry to the 'churches of the desert' was phenomenal by apostolic standards. Interrupted by recuperative and support-raising visits to Switzerland, Germany and England, and a brief pastorate in Holland, Brousson's labours ended during his third and final visit to France which began in August 1697. Leaving his family at the Hague, the fears of his tearful wife were now to be realised. He was betrayed and arrested near Pau in south-western France and imprisoned in the Citadel at Montpellier on 30 October

¹⁰ Due to the decayed condition of the originals, a two-volume 19th century transcription of the *Icones* is accessible to readers at the library. The transcriber was the Revd Hugh Hutton, MA (d. 1871), minister of Churchgate Street Presbyterian Church, Bury St Edmunds (see John Browne, *History of Congregationalism . . . in Norfolk and Suffolk* (London, 1877), 421). The work occupied 3 years (1862–5) for which the princely sum of £150 was paid. I am grateful to the Librarian, Mr John Creasey for permission to quote from the *Quick MSS*, 38.39 (50), hereafter given as ISG.

¹¹ See Samuel Smiles, *The Huguenots in France* (London, 1875), 30ff; Richard Heath, *The Reformation in France* (London, 1888), 55ff; Appendix to John Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs*, ed. William Bramley-Moore (London, n.d.), 619ff.

¹² See Philippe Joutard, 'The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes: End or Renewal of French Protestantism?' in *International Calvinism 1541–1715*, ed. M. Prestwich (Oxford, 1985), 339ff.

1698. His execution on 4 November proved a glorious demonstration of the all-sufficient grace of God. After the martyrdom of this remarkable servant of Christ, the Montpellier executioner declared, 'I have put to death two hundred convicts, but none have ever made me tremble like M. Brousson.'¹³

John Quick's biography of Claude Brousson is noteworthy in several respects, not least because in 1694 a personal meeting took place between author and subject during Brousson's visit to England. Writing in 1700, Quick says of his Huguenot hero:

I had the honour of his acquaintance and was favoured with a conversation with him in my house [in Bunhill Fields] about seven years ago, when he was in London, which lasted five good hours. The time seemed very short unto me, that I was blessed with such a guest . . . We spent the time in Christian conference and discourse . . . Not a vain or idle word dropped from his mouth. He seemed an angel in a human body, who was not content to go to heaven alone, but would carry his friends, countrymen and strangers thither together with him also.¹⁴

Quick's epic account of Brousson's heroic ministry must rank with the most vivid and inspiring Christian literature ever written. From this little known MS material,¹⁵ the following carefully chosen extracts portray Brousson's personal godliness, pastoral zeal and sacrificial dedication to the cause of Christ in the midst of the most horrific, ruthless and brutal persecution of the period. Despite the most determined opposition, his activities and experiences remain unique examples of the all-sufficient and sustaining grace of the living God.

II.

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. Furthermore, at a time when English Nonconformity was becoming notorious for doctrinal decay and moribund spirituality, Brousson displayed the zeal of purer times. Fifty years before the Methodist Revival, Brousson's itinerant activities anticipated those of Whitefield and the Wesleys, the Huguenot's being conducted in far more hostile conditions. John Quick continues the story:

In the Cévennes and Lower Languedoc . . . there were quartered . . .

¹³ Richard Heath, *op. cit.* 61.

¹⁴ ISG 710.

¹⁵ See n.10.

several regiments of dragoons who rode up and down night and day to hinder all religious meetings; and yet notwithstanding all their pains, subtlety and malice, they were both very frequent and numerous. Every night there was one or more of these assemblies celebrated for divine service; for ordinarily they met at midnight. M. Brousson the first two years of his ministry held very many of them, at least three or four every week, till by the unseasonableness of the time (which in nature was designed for rest) and the overstraining of his lungs in speaking, he quite broke his health, and contracted such a soreness in his breast, as he could never be rid of it to his dying day.

The desolation of the people of God was deplorable. This grieved his very soul. For they being as sheep without a shepherd were every moment exposed to the fury and malice of those evening wolves and ravening bears, the idolatrous priests of the Romish synagogue who shewed them no mercy, but most insatiably worried and devoured them. When he reposed himself a little while, he was necessitated to range over a wild and spacious country to exercise in other assemblies. Sometimes the meetings were nearer, other times at farther distance, according as they could find a conveniency to be together.

Before he could tarry at one place a week, he was necessitated upon times to preach ten, twelve, fifteen and once five and twenty sermons at these meetings in the space of eight days. These were indeed the labours of a true apostle of our Lord. For a fortnight together he hath preached every other night; transporting himself that evening in which he did not preach unto the next place appointed for that service. At ordinary meetings he was obliged to speak three hours, and in those of them that the Lord's Supper was administered, no less than four or four and a half. The most of which time was spent in prayer, because of the doleful calamities of God's poor Zion in France. One thing, though it much comforted him, was yet no mean affliction to him, and a mighty prejudice unto his voice. It was this; he was necessitated to raise all the psalms, and to guide all the people himself, that they might sing musically. And the tunes of the French Psalms as they are most sweet and melodious,¹⁶ so many of them are of very high and lofty notes, to the true

¹⁶ Apart from the 'Old 100th' and 'Old 124th' psalm tunes, the music of the French (Genevan) Psalter is little-known in the English-speaking world. Millar Patrick's interesting verdict coincides with Quick's observation: '... we may justly say of the music of this Psalter, "Here is richness": no other comes near it in either poetic or musical accomplishment and interest. All subsequent metrical Psalters are based upon it, and though the gulf dividing them is sometimes of the widest, derive from it much of their musical interest' (*Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody*, (Oxford, 1949), 20). For all their famed emotional power, the later tunes of Methodism do not compare with the Genevan tunes for depth, grandeur or tenderness. Of the great variety of stanza-forms and rhyme groups, Patrick also says, 'There is nothing in other Psalters to compare with this deliberate ingenuity in using every kind of structural device to render impossible the monotony so characteristic of the Psalters used in England, Scotland and America' (*Ibid.* 19). Sir Richard Terry's similarly enthusiastic remarks on Calvin's 1539 Strasbourg

singing of which there is required sound lungs, and a clear strong voice. This made him strain his lungs, and put his voice and breast upon the rack. But he was the servant of God and his Church, and he valued not his health, nor counted his life dear unto him, so that he might serve and save souls, fulfil the ministry unto which he was called, and finish his course with joy.

After the sermons were ended, he usually made a plain and familiar discourse, in which he exhorted those who by reason of the violence of temptation, and frailty of human nature had fallen from their holy profession, to repent heartily and enter the bosom of the church unfeignedly, and to renounce all the reigning sins of this present age, and the abominations of unclean Babylon, and to swear allegiance and fidelity unto God, and to keep his commandments diligently for the future. And the Lord crowned this exercise with a rare and wonderful blessing. For I remember in those five hours conversation with him in my house, he told me that in one part only of one of the western provinces of France, no fewer than five thousand persons kneeling down upon the bare ground with streaming tears, deep sighs and heart cutting groans, after such familiar exhortations of his, did most bitterly lament their revolt from our holy religion, and with eyes and hands lifted up to heaven did call God to witness upon their souls that they renounced the Romish faith, worship and discipline, that they would never any more have or hold communion with that idolatrous antichristian synagogue, that they would never bow the knee to Baal more, never go to mass, come what there would of it, and that they would 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. This I say was in only one part of a province. But he had reclaimed some thousands more in other provinces. So mighty was the power and presence of God with him in his ministry. He never baptized infants in the larger but lesser assemblies.

Over and besides these labours in their solemn meetings, M. Brousson spent three hours every day in prayer, the first in the morning, the second at three in the afternoon, the third in the evening, for the comfort of those families where he stopped or lodged, as he travelled from one place unto another, or that took upon them the care of his person, and watched for his preservation, or of the faithful who assisted at these holy exercises. He most usually accompanied these prayers with a most lively exhortation unto those who were present at them. He preached twice every Lord's Day, in the morning and afternoon; besides he repeated his sermons unto

Psalter apply equally to the complete Genevan Psalter of 1562: 'Apart from the dignity and beauty of the melodies here preserved, another striking feature of the book is the wealth and variety of its metres . . . our English Psalters groan under the weight of the monotonous "Ballad Metre" . . . ' (*Calvin's First Psalter*, (London, 1932), p. vii). Evidence suggests also that the French psalms follow the rhythmic patterns of the original Hebrew far more than any other psalter does. The Genevan Psalter is made available in English by the Canadian Reformed Churches; see *Book of Praise, Anglo-Genevan Psalter* (Revised Edition), Premier Printing, (Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1987).

such of the faithful, as knowing the place of his retreat, would visit him in the evening.

Nor did he preach the Gospel by word of mouth but did it also by writing.¹⁷ For in those nights in which there were no assemblies, he sat up transcribing copies of his sermons which he sent abroad among the godly, and the subject matter of which were the most important points of Christianity, such as were of indispensable necessity to be known that we might be saved . . . All his sermons were written in a becoming plainness, suited to the capacity of his auditors and in the divine style of the Sacred Scripture, in the heavenly language which the Holy Ghost taught the divinely inspired prophets, evangelists and apostles to hand down unto us their infallible oracles, books, gospels and epistles. So that through the grace of God he delivered the celestial doctrine in its natural simplicity, purity and evidence: whereby that poor people were wonderfully edified. These little sermons of his took with them most mightily, and 'twas who could purchase them, especially in those places where there were no assemblies nor ministers. To this purpose he always carried with him a little desk to write upon, and which he placed upon his knees when he wrote, and the godly in the Cévennes and Lower Languedoc called 'the table in the wilderness'. So that when his impaired health, and the infernal rage of his enemies hindered and took him off from preaching in the wilderness meetings, yet God granted him this consolation that by his written sermons he preached louder, and was heard at a farther distance, than if he had uttered them before a particular congregation.

M. Brousson also did at several reprises contend by other writings in defense of the truth. These were the results of his spare hours, when against his will he had an extraordinary vacation. These he dispatched unto the court at Versailles. Such was his *Apology for the Project of the Reformed in France, and for those other Servants of God who preached and assembled to worship God in that forlorn kingdom*.¹⁸ But God the most righteous judge as he hardened Pharaoh and the heart of the Egyptians his subjects, so did God harden the heart of the French king, of

¹⁷ Quick supplies this bibliographical information:

'The works of M. Brousson in print that I have seen are these:

(1) *Relation Sommaire des Merveilles que Dieu fait en France dans les Cévennes et dans le Languedoc*, printed in the year 1694 in 12^o.

(2) *Estat des Réformés en France*: printed at the Hague in 1685. It consists of 3 parts—but the 3rd part hath this title, *Apologie Projet des Réformés en France*. Its a pretty thick Octavo, and small and close print, and therefore hath multum in parvo.

(3) A volume of sermons, in 8^o. But there be other works of his in manuscript, which argue his excellent learning, judgement and piety. He was a man of indefatigable industry, and could never be idle. He loved to be at work, and it was his very life. The zeal of God's house did eat him up' (ISG 794-5).

For a recent sermon extract in English, see Janet Glenn Grey, *The French Huguenots, Anatomy of Courage* (Grand Rapids, 1981), 267.

¹⁸ See n.17.

the sycophants his counsellors, and of his sodomitical clergy, so that they would not let the Protestants go free to serve and worship Him, nor to pay unto the Divine Majesty those homages which are due unto Him from men and angels. Yea the task of bricks hath been since doubled and trebled, as the zealous affection of His poor people augmented to follow him in the wilderness there to adore and hold communion with Him. Hence they turned every stone, and tried all kinds of experiments utterly to destroy those few ministers who laboured to instruct and comfort them.

Over and above those five regiments of dragoons before mentioned maintained and dispersed by the clergy in the Cévennes and Lower Languedoc to keep the good people from worshipping God according to His appointments, there were also several garrisons in those two provinces in the forts of Ale//js, St Hippolyte and at Nîmes. These made it their incessant business either to seize upon or massacre the poor ministers of the word, but their principal aim was at [François] Vivens and Brousson. So that in the year 1691, an ordinance was published in which they promised 5000 livres to him or them, that should take either of these servants of God alive or dead. Thus had anyone liberty to murder them, and those assassins that should make them away were sure of a rich reward from the Government . . .¹⁹

III.

Like the English Puritans and the Scottish Covenanters, the French Huguenots also had their episodes of military conflict. Whether or not Christians should ever resort to the sword in the face of persecution and despotism is a question of timeless importance. In an atmosphere of relentless provocation, graphically related by Quick, Brousson's teaching and example possess a unique challenge. Its relevance to current discussion cannot be ignored:

But the faithful in the Cévennes being most cruelly oppressed, as yet they are to this very day [1700], it was impossible but that some persons transported with a blind zeal or by the motions of their natural choler which they could not always master, should break out into intemperate actions or expressions, especially when as they saw their nearest relations murdered before their faces without any legal trial, only for serving God. M. Brousson did not approve of such transports and restrained them to the utmost of his power. But sometimes he had to do with men whose spirits were so embittered by reason of those manifold evils they suffered that they grew stark desperate. They would complain, and they had too just and too much ground to complain, that the Edicts most religiously sworn to them were violated, all Treaties of Pacification rescinded, that the most barbarous hostilities were exercised towards the

¹⁹ ISG 732-38.

Reformed, that they were against their consciences compelled to abjure the true religion by which they hoped for salvation. They were cruelly tortured in their bodies, plundered of their goods, racked in their consciences, and all for no crime in the least but this, that they kept the commandments of God and therefore they were as sheep devoted to the slaughter and massacred every day.

In Poitou, in Lower Languedoc, in the Cévennes, [the dragoons] had perpetrated already numberless massacres. And if they had not committed murders enough upon Protestants, they fell foul again upon them. One of the ladies of Belcastell received a deep wound in her head with a cutlass. Many of the faithful were killed at a meeting nigh unto St Germain in the Cévennes and a greater number of them wounded, and divers attempting to save themselves were drowned. This was in June 1686. The July following, a great multitude of them as they were at the worship of God about two leagues from Uzès were most of them slaughtered in the very place. The popish dragoons mingled their blood with their sacrifices. Some of both sexes were taken and hanged up immediately. In October of the same year, 40 persons more for the same heinous crime in meeting together to call upon God were all of them shot dead at Le Vigan in the Cévennes.²⁰ In the month of February 1689, no fewer than 300 souls were butchered in the place of meeting which was on another mountain of Vivarais, and they cut the throats of about 50 more in the Vaunage. It was that monster of a man (and surely the African monsters were more humane than he) the Intendant Bâville that did by express orders enjoin these unheard of murders. His dragoons soaked in blood spared neither sex or age, but slew all, young, old, men, women and sucking children indifferently. When the murderers came and assaulted these innocent lambs, they were all at prayer, upon their knees, with their eyes and hands lifted up to heaven; and in this very posture did they kill them either with their carbines or sabres. Yea many of them did open their own breasts voluntarily to receive the mortal shot or blow from them, rather than they would abjure their religion.

One of these dragoons, a worthy apostle of that old red dragon murdered a poor woman, whose little infant was sucking at her breast; and coming up to her, the poor babe smiling upon him held out its pretty hand to play with him. But instead of playing with it, this devil incarnate stabbeth this poor lamb with his bayonet into the heart, and holding it up, crieth unto his comrade, 'See, see', saith he, 'how this frog which I have stuck yet sprawleth!' When the Intendant Bâville was informed of this horrible murder, he takes no notice of it, but only asked the murderer whether the woman had any other children. And he answering yes, 'Well', quoth he, "'tis so much the worse for thee. For one time or other they will avenge their mother's death upon thee . . .'

Had these poor Christians the patience of angels, they could hardly have born up without resenting of such barbarous inhumanities. Yea,

²⁰ This kind of atrocity is well documented in local histories. See Pierre Gorlier, *Le Vigan: A Travers les Siècles* (rep. Anduze, 1981), 140.

although they found any of the faithful quiet at home, nor at any of these meetings, if they had not their throats cut, yet they were robbed and spoiled of all their goods, their homes demolished, their families dissipated, and the men, as if they had been the most incorrigible villains in nature were condemned unto the galleys. These violences, these murders and massacres made many very sober persons contrary to their former resolutions to grow impatient.²¹

Now though the injustice and cruelty of these bloody persecutions exceeded all bounds, yet M. Brousson could not approve of [François Vivens' violent retaliation against the dragoons] which proceeded from a mistaken and immoderate zeal.²² His enemies proclaimed open war against him, and he bade defiance unto them. M. Brousson did frequently represent unto him, 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. This very doctrine did M. Brousson oftentimes inculcate unto his brother Vivens and to some other Protestants who were acted by the same spirit of fire, zeal and indignation.²³

IV.

Much of Reformed theology's oft-lamented reputation for sterile orthodoxy has its origins in the seventeenth century. Such cerebralism, so it is argued, justified the warmth and 'enthusiasm' of the Methodist Revival. According to Quick's account, Brousson was far removed from the Dutch and Anglo-Saxon Reformed stereotype. When clinically accurate theology would have been meagre sustenance indeed, Brousson's experiences of the Holy Spirit reveal a higher dimension. He was favoured with an extraordinary assurance, the details of which invite a comparison with the experiences enjoyed by eighteenth century Methodists in far less threatening circumstances:

Now although M. Brousson was like unto a pelican in the wilderness and an owl in the desert, and forced to lurk in caves and dens of the earth, yet was he continually pursued by his enemies. Which way soever he turned his head he could see nothing else but death before him, yea that death which was most cruel. For the Government was much more exasperated against him than against all the other servants of God. But he was wonderfully supported by divine grace. A thousand times hath he

²¹ ISG 741-44.

²² See Philippe Joutard, *op. cit.* 362.

²³ ISG 745-47.

concluded with himself 'All way of escape faileth, I shall certainly now be taken, I cannot but fall into the hands of these Sauls.' Infinite times hath he looked martyrdom in the face, and he hath resigned up his soul to God as if the sentence of death were the very next moment to be executed upon him.

Sometimes the Lord hath dawned in with a beam of hope into his heart, and then he would persuade himself that God would never suffer him to fall into his enemy's hands, that He would never sell nor deliver him up to those cruel oppressors, that thirsted for his blood, and prepared for him the most exquisite and unheard of torments. But a while after, he fell into his old fears, darkness and terrible alarms. Insomuch that it was even with him as with Job and David, he was scared with visions and terrified with dreams. Yet recollecting himself and the carriage of divine providence towards him, he would say unto his soul, 'Why art thou cast down O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope still in God, who is the light of thy countenance and thy God. My life is in His hands. If He will have me die, 'tis not all the world can hinder it. And if I must die, 'tis better dying in the way of duty than in the neglect of it.' Whereupon he went and preached the Gospel in those places where he had promised. And the danger was visible, yet the wisdom and mercy of God safeguarded him. He was in the midst of a burning furnace which was heated against him seven times hotter than usual, but the providence of God did most miraculously preserve him . . .²⁴

Now and then M. Brousson might get a soft bed at Nîmes, but his ordinary lodging was in the woods, on the mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. He was royally accommodated when he had sweet fresh straw; at other times he must be contented to lie on a dunghill, or upon fagots, to sleep under a tree, under bushes, in the clefts of rocks, and under ground in holes of the earth. In the summer he was consumed with the burning heat of the sun. In the winter he was almost frozen to death upon the cold mountains of ice and snow, not daring to kindle a fire to warm him for fear the smoke or light thereof should discover him, nor durst he get out of his hiding place to enjoy the comfort of the warm sun lest he should be seen by his enemies and false brethren. Many times hath he been pinched with hunger, wanting food to sustain nature, and was fainting away for want of drink. The fatigues that he has endured have brought him so low that he hath been next door to the grave. Wherefore in all those pictures of him which were scattered up and down the kingdom in city and country, in order to his discovery, he was represented as a man of a sallow countenance, tanned with the sun, exceeding thin, and meagre as a skeleton. Yet did none of these things grieve him when he considered that he suffered them in God's service, for His glory and the consolation of his poor people.

And when this poor people considered the calamities and dangers to which he was incessantly exposed in his labours for the salvation of their

²⁴ Ibid. 756-71.

souls, and when they also reflected upon the innocency of his life and that grace of God given him to preach His word in its native simplicity and purity, in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, he never retired from those holy meetings but that several of them would fall upon his neck, kiss him and wish a thousand blessings upon him. Moreover the Lord led him into His banqueting house, displayed the banner of His love over him, made him taste those joys of the Holy Ghost, which are unspeakably sweet, ravishing and full of glory. But he felt those heavenly consolations in his soul mostly when he was preaching or praying in those holy assemblies or administering the Lord's Supper. Then was he stayed with flagons of new wine of the heavenly kingdom; then was he comforted with the apples of the celestial paradise. He was even sick with the love of God, the glories thereof overflowing his feeble nature. Christ's left hand was under his head and His right hand did embrace him.

He had one experience, yet he believed that it was not his own only, but that other servants of God might sense it as well as himself, that although he was environed with armies of enemies, who coursed up and down continually in search of him, yet no sooner was he got into those holy assemblies and had lifted up his heart to God in prayer or had opened his mouth to sing His praises or to preach His word, but that all his carnal servile fears vanished and his mind was as quiet, serene and calm as if he had been in a land of liberty. And he had this great tranquillity of soul whenever he took pen in hand to write in behalf of the truth, for the advancement of God's kingdom and the consolation of His desolate church. He composed also in the midst of these pressing dangers several pieces which are since published and which he sent to Court for the justifying of that doctrine which he preached. This cannot but be wondered at. But God magnified His own glorious power in the weakness of His instrument . . .²⁵

From the year 1692, M. Brousson set up those holy meetings again; but his breast was so very sore that he could only preach but once in seven days. Yet was not the people's zeal allayed during his long indisposition. For that taste they had of the sweet and heavenly comforts of the Holy Ghost, and their fear of losing them, the many copies of his sermons, letters and prayers which he had dispersed among them, which falling into the hands of persons of quality and of estate in the world, it raised up such a flame in their souls after the word of God, that now rich merchants, noble gentlemen, lords and ladies with their families and children, who were formerly lukewarm and indifferent as to religion, were melted into repentance, and frequented constantly and conscientiously these religious meetings. By this means, as two flints clashing together will strike out fire, so the zeal of one Christian fired and inflamed another. Insomuch that the greatest care of Brousson and the other preachers was that their meetings might not be too numerous nor public, lest the faithful should be exposed unto persecution. But the news of these religious assemblies made a very great noise not only in the

²⁵ *Ibid.* 764-65.

Cévennes and Lower Languedoc but in all parts of the kingdom, and the godly were very much edified and confirmed by them.²⁶

V.

No survey of Brousson's life and ministry, however brief, is complete without his martyrdom at Montpellier on 4 November 1698. Quick's account is well attested and profoundly moving:

My author informs me (who was an eye-witness of his martyrdom) that he carried it like a true Christian, of an invincible spirit, one who triumphed over death. There were near twenty-thousand persons present to see him die, most of the nobles of the city and country, besides abundance of foreigners. He prayed earnestly, with his eyes and hands lifted up to heaven all the way as he was going unto execution, nor did he take notice of any person till he came unto the scaffold, his heart and thoughts being wholly taken up with his approaching change. The mildness and courage with which he ascended up the scaffold is not to be expressed. Though as he passed by them the people wept and groaned, bitterly lamenting the hard fate of a person of such eminent merit and piety, yet you might read the inward calmness of his soul in his smiling looks and cheerful countenance.

He gave his watch unto the Captain of the Count of Broglie's Guards and his cloak to one of the Intendant's messengers who had waited upon him during his imprisonment. Upon the scaffold he made a speech unto the people but no one could be edified by it. For the drummers of the Regiment of Guards did all beat an alarm as soon as he began to speak. M. Brousson having ended with his auditors prepareth himself for death. He putteth off his own clothes to his shirt, yielded both his hands and feet to be fastened to the wheel, and whilst they were tying them up, 'Tis a comfort to me', said he, 'that my death hath some resemblance with that of my Lord.' The spokes of the wheels were struck into the rands in form of a St Andrew's cross. Being in this posture they pronounce again his final sentence on him which undoubtedly surprised that vast crowd of auditors, if it did not M. Brousson, for he was thereby ordered to be strangled to death, before he was broken on the wheel. This was an unexpected favour. God doth sometimes mollify the hearts of lions. He would not suffer the bloody papists to let out all their rage and cruelty upon His servant.

The executioner having fastened him, went down the scaffold, and being just under the holy martyr, when he had half strangled him, the [metal bar] brake in his hand, so that M. Brousson came to himself again and fell a praying. The Abbé [Crouzet] hearing him call upon God, came near unto him [to encourage repentance]. M. Brousson seeing him [but rejecting the suggestion] said, 'May God Almighty, sir, reward your great

²⁶ Ibid. 764-5.

charity towards me, and grant us this mercy, that we may see each other's face in Paradise!' These were the last words that he was heard to speak in this world. When he was dead they immediately brake him upon the wheel. He was very much lamented by the sober Papists themselves. And well they might; for if these things be done in the green tree, what will not be done in the dry? A man asked the executioner how M. Brousson died. 'If I durst speak it out,' said he, 'I could say much, but in short, he died a saint, and sealed the truth which he had preached with his heart's blood.' Yea and the Intendant Bâville confessed that he never heard a man talk so excellently as Brousson did . . .

When the news of his martyrdom was brought unto Lausanne in Switzerland, M. Merlat, formerly Pastor of the church of Saintes in France, but then minister in that city, preaching upon this sorrowful occasion, declared so many excellent things concerning this martyr, that the whole congregation burst into tears.²⁷

VI.

Doubtless disappointed at his inability to publish the *Icones*, John Quick must have been further distressed by news from France and especially the Cévennes during his last years. In the aftermath of Brousson's death, the tragic failure of the Camisard insurrection (1702–4)—largely fought on François Vivens' principles—must have seemed like the end of the Reformed churches in France. However, as Quick was departing from this world, God was preparing the 'Huguenot Nehemiah'.²⁸ His name was Antoine Court, born at Villeneuve-de-Berg in 1696. In 1715, the very year Louis XIV died, this teenager from the Vivarais was called of God to revive the Reformed Faith in France. Unlike 'le grand monarque', the God of the Calvinists was not dead! The renewed vision, intrepid labours and organizing genius of Antoine Court were to vindicate everything Claude Brousson had lived and died for—but that is for the equally amazing sequel to a truly glorious though sad and violent story, part of which was first told by 'our English Quick'.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Abstract

The Huguenot pastor Claude Brousson (1647–98) is little known in the English speaking world. His ministry and martyrdom were first documented by an equally little-known English Puritan, John Quick (1636–1706), himself no stranger to persecution. Brousson's

²⁷ Ibid. 791–3.

²⁸ Richard Heath, op. cit. 85.

itinerant labours probably have no parallel in the seventeenth century. At a time when English Nonconformity was becoming moribund, Brousson displayed the zeal of purer times. While Reformed theology's reputation for sterile orthodoxy has its origins in the seventeenth century, Brousson's experiences of the Holy Spirit reveal a higher dimension. Fifty years before Anglo-Saxon Methodism, Brousson's career anticipated those of Whitefield and the Wesleys, the Huguenot's being pursued in far more hostile conditions. Like the English Puritans and the Scottish Covenanters, the French Huguenots had their militant episodes. Seen in the context of cruel persecution, graphically depicted in Quick's little known narrative, Brousson's teaching and example possess a unique challenge for today.