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From the editor

Markets and milk

Running out of milk might not seem very exciting.

In our village, there has been a quiet revolution. The village shop was on the market for two years, the owners needing to retire. After failing to sell in a difficult market, they announced that the shop would have to close. The Village Committee decided to take the shop on and run it as a community enterprise. Six months on, it is staffed by volunteers and boasts a great selection of foods and basic items, keeping our village alive at its heart and providing a service to the elderly (our bus service was recently compromised), and a meeting place for parents after the school run. Running out of milk is a good sign, because it shows that the shop is used. The next step is to have a meeting to explore whether the Village can also take on the pub, which has been empty for two years, and run it as a restaurant/café. Last year, on holiday in a remote village in Ayrshire, we found exactly the same thing had happened—a vibrant shop run by the community, offering a book and toy exchange, and wifi for locals to use while having coffee in the small café area.

These examples of a shift from the market to the communal are encouraging, with people taking back some modest control over their local communities and giving time and money to serve a wider purpose. Rather than wringing hands and expecting 'the authorities' to do something, 'we' have done something. These are Kingdom values and to be welcomed and encouraged, and engaged by the church wherever possible.

Readers interested in this issue will be pleased to see three book reviews in this issue—by Bruggemann, Cox, and Welby (the latter being a Lent book)—addressing exactly this question of the market and our faith. I'd be interested to see further theological reflection in *bmj* from your own settings—do contact me.

Don't forget the Essay Prize Competition (back cover) and meanwhile, every blessing for 2018 and all that you do in His service. *SN*

A dangerous Supper?

by Michael Jackson

For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died (1 Corinthians 11:30). In this single verse the Apostle bestows upon the Lord's Supper a significance unanticipated in other references to it. Elsewhere, such themes as 'covenant', 'memorial', 'sharing', and 'sacrifice' are uppermost, with the intention that the Supper should be understood as a means of maintaining the cohesiveness and spiritual wellbeing of the Christian community. Here, however, discussion of it climaxes with the shock announcement that, in certain circumstances, participation could be dangerous, even to the extent of the taking of life. In this article I will examine Paul's declaration surveying the various theories and perspectives put forward in an attempt to throw light upon it.

Gluttony

This may be described as a naturalistic explanation of the phenomenon. It is offered by a few commentators: Alan Johnson,[1] for example, who regards the effects of such self-gratification as the vehicle God used to exercise judgement on those he wishes to discipline, quoting Hebrews 12:5-11 and 1 Peter 4.17. Anthony Thiselton[2] also concedes that this is a possibility perpetrated by the wealthy in the church who, by an ostentatious show of the quality and quantity of their meal, emphasised their social standing. By this means the Lord's Supper was reduced to an opportunity for status affirmation and over-indulgence. A.J.B. Higgins takes a similar view, arguing that eating and drinking to excess (1 Corinthians 11:21) clearly demonstrates the failure of the church in Corinth to understand its essential identity as the body (*sōma*) of Christ through lack of discernment (*diakrinōn*).[3]

In the first century context, meals played a significant, indeed pivotal, role in underpinning the cohesion of societies, from the various *collegia,* encompassing burial clubs and trade associations, to the plethora of religious expressions, taking in the Mysteries and near eastern cults. Almost all would participate in ritual meals and celebratory banquets to strengthen group identity, welcome new initiates, and enact the liturgy of the god with whom they identified. It has been observed by Pheme Perkins that depending on the nature of the occasion the emphasis would differ: if the meal was a sacred ritual, strict decorum would be observed; if a festal banquet, proceedings could become bacchanalian, necessitating rules governing behaviour and penalties for non-observance.

It is further suggested that, because the ritual of bread and wine was set in the context of a fictive family community meal, the atmosphere was very free and easy, encouraging excessive consumption, gluttony and drunkenness. The purpose of Paul's harsh stricture was to establish the whole proceedings as a *ritual* meal.[4] The tantalising question is whether the Corinthian church originally taught the body theology of the Lord's Supper as suggested by 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, but chose to ignore it in the interests of self-indulgence, or was Paul too optimistic in assuming that the church would instinctively understand it as he did and behave accordingly?

When it comes to evaluating gluttony as the reason for the sickness and death reported to Paul, it seems to the writer one of the weaker explanations, for the Apostle himself does not cite this as the cause, only as the result of a deeper malaise: a failure to understand the true nature of the Christian community.

Magic

The second possible explanation of the catastrophe visited upon the church is mentioned by some commentators, such as Hans Conzelmann,[5] Howard C. Kee,[6] Günther Bornkamm[7] and T.C. Carter.[8] There is a dilemma in that the word 'magic' is rarely defined in this context. Kee[9] quotes Malinowski in attempting to differentiate between magic and religion: the former depends upon the exact performance of a ritual, by an acknowledged practitioner, to achieve a specific objective; while religion is a corporate affair, concerned with responsible behaviour in the sight of the deity to whom worship and obedience is rendered, though it is acknowledged that the two realms may overlap.

Of course, what *we* today perceive as supernatural (magic) phenomena may well have been regarded as simply another legitimate expression of the one reality in an ancient world, in which gods and humans were believed frequently to interact.

In the Corinthian context of the Lord's Supper, Malinowski's definition seems inappropriate, because the magical elements necessary to bring about the sickness and death (such as a specific ritual and a magician), are absent. On the contrary, it is the behaviour of the Corinthian church itself which, according to Paul, precipitates the catastrophe. This being so, it is probably unhelpful to introduce an inexplicable concept, which takes us no further. It appears to be adopted by some as a convenient 'shorthand', non-rational, explanation for a passage that is notoriously difficult to comprehend.

Toxicity

In the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*,[10] dating probably from the third century, there is an account of a young man who, after committing a sin (murder), communicates at the

Lord's Supper, resulting in the withering of his hands. Thomas' response is to declare that while the Supper brings healing to many; in this case it has convicted the man of sin by inflicting injury. We cannot be sure how much this incident has been directly influenced by the eucharistic episode in 1 Corinthians, or whether there was an independent conviction in the early church that the Lord's Supper, if partaken in the wrong spirit or by someone harbouring unconfessed guilt, could be a 'dangerous' environment. This is an example of a belief in 'eucharistic transference', whereby the elements designed to impart blessing to the partaker could perversely impart a curse, depending upon their (un)worthiness. Leaving aside for the moment the objection that the Pauline account is focused on community, not the targeting of individuals, the toxicity hypothesis features in the work of Joseph Fitzmeyer,[11] Anthony Thiselton,[12] Dale Martin,[13] and Ernst Käsemann,[14] among others.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, uses the Old Testament wilderness experience as a warning, since although the 'baptised' of Israel ate and drank the same spiritual food, they were all punished on account of their apostasy (Exodus 32). This example provides evidence that the Apostle did not regard the Lord's Supper as an antidote to dying, or to confer eternal life *ex opere operato*, in opposition to Ignatius of Antioch's much quoted definition of it as the 'medicine of immortality'. Dale Martin introduces into the discussion *pharmakia* (Galatians 5:20), which in the ancient world describes both curative drugs and poisons, so is associated with sorcery.[15]

Martin's context here is the 'idol meat' issue in the previous chapter, and its demonology. Ingesting such meat transforms the Lord's Supper into a toxic ritual, whereby participants eat and drink condemnation rather than health and salvation. Martin regards this anthropology as reflecting that of the ancient world at large, where disease was believed to result from the invasion of the body by hostile demonic forces.[16]Fitzmeyer, while taking this aspect into consideration, conjoins it with the possibility that the sickness and death visited upon the church may simply reflect the Judaic equation of disobedience equals divine punishment.[17] Käsemann, while conceding that there is 'massive verification' in comparative religions for the toxicity perspective, argues that it is not necessary to introduce it in this context, since the Lord's Supper itself represents the seat of judgement for those who are indifferent to Christ at the table: 'salvation despised becomes judgment'.[18]

How, then, are we to assess the toxicity aspect of the disaster which befell the Corinthian church? Its strength lies in the fact that it roots the Lord's Supper firmly in the anthropology of the ancient world, where so much is determined by demonic spiritual forces to which the human psyche is vulnerable. However, it pays too little attention to the actual context of the issue Paul is addressing, namely the failure of the church to recognise what it means to be the body of Christ, reflected in some feasting while others go hungry: a tragic misunderstanding of the nature of *sōma*, limiting it to the elements rather than including the believing community.

Purity

Closely associated with the issue of 'toxicity' is the aspect of 'protecting' the Lord's Supper against sources of pollution, maintaining its sacred character. Among those who discuss this aspect of Pauline theology are Wayne Meeks,[19] Stambaugh & Balch,[20] and Michael Newton.[21] Mary Douglas, in her influential *Purity and danger*,[22] defined 'purity' as the way meaning is imposed on things that are out of place and disorderly, designated as 'dirt'. Her study of the Levitical code provided ample evidence for the assertion that in ancient Judaism the purity of a place, situation or person was determined by *material* circumstances, such as certain animals, contact with non-Jews or skin disease.[23]

In the context of his day and culture Paul was radical in his attempt to redefine Jewish concepts of 'purity' in terms of inward motivation and intent, as in his confrontation with Peter over Jewish and Gentile relationships within the Christian church (Galatians 2:11-14). The Lord's Table represents another instance when purity became an issue. It was threatened first by association with pagan cultic ritual (1 Corinthians 10:14-22). Although Paul does not believe in the reality of idols, he does believe that association with them brings people into idolatrous contact (partnership) with demons, which, in turn, compromises and corrupts their partnership with Christ at the Lord's Table (*cf* 1 Corinthians 6:15-16). It appears that this does not apply to eating 'idol meat' outside pagan cultic activity.

The second way in which purity at the table was threatened was the selfishness and fractured community, which allowed some to feast and others to hunger, destroying its unity. In effect, says Paul, this so polluted the table that it ceased to be the *Lord*'s Table, rather a table of self-indulgence and social dysfunction—a denial of the church as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). This idea harmonises with the notion that discord and disruption of the body politic generates disease, so compromising its purity.[24] In effect the boundaries erected against a sinful world have been breached, precipitating judgement on the guilty.[25]

A comparison may be made with the community meals at Qumran. Though these were not in themselves sacred events, those participating did so in a state of purity; unclean members were excluded to maintain such purity (1 QSa 2.3*ff*). When the covenanters gathered in this way they were focussing their expectation of the setting up of the new Temple and the renewal of the nation's life. Thus, as for Paul's understanding of the Lord's Supper, such meals were eschatological. Paul declares they will be so 'until he comes' (1 Corinthians 11:26 *cf* Didache 10:6).[26]

It could be argued that the theme of 'judgement' (*krima*) in Paul's teaching on the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:28-32) encapsulates the very core of the gospel, since at the Table it is either proclaimed or denied by the community according to whether that community accepts the judgement of the cross.[27] This being so, the Supper serves

to focus the ground of the sacred, the essence of purity, which is so vulnerable to defilement and of which the Corinthian church is clearly guilty. Such a source of defilement stands in sharp contrast to sacred ritual in the ancient world at large, in which it often sprang from failure to observe exactly the prescribed ritual actions.[28] Although the text in question describes 'many' suffering, it remains an open question whether only those who defiled the Table suffered the consequences, or whether 'weakness, sickness and death' were indiscriminate, as in the wilderness wanderings (Exodus 32:35; *cf* 1 Cor 10:1-5), reflecting the ancient concept of 'human solidarity'.[29]

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Taboo zone

The result of a stress on 'purity' is to establish boundaries between the Jesus community and the rest of humanity. Although there is much emphasis in Pauline theology on the breaking down of barriers, memorably summed up in Galatians (3:28), in which belonging to Christ renders all divisions, racial, social and gender obsolete, initiation into the Christian community established a marked exclusivism which provided the impetus for its strong missionary character. A number of scholars pick up on this aspect, including Wayne Meeks,[30] Gerd Theissen,[31] and T.C. Carter.

In Pauline theology, the baptismal ritual represents initiation into an exclusive community—a putting on of Christ (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3)—in which the initiate enters a whole new world, leaving behind the old (Romans 6:6-11). As a consequence, a socioreligious boundary is established within which an alternative identity is embraced. This is buttressed by uncompromising paraenesis using a 'stick and carrot' approach (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12), hopefully to achieve what has been termed a 'taboo zone', in which the ethos of a sinful world is excluded.

Such a theology equally governs the Lord's Supper which, like baptism, is rooted in the death of Christ, serving as a renewal of the essential identity of the baptised community expressed in bread and wine. The intense sacredness of the meal is measured by strict teaching affecting those who violate community standards (1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; Didache 9:5); they are to be excluded from the supper. Such is the exclusivity and desire to maintain boundaries that in church history the unbaptised were not permitted to participate at the Table in view of its perceived sacredness.[32]

In the light of Paul's passionate convictions, not least the 'judgement' theme expressed in the reference to those weak, sick and dying, some commentators interpret him as throwing the Lord's Supper on to a bigger canvas: no less than a 'symbolic universe' in which darkness and light play out an 'eschatological drama'. Meeks follows Theissen in arguing along these lines.[33] Theissen further suggests that the elements at the supper transcend mere symbols of Christ's body and blood, possessing a 'numinous' quality, in keeping with his interpretation of the ritual as supramundane. If these elements are not recognised and respected as such, sickness and death encroach.[34] Carter, too,

acknowledges that the key to Paul's thinking lies in boundary-making and breaking.[35] He sees association with demons compromising the boundary represented by the Lord's Supper, so that two incompatible worlds collide, with retribution for the offenders. He quotes Mary Douglas in stressing the danger represented by social boundaries, modelled on the human body, which harbour the energy to reward conformity and repulse attack, so safeguarding the integrity and purity of the community in question.[36] To this we could add the selfishness and community violations at the Table, which effectively fractured the community, so attacking the very body of Christ they were supposed to be proclaiming (1 Corinthians 11:20-21).

Conclusion

The fact that 1 Corinthians 11:30 and its withering judgement on the Corinthian church evokes such a variety of explanations—from gluttony and magic, toxicity and purity, and taboo—is an indication of the inherently difficult exegetical dilemma. What can be stated without contradiction is that it reflects the depths of Paul's passionate concern to maintain the integrity of a community meal which for him, far from an empty ritual, proclaimed the very essence of the Christian faith: the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, by means of which the church was established.

But which, if any, of the explanations considered above best interprets the text? In my view, the two with most merit are purity and taboo, since they clearly reflect Paul's stated concerns. However, it raises the question as to which came first: his understanding of the nature of the Supper, or the judgement expressed in the sickness and death experienced within the Corinthian community? In other words, did Paul regard the Lord's Supper in the way that he did before the catastrophe occurred? It is my sense that this catastrophe may well have served to reinforce and perfect his final understanding of its essential nature. If so, the judgement, though clearly a crisis for the Corinthians, served to develop and deepen Paul's sacramental theology.

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Notes to text

1. Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*. Illinois/Leicester: IVP, 2004, pp211-212.

2. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The first epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2000, p894.

3. A.J.B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*. London: SCM, 1954, p67.

4. Pheme Perkins, *First Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012, pp145-146.

5. Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, p203.

6. Howard C. Kee, *Christian origins in sociological perspective*. London: SCM, 1980, p115.

7. Günter Bornkamm, *Early Christian experience*. London: SCM, 1969, p124.

8. T.C. Carter, *Paul and the power of sin*. Cambridge: CUP, 2002, p74.

9. Kee, pp63-66.

10. *Acts of Thomas* 51.

11. Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *First Corinthians*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008.

12. Anthony Thiselton, *First Corinthians: a shorter exegetical and pastoral commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006, p188.

13. Dale Martin, *The Corinthian body*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1995.

14. Ernst Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament themes*. London: SCM, 1981.

15. Martin, pp190-191.

16. Martin, pp196-197.

17. Fitzmeyer, p447.

18. Käsemann, p125.

19. Wayne A. Meeks, *The first urban Christians: the social world of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1983, pp102-103.

20. John Stambaugh & David Balch, *The social world of the first Christians*. London: SPCK, 1986, p59.

21. Michael Newton, *The concept of purity at Qumran and in the letters of Paul*. Cambridge: CUP, 1985.

22. Mary Douglas, *Purity and danger*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.

23. Douglas, pp41-57.

24. Martin, p197.

25. Carter, p74.

26. Newton, pp34-36.

27. C. F. D. Moule, 'The judgment theme in the sacraments', pp472-474 in *The background of the New Testament and its eschatology: studies in honour of C. H. Dodd*, W. D. Davies & D. Daube (eds). Cambridge: CUP, 1956.

28. Perkins, p145.

29. D. E. H. Whiteley, *The theology of St Paul*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980, p45.

30. Meeks, pp102-103.

31. Gerd Theissen, *The social setting of Pauline Christianity*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982.

32. Justin Martyr, *Apology*, 65-66.

33. Meeks, pp159.

34. Theissen, pp164-165.

35. Carter, pp73-74.

36. Douglas, pp114-127.

The preacher and the podcast

by Robert Beamish

In a year in which one couple left the church because they wished I preached more like John MacArthur, and another couple because I was not Jimmy Swaggart, I spent some time considering the relationship between preaching and podcasting.

The term *podcast* is used as a generic term for audio files, which are downloaded for consumption. It was first mentioned by Ben Hammerlsey in the Guardian newspaper in February 2004, and is a 'portmanteau of the words pod from iPod, and broadcast'.[1] The term is used to differentiate a piece of *radio speech* content rather than a music track. Through the development of portable media players and smartphones it is easier than ever to access audio content, and many churches have taken full advantage of this. It is now more than likely that your church has a website, and it is possible that in some form you make recorded sermon content available online. Recording the sermon is not that new. Tapes and CDs have been filling shoeboxes in churches and homes for years, but it is the instant access and potential reach made possible by putting content online that changes the landscape.

Is this practice a good idea for the local church, and is it good for preaching in general? I explored this by surveying ministers in the North Western Baptist Association (NWBA) with three questions in mind.

1.How does the preacher understand the purpose of the sermon?

2.How does the preacher understand the purpose of the podcasting of sermons?

3.Is there a conflict for the preacher between their understanding of the purpose of the sermon and their understanding of the purpose of podcasting?

I cannot give a full account of my research here, but my aim is to encourage you to reflect on the question and to note its importance. This topic matters on several levels, because those who listen to podcasts could be significantly influenced by the content, potentially altering their relationship with their local church. We can also underestimate the power and effect of technology in our lives.

The fictional Congregationalist pastor John Ames wrestles with the effects of religious radio and television content upon his congregation in the early 1950s in Marilynne Robinson's award-winning novel *Gilead.*

Two or three of the ladies had pronounced views on points of doctrine, particularly sin and damnation, which they had never learnt from me. I blame the radio for sowing a good deal of confusion where theology is concerned. And television is worse. You can spend forty years

teaching people to be awake to the fact of the mystery and then some fellow with no more theological sense then a jackrabbit gets himself a radio ministry and all your work is forgotten. I do wonder where it will end.[2]

Where will it end? Not a bad question really, especially as the rapid shifts in communication technology mean that we at least appear to be more connected, and to have more information at our fingertips, than ever before. I make no claim to be the only voice to which my congregation should listen, but I am with the fictional John Ames in his frustration that careful instruction can be forgotten in a moment when believers are confronted with someone whose platform appears to carry more authority than mine, or the presentation comes with a little more glitz than I can muster on a Sunday morning in the depths of winter.

In case you were wondering, I have looked up what a jackrabbit is, and it turns out to be a type of hare native to Central and North America. One of its key qualities is its breeding prowess, with each female capable of several litters a year of one to six young. So, the allusion to jackrabbits is a pertinent one as ideas picked up outside the fellowship can take root and spread in often unexpected and sometimes unhelpful ways. How we discern the good from the bad is always fundamental, and that can be difficult in a crowded and noisy marketplace with content constantly pouring in from every direction.

In a blog post on sermon podcasts, Barnabbas Piper, the son of an often-podcasted preacher, John Piper, notes his own realisation that listening to podcasts was having an undue effect on him.

I have moved away from depending on them [podcasts] for my sermonic intake. A few years ago my iPod was filled with sermons from the usual gospelly suspects, and I listened to them fairly regularly. But I realised something wasn't quite right. I was even more critical than usual. I was subconsciously grading my pastor's sermons. My enjoyment of worshipping at church diminished. So I quit listening to sermons from famous guys. And this is what I noticed. My own pastor's preaching became enormously important to me.[3]

There might not be many people in our congregations listing to podcasts on a regular basis, but there may be some. I remember preaching a sermon and being told by a church member that their real highlight in the days after had been going online to hear a well-known megachurch leader preach on the same passage, with the implication that his sermon was better! Maybe it was—but the incident shows that comparison obviously takes place and can undermine local ministry, as Piper notes.

This increased availability of content comes at a time when we have become suspicious of the ability of language (written or spoken) to convey truth. Andrew Byers, in *Theomedia,* argues that the problem lies in the medium of cyberspace itself and its effect on language. The internet does value words, but they have less weight than images; and that is problematic when dealing with a text and a communication model that gives great weight to what is written. 'In digital culture we just hit backspace, delete, or click on an

"X" icon. For us, words are less binding, less reified, less irreversible than they were in the bygone days of Israel'.[4] This weightlessness matters when dealing with concepts and ideas, as Robert MacFarlane notes: 'to which words will not easily cleave'.[5] The internet then does not always appear to be the best place for what we hold to be most valuable.

Technology is not neutral. Pauline Hope Cheong quotes Neil Postman, 'A new technology does not add or subtract, it changes everything'.[6] That change can be positive or negative, and on the negative side Nicholas Carr writes about how we are being adversely affected by our digital age.

> *As McLuhan suggested, media aren't just channels of information. They supply the stuff of thought, but they also shape the process of thought. And what the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. Whether I'm online or not, my mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski.*[7]

Many writers have voiced doubts over the benefits of modern technology, arguing that it is precisely because of its obvious benefits that we need to be watchful. The popular literature decrying the impact of technology is as prolific as that which is more hopeful about its creative possibilities.[8]

On a positive note, Andrew Byers, again in *Theomedia*, explores how God has always used media to communicate the message, and that God has always spoken the loudest when confronted with the white noise of society. Heidi Campbell challenges the idea that technology shapes religion negatively. She shows that different religious groups have always shaped and used technology, 'bringing their theological traditions to bear on how they use them'.[9] Whether it is using websites to target groups previously beyond reach, or adapting technology to suit religious practice, it would be wrong simply to argue that we are enslaved to the latest technology.[10] It is a willingness to adapt new technology that has marked religious engagement. For Campbell this is the 'Religious-social shaping of technology', comprising four distinct stages. 'Religious communities reflect upon their history of media use, consider their core values and practices, evaluate the technology and negotiate its redesign and finally frame the technology through a group discourse that sets appropriate goals and boundaries for its use'.[11] Is it in the second of Campbell's four stages that the church has failed to reflect adequately?

There has been theological reflection on podcasting, with some seeing its positive impact. Michael Nolan in his 2011 study, *Using the podcast as a medium to prepare hearers of the word to receive the Sunday preaching*, produced short podcasts to prepare members of his Roman Catholic parish for the sermon on Sunday.[12] The study concludes that the podcasts worked well as a preparation for receiving the Sunday sermon. Nolan considers communication theory, noting that the podcasts were seen by the participants as communicating information as part of the *transmission model of communication*

rather than anything more dialogical, and this starts to point to its limitations. Nolan felt keenly McLuhan's concept of *extension and amputation.* He writes,

My voice was extended beyond personal presence at the church ambo (pulpit) into the home, vehicle, or at work place of the listener on his or her computer or portable digital device. At the same time my voice was amputated from the facial expressions, seating posture, and my own awareness of the context of the voice output as I surrendered it to technology and the choices others would make on how, when, and where to utilise that podcast voice.[13]

This concept of *extension and amputation* feels like the core of the reflection that is needed, summing up what is positive and negative. Here are descriptors that give us the means to explore more fully the type of reflection that Campbell implies is necessary.

My survey showed that *extension* was indeed a key motivator for podcasting. Of the 72 responses received 55% said that their sermons were not podcasted, 42% said they were, and 3% did not know—with the principal reason for podcasting being the desire to allow congregational members to catch up or listen again. However, of those that podcasted, 29% wanted simply to archive the teaching, and the same percentage thought that it might attract new congregants. This reflects my own experiences of new congregants accessing online content before deciding to come along to the church.

For those who podcast, there was little restriction of who could access their content, with 96% saying there was no restriction. An unspoken assumption is that the sermon has a *right* to be published, but one non-podcasting respondent said that their sermons were 'probably not good enough' to be podcasted, a view which was repeated by others. Some were confident that God can work through any medium, and others were reluctant to lose good sermons, stating: 'Some have a clear teaching/preaching gift. It is a good idea to record their sermons in order that others can benefit from them'. One comment continues this theme and emphasises the need for discernment: 'I believe that we should be more discerning and selective before putting anything on the web, which will act as both a shop window for your church and (for primarily non-Christians) the gospel'. As journalist Jon Ronson has ably demonstrated, posting online content in any form is a risky activity and open to misinterpretation.[14]

It is the concept of *amputation* that most effectively sums up the reality that a recorded sermon is removed from its original context and community. In the survey, those who podcast and those who do not saw listening to a recorded sermon as changing the experience of the sermon in some way. When asked if this was so, of the podcast group 64% said it does, with only 8% saying *no*, but 28% saying *maybe*. This is similar to the non-podcast group with 75% saying *yes*, 6.25% saying *no* and 18.75% saying *maybe*.

These results highlight the importance of context and community, showing that there is a sense that recording does *amputate* the sermon from its community in some way even though the recording may be solely intended for community use. Responses on this

suggested a sense of *same but different* when it comes to recordings. 'In the same way that listening to live music is a totally different experience to listening to recorded music, so it may be with recorded sermons. The moment is different, as is the audience'. Other comments are similar in their themes for both groups, majoring on the loss of context, the visual element and the atmosphere.

Also worth noting is that the sermon was mostly understood by both groups as an integrated part of a worship service, so listening to the sermon apart from that is to lose something. 'When you remove it from the context of the worship gathering you have no idea what has happened before the sermon or after, it removes the drama and theatre of the sermon'. This resonates with the potential benefits of recovering a more explicit commitment to the community as the body of Christ where the sermon is received and applied together. It can be claimed that listening to a sermon is a whole-body experience, both physically and socially. One comment recognises this: 'Any spiritual experience taken outside the body, in isolation, changes that experience. Following Jesus was always meant to be a joint enterprise, but we have imposed upon it our western love of individualism'.

With that comment in mind, I finish with Walter Brueggemann's description of preaching as 'The chance to summon and nurture an alternative community with an alternative identity, vision and vocation, preoccupied with praise and obedience toward the God we Christians know fully in Jesus of Nazareth'.[15] To podcast our sermons provides opportunity for greater reach, but also presents clear challenges for community and raises significant questions about the nature, function and place of the sermon as we continue to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

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A view from another angle

by Bob Allaway

Since my retirement, Sylvia and I have joined an Anglican church plant, on a notorious local council estate. We were already aware of its existence, since a member of my former church contributed to its founding. This creates a problem when I fill in questionnaires and they ask for my denomination. Am I a Baptist or an Anglican? I reckon I am still a Baptist, since I am still on the list of ministers, and, whatever its official denomination, our present church is, in its ethos, more Baptist than many Baptists! However, it does enable me to look at Baptist church practice with more objectivity.

Nearly 40 years ago, I was briefly a member of a church where the late Michael Walker was minister. He taught me a lot about the importance of communion (of which more shortly), but it was not until many years later that I saw the relevance of his view of ministry. He believed that Baptist ministers corresponded not to elders in the New Testament, but to apostles. This was unfortunately at the time when those speaking most of apostles were in the Restoration movement, with their notorious 'heavy shepherding', so I rejected his view out of hand.

It was not until 2001, when preparing a talk on how chaplaincy fitted with our conventional view of Baptist ministry, that I grasped the central point he was making. I suspect most Baptists tend to see the minister as elected to his or her role by the local church, like the deacons (and any local elders), with recognition by the Union or Association serving as a recommendation to them. But what happens in a missionary situation? What happens when there is no church to appoint the minister, but, rather, the minister creates the church?! Now that we are members of a church plant, I am able to see firsthand how that works out in practice.

The key thing in both ministry and membership is surely accountability. Our church has a core leadership of three.

* Our pastor is a lay reader, that is, a trained and recognised lay preacher, like a Methodist 'local preacher'. His main ministry is leading the varied children's and youth clubs that meet on our premises, with a team of helpers. (We are more a youth club with a church associated with it than the other way round!)
* Our co-pastor is another lay reader. Her ministry is more in pastoral care to families.
* Father R is an elderly retired vicar. He is invited out and, seated behind a table because of his unsteadiness, he consecrates the bread and wine using a shortened communion service. Apart from that and his 'blessings', he sits in the congregation as

just another member (albeit one wearing a discreet clerical collar). As he is low church, I suspect that 'Father' comes from the way those of a Catholic background address him. He and his wife also exercise a quiet pastoral ministry.

These three are accountable to one another and (in theory) to their fellow leaders at our 'sponsor' church, at which they are 'licensed' by the bishop. I make no comment as to the helpfulness or otherwise of the leadership there. If we were 'sponsored' by a Baptist church, I doubt if the dynamics of the situation would be any different.

The co-pastors have been involved from the start; leadership has always been corporate. The original church plant was sponsored by three churches who each contributed three people. Our pastor came from his church, along with two others, one ordained. However, as the estate technically lay in his co-pastor's (then) parish, she came from them, along with two others. A Pentecostal congregation also contributed three members. The local Anglican bishop helped expedite all this. A London City Missionary was attached to them, to be responsible for youth work and outreach on the estate.

In time, the other churches and LCM handed over responsibility to the pastor's church. He took over leading the youth work, his co-pastor transferred to his parish and 'Father R' became the ordained minister, giving the present core leadership of three. The bishop continues to support the work; he even came and took the service one Easter!

This inner core leadership can expand, by invitation, to a wider leadership/core membership of around eight. This includes my wife (as treasurer) and others who may be available and whose input is needed. We hold one another accountable; this includes the core leadership's accountability to the wider leadership team.

Sylvia and I see ourselves, and are seen by others, as members of the church. What makes us members? It is not that a church meeting has put us on a church roll. It is because we are self-evidently members of the body of Christ in that place, because we share fellowship in the bread and wine offered by the leaders, and they recognise our giftings in the body by including us on the rotas of things to do each week. (In my case, that can be preaching or leading worship.) As our pastor stresses, every member has a ministry. Johann Oncken, the 19th century German Baptist evangelist, made the same point in the churches he planted.

We do have occasional 'church meetings'. These function as more expanded versions of the 'wider leadership/core membership' meetings already mentioned, to which anyone who wishes to come is invited. Once again, participation in the team presumes accountability to our fellow team members.

There is an additional way of formally relating to the church. Some adults and older youngsters appear to be believers, and are invited to do things, but choose not to take the

bread and wine (which the lay readers take into the congregation, like Baptist deacons). Instead, they go forward to be 'blessed' by the 'Father'. His 'blessings' are not perfunctory gestures, but personal, relevant prayers for each of them, which are obviously greatly appreciated. Talking with them, they seem to be believers who have yet to make a formal, public confession of faith (confirmation in our context). In traditional theological language, they are catechumens, but they are learning the life of faith by living it, not by attending some middle-class 'course'. This reminds us that, in our mission to an increasingly secular society, having a halfway-house to full discipleship may be needed to help new believers make that transition.

I need to stress that their choice of 'blessing' over sharing in the bread and wine is their personal decision; the core leaders offer the bread and wine to all, with the option of a blessing as an alternative.

I recently read Daniel Sutcliffe-Pratt's *Covenant and church for rough sleepers.* He stresses that they have an 'open table' to welcome all 'within a context where many have experienced marginalisation or rejection'. While I would hope we are equally welcoming, I wonder what such an 'open table' would look like in our context. Communion is an integral part of a service that has already included a congregational prayer of confession (so we know we are all there as sinners: no one need feel 'I'm not good enough') and some sort of congregational creed. Would anyone who felt unable to participate in those things wish to share in communion?

This raises the question: what is the purpose of the Sunday meeting? Is it to be a place of interaction with the unbelieving world? Such was the assumption behind the fashion for seeker services in past years, and the modern tendency of some churches to advertise their worship services like pop concerts. Or is the object of the Sunday liturgy to form believers in the image of Christ, the better to interact with the unbelievers they meet in the world every day? (Incidentally, I gather that, when they first planted the church, they held no communion service for a long time, as they wanted it to be meaningful to those joining them, not just an empty ritual.)

In any case, I sense that the heart of our Sunday service is neither the public reading of the Bible and associated talk, nor the communion, but the congregation's spontaneous prayers of intercession and associated prayer requests. Our pastor sometimes encourages us to do these in small, confidential clusters, so individuals can feel free to open up about themselves. When outsiders do come in, it would seem to be the opportunity for such prayer support that draws them. Sylvia testifies that some of the prayer requests she has received in that context have taken her 'way out of her comfort zone'.

At this point I would like to pause and revisit my initial question about the nature of Baptist ministry. Which comes first? Questions about church and ministry are meaningless, because, in reality, there can never be 'a minister' in isolation, nor isolated

believers covenanting together as a church. As soon as one person leads another to faith, there are believers in communion, drawing others into communion with them, with the accountability that this entails. Is it not significant that New Testament apostles ministered in pairs? Planting a church was not just a matter of preaching the gospel, but of being the mutually accountable fellowship in Christ that others then joined.

Are there things I would question in the Anglican context (apart, of course, from infant baptism)? Yes, but not what you might think. I find Anglican communion is no real problem. I have never held Zwingli's minimal view of the Lord's Supper. Michael Walker used to delight to point out that most Baptists, historically, held a Calvinist view of communion…as did Cranmer!

Within a Baptist context, I have tried to get people out of thinking that a minister is necessary to preside at communion. However, when, as with us, that minister presides out of his frailty, in service to the community, as an assistant to the 'lay' ministers, it subverts all thoughts of priestly hierarchy. It is just a ministry in the body, the same as others make the tea or put out the chairs, but one that reminds us that our communion is with the church universal, as well as our local fellowship.

What troubles me more is Anglican ministerial formation. Both our main pastors are black. This is appropriate, as ours is an overwhelmingly black church. Local Baptist churches (including my former pastorate) now tend to have black pastors. However, while there are a few ethnic minority vicars around, my perception is that (thinking of social class as well as ethnicity) Anglican ministers tend not to be representative of their churches and certainly not of the communities around them. In this context, it is significant the two main leaders are both lay readers, as that is the one Anglican qualification that everyone studies for part-time. Our pastor has also been attending one of the few part-time Anglican seminaries, but it has taken him years, and he is still not ordained. Within the LBA, at any rate, I believe we Baptists are doing a better job at training people raised up within the churches, without isolating them from their community context.

I hope this article raises a few questions to ponder. If you disagree with my opinions, do email or write to Sally to say so; I am sure she would like to have correspondence!

I leave you with the liturgical close of every Sunday service at our church. The children (if out) come back in, and everyone, young or old, black or white, joins hands in one big circle to say: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.*

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Celebrating the Reformation(s)

by Stuart Murray Williams

During 2017 Lutherans, and many others, celebrated the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's demands for reform in the church of western Christendom. As a new year dawns, how might Baptists, and other Free Church Christians, reflect on the events that shook and fragmented Christendom in the 16th century? To what extent do we regard ourselves as heirs of that reforming movement? Despite the less than friendly treatment early Baptists received at the hands of those who promoted reform, but were dismayed by what they regarded as schismatic developments and remained wedded to the notion of a territorial church, many Baptists today sit happily within the reformed camp. But not all do.

Some Baptists, and Christians from many other traditions, prefer to align ourselves with the so-called Radical Reformation, of which the Anabaptists were the most significant members. Criticising Luther and his colleagues for being 'halfway men',[1] hamstrung by their reliance on political support, fearful of social unrest and still in thrall to Christendom assumptions and practices, the radical reformers urged more thoroughgoing reform of both church and society. Among other things, this meant the baptism of believers and the separation of church and state, both of which would become important Baptist convictions several decades later.

Historians continue to debate the nature of the relationship between the Anabaptists and the Baptists. There were undoubtedly connections between the early English Baptists and some Mennonite communities in the Netherlands. But the Baptist movement was no more uniform than the Anabaptist movement, drawing inspiration from various sources. Anabaptists and Baptists shared many convictions but also differed on important issues. If direct descent is untenable, perhaps 'first cousins' is a reasonable ascription.[2]

But was the emergence of two streams of reformation, one purportedly more radical than the other, inevitable? Was there no possibility of an alternative to the mutual condemnation that characterised most discussions between representatives of these streams? If they had really listened to each other, could some of the ensuing fragmentation have been avoided? Might the whole reforming movement have been more responsible and more creative?

In most contexts the two sides seemed so far apart that any such expectations would have been perceived as utterly unrealistic, not least because any public debates or

discussions were loaded in favour of the reformers and liable to result in exile or much worse for the radicals. But there were rare occasions when reformers and radicals met and talked together without impending threats, occasions characterised by mutual respect if not whole-hearted agreement, occasions when there was mutual learning rather than mutual anathematising. One of these occasions was the encounter in Strasbourg between the reformer, Martin Bucer, and Pilgram Marpeck, an Anabaptist leader. One of the modules taught at the Centre for Anabaptist Studies at Bristol Baptist College[3] examines this encounter and the impact these men had on each other.

Martin Bucer (1491-1551), a former Dominican monk, joined the reform movement under the influence of the humanist scholar Erasmus and the writings of Martin Luther. Following marriage to a former nun and subsequent excommunication, he made his home in Strasbourg, where he became the people's priest in the cathedral and the leading figure among a group of reforming church leaders in the city. Strasbourg was a melting pot of diverse religious views and communities, on the borders of the Lutheran and Zwinglian spheres of influence, offering at least temporary sanctuary to numerous radical reformers, and opportunities for dialogue. Bucer was passionately committed to the unity of the church, so he was concerned about this fragmentation, but he was less enthusiastic than most of the other reformers about persecuting dissenters. He preferred to engage in private and public debate with those who championed other views.[4]

Pilgram Marpeck (*ca*1495-1556), a civil engineer with expertise in mining, forestry and water supply who undertook various projects in several cities in the region, arrived in Strasbourg in 1528. Initially drawn to the reform movement, he was by now associated with the radicals and joined an Anabaptist community led at that time by William Reublin. Marpeck was an unusual Anabaptist. He had high social status, substantial economic resources and was valued by the authorities for his expertise even though his radical views concerned them. Although he was arrested and eventually expelled from Strasbourg, he did not suffer persecution of the kind many others did in this period.[5]

Bucer and Marpeck encountered each other shortly after Marpeck arrived in the city. Initial impressions were favourable and early conversations were friendly as each tried to persuade the other to consider different viewpoints. Bucer saw in Marpeck a valuable potential ally in the reform movement. Marpeck saw in Bucer someone who shared some of his concerns for more radical reformation. On many issues the two men agreed and mutual respect is evident in the records of their debates and in their writings.

The language slowly became more acrimonious as Bucer became increasingly worried about the growing influence of the Anabaptists and frustrated that he could not persuade Marpeck to join him. Both men at times lost their tempers as they passionately defended their views. Nevertheless, their debates were measured and thoughtful, despite the very real differences between them. The full record of these debates, which took place during 1531, is the most extensive of any dialogue between reformers and Anabaptists.

Although each failed to win over the other to his cause, they undoubtedly exercised considerable influence on each other's views. They listened to each other, took seriously the criticisms of their own positions and allowed these to be moderated by what they heard. This is all the more remarkable given their disagreement on some quite fundamental issues. Bucer remained committed to the Christendom system with its territorial understanding of church, the practice of infant baptism and partnership between church and state. Marpeck espoused a vision of church that was free from state control and consisted of those who had chosen a life of discipleship and signified this in baptism. Bucer believed in a single divine covenant that spanned both Testaments and rejected Marpeck's insistence of a distinction between the Old and New Testaments. This hermeneutical disagreement, which was at the heart of numerous debates between reformers and Anabaptists, impacted their views on many issues.[6]

Marpeck was convinced that freedom from state control and separation from what he saw as a corrupt state church was essential for the thorough reformation he believed was required. Bucer, however, regarded Marpeck as a heretic for breaking the unity of the church. As Neal Blough writes: 'what seems to most offend Bucer is the fact that Marpeck, under the pretext of offering something better, separates himself from the "official" church. The separation and the division implied by Marpeck's theology were indeed the real problems in Bucer's perspective'.[7]

At times the debate may have actually strengthened their existing commitments. For example, the distinction between the Testaments so evident in Marpeck's writings might have been less pronounced without this polemical background. And Bucer's deep concern for the unity of the church received fresh impetus from his inability to convince Marpeck to seek reformation from within the state church. But the debate also exposed them to other ways of thinking and highlighted weak areas that provoked them to revise their practices.

Bucer took seriously Marpeck's concern about the need for discipline in the church. He had heard this from other Anabaptists too and was sensitive to their critique of the state churches. He acknowledged the difficulty of combining measures to encourage discipleship with his territorial understanding of church. He tried for several years to introduce measures to bring greater discipline into the Strasbourg churches. Initially he hoped governmental action might achieve this, but eventually he proposed the formation of committed groups in the churches which would exercise voluntary discipline. This was not far removed from the Anabaptist approach to church life, but it avoided what Bucer disliked most about the Anabaptists—their willingness to separate from the state churches.

Bucer struggled with the tension between two different visions of church life, wrestling with his horror of separation and disunity on the one hand, and on the other hand his dismay at the difficulty of introducing proper discipline into the churches. Although his

measures were not very successful in Strasbourg itself, he was able to make enough progress in some other areas, especially in Hesse, that he succeeded in winning numbers of Anabaptists back to the state churches, convincing them that their concerns were being addressed. David Wright concludes: 'Bucer achieved the only mass recovery of Anabaptists into the established church in the whole of the sixteenth century'.[8] Nevertheless, despite his conviction and intentions, church discipline within the state churches rarely extended beyond an experimental period.

Marpeck was undoubtedly challenged by Bucer's passionate plea for church unity, even if he remained in Bucer's view a separatist (as, of course, was Bucer from a Catholic perspective). In many of his writings he urged love and unity over an unduly harsh or intemperate exercise of church discipline. Much of his ministry was spent travelling among and corresponding with Anabaptist communities that were at odds with each other. On several issues he held the centre ground between Anabaptists in the Swiss Confederation, South Germany and Moravia, encouraging them to respect each other and strive for unity. And, contrary to many others in this deeply divided period, he insisted on regarding Bucer and others with whom he disagreed as authentic Christians.

Through his debates with Marpeck and others, Bucer recognised the importance of believers' baptism to the Anabaptists and came to understand the connection between this and the kind of disciplined communities he wanted to see formed. His continuing commitment to the state-church partnership at the heart of the Christendom system and his conviction that there was a fundamental continuity between the Testaments, justifying infant baptism by analogy with circumcision, meant that he was unwilling to give up the baptising of infants. But he realised that the link between baptism and discipleship was significant, so he introduced into reformed churches the rite of confirmation to forge this connection. Amy Nelson Burnett writes: 'Bucer clearly saw the re-introduction of confirmation as a concession to Anabaptist demands...In Bucer's words, each child was "to commit himself to the fellowship and obedience of the church." The concept of committing or surrendering oneself (sich begeben/sich ergeben) was frequently used by Anabaptists in conjunction with adult baptism'.[9] Although he failed to persuade the Strasbourg authorities to adopt this, Bucer was more successful elsewhere—introducing this first into the state churches in Hesse and later into the Anglican Church during his time in England. This rite, he believed, would encourage adults who had been baptised as infants to commit themselves to faith and discipleship.

Marpeck, on the other hand, acknowledged the failure of Anabaptist communities to include children in the church community as wholeheartedly as he now realised was appropriate. He introduced into the churches influenced by his teaching the practice of dedicating and naming young children. This was not an equivalent of infant baptism but a thanksgiving event and an anticipation of the baptismal vows it was hoped that such children would make in due course. Marpeck was explicit about the status of children in the church, writing in his Confession: 'Christ has accepted the children without sacrifice, without circumcision, without faith, without knowledge, without baptism: he has

accepted them solely by virtue of the word "to such belongs the kingdom of heaven...the innocent children cannot accept Christ; rather Christ has accepted them as children in his kingdom'.[10] But this did not imply that these children need not exercise faith as they grew. He continued: 'We admonish the parents to cleanse their conscience, as much as lies in them, with respect to the child, to do whatever is needed to raise the child up to the praise and glory of God, and to commit the child to God until it is clearly seen that God is working in him for faith or unfaith'.[11]

Eventually, the Strasbourg council, which was overseeing the debate, required both men to put their arguments into print. Bucer presented a defence of infant baptism, Marpeck replied with his Confession of Faith, and Bucer responded with a detailed rebuttal. Not long after this, the council's patience wore out and Marpeck was expelled from Strasbourg, although all parties involved seemed to regret the necessity of this. Walter Klaassen and William Klassen reflect on this unusually constructive interchange of ideas: 'all the parties involved – the clergy, Marpeck, and the council—acted in a remarkably peaceful and generous manner toward each other in spite of their fundamental disagreements'.[12]

This series of debates between Bucer and Marpeck gives a rare and tantalising glimpse of how Reformed-Anabaptist relationships might have been conducted. No doubt the spirit in which these debates were conducted owed much to the personalities of the two men, but the unusually tolerant context in Strasbourg was very significant. Bucer's colleague, Wolfgang Capito was, if anything, even warmer towards the Anabaptists. His correspondence evinces great respect for Michael Sattler, whose early execution prevented what might have been a similarly constructive Reformed-Anabaptist dialogue.[13] Klaassen and Klassen conclude: 'The Bucer-Marpeck exchange shows that opponents could be respectful of each other even in the midst of controversy during the Reformation, when disagreement so easily developed into legal coercion and even bloodshed'.[14]

What might we learn from this exchange? Although our socio-political and ecclesial context is very different, the specific issues debated by Bucer and Marpeck still have some resonance. These include the uncongenial need for mutual accountability, the uncertain place and status of children in the church, and questions about whether infant baptism is biblically justifiable, missionally effective or ecclesially damaging. More generally, these debates encourage us to acknowledge our preconceived ideas and recognise their influence on the positions we hold; they remind us that we can learn much from our critics and those with whom we disagree; and they challenge us to listen well and to speak graciously, however passionately we feel the need to maintain and promote our own views. They also invite us to consider whether principled dissent or concern for the unity of the church should determine our engagement with contentious issues today. This has been a perennial issue in the history of the church—'stay in' and work for gradual reform or 'come out' and embody wholeheartedly dimensions of the faith that have been neglected in the hope that new ecclesial expressions will catalyse change in the whole community.

Some argue that the root cause of division between the mainline and radical reformers was the pace of reform. If only the Anabaptists had been more patient and had not broken away from the state churches, their zeal and determination might have resulted in wholesale reform without the fragmentation that ensued. Or if only the reformers had been less anxious about losing political support and more courageous in implementing the more radical reforms they espoused in their earliest writings and sermons, they might have retained the trust and support of the radicals. Whichever perspective we embrace with the benefit of hindsight, this was undoubtedly a factor, as the record of an earlier—and much less mutually respectful—debate between Ulrich Zwingli and the Zurich Anabaptists indicates.[15] If more debates had been like that between Bucer and Marpeck, might a more collaborative way forward have emerged?

But hindsight also suggests that there were more substantive issues than the speed of reform. The radical reformers were advocating a way of being church, an understanding of mission, a Christocentric hermeneutic and an approach to ethical issues such as truth-telling, economics and violence that the state churches could not adopt without fundamentally undermining the whole edifice of western Christendom. They concluded, sadly and sometimes after sustained efforts to work within the system, that separation from the churches was necessary in order to be faithful followers of Jesus. Luther's reform movement had, after all, already fractured the monolithic church of western Christendom, however much Luther had wanted to avoid this outcome. Unsurprisingly, Marpeck found Bucer's plea for unity at all costs unconvincing.

Today, when the Christendom system from which they dissented is disintegrating and many (though not all) of the principles and practices the Anabaptists advocated unsuccessfully in the 16th century are widely accepted and may be crucial in post-Christendom churches, we might be grateful for their courageous dissent. Indeed, we might start planning ways of celebrating the 500th anniversary of the radical reformation in 2025. But we would do well to do this humbly, welcoming the involvement of conversation-partners who can help us learn from other traditions, and embracing a fresh commitment to seeking the unity as well as the ongoing reformation of the Christian community.

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Notes to text

1. Cornelius Dyck: *An Introduction to Mennonite History* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1987), p24.

2. A suggestion made by several authors, including David Smith: *All God's People: A Theology of the Church* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), p133.

3. See http://www.bristol-baptist.ac.uk/study-centres/anabaptist-study-centre/.

4. For an overview of Bucer's life, see David Wright: *Martin Bucer: Reforming Church and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

5. For an overview of Marpeck's life, see Walter Klaassen & William Klassen: *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 2008).

6. See further Stuart Murray: *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2000).

7. Neal Blough: *Christ in Our Midst: Incarnation, Church and Discipline in the Theology of Pilgrim Marpeck* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2007), p72.

8. Wright, *Bucer,* p31.

9. Amy Nelson Burnett: 'Martin Bucer and the Anabaptist Context of Evangelical Confirmation,' *Mennonite Quarterly Review* **68** (1994), pp96, 110.

10. William Klassen & Walter Klaassen: *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1978), pp130, 132.

11. *Op. cit*., p147.

12. Klaassen & Klassen: *Marpeck*, p180.

13. See The Capito Letters in John Howard Yoder: *The Legacy of Michael Sattler* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1973), pp86-99.

14. Klaassen & Klassen: *Marpeck*, p178.

15. The Second Zurich Disputation, in Leland Harder (Ed.): *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1985), pp234-252.

Migration and the Bible

by Israel Olofinjana

As we continue as a nation to wrestle with the consequences of triggering Article 50, our exit/Brexit from the European Union (EU) seems now to be pretty likely! We have to wait and work out how this affects the status of EU workers, students, diplomats and citizens in the UK. A question that Brexit definitely raises is our view on migration and migrants. For Christians, the question should be what has the Bible has to say about migration, and what do we think of migrants? Should our opinion on this important subject be shaped and dictated entirely by public opinion and discourse?

Chris Wright, in *The Mission of God* (IVP, 2006, pp48-51), argued that there is a missional basis to the entire Bible. To this understanding I would like to add that the Bible is a book of migrations—making it a book of missionary migrants.

The God of the Old Testament was certainly interested in migrants, as a casual perusal of the text reveals. Often God uses migration to accomplish his mission and purposes; so migration and mission complement each other. Take, for example, the classic case of Abram's call in Genesis 12:1-3. God's calling meant that Abram (later, Abraham) had to migrate from Ur of the Chaldeans in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) to the new land God was showing him in Canaan (modern-day Israel and Palestine). The writer of Hebrews was so convinced about Abraham as a missionary migrant that he uses the word migrate (*parokesen*) in Hebrews 11:9 to describe Abraham's journey. This condition of temporary residence is also seen in the stories of Isaac and Jacob.

Through a combination of jealousy and circumstances, Joseph (Abraham's great-grandson) found himself an economic migrant in Egypt. He was sold by his brothers to traders. Joseph found himself in a strange land, and in difficult situations—such as being wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39). In all the suffering Joseph faced as a migrant, God somehow used his journey and experience to fulfil his mission. Joseph preserved his family from the terrible famine that occurred and led to Joseph's declaration in Genesis 50:20, 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives'. Here is another example of how God uses migration in mission.

Joseph's role as Prime Minister in Egypt led to the children of Israel being welcomed initially, but when the government changed, the new authority felt the borders were too loose and therefore needed to tighten border controls. The new Pharaoh introduced and implemented immigration policies to control the many newcomers in Egypt.

The first immigration policy Pharaoh introduced was forced labour and exploitation, as a

result of which the Israelites helped build and develop the cities in Egypt (see Exodus 1:11-14). When it appeared that this measure neither worked nor stopped the migrants increasing, Pharaoh introduced a crueller measure—to ask the midwives systematically to eliminate all the boys born to the Israelites (Genesis 1:15-20). This would mean reducing a community of people to nothing, since men were the backbone of society. When this policy also failed, Pharaoh implemented another sadistic measure to combat increased migration. This time he decided to wipe out an entire generation by infant genocide. Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: 'Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live' (Exodus 1:22 NIV).

It was in response to this injustice and oppression that God decided to liberate the Israelites from slavery. So that they would not forget, but rather learn from this experience, God instructed them on how to treat strangers and foreigners.

* Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt (Exod 22:21).

* Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt (Exod 23:9).

* When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God (Lev 19-33-34).

* When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this (Deut 24:19-22).

I have been working on a Bible study resource with Rev Dr Steve Finamore, Principal of Bristol Baptist College, and Rev Wale Hudson-Roberts, Racial Justice Enabler of BUGB, entitled: *Moving Stories: The Bible and Migration*.. The resource has contributors from the majority world, bringing their perspectives on the subject of migration. Topics include reverse mission, economic migration, Syrian refugees, unaccompanied minors in Calais, migration and persecution, migration and land, the transatlantic slave trade and diaspora theologies. To download and use these free resource please follow this link:

http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/494127/Moving_Stories.aspx

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Reviews

Editor: Michael Peat

Enduring treasure: the lasting value of the Old Testament for Christians

by Pieter Lalleman
Faithbuilders, 2017

Reviewer: Bob Allaway

This is Pieter Lalleman's own translation of a book originally written in his native Dutch, which may account for its relatively easy English. He laments that, while the early church condemned the heretic Marcion for wanting to dump the Old Testament, 'in practice many Christians have become followers of Marcion, whether we admit it or not'. By contrast, he approves of another Dutch theologian, who saw the Hebrew Bible as 'the actual Bible', with the New Testament as a sort of explanatory appendix.

Lalleman sees six ways of grouping OT texts in their relationship to the New.
1. Texts that are plainly predictions of the Messiah, *eg* Zechariah 9:9;
2. Those that are now seen to be Messianic, even though the original authors may not have intended that, *eg* Psalm22.
3. Commandments that the NT says still apply to us, *eg* Exodus 20:14.
4. Commandments that the NT says do not apply to us, such as the laws on 'unclean' food (he recognises that Christians may disagree about which categories some commandments fall into);
5. Stories about individuals that never lose their interest—especially for Sunday School lessons!
6. Finally, those passages that New Testament writers overlook, because they do not impinge on their interests, but which may still have something to teach us today. This book is devoted to expounding these: 1. Creation, 2. The Name and Titles of God, 3. Sexuality, 4. Politics and the Stranger, 5. Scepticism and Doubt, 6. Laments, 7. Contradiction, 8.The Message of Esther, 9. The Jewish Canon, 10. Mixed Mistakes, 11. The Prosperity Gospel and 12. Jewish Festivals. The last three cover what he considers to be misused passages from the Hebrew Bible.

I have two gripes about section 2: He dismisses 'Father' as simply a title 'carried over from the Old Testament into the New'. But Jesus enabling any individual to address God as 'Abba' (Dad) is surely radically new. I find misleading his explanation of how YHWH acquired its present Hebrew vowel-signs.

Anyone expecting section 3 to give simple support to one side or other of current debates will be disappointed, but they might find helpful insights. Worship leaders would benefit from reading section 6. *Chetubim* in section 9 would be better transcribed *Kethubhim*, or *Ketubim*.

On the whole, this is a book I would happily recommend to 'ordinary' church members, even though I disagree with some of his opinions.

Human trafficking, the Bible and the church

by Marion Carson
SCM Press, 2016

Reviewer: Rosa Hunt

The issues which this book addresses were brought into sharp relief for me a couple of years ago when, with the author, I was taken on a tour of the Red Light district in Amsterdam by Lauran Bethell, an American

Baptist who has been working for more than two decades on behalf of women who have been exploited and abused. The tour raised all manner of questions for me, including the moral arguments behind legalising prostitution, and above all, the perennial question: what should I and my church be doing about this? So when Marion Carson's book was published, I was eager to see what she had to say.

Sometimes reports about the depressing extent of contemporary slavery can be little more than a compilation of statistics, and therefore difficult to process. This book is very different. It starts by examining the different hermeneutics employed by both pro- and anti-slavery campaigners in the time of William Wilberforce. This careful analysis is important because the worldview of the Bible on slavery is necessarily very different from ours. Carson uses the hermeneutical approaches of the 19th century to illuminate different ways in which the Bible can be used or abused to support or destroy an argument. With this in mind, she turns to the Bible itself and carries out a survey of major biblical texts dealing with slavery. Her conclusion is that while many individual passages do accept 'slaveholding', there is what she calls an overriding 'redemptive impulse' which is the Bible's consistent song.

Having thus far considered slavery in general, Carson turns to the sex industry as one prominent example of contemporary slavery. She first provides us with a fascinating exploration of historical and contemporary views of prostitution, including the arguments of those who think that it should be legalised. Next she turns to the biblical texts to try to determine the overall 'mind' of Scripture on the subject of prostitutes. She concludes that the biblical literature supports the view that Christians should work towards the eradication of prostitution, but without condemning prostitutes themselves. Instead, 'the church should be looking for ways to prevent that exploitation in the first place—drawing attention to the customers' role in perpetuating prostitution, refusing to collude in systems of corruption, greed and inequality, which render people vulnerable, and calling to account those who exploit, abuse and traffic others into prostitution'.

This book is a clarion call for Christians to unite in setting the captives free. But it is also a carefully researched and clearly argued piece of biblical scholarship. It is accessible enough for those who have no theological background, but contains some intriguing pointers for further research for those who do. I commend it to all Christians.

Immigration and the church: reflecting faithfully in our generation

by Helen Paynter
Grove Books, 2017

Reviewer: Rosa Hunt

Immigration. Don't stop reading yet! Perhaps you feel as weary as I do of hearing the same stale arguments and statistics being trotted out on both sides of the debate. How can we make any progress when we don't know which statistics to believe, and when, in any case, Facebook memes seem more influential in forming opinion? How can we as a church take a theological position on immigration when we have members of both UKIP and the Green Party sitting in our pews?

In this well-written and carefully researched booklet, Helen Paynter is at pains to clarify key definitions and provide reliable, relevant statistics. But the strength of the booklet is that she also provides us with helpful theological categories with which to describe and understand the phenomena

which we are all witness to. The first of these is Kristeva's notion of abjection, in which, in order to maintain our ideal identity, we establish boundaries between ourselves and people whom we perceive as 'other'. Thus we set in train a process which may lead to dehumanisation, objectivisation and finally violence towards the 'other'. Paynter shows how othering and abjection are part of the process by which radicalization occurs and terrorists are formed, but equally part of the process in which nationalist rhetoric threatens immigrants.

Next, Paynter goes on to consider Agamben's concept of bare life, in which people such as refugees who have been stripped of their political rights end up living lives reduced simply to survival, subject to the law but receiving no protection from it. Finally, she considers concepts of human motivation and desire as described by first Abraham Maslow and then Natalie Reichlova. She compares and contrasts the desires which might motivate migrants to leave their homes with the desires which are exploited by commercial advertising in the UK.

By giving us these three thought categories of abjection, bare life and desire, Paynter equips us to describe what we see in the newspapers and in our communities more accurately and precisely, and to understand it more deeply. But she also goes deeper than that. By asking what the Biblical narrative has to say about each of these theological categories, she opens up the possibility of the church framing a response to immigration which is rooted not in statistics, but in Cross and Eucharist.

I have given up trying to hold conversations about immigration based on statistics and 'facts'. I even find it hard to write the word 'fact' without putting it in scare quotes. This is the world in which we live. But I can certainly envisage holding a conversation about immigration which explores issues of othering, bare life and desire. I would recommend this booklet to all Christians who speak out and speak up about immigration, whether within their church or in a more public arena.

Journey to the centre of the soul

by Andrew Mayes
Bible Reading Fellowship, 2017

Reviewer: Ronnie Hall

This is an astonishing book that has been part of my life for several weeks. It is a course on spiritual development for the use of individuals. As such it should be digested slowly, perhaps once per week. The prayer exercises and questions at the end of each chapter are searching and definitely not surface level.

The author has an extensive knowledge of the Holy Land and starts with the idea that a lot of important things happen below the ground in the Bible. By describing these to the reader he invites the reader to imagine going into these tunnels, caves, monasteries and having a spiritual encounter. We are invited to consider how we are the way we are, he then introduces some concepts I've never heard of like 'supernatural prayer', a prayer where God takes over. He brings in great spiritual minds across the entire Christian spectrum to help the reader explore their own soul. The reader then comes across the benefits of monasticism, the pain of the dark night of the soul and even though we are below the land we can know that God is truly with us as we travel with Him. The exploration ends with the reader, the explorer, coming back to the surface and facing the future.

This is obviously not a book to practice speed-reading. To benefit from it at all I would suggest you need two sessions of solitude for five weeks or one session for ten weeks. You have to want to go on this exploration and have a deeper encounter. Coming at this book in the right frame of mind means you cannot possibly stay the same afterwards. If nothing

else you'll learn more about yourself, the archaeology of the Holy Land and have links to some of the greatest spiritual minds ever to live.

One suggestion from the author is that the book can be used. It can be used by groups but this is not a book for beginners. It is for people who want that experience, whatever it might be, of deepening their own relationship. For that I would suggest the group members be more spiritually mature and committed to the process. I cannot recommend this highly enough.

Shaped for service: ministerial formation and virtue ethics

by Paul Goodliff
Pickwick Publications, 2017

Reviewer: Craig Gardiner

This new book from Paul Goodliff, former Head of Ministry in the BUGB, comes with just the right balance of personal experience, theological reflection and prophetic challenge for those involved in the formation and nurture of Christian ministers. Goodliff draws particularly on his own Baptist context, but the approach in *Shaped for service* will resonate with many across the Christian denominations who share a core conviction that at the heart of preparing Christian leaders should be a personal and ecclesial commitment to transformed moral character.

To enable this exploration, Goodliff draws on the ancient tradition of virtue ethics, particularly as more recently articulated by Alasdair MacIntyre, and applies it with accessible dexterity across a wide range of ministerial topics throughout the book's 18 chapters. Thus, without ever becoming naïve about the challenges facing contemporary formation, Goodliff offers a compelling counter-narrative to the overly pragmatic voices that have sometimes dominated recent discussions on equipping ministry today. And yet, while there is never a chapter that disappoints, somehow this is a book that feels in need of more explicit cohesion if it is to reach the beyond the sum of its otherwise excellent individual parts.

The book is arranged into four sections. Part One helpfully lays the ground work of his argument, reviewing the history of ministerial formation and the development of virtue ethics. The second section goes on to examine some distinct models of ministerial practice through the motifs of wisdom, discipleship and most interestingly, a return to the idea of apprenticeship. Part Three goes on to develop a compelling argument for the integrated intellectual, spiritual and character formation of the individual, both in preparation for ministry and in their continuing development.

The final and longest section of the book looks at a variety of practices in ministry, including mission, leadership, preaching, pastoral care and administration. Each reader will no doubt have their favourites from this latter section, (mine was mission—not least for the analogy of pottery and evangelism, 'there has been too much attention given to the marketing of the pot by those who are rather inept at potting in the first place', p234). What cannot be denied is that across these final chapters there is little that escapes Goodliff's practical consideration. Furthermore it is all examined with theological precision and with a personal conviction that makes it ripe for discussion with those involved in ministerial formation and beyond. However, by the end of the book I was still unable to shake the feeling that the later material needed a more unequivocal connection to its early foundations.

In those important opening chapters, Goodliff reviews the history of ministerial

formation, and while the early and quite detailed examples might have been reserved until a bigger picture was established, such larger canvases do then appear with engaging examples from the arts, particularly Bonhoeffer's adaption of musical imagery from Bach and the metaphors of works of art by Piero della Francesca and Caravaggio. Goodliff suggests that such metaphors lay strong foundations for ministries that cultivate attentiveness, that understand themselves in terms of divine gift and are marked by a commitment to cross-bearing discipleship.

The opening section also offers his succinct unpacking of McIntyre's virtue ethics particularly his distinction between 'activities' and 'practices'. All this, says Goodliff, might be fruitfully understood alongside Lex Vygotsky's pedagogical ideas of 'communities of practice' and 'proximal development'. And there is my only difficulty with the book. These early themes and metaphors do underpin the more distinct chapters that follow. McIntyre does re-appear with justifiably overt frequency, but others do not. For example, my excitement at seeing Vygotsky's work appear early in the text dissipated as he, along with many of the early metaphors from art and music largely remained undeveloped.

Perhaps the 'something more' I wanted from this book was no more than a concluding chapter that overcame the rather abrupt ending and brought the rich threads together again in one place. Maybe there was more that might have been done to make explicit some of the deeper connections that lie between chapters, a more visible string to hold Goodliff's pearls of wisdom together. However, this quibble can only be a minor one: it does not diminish the wisdom and challenge contained within each chapter nor does it lessen the significance of a book whose ambition is clear and whose message is a timely challenge. For all those involved in Christian ministry, along with those who enable their formation and development, this is a book that deserves not only to be read, but to be debated and ultimately put into practice.

Messy Church does science

edited by David Gregory
The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2017
Reviewer: Bob Little

Messy Church's key characteristics include encouraging an experiential, practical and immersive encounter with theology. Within this process, discovery, experimentation and exploration are key concepts—so it would seem appropriate to illustrate biblical truths via science, where these concepts are also highly prized.

Helpfully, in this book's *Introduction,* David Gregory explains, 'The important thing about science is not getting the right answer. More important is asking the right questions'. Something similar might be said for 'faith', 'theology' or 'religion'. Reassuring his readership, Gregory states, 'You don't have to know a lot about science…Our hope is that the experiments in this book will enable others… [to help] families to discover that science is welcome in the world of faith'.

These experiments cover the topics of water; earth, stars and space; air; light and colour; the human body; plants; animals; power and energy; transformations and reactions, as well as time and measurement. Conveniently introduced (that is, put into a context) by a 'science and faith' specialist, each section contains 10 activities, making 100 in all.

There are also useful indices of activities, themes and relevant Bible verses, along with a glossary for the 'less-scientifically-gifted'. The book even includes a sample feedback form (also known as a 'happy sheet' or 'Kirkpatrick level one evaluation sheet') for a Messy Church audience.
Each experiment has been designed to fit within a typical Messy Church activity

session—some 20-25 minutes. Having outlined each experiment, there are sections labelled 'Big thinking' (exploring the science behind the activity) and 'Big questions', containing links to relevant Bible stories and suggestions for reflective or prayer-related activities.

Whether you're searching for inspiration about things to do at the next Messy Church session or you're taking a more strategic view of planning the next series of Messy Church encounters—or even wanting some activities for 'Family Church' time—this book should provide plenty of food for thought, along with practical advice on what to do and how to do it.

Moreover, using the contents of this book in family worship, as well as in the context of Messy Church, could go a long way towards exploding the secular myth that 'faith' and 'science' don't mix.

Messy parables: 25 retellings for all ages

by Martyn Payne
Bible Reading Fellowship, 2017

Reviewer: Pieter Lalleman

The first thing I learned from this book is that Messy Church is a trade mark (it is not part of my local church). The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) has a dedicated team which supplies guidance and materials for Messy Church.

The book begins with an introduction to story-telling and some help to become a story-teller. Subsequently Payne, one of the BRF's team, presents 25 parables. Each chapter has the same format: the Bible text is followed by a section ('Get ready') which contains some background, exegesis and theology. These pieces are brief—a page on average—but quite good. Then in 'Get set' Payne explains the preparations necessary to tell this particular parable, including any props needed. Some parables can be told without props whereas others require quite a few. In 'Go' Payne retells the parable in short sentences, with stage directions included. Each chapter closes with ideas for common prayer. The book contains a link to a website from which illustrations can be downloaded, which works well.

Payne is clearly enthusiastic about Jesus as story-teller and about the generous God who is the main character in the stories, and this enthusiasm is contagious. Those not involved in Messy Church could use the short drafts for sermon preparation instead. Payne largely allows the parables to speak for themselves, often pointing to the many surprising elements in them; yet occasionally the props might take over if you use everything he suggests. Another caveat is that the author presupposes that all his readers know a full range of very British nursery rhymes; using these rhymes will obviously help to contextualise Jesus' stories, but those with a different cultural background will regularly feel on alien ground and will have to think of alternative elements for their retellings.

This book made me think I would recommend Messy Church to my minister.

Straight to the heart of Mark: 60 bite-sized insights

by Phil Moore
Monarch Books, 2015

Reviewer: Pieter Lalleman

Not so long ago I reviewed another book in Phil Moore's *Straight to the heart* series (on Hebrews and James) for *BT Online*, and gave it a cautious welcome. In this book, in his growing series, Moore takes four or five pages to explain a passage, focusing on key elements of its message. Rather than really going 'straight to the heart' of each passage, he normally begins with a helpful anecdote. The style of writing is direct and urgent.

Moore presents Mark as Peter's story told to Roman readers and he consistently interprets

the gospel in this light. He provides many footnotes with extra information, often on Greek words or synoptic passages. In combination with the series' straightjacket of dividing the material into exactly 60 chapters, this means that the book's chapters are not exactly bite-sized! (Chapters in *The People's Bible Commentary,* for example, are never more than two facing pages.) To cover all of Mark, Moore also has to combine passages which could well have been discussed separately. Nonetheless, his solid explanations of scripture (NIV) can be commended to all serious readers. Strangely enough, the chapters often end with a call to conversion, but I would think that the book is rather too substantial for non-believers.

As in the other volume I reviewed, Moore is sometimes unnecessarily polemical; in this volume, for example, John Calvin comes in for much too harsh criticism. Again, not all his interpretations convince, such as the suggestion that the mount of the transfiguration was Mt Hermon. Yet I liked the phrase 'He [Jesus] had to come to deal with the heart of the human problem by dealing with the problem of the human heart'. And when I preach from Mark, I will surely look at what Phil Moore says about my chosen passage.

God, neighbour, empire: the excess of divine fidelity and the command of common good

by Walter Brueggemann

SCM Press, London, 2017

Reviewer: Philip Clements-Jewery

The transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich even in a time of austerity; the reduction of everything and everyone to commodities that can be bought and sold in the market; and the readiness to use force to ensure the success of both—does all that sound familiar? It's a story with a very long history.

In the Hebrew Scriptures we see Joseph practising such policies in the seven lean years of famine in Egypt; that Pharaoh used similar means to oppress the Hebrew slaves in the time of the Exodus; that Samuel warned the people that if they should opt for a king, this would be exactly the course he will follow. Solomon's reign proved the point, as, later, does Jehoiakim's. Empire, like the poor, seems to be always with us.

Although the Old Testament does present a theology to legitimate such practices, allying the power of God to the power of the state, it is the merit of Walter Brueggemann's provocative yet profound scholarship that he shows there is another, contrary, theological trajectory. Delivered as a series of lectures at Fuller Theological Seminary, this book revisits themes that will be familiar to those who know Brueggemann's work, but it is good to have them restated clearly and succinctly here.

The first chapter, on the nature and mission of God, shows not only how God is 'irreducibly, inscrutably relational', but also that such 'relationality trumps our preferred order with new possibility'. The second chapter shows how justice is a non-negotiable given ordered in the structure of creation by the creator God. Any legitimatisation of injustice is thus fatally undermined. The third chapter, on grace, contrasts the sort of theology in which God is portrayed as one who punishes offenders and rewards those who are compliant with his will with another Old Testament theme in which God is seen as the God of second chances.

In the final chapter Brueggemann shows how law in the Hebrew Scriptures is not fixed and unchangeable (like the laws of the Medes and Persians), but rather an ongoing conversation and thus endlessly negotiable in the light of changing circumstances. The simplistic application of the 'one meaning of the law' is to be refused in the light of this continuing interpretation and application. I can think of a number of contemporary debates where this insight might be relevant!

This is not only a book to be pondered. It also

contains much that can be preached. Commendably, there are not only full endnotes but also two indices, scripture and author/ subject. There is also a foreword by Jane Williams. Even so, a short review cannot fully do justice to this book. I can only urge you to read it for yourself.

The Market as God

by Harvey Cox
Harvard University Press, 2016

Reviewer: Stephen Heap

According to Cox, a 'pseudo religion' (p22) has emerged which is 'the most formidable rival' (p19) to other religions. He calls it The Market, or, in the words of Pope Francis, the 'deified market' (p3); The Market as God. It is a religion which is doing great damage to humankind and the planet.

It is not the market *per se*, a method of exchange, that Cox criticises, but the shift from the market being a servant of other goods, moralities and spiritualities to it being a faith by which society is to be organised. Once the market square was within the Temple or in the shadow of the Cathedral; symbolic of the market serving higher goals. Now the market is treated as a 'grand narrative about the inner meaning of human history, why things go wrong, and how to put them right' (p5). It is this grand narrative which Cox calls The Market; a myth which seeks to tell us who we are, how we should behave and where we are going. It is a pseudo religion, created by humankind.

Its harmful effects, discussed in chapters 4-8, include creating great disparities of wealth, marginalising the poor, injuring nature and distorting the values by which individuals and communities (including churches) live. It offers a different way from the God of the Bible, who has a bias to the poor expressed for example in the laws of Sabbath and Jubilee. At present, The Market has beaten the God of the Bible, though God's followers do keep fighting back, witness liberation theology.

What to do is a proper question to address to one making such points. Cox's answer is that The Market is a human creation and humans can 'renovate, dismantle or transform it' (p256). Humans can turn it back from being a way of organising society, to a method of exchange. To do so, we need to decentralise the market, 'dis-integrating the colossal banks and financial empires that are "too big to fail"' (p265). The Spirit of God who, in creation, dispersed power to creation, might help us. Cox also suggests smartphones and similar devices which give individuals access to banking will accelerate decentralisation; not very convincing because the edifice of The Market remains untouched.

More interesting than what seems a weak ending are thoughts inspired by Adam Smith, hailed by some as a saint who helped create The Market religion. In Cox's view, Smith is a Christian theologian whose views are not at one with The Market. For Smith, says Cox, the market is a means, not an end. Smith extols virtues such as benevolence and borrows from Methodism the idea that human beings can '"move on" toward the "perfection" for which God intended us' (p150). Such goods are the real ends for humankind, not The Market, or wealth creation. So Cox finds material in Smith to support his argument.

What to do? As a theologian, Smith engaged with many fields of human learning, philosophical and theological. Cox's contention is that such wide engagement needs to happen again, between economists and those who think about the meaning of life from other angles. There needs to be an opening up of spaces for 'criticism and reflection', including from 'a transcendent point of reference' (p174). Within such a movement, Smith may have a prophetic voice. The need to talk, with theological voices as part of the conversation, seems clear.

Dethroning Mammon: making money serve grace

by Justin Welby
Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016

Reviewer: Michael Peat

In his 1943 book, *The abolition of man*, C.S. Lewis cautioned against eclipsing the benefits received from technological advance by succumbing to an unreflected pursuit of power over nature. In language that reflects his time, Lewis calls us to recognise the threat lurking behind the seductive appeal of increasing control, that 'each new power won by man is a power over man as well'. For all the benefits of technological advance, Lewis argues that we risk being lured into an all-consuming technocratic way of thinking about ourselves and the world in which social inequality becomes ever more entrenched.

A similar kind of 'magician's bargain' (as Lewis calls it) troubles Justin Welby. His Lent book similarly seeks to expose and challenge enslaving and exploitative ways of thinking into which we are readily drawn by 'Mammon'. Welby uses this biblical term to denote the power dynamic that drives our seemingly insatiable desire to acquire, and to assume that economic exchange is the governing force of our lives. Like Lewis reflecting on our growing mastery of nature, Welby is keen to emphasise the real benefits of economics, insisting on the superior potential of democratic capitalism materially to benefit the many. The fact that it is more often the few than the many who benefit from this system Welby attributes not to the accumulation of wealth as such, but to the manipulative domination of Mammon over the way we think about what we have, its characteristic way of 'playing on insecurities, on good intentions and on reasonable ambitions'. Those wanting to deepen their understanding of this dynamic would do well to read another book reviewed in this *bmj* issue: Harvey Cox's *The Market as God*.

Through the lens of Jesus' parable likening the Kingdom of God to a merchant letting go of all he has to own the pearl of great price, Welby begins with an unsettling 'Christ-directed' enquiry into attitudes we are all prone to regarding wealth. Reflections on other scriptural passages, and a 'wealth' of illustrations from an author clearly well acquainted with international commerce, combine to offer insightful explanations of the claims which focus each chapter, for example: 'What we see we value'; 'What we measure controls us'; 'What we receive we treat as ours'. There is grist to the mill for the preacher as well as the discussion group here. Later chapters take us on from the exposing of attitudes to cultivate self-awareness to the kind of gestures of repentance and renewal that equip us for a lifetime of dethroning Mammon so as to enthrone Christ in our personal and communal lives.

Six chapters overall, with questions for discussion in each, reveal Welby's intention that this book be suitable for reading in Lent, either by individuals or groups. I commend it as both accessible and wise, showing humility but also the 'street cred' of an archbishop whose former profession constantly pressed the question that motivated him to write this book: 'How are Christians distinctive in their approach to money?'.

Could YOU review?

If this section has inspired you, contact Mike Peat with your areas of interest on

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Of interest to you

edited by Arderne Gillies

SETTLEMENTS

NEW PASTORATES AND PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS

Keith ABRAHAM	From Wellington Square, Hastings to Greenfields, Crawley (September 2017)
Steve AYERS	From Burnham on Sea to Kendal Road, Gloucester (January 2018)
Stephen BLACKABY	to Melbourne, Derbyshire (July 2017)
Wayne CLARKE	From New North Road, Huddersfield to Trinity, Gorton (January 2018)
Norman CUMMING	From West Craven Baptist Fellowship to Ashill (December 2017)
Dave DUCKER	From St. Philip's, Sheffield to St. Philip's, Sheffield – Team Leader (Sept 2017)
Rosemary EATON	From Bridgwater to Highams Park (February 2018)
Mags FARROW	To Fishponds (June 2017)
Alyson GODFREY	To Mount Carmel, Caerphilly, Children & Families Worker (September 2017)
Gilson GWENDU	From Laindon to Mill Road, Cambridge (October 2017)
Ben HALDANE	From Scunthorpe to Barrow on Soar Assistant) (September 2017)
Joth HUNT	From Eastleigh to Regional Minister, SCBA (January 2018)
Gaynor HAMMOND	To Hope, Hebden Bridge (Retirement Pastorate) (April 2017)
Mark HERD	To Mansfield (October 2017)
Clare HOOPER	From Wokingham to Southern Counties Baptist Association, Regional Minister for Children, Youth & Families (Nov 2017)
Stephen JENKINS	From Hampton to Uckfield (Dec 2017)
Danielle LEIGH	From Ibstock to The Green, Stafford (Associate) (September 2017)
Dave LLEWELLYN	From Lisvane to Regional Minister, SCBA (January 2018)
Tom McGIBBON	From Oundle Road, Peterborough to Cleveleys (January 2018)
Stephen McKIBBON	To West Bridgford (January 2018)
Allie MOORE	From Sompting Community Church (Community Minister) to Sompting Community Church (Minister) (Oct 2017)
Bob MORRIS	From Cirencester to Cirencester, 1 day/week and WEBA (Children, Youth & Families Mission Enabler) (September 2017)
Danny PAINE-WINNETT	To North Winchester Community Church
Kezia ROBINSON	From Wakefield to Wakefield, Team Leader (September 2017)
John SCREEN	To Combe Martin (September 2017)

Steve THOMSON	From St. Peter's, Worcester to Minchinhampton (Team Leader) (January 2018)
Peter WALLACE	To Enon, Sunderland (Associate) (September 2017)
David WARD	To Dereham (Children, Youth and Families) (September 2017)
Richard WEBB	From Upton Vale, Torquay to Big Life Ministries (SWBA) (August 2017)

MINISTERS IN TRAINING

Sam ACKERMAN	Spurgeon's to Purley (MIT placement)
Michael Mensah BOADU	Spurgeon's to Pawson's Road, Croydon (MIT placement) (September 2017)
Amy BARKER	Spurgeon's to Walsgrave (Summer 2019)
Neil BYWATER	Spurgeon's to Pilgrim's Hatch, Brentwood (Summer 2018)
Dan COPPERWHEAT	Spurgeon's to Greenleaf Road, Walthamstow (August 2017)
Denise DOBIE	Bristol to Bewdley (Associate) (MIT placement) (September 2017)
Sarah DUCKER	St Hild/Northern to St. Philip's, Sheffield (Team Leader) (September 2017)
Laura GIMENO	Spurgeon's to Great Ashby, Stevenage (Summer 2018)
Sue HENSBY	St Hild/Northern to Sutton St. James (MIT placement) (September 2017)
Linda HOPKINS	Northern to Waterloo United Free (Summer 2018)
Stevan KIRK-SMITH	Spurgeon's to Cheriton (Assistant) (September 2017)
Michael LOVEJOY	Spurgeon's to Northolt Park (January 2018)
Andrew MAYNARD	To Eldon Road, Wood Green (MIT placement) (September 2018)
Andrew MUMFORD	Spurgeon's to South Ashford (September 2017)
Alex NEWENS	Spurgeon's to Sidcup (September 2017)
Phil PALMER	St Hild/Northern to Beverley (Summer 2018)
Claire ROBERTS	Bristol to Worle (MIT placement) (September 2017)
Benjamin TUCKER	Spurgeon's to Seaton, Devon (Summer 2018)
Chris TUTTE	Regent's Park to Lliswerry (Summer 2018)
Gavin WALTER	Spurgeon's to Ashdon (Summer 2018)

CHAPLAINCIES, EDUCATIONAL APPOINTMENTS, MISSION & OTHER SECTOR MINISTRIES

Neil BRIGHTON	From Poynton to BMS World Mission (September 2017)
Barbara CARPENTER	From Stoke St Gregory to Chaplain, Lee Abbey Fellowship (October 2017)
Jenni ENTRICAN	President of the European Baptist Federation 2017 – 2019

Anthony GILL	From Director, Nationwide Christian Trust to Chaplain, Addenbrooke's Hospital (October 2017)
David HUGHES	From Paignton to Chaplain, 2gether NHS Foundation Trust, Gloucester (Sept. 2017)
Arthur MAGAHY	From Tutor, IMC, BMS World Mission to Head of Mission Discipleship Training, OM UK, Halesowen (October 2017)
James NEVE	From Frontline Debt Advice to BMS World Mission, India (September 2017)
Ruth NEVE	From Thornhill, Southampton to BMS World Mission, India (September 2017)
Claire ORD	From Director, IMC, BMS World Mission to Chaplain, Worcester Royal Hospital (November 2017)
Stephen PLUMMER	From Colwell, Isle of Wight to Chaplain, MHA Care Home, Shefford (Oct 2017)

RETIREMENTS

Martin ASTON	East Leake (July 2017)
Gary BIGHAM	Memoral, Swansea (September 2017)
Geoffrey BLAND	Lliswerry, Newport (July 2017)
Gordon BRAND	Chaplain, Kemp Hospice (July 2017)
Geoff CARR	Roding Lane Free, Ilford (May 2017)
Simon FARRAR	Chaplain, Lee Abbey Fellowship (October 2017)
Roger FOSTER	Castleton (July 2017)
Colin FRAMPTON	Sompting Community Church (September 2017)
Ian FULCHER	Norton, Stockton on Tees (December 2017)
Lis JORDAN	New Life, Northallerton (December 2017)
John LAYZELL	Farnborough (October 2017)
William LONGLEY	Waterlooville (February 2018)
Paul MERTON	Westgate, Newcastle upon Tyne (Jan. 2018)
Alison OVERTON	Roseberry Park, Bournemouth (Nov. 2017)
John PRESSDEE	Green Street Green (Easter 2018)
Yvonne PRESSDEE	Green Street Green (Easter 2018)
John ROSS	Farnham (September 2017)
Robin SCOTT	Cippenham, Slough (January 2018)
Laurence WEAVER	Duckpool Road, Newport (April 2017) to Canada
Brian WIGGINS	Cornerstone, Bournemouth (December 2017)

DEATHS

Geoff CARR	Roding Lane Free (June 2017)
Raymond BURNISH	Retired (Fareham) (August 2017)
John COMINS	Retired (Kirkby in Ashfield) (July 2017)
Cliff DUNN	Retired (Worksop) (August 2017)
Dennis FLOODGATE	Retired (Horsham) (September 2017)
Cyril MILLWOOD	Retired (Worcester) (October 2017)
Barbara STANFORD	Retired (Ipswich) (September 2017)

ANNIVERSARIES

Roger & Jenny TAYLOR Golden Wedding 23rd December 2017

MATTERS FOR PRAYERFUL CONCERN

Elaine BLUNDELL	From Keyworth (March 2018), seeking settlement
Stephen COLES	From Stoborough (February 2018), seeking settlement
Roger STANDING	Former Principal, Spurgeon's College, on Leave of Absence

Of interest to you: contact details

To include matters for prayer or interest such as special wedding anniversaries (50+), bereavements, illness etc, please contact : Arderne Gillies at Greenhill, 39 South Road, Chorleywood, Herts WD3 5AS, or email her at rev.arderne@btinternet.com .

Please note that Arderne's resources include the Ministry Department and the Baptist Times, as well as direct communications. Because of this, the descriptions of posts published may not always match the locally identified roles.

bmj Essay Prize 2017/8

The *bmj* invites entries for our first Essay Prize from those serving in, or in formation for, the leadership and ministry of Baptist churches. We would like an essay of 2500 words on a topic and title of the entrant's choice that fits into *one* of the following categories:

Baptist History and Principles
Biblical Studies
Theology or Practical Theology

We are looking for clear writing and argument, and a creative engagement with our Baptist life. The prize will be £75.00 and the winning essay (and any highly commended contributions) will be published in *bmj*.

We particularly encourage entries from those in the early years of their (Baptist) ministries, including MiTs and those who are not in accredited or recognised leadership roles.

Closing date: 30 March 2018

Entries should be submitted electronically, double spaced and fully referenced, to the editor at revsal96@aol.com, including details of your name, address, church, role, and stage of ministry.

Judges will be drawn from the Editorial Board of *bmj* and subject-appropriate academic Baptist colleagues. We reserve the right not to award a prize if the entries are unsuitable, of an inadequate standard for *bmj*, or do not meet the criteria.

Please share this competition with colleagues to whom it might be of interest.

Contact the editor if you have any queries.