

Reformed Faith and Life

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Dear friends,

A deep social and political crisis

“Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning!” (Eccl. 10:16). *“The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender”.* (Prov. 22:7). While I was travelling from Lyon to Montpellier (South of France) last week, visiting several Protestant communities and getting better acquainted with their lives, practices and challenges, I was reminded of these two Scripture passages from the Old Testament. Why so? The severe social and political crisis currently hitting France, embodied by the movement of the gilets jaunes (yellow vests) hit me as I was driving through highways and round traffic circles. For sure, being met by friendly retirees or young people letting me pass for free through expensive toll booths was not the traumatic experience Parisian shopkeepers had to endure when extremists vandalized and looted their shops during three consecutive weekends. I thought, however, that these Scripture texts exemplify quite well the situation of a country headed by a very young leader who is blissfully unaware of the plight of so many of its citizens. Caught up by his globalist agenda, he follows it regardless of the signs of growing anger and a bitter sense of injustice. Held to ransom by high and controversial taxes (some of them being taxes on taxes!) these people who, for the most part, did not vote for him or his party, have gradually become unable to make a decent living from their hard work or their meagre pension. And in the meantime government officials are widely benefitting from public taxation, voting for themselves increases in salary or privileges...

After repeated eruptions of violence have threatened the very matrix of public order, some dramatic announcements by the president (or were they rather dramatized?) brought to my mind Proverbs 22:7. For what do you do when the State and its princes, finally realizing that social peace is better than chaos, plunge the land deeper into debt in order to finance pledges which they cannot otherwise keep, enslaving that land further to all kinds of money-lenders (countries like Qatar, which has heavily sponsored Islamism)? The crisis is certainly not over, no more than when a doctor prescribes his patient a soft cream to treat a deep wound in order to avoid telling him how severe his condition really is. Most of the time, moral and financial bankruptcy go hand in hand...



Yellow vest protesters at a round traffic circle near the city of Nîmes



They risked the gallows or the galleys if caught by royal troops...



Transmitting the living faith of the dead

My visit to the South took me for three days to the beautiful *Cévennes* region - one of the centers of Reformed faith in France some three hundred years ago, also the seat of unrelenting resistance against the religious persecution by French kings and the Roman Catholic clergy. What an experience to climb a very steep hill and enter a deep cave big enough to hold a thousand people or more, or walk in a remote place with its rocky terrain covered in scrub, both places where the *Huguenots* used to gather in secret in their hundreds to sing the Psalms and to listen to their *prédicants* (ministers). They risked the gallows or the galleys if caught by royal troops... I was quite motivated to be dealing with some of their offspring who have kept the sincere faith of their brave forefathers, with the aim of making John Calvin's works more widely known, in particular his sermons. May God bring back to the Lord Jesus Christ other offspring of the Protestants who love to boast that there are "sons of Abraham" (like Jews in the time of John the Baptist) while they have actually exchanged the faith of their ancestors for a blind trust in their own moral and humanistic ability – yet another form of moral bankruptcy in the sight of the holy One. But may He also bring to saving faith the offspring of those who persecuted the Protestants back then!

A reign of truth, peace and justice

While our reigning princes are plunging the land into further debt, and those who have no money to finish the month will keep demonstrating for decent wages, the call of the prophet of old still resounds for all, including for holders of deceitful riches. This is the only faith that will not be deceived, for it rests on a solid rock: *Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in rich food* (Is. 55:1-2).

And while there is a curse on a land whose king is a child and whose princes arrogantly feast in the morning, that same prophet of old also announced the coming of another child whose scepter would rule with complete truth and justice, delivering his people from all kind of slavery: *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* (Is. 9:6).

In His name

Rev Eric Kayayan



The Rouville cave in the Cévennes region could hold a thousand people

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