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the baptist ministers' journal

October 2018 volume 340

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the baptist ministers'

journal

October 2018, vol 340, ISSN 0968-240

the baptist ministers' journal© is the journal of the
Baptist Ministers' Fellowship

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front and back covers

(all service to the Fellowship is honorary)

www.bmf-uk.org

printed by Keenan Print (keenanprint@btconnect.com)

From the Editor

Waiting time

At the time of writing, the UK is waiting for decisions on Brexit. Terms are suggested and rejected; the spectre of 'no-deal' looms ahead, and we have no idea which way things will go. People who need to move cannot sell their houses. European nationals are returning home because they feel unwelcome in this country. Restaurants and care homes cannot fill their staffing rotas. Things feel fragile while we wait.

Recently some of us attended some teaching by Doug Gay of Glasgow University on nationalism, which necessarily involved a discussion of the current Brexit situation. Whatever one's political view, one of Gay's questions and suggestions was helpful and provocative. What have churches *already done* to facilitate good conversations on Brexit? And what can they *now do* to facilitate good conversations on Brexit (or indeed, to hold a safe conversation space on any other divisive issue in our nation)?

Christians have two key times of waiting in the liturgical year—one being Lent, one Advent, and this latter will soon be upon us. Regular disciplines train us for times of testing—and if anyone is trained in waiting, it should be us. Maybe this is a gift we can offer to our stressed communities in some way: to wait, to fear, to wonder—and ultimately to hope, for our Lord will come.

Meanwhile, there are interesting things on the Baptist menu. The BMF (through *bmj* and its developing electronic interfaces—and do see our new Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/baptistministerfellowship)—loves to encourage theological engagement and reflection among ministers and seeks to facilitate this wherever possible. Have a look at the two essay competitions advertised in this issue (pp30-31), and also at the invitation to nominate a possible Whitley Lecturer for 2021 (p9). We have rich resources in our Baptist movement and these are opportunities to share and to hear new ideas. Maybe you know someone who should be encouraged to enter?

Every blessing on your ministry as we wait for the King to come. *SN*

A brief theology of time

by Peter Shepherd

As I am writing this, I am experiencing the reality of the present moment, just as you are in reading it. I am aware of the sensations of temperature, the pressure from the seat on which I sit, my mind's ponderings as my fingers move over the keyboard. Everything, for both of us, is embraced by the present moment, including the past, which no longer exists except in our memories, and the future, which does not yet exist. And yet, paradoxically, this present moment, in which all of our reality resides, does not exist either. It flies by at such speed that it cannot be captured. The opening sentence of this paragraph—even the word I have just written and you have just read—is already history for both you and me.

Scientists, philosophers and theologians have long pondered the meaning of time. In practical terms, we are dominated by it. We search for time-saving devices and greater speed; our calendars give shape to our lives. But perhaps our dependence on clock and diary shuts us out from the real meaning and wonder of time. Some hold that the distinction between past, present and future is an illusion—a psychological device helping us to interpret our experience of change and decay.

Science has raised intriguing questions about time, and its relation to space and matter. Einstein demonstrated that the rate that time appears to pass is variable; before the Big Bang we are told time did not exist; experiments in quantum mechanics suggest that time behaves very differently at the sub-atomic level. Such strange features of the world in which we live may make no discernible practical difference to the way we carry on, but they do provoke us to reflect afresh on the relationship between time and eternity, between our mortal existence and the nature and being of God.

Our faith is rooted in the historical birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. How do these events relate to an eternal God, and to us, living centuries later? Does God exist in time, and if so, how can we understand what this means? What difference does our belief that Christ is both an historical man and eternally God make to the way we understand the atonement, and other great themes of theology? Time is clearly a theological issue. Stephen Hawking was not speaking as a theologian when he said there was no possibility of a creator because there was no time for a creator to have existed before the Big Bang, but whether or not time itself had a beginning has important theological implications for how we think about God.

God and time

Theologians have always wrestled with the question of how time relates to God. How can we best understand and talk about a God who is both the Creator of time and is also active within it? Should we think about eternity as time without end, or as timeless?

The hymn *Amazing grace* includes these words:

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less time to sing God's praise than when we first begun.

The same sentiment is expressed in a recent worship song by Matt Redman:

The end draws near and my time has come; still my soul will sing your praise unending, ten thousand years and then forevermore.

These lyrics may be poetic and metaphorical, but they are significant in picturing eternity as an endless stream of time, measurable in years, just as we experience time in a linear fashion here and now. Perhaps we can see a similar idea in Paul's description of the Christian dead 'waiting' for the day of resurrection (an interesting contrast to the words of Jesus on the cross that the condemned man would be with him 'today' in Paradise). Some theologians, such as Oscar Cullmann, in his book *Christ and time*, have promoted this idea of eternity as time indefinitely prolonged.

A difficulty with this idea is that it makes God subject to chronological time rather than its creator. It is also based on a particular understanding of time as a chronological sequence, which is not necessarily how we conceive it.

An alternative view is that God's being is totally outside time. He remains quite distinct from the space and time he creates, existing in unchanging and constant holiness, unmoved by historical change. For God, past, present and future, attached as they are to change, decay and mortality, do not exist. This notion of a changeless, timeless eternity influenced Christianity through its contact with Greek philosophy, and we can see suggestions of it in a song such as:

Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same; all may change, but Jesus never, glory to his name!

Again, I wouldn't want to put too much theological weight on it, and it is easy to appreciate the sentiments the writer wanted to convey, but it is hard to square such a concept of God as totally outside time with him being active in history, especially in the person of Jesus. Scripture clearly depicts God as affected by and involved in events in time. His love and purposes for us are revealed in history, and it is impossible to conceive of the God of the Bible being untouched by it or remote from it. Quite apart from historical events on earth, a God who is love, and who loves, as the doctrine of the Trinity implies, must surely know what it means to be moved and affected by the giving and receiving of love.

The opening verses of Genesis provide us with some help in trying to understand the relationship between God and time. They describe an original state of formlessness for the earth and universe, without time or space or substance, in which God is the only reality—'in the beginning, God'. The story of creation which follows occurs over a series of six days, with the repeated refrain at the end of each day, 'there was evening and there was morning'. The emphasis on time is striking. As God speaks the words of creation, we see not only the emergence of light and darkness, air, earth and sea *etc*, but of time itself. And we see God's own activity within the context of this sequence of 'days'. They follow one another, each one marked by a special act of making. Chronological time and timeless eternity meet in God's act of creation.

We see this meeting of time and eternity in the acts of God elsewhere in scripture too. The revelation to Moses in Exodus 3 demonstrates both God's close involvement in the history and experiences of Israel, but also his timeless present—'I am who I am'. It is reflected in the 'I am' sayings of Jesus in John. The Psalms repeatedly refer to both the eternal character of God—'from everlasting to everlasting you are God'—alongside his immediate concerns for particular people at particular times—'when they call to me I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble'. The eternal and the temporal come together above all in the person of Jesus. When he describes the Kingdom of God as 'at hand', is that not precisely what he is talking about?

Karl Barth suggests that the time God has created for us is a shallow reflection of the quality of time known only to him in his eternal, triune existence. God's time is free from the limitations of the only kind of time thinkable for us. He is love, in the eternal loving fellowship of the Trinity, yet chooses to love us in the mortal, time-bound existence he has created for us.

If time and eternity come together in Christ, this means that the historical events in Bethlehem, Galilee and Jerusalem are more than simply passing events in time. Christ offers us the opportunity to share in the eternal realities of incarnation and atonement. As our risen and eternal Lord, he continues to bear the scars of his suffering and death. His resurrection, overcoming the sadnesses and injustices of the world to bring hope and joy, is a reality he offers to people of every age. The historical actions of God to save us burst out of time. They become new and personal for every generation. We see this powerfully expressed in the Lord's Supper and baptism.

Remembering Christ and his people

Christ calls us to remember him at his table. Such remembering is not simply a matter of recounting and bringing to mind historical events. Christ makes his broken body and shed blood present to us in bread and wine—'This is my body'. We 'proclaim' his death at the table not just by describing it in words and representing it symbolically act, but by making

it a reality here and now. The Lord invites us to his table to feed by faith on him.

In a similar way in baptism we are buried 'with him' and 'raised with him'. Christ's death and resurrection are brought into our experience through baptism. These events determine who we are. Through this special act of remembering the past, we become one with Christ, and receive his gift of new life. We touch eternity, and the passage of time that, as far as we are concerned, separates us from these events, becomes of no account.

We carry the living memory of Christ, with its message of redemption and hope, into each conversation, each opportunity and each challenge we face. Jesus, the crucified and risen one, promises to be with us 'always'. Chronological time may distance us from Christ, but our knowledge of him draws us into eternity. The historical Jesus of the gospels is with us, now and always, by his Spirit, who John says will take what is Christ's and bring it to us.

We are also united with all those who have also been touched by eternity and drawn into eternal fellowship with Christ. We are one with his followers of every age, past, present and future. They are part of our present experience, shaping who we are today. Remembering those who have followed Jesus before us is not just an exercise for church historians but an integral part of what it means for us to be his followers today—an acknowledgement that we are part of a journey of discipleship that embraces past and future disciples as well as present ones. As the writer to the Hebrews wrote, 'we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses', accompanying and inspiring us as we follow Christ. In like manner, of course, we are witnesses to them.

God calls us into fellowship with Christ. He calls us to see that we are not just momentary blips in the process of time, but part of his eternal purpose. We are citizens of heaven. In reflecting on this, we can thank the insights of science for opening up interesting avenues for thought. Ideas about the nature of time lie at the heart of the search for what it means to be human. They also help us to think about the nature and being of God.

A preacher was once expounding on the theme of God. He paused during his sermon and asked his congregation, 'Where was the Lord before the world was made?' An interesting question, that raises not only the issue of God's being, but also the origin of time, space and matter. Understandably, the congregation was baffled, unsure what the question meant. Eventually the preacher answered the question himself. 'Where was the Lord before the world was made? The Lord was in his glory'. Yesterday, today and for ever, the Lord is in his glory, and he invites us to share in it.

Peter Shepherd is now retired from Baptist ministry and lives in Sheffield. Contact Peter on shepherd.peter@talk21.com.

The Whitley Lectureship

The establishment of the annual Whitley Lecture is designed as an encouragement to research and writing by Baptist scholars, and to enable the results of this work to be published

The Whitley Trust Committee would like to increase the scope of nominations in the interests of good inclusive practice, and so welcomes nominations from members of the Baptist community in the UK and in Ireland for the 2021 Whitley Lecture.

For potential Lecturers, the Committee requires (on the proper nomination form, available from the Secretary, below):

- *name, church and occupation of both the nominating person and the proposed Lecturer,*
- *a current CV indicating academic ability;*
- *a paragraph (250-500 words) about the subject for the Lecture;*
- *a declaration that the proposed Lecturer will be available for the main Lecture period: normally January—May 2021 (all precise Lecture dates are subject to negotiation between the Lecturer and the hosts).*

Please note that:

- *the Lecturer does NOT need to be a Baptist minister;*
- *the Committee will select a balanced range of topics over the years from suitable nominations, reserving the right not to appoint a Lecturer in any particular year, if none of the suggested material is deemed suitable.*

Please contact Sally Nelson, Secretary to the Whitley Trust Committee, at revsal96@aol.com, if you would like a nomination form, further information about the Lecture, or information about the process of nomination.

The Whitley Trust Committee, 2018

Interfaith: a reflection

by Laura Staves

Becoming vice-chair of the local Churches Together group involved attending the local Interfaith Forum. I came to the forum somewhat warily and found the situation felt uncomfortable. My difficulties were not from lack of contact with those from other faiths but seemed to lie with a lack of clarity in my own thinking on interfaith matters and uncertainty over the purpose of the group. The situation created more questions than answers for me: questions over the way that Christians seem to instigate interfaith dialogue or interfaith groups, yet then strive to be accommodating, to be inclusive and not offend.

Multicultural and multifaith issues are becoming more crucial for Christians as the rich diversity is increasingly seen in all areas of day-to-day life.[1] Our children encounter adherents of a wide selection of faiths at school and with many different backgrounds living close by friendships often cross over religious boundaries.[2] With increasing migration and global communication our world is very different to that of the first Baptist churches. Finley paints a very negative picture of the early Baptist attitude of opposition to Catholic and Anglican thought, of prejudice towards Jews and isolationism combined with disinterest in other religions.[3] Yet Walker points out that Baptists 'are called to be in solidarity with all people, no matter what their race, faith or culture'.[4] Clearly the historical Baptist commitment to religious freedom applies to all faiths. Yet this must be balanced with the emphasis of a Christian life being one of witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ, the importance of scripture in personal life and in the life of the church as a fellowship of believers.[5]

Living our faith within a plurality of culture means that, not just as individuals, but as a church, we need to be able to relate to those of other faiths or of none.[6] Over the years many Christians have become less exclusive and suspicious, and more open to working together. Much of this has been driven at grassroots level as Christians, including Baptists, have worked with those from other faith backgrounds on social projects and forged friendships.[7] Yet in interfaith situations there is a danger of swinging to one of two extremes for an easy life or to avoid the challenges therein.

One extreme is to keep Christianity a private matter and avoid engagement with public issues, especially concerning other faiths. This approach assists those secular groups who are striving to remove religion from having any influence in public life.[8] The words of two bishops could be heeded. Bishop Wright spoke of the healthiness of public life

being linked directly to the healthiness of religion.[9] Christians need to play their part for the good of our country and the health of society by demonstrating a better way of relating, especially in the current toxic environment of increasing racial hatred.[10] Secondly Bishop Newbigin, reported by Riddell, warned that by 'withdrawing into the private sphere, Christians have limited the public claim of the lordship of Christ over all things'.[11] Our testimony is damaged by lack of engagement.

However, the other extreme of interfaith contact has two faces: either becoming very dogmatic in beliefs alongside a zealous and arrogant activism, or accommodating everyone—which is the slippery slope leading to 'a benign but bland, smoothing over' of differences.[12] Riddell asserts that certain interfaith matters form 'one of the most controversial subjects in the modern church', with viewpoints varying within denominations as well as between them. Walking the middle way of being faithful to Christ while allowing our own context to shape us and seeing the good in others is not easy but is crucial.[13]

Biblically one argument comes from injunctions to be hospitable to aliens and strangers, which occur throughout the Old and New Testaments (*eg* Hebrews 13:2). Linked with this argument is in the parable of the Good Samaritan, where 'the other' is a neighbour. It is someone from another faith who shows us how to love our neighbours. This calls for a relationship which is not superficial, it means 'trying to look through her lenses'.[14] As Paynter points out, the answer in our global village to 'who is my neighbour?' can be found in Augustine's words 'since you cannot do good to all, you are to pay special regard to those who, by the accidents of time, or place, or circumstance, are brought into closer connection with you'. Yet unconditional hospitality is not an option, since there is an underlying biblical concern for holiness in relationships with others, for example Deuteronomy 7:1-6 and 2 John 9-11.[15] By balancing the call for hospitality with that of the call for purity we can avoid slipping into the blandness of being too accommodating. Another passage is the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42), someone of a different culture and religious background. Jesus does not correct her dogmatically, but creates dialogue resulting in 'a life-altering encounter with himself'.[16] In our own encounters with Jesus, the more 'we grow in faithfulness and commitment to him, the closer we in fact find ourselves in the midst of those "not like us" with arms outstretched in love, hearts full of grace, and minds ready to listen'.[17]

The other biblical principal worth mentioning is that God does not just work through his people. Cyrus is a prime example (Isaiah 45). Involvement will not weaken our faith, but faith is strengthened in dialogue with others.[18] Riddell helpfully summarises four major biblical themes which give guidance when considering other faiths.

• God's universal blessing was bestowed originally on the human race regardless of creed, ethnicity, geography and other factors (Genesis 9:8-17).

• Some people turned away from God and developed aberrant religious beliefs and practices (Romans 1:21-23, Isaiah 2:6).

• God seeks to re-establish his original relationship with all humankind. The key to this is the kind of faith preached by Jesus and found both among those who profess to be his followers and among some who come from outside groups (Romans 10:4).

• it is incumbent upon Christians to take the message out to all people, in fulfilment of the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20).[19]

He comments that these four are a complete package and that none of them should be stressed over the others.[20]

The main positions taken by Christians in relation to other religions come under three headings, though within each there are varying viewpoints held.

Exclusivism is the view that only in Christianity can God be found and that other religions are in error.[21] Ultimate salvation is only through faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.[22] Within this view there are differences of belief over what happens to those who have never heard the gospel or who lived before Christ.

Inclusivism holds in tension the belief of salvation being found through Jesus Christ and God's desire to save all people.[23] This leads to the conclusion that other faiths may include some elements of God's revealed truth, but without Christ they do not offer full salvation.[24]

Pluralism holds that Christianity is one of many routes to the knowledge of God and salvation, basically it is the idea that each religion provides a different path up the mountain to the same destination at the top.

Interestingly, different writers support different positions. Race rejects exclusivism since it leads to the condemnation of other faiths, he rejects inclusivism due to the perceived problems inherent in it and favours pluralism—though he carefully avoids the resulting contradictions from religious and philosophical differences by suggesting approaching plurality 'from the perspective of the transformative purpose for which the religions exist'. For him, this allows the Christian view to be heard on an equal footing with the other faiths. He and others note how crucial the attitude to Jesus Christ is in approaching interfaith relationships. For example, the Vatican noted in 1997: 'How can one enter into an interreligious dialogue, respecting all religions and not considering them in advance as imperfect and inferior, if we recognize in Jesus Christ and only in him the unique and universal saviour of mankind?'. Race finds a way round this problem by 'reclassifying' Jesus, suggesting that the traditional view of the incarnation is no longer acceptable.[25] This sounds like an illustration of how to smooth out differences with an approach centring on God but relegating Christ to the role of representative, equal to say Muhammed or Buddha.[26]

Wingate rejects pluralism and questions how all religions can be equally true because of contradicting beliefs. Even if pluralism is thought of as Race's 'transformative process', the finishing point is not the same for different religions. Some religions could be described by others as a false trail leading to a precipice.[27] If this description is possible then how can they be thought of going the same way? In fact, it is pluralism itself that is the false trail being manufactured by an increasingly secular society in the West, which wants to promote equality for all, especially in religion.[28]

Wingate favours inclusivism, suggesting that God in His generosity will find many ways to include people—though he notes that, owing to free will, individuals may exclude themselves from salvation. He does suggest that God includes people due to 'their Christ-like way of life and commitment to their own faith' since the Spirit of God who works through other faiths can be taken to be that of Christ. He comments that people becoming Christians from other faiths will now simply know explicitly what was only implicit before in their own faith. In allowing the possibility of being saved outside of Christianity, Wingate leaves this final decision to God![29]

Riddell raises the warning that there is a danger in inclusivism of laying stress on God's universal blessing for all people, the first of his major biblical themes, at the expense of the others. He warns that this 'is as unbalanced as an extreme exclusivist viewpoint'. Since WW2 the Protestant church has been shifting from exclusivism to inclusivism with a danger of thinking more about what can be learnt from other religions than about the importance of mission. Riddell calls for a balance between the exclusive and inclusive positions, illustrating them as a balance in approaches between Paul's debating in Athens (Acts 17:16-34) and acknowledging our shared humanity from God creating all human beings in his own image (Gen 1:27).[30] I have found this quote of Newbigin helpful:

The position which I have outlined is exclusivist in the sense that it affirms the truth of the revelation in Jesus Christ, but it is not exclusivist in the sense of denying the possibility of the salvation of the non-Christian. It is inclusivist in the sense that it refuses to limit the saving grace of God to the members of the Christian Church, but it rejects the inclusivism which regards the non-Christian religions as vehicles of salvation. It is pluralist in the sense of acknowledging the gracious work God in the lives of all human beings, but it rejects the pluralism which denies the uniqueness and decisiveness of what God has done in Christ. Jesus.[31]

One thing on which all writers agree is the importance of dialogue between faiths. There is not space here to go into the wealth of writing on dialogue. The challenge is to engage with interfaith initiatives which promote understanding, realising that dialogue is two-way and we have things to contribute as well as to learn.[32] It is worth including Riddell's helpful six-point summary of the core elements of church statements.

1. Other faiths may contain elements of truth and beauty.

2. Christians may learn something from people of other faiths.

3. Christians should allow themselves be challenged by other faiths.

4. Other faiths are worthy of Christian affection, respect, and even admiration in certain ways.

5. Other faiths do not represent alternative gospels.

6. The biblical witness to God and Christ is complete in itself.[33]

Riddell's evaluation has been very helpful and there is encouragement in his description of evangelical churches who 'appear to have planted their flag firmly at the point where they acknowledge elements of truth in other faiths and seek to build bridges of understanding with other faiths, but draw the line at compromising the essential uniqueness of Christ as the ultimate and universal path to God'.[34] In our richly diverse society, we are called to be hospitable to others without compromising our faith: now we are to work that out in practice.

Laura Staves is minister of Rockingham Road Baptist Church, Kettering and can be contacted on laura.staves@ntlworld.com.

Notes to text

1.BUGB and URC, *We Belong: Celebrating Cultural Diversity and Living Hospitality: An Ecumenical Racial Justice Starter Training Pack*. Participants' Manual (Didcot; London: BUGB/ URC, 2006), introduction.

2. Alan Race, *Interfaith Encounter: The Twin Tracks of Theology and Dialogue* (London: SCM, 2001), p5. Nesbitt, Eleanor M., Interfaith *Pilgrims: Living Truths and Truthful Living*, Swarthmore Lectures, 2003 (London: Quaker Books, 2003), p19.

3. Finley, John M., *Ecumenical/Interfaith Dialogue and Ministry: Are Baptists Ready for the Excitement?* <http://www.baptisthistory.org/finleyspeaks.pdf> [accessed 10th September 2017], paragraph 1.

4. Paul Walker, 'A complex issue', *Baptists Together* (Spring 2018), 13-14 (p14).

5. Joppa Group, *A Baptist Perspective on Interfaith Dialogue* (Alcester: Joppa, 1992), p6.

6. Richard J. Sudworth, *Distinctly Welcoming: Christian Presence in a Multifaith Society* (Bletchley: SU, 2007), p19.

7. Finley, paragraph 5.

8. Sudworth, p21.

9. N. T. Wright, *Moral Climate Change and Freedom of Speech* (speech in the House of 10. Lords, February 9th 2006), <http://ntwrightpage.com/2016/04/05/moral-climate-change-and-freedom-of-speech> [accessed 20th February 2018], paragraph 8.

10. Interfaith Network, *Inter Faith Learning, Dialogue and Cooperation: Next Steps*, <https:// www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/inter-faith-learning-dialogue-and-cooperation-next-steps> [accessed 10 October 2017], pp5,41; Walker, p14.

11. Peter G. Riddell, *Christians and Muslims: Pressures and potential in a post-9/11 world* (Leicester: IVP, 2004), p118.

12. Sudworth, p21.

13. Riddell, pp33,118.

14. Nesbitt, p68.

15. Helen Paynter, 'Exploring why Christians would respond to immigration', *Baptists Together* (Spring 2018), p15, quoting Augustine.

16. Wheeler, p31.

17. Wheeler, p28.

18. BUGB, *Faith and Society Files*: 12 Myths of Inter Faith Engagement, <http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/500029/Faith_and_Society.aspx> [accessed 10th September 2017], myths 3 & 9: Andrew Wingate, *Celebrating Difference, Staying Faithful: How to Live in a Multi-Faith World* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005), p13.

19. Quoted, with Bible verses added in, Riddell, pp206,207.

20. Riddell, p59.

21. Race, p23.

22. Riddell, p31.

23. Race, p25.

24. Riddell, p31.

25. Race, quoting *International Theological Commission, Christianity and the World Religions,* Vatican 1997, p15, pp23-33, 65-69, 105.

26. Riddell, pp31,208.

27. Wingate, p63.

28. Riddell, p208.

29. Wingate, pp63,64.

30. Riddell, pp32,59,133.

31. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1998), p162.

32. Nesbitt, p36: Finley, paragraph 5.

33. Riddell, p135.

34. Riddell, p133.

Engaging our non-Christian neighbours

by Ted Hale

I am writing this in the aftermath of a long period of disquieting events. The Brexit vote (at the very least) suggested that a majority of my co-citizens want less to do with their European and other neighbours. A successful US Trump campaign, supported by many Christians, was clearly based in part on fear of Muslims and immigrants. At a personal level, within Churches Together in Northampton, I have been made aware of intolerance verging on open hostility toward people of faiths other than Christianity, and

especially toward Muslims. This attitude can flourish in any town where there is minimal Christian engagement with interfaith relationships caused by fear, prejudice, antipathy, lack of interest, or (probably more damaging) a widespread sense among Christians—including many ministers—that it is not important. I want to offer reasons why that notion should be untenable for Christians.

Theology

What sort of God do we worship and honour? I accept that God is the God who in Jesus loves the church/Christians in spite of (or because of?) many imperfections (Ephesians 5:25, 1 John 3:16). But the love of God should not be limited thereby. A fundamental Judaeo-Christian faith statement is: God looked at 'everything' he had made and saw that it was very good (Genesis 1:31). 'Everything' includes humanity, which is created thus: *Let 'us' make humankind in 'our' own image* (Genesis1:26). This is a significant indicator of how God and God's relationship to humanity should be considered. God does not create Christians or Jews or Sikhs, or different races, but a multiplying variety of human beings who are severally and individually called to love one another, reflecting that unity in diversity which is the nature of God.

The Old Testament

Please note: The word 'Jews' in what follows is shorthand. It avoids distinguishing between the 'descendants of Abram', 'children of Israel', the nations of Israel or Judah, the 'people of God' *etc,* which would have made this article tediously lengthy. But it also facilitates readers' substitution of the word 'Christian' for 'Jew' where this seems appropriate—as in the next sentence!

There is no doubt that in the Old Testament there are numerous claims for the Jews to a privileged, God-given, religious and ethnic supremacy, justifying xenophobia and genocide. Sadly, some still champion such a claim for the (secular!) state of Israel. This ignores the strong counter-message which through prophecies, stories and non-Jewish characters makes plain that God is not the God of, and for, the Jews alone. They have no legitimate claim to special status. A strong nationalist tendency to pride and prejudice does not go unchallenged within the Old Testament itself.

Some of the non-Jewish Old Testament characters who are regarded as God's servants find their way into the New Testament. Perhaps it is since the advent of feminist readings of scripture that we have seen more of a focus on Rahab, Tamar, Bathsheba and Ruth, Old Testament women who find a place in Luke's genealogy of Jesus. Two of these women are non-Jews. Ruth is a fine example of a counter-narrative to religious

and ethnic exclusivity. E. A. Jones says Ruth's story

was written as a conscious polemic against those people in post-monarchic Yehud who aimed to exclude all people who were not part of the community of returning exiles from Babylon…Ruth is a blessing to the community rather than a threat. The author of Ruth creates a poignant critique of a society which behaves badly towards "the Other".[1]

For Christians to ignore or slight people of other faiths, who are generally speaking immigrants, or first-generation children of immigrants, is behaving badly towards 'the Other'.

Alongside Ruth, consider the Book of Jonah. Here is a story which effectively discounts any notion that God loves Jews more than other people. The non-Jewish and mysterious high priest, Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18, Psalm 110:4) is an 'other', a non-Jew, yet the writer of Hebrews regards him as superior to the entire Jewish priesthood (Hebrews 5:6ff). Noah? Jethro? Cyrus? I am sure you can add your own examples of 'gentiles' who have been loved and used by God. Perhaps the most important and direct statement to remember is the promise made to Abram, 'through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed' (Genesis 22:18). How untrue as well as true that has been.

One further Old Testament insight is important. Micah 6:8, *And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*. The path of humility is not an easy one, but it is the one chosen for and by Jesus (Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 22:27) and the one he encourages his followers to adopt (Matthew 5:5, John 13:1-17). It is furthermore a fundamental response to God throughout the whole Bible.

The picture of Abram in the presence of God adopting the Islamic ('submission') prayer position (Genesis 17:3) is symbolic of all who have any claim to genuinely seek to walk with God. It is also the position adopted by Abram when three strangers arrive (Genesis18:2; Hebrews 13:2). It is not just humility vis-à-vis God which is enjoined by the Bible, but humility in the presence of the stranger. We never know what word of God THEY have to offer to us. That is foundational for interfaith relationships, and is exactly the opposite to how some Christians attempt to engage with people of other faiths: that is, they act in a spirit of what we have to offer rather than what we have to receive. It was pointed out to me that Christians rarely, if ever, invite or welcome criticisms from people of other faiths. It is not humble to believe that I am superior to another human being in my relationship with God, or in my understanding of God. In intra-Christian relationships humility is worked out as 'submission' (Ephesians 5:19ff); in interfaith relationships it is worked out in mutual respect, honesty/truthfulness, understanding and hopefully friendship—the kind of

friendship God in Christ offers us (John 15:15; Colossians 1:22).

The New Testament

By Matthew's account, Jesus accorded priority to inviting the Jews to recognise and enter his kingdom (Matthew 10:6, 15:24). However, Mark (11:17) and Luke (19:46) both recount Jesus' cleansing of the temple with his comment that 'all the nations' had been robbed of what should have been a place of prayer and blessing for them (*cf* Isaiah 56:7). This countercultural attack on Jewish elitist practice led directly to plots to kill Jesus. If we set this episode alongside Jesus' repeated comment that he had found greater faith in a gentile than amongst his own people (Matthew 15:28, Luke 7:9), his warmth toward Samaritans (Luke 10:30ff, Luke 17:16, John 4:4-42, Acts 1:8)[2], and the inclusive picture of feasting in the Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 8:11, Luke 13:29 cf Isaiah 25:6), there is no doubt that Jesus rejected self-righteous nationalism and behaviours based on supposed religious superiority. David Lawrence, commenting on Mark 11:17, said 'Jesus' denunciation finds its context in Jeremiah 7:9–11. Jesus' Temple protest alerts the people of God that how they treat one another – and especially how they treat 'outsiders' from 'the nations' (v17) – matters to God!'[3]

This was a lesson the early church found hard to accept, and many current churches seem to find it no easier. The book of Acts and some of the epistles testify to the struggles of early Jewish-Christians to open their hearts and churches to non-Jews. This struggle is encapsulated by the story of Peter (the Jew) and Cornelius (the Gentile) in Acts 10. I love this story, because Cornelius, like many of my other-faith friends could be described as a 'God-fearer'. But initially that was not enough for Peter to relate fully to a Gentile nor to accept his hospitality. A Christian in Northampton recently said to me, 'I would NEVER go into a mosque—even if invited'. A mosque is full of 'God-fearers'! I wish all Christians would absorb Peter's message to himself and the church,

God has shown me that I should not consider any person common or unclean. Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him (Acts 10:28, 34ff).

John's gospel, so often misused to confine God's love, paints with an equally broad brush. Jesus is the Word which gives life to all creation and every creature. He is lifted up to draw all men to himself, and specifically in John 10:16 Jesus says, I have other sheep which are not of this pen, I must bring them also. Sadly, some Christians think of themselves as the new Israel, rather than a renewed Israel, renewed by the inclusive Spirit of the Redeemer of the whole world, a Spirit who acknowledges the faith of the 'foreigner' as often superior to that of the 'in-crowd'. I know I am not alone in having been truly humbled by the hospitality of a Sikh gurdwara, or Peter-like obeisance of

Muslims at prayer, or the unbridled joy of Hindus at Divali. People of other religions are no more perfect than are Christians, but I believe Jesus would recognise their faith, rejoice in it and offer himself to them in friendship and love. Jesus was not defined by the words he used, but by the life he lived. Too often we let our words (our creeds) define us and determine our relationships with others.

And Jesus' ultimate judgement? I was a stranger and you did/did not provide me with hospitality (Matthew 25).

Personal experience

I have been involved in the ecumenical movement as part of Christian living for 50 years, For half that time 'ecumenical' meant 'intra-Christian/inter-church'. Of course, this was a necessary journey, given the divided and divisive nature of Christendom in post-WW2 England. But it was never full ecumenism. The *oikumene*, the household of God, encompasses the world/universe and has many rooms. It's been my privilege and joy to get a glimpse of some of those 'rooms'; or people have come out of one of those rooms to give me insights into God's love and goodness beyond my imagining. At the funeral for my son, as well as many Christian friends, people of other faiths came into the Abbey Centre Chapel to show their solidarity with a friend who was sad. They also have known sadness and suffering. Jesus, in the midst of his suffering, assured a God-fearing co-sufferer of a place in the loving inclusive embrace of his Kingdom. How can anyone in Jesus' name offer less?

It is worthy of repetition: Jesus' Temple protest alerts the people of God…that how they treat one another—and especially how they treat 'outsiders' from 'the nations' (v17)—matters to God![3]

If it matters to God, it should matter to us.

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Footnotes:

1. Edward Allen Jones III, *Reading Ruth in the Restoration Period: A Call for Inclusion.* T&T Clark, 2016.

2. The relationship between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus's day has close parallels with that of Christians and Muslims in our own.

3. David Lawrence, *WordLive (*Scripture Union online daily Bible Study), 15-11-16.

‘Rediscovering justice’

by Julian Gotobed

Fifty years ago, an assassin killed Martin Luther King Jr—the African-American Baptist pastor who became a prominent leader in the American Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s—on 4 April 1968.[1] This anniversary of his death has occasioned a range of events and reflections in 2018, informed by his life, ministry, and message. Christian Aid organised ‘Rediscovering Justice’, a national service at Westminster Abbey, and a Symposium at St Margaret’s Church, London, on 4 April. A rarely seen documentary about King’s public ministry, *King: A Filmed Record...From Montgomery to Memphis*[2] is also on re-release and accessible to the public in its original version for the first time since 1970.[3] Various British media outlets[4] reported the anniversary of King’s death and considered his impact,[5] and *The Baptist Times* included several pieces to commemorate King’s demise.[6] This article is an expanded version of a paper presented at the ‘Rediscovering Justice’ Symposium. It focuses on the theology at the heart of King’s commitment to seeking justice and outlines some implications for Christians today.

Why bother with King, five decades after his death? James McClendon, a Baptist theologian and contemporary of King, proposes in *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today’s Theology*[7] that some Christian lives merit careful attention, because the beliefs they embody enable the church to reform its theology to be ‘more faithful to our ancient vision, and more adequate to the age now being born’.[8] King is one such life in McClendon’s estimate.[9] King constituted a prophetic challenge to church and society in the US that embodied the call and cost of the gospel. He presented an uncomfortable critique of poverty, racism, and militarism;[10] he spoke truth to power. The initiatives in 2018 that remembered King and his death, including this paper, concur with McClendon’s assessment of him. His legacy continues to inspire people in the 21st century to think about, commit to, and work for justice.

McClendon explores the potential of some Christian lives to provoke self-examination and reform in fellow believers. ‘By recognising that Christian beliefs...are living convictions that give shape to actual lives and actual communities, we open ourselves to the possibility that the only relevant critical examination of Christian beliefs may be one that begins by attending to lived lives’.[11] The identification of the most deeply held beliefs or convictions in individuals and communities is the starting point for McClendon’s approach to theology. It serves as the springboard to his own appraisal of King’s life[12] and to my own examination.[13]

Joshua Searle gets to the substance of McClendon's notion of the beliefs most important to us, when he observes, 'Convictions are a matter of habit induced, conscience forming, inarticulate, and pre-critical assumptions concerning the deepest issues of life, faith and meaning'.[14] The 'inarticulate' and 'pre-critical' nature of our convictions means discovering them is not straightforward. Yet, to discern our convictions is to see ourselves for who we are in the clearest way possible; it can be a disorienting experience, especially if we detect contradictions within ourselves. For McClendon, 'A conviction is a persistent belief such that if X (a person or a community) has a conviction it will not be easily abandoned, and it cannot be abandoned without making X a significantly different person or community than before'.[15] McClendon's concept of a conviction shapes his definition of theology, 'It is the discovery, understanding or interpretation, the transformation of the convictions of a convictional community, including the discovery and critical revision of their relation to one another **and to whatever else there is**'.[16] He invites us to identify, interpret, and transform our convictions in the light of the convictions embodied in tangible lives, where those lives point us faithfully to the gospel.[17] Paying attention to King's theological convictions assists us to scrutinise our own, test them, and correct them, where necessary, when it is apparent some aspect of the gospel is missing or distorted. He can enable us to identify where justice has been forgotten or neglected. King can help us 'Rediscover Justice'.

King's core theological convictions cluster around three broad themes: God, humanity, and love-justice. The seeds of these convictions arose in the soil of King's experience of the black Baptist church tradition in the segregated society of the South.[18] In black Baptist religion, the biblical narrative, especially the Old Testament story of the Exodus, interpreted the black experience of oppression and inspired hope for liberation.[19] King's exposure to Liberal Protestant theology in the North at Crozer Theological Seminary, Pennsylvania, and Boston University School of Theology, Massachusetts, tested, refined, and enlarged the convictions forged in his experience of black Baptist culture growing up in the South.[20]

Convictions about God

King considered personal language to be adequate for talking about God intellectually and experientially. The preaching of the black Baptist church he grew up in drew strength from the Old Testament witness to a personal God. The story of creation is clear: God makes all human beings in the image of God, including black people. God imbues all human lives with a sacred dignity that means they are precious to God. The (white) world might tell a black person she is a 'nobody' but God always sees a black person as a 'somebody'. The story of Israel's redemption from captivity and oppression in Egypt described a personal God on the side of justice that intervened to set the people of Israel free and still acts on the side of justice and the oppressed in the present.

At Crozer Theological Seminary, King encountered the ideas of influential US liberal Protestant theologians such as Walter Rauschenbusch, Reinhold Niebuhr and Edgar Brightman.[21] King pursued doctoral studies at Boston University, attracted to the philosophy of personalism associated with the School of Theology. Personality is the basic category of reality according to personalism.[22] King's embrace of this philosophical perspective reinforced the theological convictions formed in his black church experience. In *Stride Toward Freedom*, King's account of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, he offers the following description of his intellectual development:

I studied philosophy and theology at Boston University under Edgar S. Brightman and L. Harold DeWolf. Both men greatly stimulated my thinking. It was mainly under these teachers that I studied personalistic philosophy—the theory that the clue to the meaning of ultimate reality is found in personality. This personal idealism remains today my basic philosophical position. Personalism's insistence that only personality—finite and infinite—is ultimately real strengthened me in two convictions: it gave me metaphysical and philosophical grounding for the idea of a personal God, and it gave me a metaphysical basis for the dignity and worth of all human personality.[23]

King's doctoral thesis compared the theologies of Paul Tillich and Henry Wieman.[24] Both eschew personal notions of God. He concludes that the approaches of Tillich and Wieman are unsatisfactory. In his view, a personal God is necessary to account for fellowship between God and human beings and to explain God's goodness:

The religious man has always recognised two fundamental religious values. One is fellowship with God, the other is trust in his goodness. Both of these imply the personality of God. No fellowship is possible without freedom and intelligence. There may be interactions between impersonal beings, but not fellowship. True fellowship and communion can exist only between beings who know each other and take a volitional attitude toward each other.[25]

God's personality is also the presupposition of his goodness. There can be no goodness in the true ethical sense without freedom and intelligence. Only a personal being can be good...Goodness in the true sense of the word is an attribute of personality.[26]

King's doctoral thesis made the intellectual case for a personal God. The ensuing five years of public ministry in the cause of civil rights for black Americans impressed upon him the experiential grounds for asserting God is personal. In 'Pilgrimage to Nonviolence', his contribution to *The Christian Century* series *How My Mind Has Changed*, King reflects:

In recent months I have become more and more convinced of the reality of a personal God. True, I have always believed in the personality of God. But in past years the idea of a personal God was little more than a metaphysical category which I found theologically and philosophically satisfying. Now it is a living reality that has been

validated in the experiences of everyday life.[27]

To affirm God is personal is not to infer that God is simply an individual human person writ large. God is no 'Big Man in the sky':

To say God is personal is not to make him an object among objects or to attribute to him the finiteness and limitations of human personality; it is to take what is finest and noblest in our consciousness and affirm its perfect existence in him. It is certainly true that human personality is limited, but personality as such involves no necessary limitations. It simply means self-consciousness and self-direction.[28]

Moreover, since God is personal God is on the side of justice:

I am convinced that the universe is under the control of a loving purpose and that in the struggle for righteousness man has cosmic companionship. Behind the harsh appearances of the world is a benign power.[29]

King demonstrates a keen sense of a personal God accompanying him on the difficult journey to justice. God is the author of hope in King's life and the message he proclaimed. The same God is still on the side of justice and a companion to those seeking what is right and equitable here and now. A firm conviction, both intellectual and experiential, that God is with those who seek what is right in the face of misunderstanding, hostility, and great obstacles can be a potent source of comfort and inspiration today, as it was for King in the US of the 1950s and 1960s.

Convictions about humanity

King believes passionately that human beings reflect a sacred dignity. In *The Ethical Demands of Integration* he alludes to the Genesis account of humankind:

There must be a recognition of the sacredness of human personality. Deeply rooted in our political and religious heritage is the conviction that every man is an heir to a legacy of dignity and worth. Our Hebraic-Christian tradition refers to this inherent dignity of man in the Biblical term the image of God. This innate worth referred to in the phrase the image of God is universally shared in equal portions by all men. There is no graded scale of essential worth; there is no divine right of one race which differs from the divine right of another. Every human being has etched in his personality the indelible stamp of the Creator.[30]

Since God is personal, loves human persons, and makes human beings in God's image, all people are intrinsically valuable and important to God. We are required to see the other as sacred and imbued with dignity before God. King demonstrated courtesy and firmness in his dealings with others. He refused to 'demonise' those that were 'other' or different to him in church and society. In these days of anger and polarisation followers

of Jesus can learn much from King about how to think of others and how to engage with them. It is inappropriate, indeed, incompatible with the gospel, to stigmatise those that are different to us in physical appearance, culture, language, class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or national identity.

King is realistic in his assessment of human nature. He affirms the Christian theological category of sin that describes human rebellion towards God and signifies a power that holds humankind captive:

The more I observed the tragedies of history and man's shameful inclination to choose the low road, the more I came to see the depths and strength of sin. My reading of the works of Reinhold Niebuhr made me aware of the complexity of human motives and the reality of sin on every level of man's existence. Moreover, I came to recognize the complexity of man's social involvement and the glaring reality of collective evil.[31]

King recognises a social dimension to human existence. Complex social structures and social movements shape human life. Consequently, he engages in theological and sociological critiques of poverty, racism, and militarism to expose their interconnection and the inequalities rife in each. King is critical of both capitalism and communism.[32] To him, "...communism is a judgement against our failure to make democracy real...Our only hope today lies in our ability to...go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism".[33] King provoked severe criticism, when he openly challenged the US's military action in Vietnam in a sermon entitled *A Time to Break Silence*, delivered at the Riverside Church, New York, in 1967, where he analysed the connections between capitalism, racism, and militarism. King employed sophisticated social analysis to understand the social context in which he practised ministry. King's deployment of sociological and theological categories to analyse church and society informed his message and strategy in the pursuit of justice. His approach challenges the contemporary church to engage with the concrete reality of the society it inhabits, whether in the US or the UK. We cannot be content with fixating mainly on abstract paradigms of cultural analysis like postmodernity and post-christendom.

Convictions about love and justice

King is notable for holding love and justice together from the outset of his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.[34] At the launch of the Montgomery Improvement Association on 5 December 1955, he made this dual commitment explicit:

I want to tell you this evening that it is not enough to talk about love. Love is one of the principal parts of the Christian faith. There is another side called justice...Justice is love correcting that which would work against love...Standing beside love is always justice.[35]

King's concept of love was rooted in his reading of the New Testament through the lens

of the Swedish scholar Anders Nygren's account of love, *Agape and Eros*.[36] It is an uncomfortable, disruptive, inconvenient, and far from sentimental idea of love. Nygren argues that Agape refers to God's love. King captures this sense when he contends Agape is, '...creative, redemptive, goodwill to all men...It is the love of God operating in the human heart'.[37] King insists that human beings are required to exhibit Agape love, too. 'Agape is disinterested love. It is a love in which the individual seeks not his own good, but the good of his neighbour...It is love in action. Agape is love seeking to create and preserve community'.[38] For King, God seeks out his enemies in Christ to bring them near. Those called to follow Christ must do the same. Agape love was a contentious concept for many in the black population in America that listened to King, because it seemed to demand a higher ethical standard in thought and deed on the part of a black person compared to a white person. For King, Agape love is not an excuse for white people to avoid self-examination or a license to do nothing to correct injustice. King's message to white pastors in his 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail' is as pertinent today as a critique of complacency and a call to seek justice as it was in 1963:[39]

Wherever the early Christians entered a town the power structure got disturbed and immediately sought to convict them for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But they went on with the conviction that they were a "colony of heaven," and had to obey God rather than man…Things are different now. The contemporary church is often the arch-supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent and often vocal sanction of things as they are…But the judgement of God is upon the church as never before. If the church today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. I am meeting young people every day whose disappointment with the church has risen to outright disgust.[40]

The church in every generation needs to consider an awkward possibility. Does the surrounding culture so entwine us that we struggle to recognise injustice when it is crouching on our doorstep and festering untroubled in our backyard? The Windrush scandal, Grenfell Tower, clergy misconduct, economic inequality, and 'post-truth' politics surely give pause for thought.

Conclusion

To finish, let us consider a statue and a sculpture. Ten statues commemorate ten 20th century Christian martyrs, including King, at Westminster Abbey in niches above the West Gate. To depict King in stone on Westminster Abbey is not without irony. Jesse Jackson wryly observes, 'They loved him as a martyr after he was killed but rejected him as a marcher when he was alive'.[41] The prophet becomes popular with hindsight, when it is

clear he stood on the right side of history before everyone else. Domesticating dissent,[42] as Curtis Freeman notes, is a perennial temptation for subsequent generations to resist.

On Marsh Plaza, at the heart of Boston University's campus, stands a sculpture, inspired by King's *I Have a Dream* speech. It consists of 50 iron doves joined together in the appearance of motion, ascending, like a flock of birds, skywards. It depicts an important conviction in King's life. When our purposes and priorities converge with God's purposes and priorities then we participate in a movement permeated with God's love and grace. We experience what James Forbes calls, 'a rising situation'.[43]

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Notes to text

1. David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.* London: Jonathan Cape, 1988 [first published 1986].

2. See: https://www.kinolorber.com/film/view/id/1288 [accessed 30/08/18].

3. Four screenings of *Montgomery to Memphis*, a documentary that traces the development of King's role in the Civil Rights Movement, organised by the Sam Sharpe Project and Tipping Point North South at Baptist venues, https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/524423/Rarely_seen_MLK.aspx [accessed 30/08/18].

4. On 4 April 2018, the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme played Martin Luther King Jr's final speech, delivered on the evening before his assassination in which he anticipated his death.

5. *The Guardian,* https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/mar/30/martin-luther-king-50th-anniversary-death-events-planned [accessed 11/08/18]; Gary Younge, 'Martin Luther King: How a Rebel Leader was Lost to History' *The Guardian,* https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/apr/04/martin-luther-king-how-a-rebel-leader-was-lost-to-history [accessed 30/08/18].

6. *The Baptist Times,* https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/518950/_Martin_Luther.aspx [accessed 30/08/18].

7. James Wm. McClendon Jr, *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002.

8. McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p22.

9. McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, pp47-66.

10. McClendon lost two tenured posts because he supported the Civil Rights Movement and opposed the Vietnam War. James Wm. McClendon Jr, 'The Radical Road One Baptist Took' in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, LLXIV/4, Oct 2000, https://www.goshen.edu/mqr/2000/12/october-2000-mcclendon/ [accessed 30/08/18].

11. McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p22.

12. McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, pp47-66.

13. McClendon is concerned primarily to demonstrate the origins of King's thought in his southern black Baptist experience growing up. My exposition concentrates on King's theological convictions articulated in his public ministry 1955-68.

14. Joshua T. Searle, *Theology After Christendom: Forming Prophets for a Post-Christian World*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018, p171.

15. James Wm. McClendon Jr, *Ethics: Systematic Theology*, vol. I. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002, p22.

16. McClendon, *Ethics*, p23. The emphasis in bold appears in the original.

17. For McClendon, studying the convictions embedded in human lives must be seen against the backdrop of the witness of Scripture. McClendon, *Ethics*, 17-44.

18. Gary Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Black Social Gospel.* New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2018, pp255-259; Lewis V. Baldwin, *The Voice of Conscience: The Church in the Mind of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp13-50.

19. McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, pp60-66.

20. Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, pp259-281.

21. Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, p262.

22. Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bengtsson, 'Personalism' Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Edward N. Zalta (ed.). https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/personalism/ [accessed 3/09/18].

23. Martin Luther King Jr, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2010, p88 [first published 1958].

24. Martin Luther King Jr, *A Comparison of the Conceptions of God in the Thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman*. PhD, Boston University, 1955. http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/Vol02Scans/339_15-April-1955_A%20Comparison%20of%20the%20Conceptions%20of%20God.pdf [accessed 30/08/18].

25. King, *A Comparison*, p512.

26. King, *A Comparison*, p513.

27. James Melvin Washington (ed), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986, p40.

28. Washington, p40.

29. Washington, p40.

30. Washington, pp118-119.

31. Washington, pp35-36.

32. Washington, pp629-630.

33. Washington, p242.

34. James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991, pp61-66.

35. Martin Luther King Jr, 'Address to the Initial Mass Meeting of the Montgomery Improvement Association' Tape Recording (5 December 1955) quoted in James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, p62.

36. Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (trans Philip S. Watson). London: SPCK, 1982 [first combined volume 1953].

37. Washington, p46.

38. Washington, p19-20.

39. Washington, pp289-302.

40. Washington, p300.

41. David Smith, 'Martin Luther King: Jesse Jackson on a killing that "redefined America"' *The Guardian*, March 31, 2018.

42. Curtis W. Freeman, *Undomesticated Dissent: Democracy and the Public Virtue of Religious Nonconformity*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017, pp1-37.

43. James Forbes, *'Hannah Rose' 30 Good Minutes: Chicago Evening Club* (6 Nov 1988). http://www.30goodminutes.org/index.php/archives/23-member-archives/299-james-forbes-program-3206 [accessed 2/03/18].

A reflection on a baptism

by Sally Nelson

Reflecting on a real situation often encourages us to inspect our true convictions, and to reassess things we have never previously questioned. I recently baptised my 19-year-old daughter who has severe and complex special needs. Some friends asked me to write about the baptism in case it is of use to others in ministry.

A child of the manse, our daughter has attended church since she was two weeks old. As a family we have been members of four different Baptist churches during her lifetime (of these I have been in pastoral charge of two). At each she has been welcomed into the fellowship as fully as possible, for which we have been grateful.

In these churches a variety of cultures existed. Some allowed children to receive communion; others preferred not. Problems can arise when you move a child, or someone with learning difficulties, from a church that permits receiving bread and wine to one that doesn't. They may not understand why things are different.

I don't really want to discuss the communion issue here, but I mention it to illustrate the key question of how we understand the body of Christ. I believe this matter has profound implications for those with learning difficulties. Is the body of Christ a group of individuals who self-selectively coordinate themselves, or is it the integrated body of a Person?

As she grew older, our daughter's delight in attending church and joining in worship became evident. The question of baptism and membership became pressing for us. There was never any issue about, or objection to, her baptism in our fellowship, but I was anxious to think through the practical and theological implications.

First, the practical matters, which were the least difficult. She is wheelchair-dependent with physical hypersensitivity. Our church meets in a school and has no baptistry. We considered the options of the swimming pool and of hiring a baptistry (and a hoist!), and decided against both on the grounds of her dignity and of the possibility of causing her pain. Pouring water over her would have been another option, but her hypersensitivity made that seem unkind. In the end we settled for sprinkling as the only compassionate way.

What about her cognitive, and speech and language, difficulties? Normally a baptismal candidate can profess his/her faith either by testimony or by standard responses: she could not do either. Here several more questions arose, of relevance to baptistic communities.

- Did she truly understand the commitment of faith to which she was called?

- How could she profess her faith? She is verbally unable to do so; she can't read or write; and if I had asked closed questions, her best word under pressure is 'No'—not the ideal response when asking if Jesus is her Lord and Saviour.
- How could she publicly commit herself to the community of the baptised?

These matters were resolved as follows.

We decided that the cognitive reception of her faith was not, and could not be, a prohibitive issue. There is plenty she can't understand, but she is evidently able to enter the spirit of worship within our community, and she has a heart of gold, hating to see anyone in pain. She thus satisfies Jesus' summary of the commandments: love God and love other people. Had even this level of demonstrable faith been missing because of greater cognitive damage, I still think, on reflection, that I could not have denied baptism to faithful members of the community if the body metaphor is taken seriously.

During the service we asked others to speak of the faith they saw in her. One was a teacher from her school, a church member. The other was my husband, who sat with her at the front and gently 'interviewed' her, talking about church and Jesus and love (she is able to say 'yes and 'no' accurately, if not stressed). As a whole congregation, we reaffirmed our baptismal promises together: here was the body of Christ.

One of the church leaders helped me to sprinkle the water (something we'd practised at home so that it wasn't a surprise) and to pray for her. Our church secretary presented her with a fine purple Bible on behalf of the church, which she brings proudly each week though she cannot read it.

We had plenty of music, which she loves; a quiz about water and an offering for Water Aid (to connect water with life); a lunch for everyone afterwards. Our small fellowship swelled to three times its normal size. Jesus was glorified.

I believe this baptism took seriously our corporate life as the body of Christ—and in a manner that is truly baptistic. Her faith was demonstrated and articulated *by the body*, and she will be supported by this fellowship in her commitment. She is a part of our church in every way. We did this baptism *together*: it was not about an individual's statement or commitment, but about the life of this community of baptised believers.

I offer this in the hope that it might help others. I have written more about my general thinking on baptism in a chapter in the recent festschrift, *Gathering Disciples.*

Sally Nelson is Dean of Baptist Formation at St Hild College and Hub Tutor in the YBA for Northern Baptist College. Contact her on revsal96@aol.com.

bmj Essay Prize 2019

The *bmj* invites entries for our 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 **£250.00** 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, which includes MiTs and those who are not in accredited or recognised leadership roles.

Closing date: 30 March 2019

Entries should be submitted **electronically, double spaced and fully referenced, using endnotes not footnotes**, 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.

BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

E A Payne Prize Essay

Submissions are invited of an historical essay, exploring and assessing the contribution of a woman or a group of women to Baptist life. The topic may include women who have served in ordained or non-ordained ministry in the churches.

Length: 6000 words.

Deadline: 31 December 2019

The winning essayist will receive £200 and the editors retain the right to publish essays in the *Baptist Quarterly.*

Submissions are to be sent to Stephen Copson on stephen.bhs@dsl.pipex.com

Reviews

edited by Michael Peat

Out of Nothing—A Cross-Shaped Approach to Fresh Expressions

by Andrew Dunlop

SCM, 2018

Reviewer: Bob Allaway

These are the theological reflections of an Anglican church-planter, as he looks back on how he, wife and baby settled on a 'new build' estate, full of other young families, with the intention of developing a 'fresh expression' of church there. (Fresh Expressions are 'new forms of church that emerge within contemporary culture and engage primarily with those who "don't go to church"'.) He does so from the perspective of one who has now been called elsewhere, and, looking back, asks himself, 'What is success?', the title of his final chapter. How do we evaluate our ministry? Dunlop had a sustainable church as his goal, but this raises theological questions as to 'What makes a church?'.

Dunlop's fifth chapter is 'A cross-shaped church'. What we are as church proclaims Christ to the world. As atonement is at the centre of Christ's work, how we view atonement will shape how we do church. After surveying different views of atonement, Dunlop moves, in his penultimate chapter, 'Out of nothing', to the view of atonement in Eberhard Jüngel's work on justification.

Jüngel moves discussion of atonement out of the courtroom and into the realm of relationships. God created us for relationship with himself, others, ourselves and creation. Sin negates those relationships. God's work in Christ restores them, bringing them in line with his work creating from nothing, and making Christ's resurrection as much part of his atoning work as his death. This theology sounds very interesting and full of potential.

Although Jüngel barely applied this to church, Dunlop draws attention to its application by Andrew Root, a US youth minister. Our ministry involves recognising where God is at work, meeting people in the places of 'nothingness' and brokenness in their lives, to transform them to new life (though I found myself thinking of Bonhoeffer's question, does God only meet people at the boundaries, and not also at the centre of their lives?).

While those engaged in church-planting will be interested to compare their experiences with Dunlop's, I also found some fascinating new paths to explore in theology. This brief review cannot do justice to this work and useful lessons from it. If you are particularly interested in

church-planting, please email me on bob@rallaway.plus.com and I will send you a fuller review and discussion.

How to be a Church Minister

by Nigel Wright

Bible Reading Fellowship, 2018

Reviewer: Philip Clements-Jewery

It is good to have the wisdom and experience of a former Principal of Spurgeon's College distilled into this comprehensive description of the work of ministry. I must confess that at first I was rather put off by the title, which seemed to me to suggest a somewhat DIY approach to ministry and its preparation. However, Nigel explains that the idea for it came to him when, in the bookshop of the Houses of Parliament, he observed two books entitled *How to be a* (government) *Minister* written by politicians, and thought that a similar title might be attached to a book about what is involved in church ministry.

But for whom is this book intended? Certainly not just for Baptists, even though it is, understandably, written from a decidedly Baptist perspective. Nigel suggests that it might prove profitable to a number of different groups—those exploring a call to ministry, those in training for ministry, those already deeply involved in ministry, and those like the author and myself who, through retirement, are no longer in stipendiary ministry. Any of these might find something profitable for personal reflection in this book.

However, it is not really a 'how to' book in the sense that a car manual, for instance, might instruct its user in practical vehicle maintenance. Rather, over 14 chapters, this is an extended description and explication of the work of ministry in most of its aspects. Even so, a few matters are passed over rather too sketchily for my liking, and others I would like to have seen included are missed out. Other readers, no doubt, would have their own list of omissions. We must be grateful for what is included, with, additionally, a helpful list of books for further reading.

I am sure that those at the beginning of their ministerial journeys will profit from reading in advance about the various experiences into which God may lead them. And as for those like Nigel and myself who now look back over their ministerial lives, we can be grateful for the reminder of the many ways in which God may have used and blessed us, in both sorrow and joy.

Look Back in Hope: An Ecumenical Life

by Keith Clements

Wipf & Stock, 2017

Reviewer: Stephen Heap

Keith Clements looks back on a

remarkable ministry—where he has been, where he is, and where we are—in church and nation. This is autobiography, interesting in itself, but it is his comments on the church and the UK today which really hit home; comments shaped by Clements' ecumenical commitment and by those who have inspired him, including his beloved Bonhoeffer, on whose work and life he is a recognised expert.

Born in China, a son of the manse in England during childhood, eventually finding a faith of his own, Clements was a student in the 1960s. It was then he began to enter the 'ecumenical life' of the book's subtitle. What heady days they were, with those 1964 hopes of the churches signing a covenant for union by Easter Day 1980.

Clements tells of fervour cooling long before 1980. Most Baptists hardly warmed up at all. For Clements, however, being ecumenical remained central, with continuing commitments to the visible unity of the churches and to seeking the wholeness of creation. He tells of those commitments forming and being lived out during college years, in his pastorates in Cheshire and Bristol, into the time he was a tutor at Bristol Baptist College. They became central to his work during his years as Coordinating Secretary for International Affairs at the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland and then as General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches. In the latter posts he found himself part of big events in South Africa, the Balkans, Iraq and elsewhere, and playing a central role in furthering good relations between churches. It takes a big faith and mind to handle what Clements handled. The story is worth reading, including as a lesson in how the church engages with public issues.

One of Clements' early books, which identified him as having things to say, was *A Patriotism for Today: Dialogue with Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (1984 and subsequent revisions). Reaching for my copy of that original edition, I realised how prescient it was and how relevant to issues which presently plague the UK and other nations. It sets out a theological understanding of patriotism.

Look Back in Hope is this book's title; evoking John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger?* Clements looks back in hope, anger, and disappointment (p402). Scathing comments are made about churches who turned away from the ecumenical vision and failing to engage with society, and a fearful nation seeking a 'mythical' greatness (p397). The EU referendum, Clements says, felt like a rejection of values he 'had held since the late 1960s' (p397). Hope comes from faith and the way people at all levels

engage with life and shine a light in the darkness.

Something about culture would have been useful. How to be ecumenical in a postmodern market-driven context, incredulous of any grand narrative and venerating competition, might be a question towards a way forward, perhaps confirming what Clements says about the importance of relationships. Whether that be so or not, the book tells an important story from which things can be learned for church and nation towards a more hopeful future.

Let There Be Light: Nuclear Energy, a Christian Case

by Robert Dutch

Wipf & Stock, 2017

Reviewer: Ronnie Hall

I am the perfect target audience for this book. I am concerned about the environment, carbon footprints and how we'll keep the lights switched on when our gas and coal power stations run out of energy. I am also undecided whether nuclear power stations should be part of our energy make up alongside renewable sources. I know nothing about science and all my information about nuclear energy comes from the media.

The author is a theologian who worked for many years in the nuclear power industry. He states very clearly at the beginning that he will be presenting a case that supports nuclear power stations being part of our energy future. Indeed he goes further, saying that renewable energy is not completely reliable, since it relies on sunlight and environmental factors. To prevent electricity shortages, nuclear energy is essential for the future. He cites the many countries that have adopted nuclear as the main source of their future energy needs.

The book itself is systematic. It starts by outlining the natural radiation in the universe and on earth. It points out that nuclear reactions happen all the time naturally and all the food we eat and water we drink contains some radioactive material. In other words there is nothing unnatural about nuclear reactions—without them there wouldn't be a universe! I found those chapters very interesting and I even went as far to check out some of the further reading. I had no idea about radiation levels in different parts of the UK depending on the geology of the area—nothing unsafe of course!

The book summarises nuclear policies in key countries and leads into a skilful explanation of how all the common objections about nuclear energy are overcome. Some of the information is a real eye-opener. The book closes with Christian opinions on nuclear energy.

The book is an introduction and it reads like an introduction. It is short in detail

but broad in scope. The author writes with passion, authority and humour. His broad knowledge leads to him having lots of footnotes and extensive further reading suggestions. I was so interested I even went and sought some of them. Ultimately I am still undecided on nuclear energy but I am much better informed and learned there is mostly good in nuclear energy.

Seasoned by Seasons

by Michael Mitton

BRF, 2017

Reviewer: Jenny Few

At first glance this appears to be yet another book that parallels life's experience with that of the seasons of the year; a book very definitely for those of us in the northern hemisphere. At one level it is just that, but it is also much more: subtle, insightful, full of deep and sometimes surprising wisdom, this new book from a writer of several books of readings and reflections for the Christian life, is a gem. The title comes from Portia's speech in Shakespeare's A *Merchant of Venice*, where she says in effect that things are at their best when in their right place and time. So with human experience and life, as the sub-title, *Flourishing in life's experiences*, suggests.

Four main chapters each offer seven reflections, based on biblical characters and themes. As one would expect they are Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer—but they are far from predictable or conventional.

Autumn, for instance, is not a season of mellow fruitfulness, but 'the season of creating space': The section titles move from a negative beginning to a glimpse of optimism; thus *Fear—space for new confidence* which is based on the gospel story of the storm on the lake, and focusing on Andrew. Rejection—*space for true value*, offers insights into the difficult life of Hagar. *Change—space for new vision* looks at the surprising announcement of Mary's pregnancy from Joseph's point of view. Each gives the biblical text, followed by comment and a brief question and prayer. Familiar as the biblical stories are, I found something new in each section.

The other chapters are equally good: Winter is the 'season of discovery', where the stark name of each section contrasts very effectively with the story *eg Death – the discovery of prevailing love* (Ruth and Naomi), *Failure – the discovery of being* (the Samaritan woman), *Depression – the discovery of insight* (Elijah)

More obviously, Spring is the 'season of rebirthing', and Summer the 'season of flourishing', but these chapters also make rewarding and inspirational reading. .

Mitton acknowledges that 'seasons' in life do not parallel the meteorological ones,

so there is no suggestion that the book is read in sequence. Rather, it is a book for dipping into. So who is likely to dip into it? Hopefully many regular BRF readers, as well as others. It is both refreshing and challenging, disturbing and comforting. It is well written, with well chosen bits of poetry and other quotes and though not academic in any way it will often stretch the intellect as well as nourish the soul.

The recovery of joy

by Naomi Starkey

BRF, 2018

Reviewer: Robert Draycott

The sub-title is *Finding the path from rootlessness to returning home*. It is an imaginative account of that journey from the depths of despair. The underpinning of the narrative is taken from the rich resources of the Psalms. We can often gloss over those passages which are cries for help. Often such passages indicate someone 'clinging to God by their fingertips'. Naomi Starkey takes such passages seriously and in the first two sections gradually leads the reader through other Psalms towards the rock which she speaks of as 'finding a space to settle, somewhere to rest and nurture and be nurtured.'

The journey then continues from island to island through sections entitled *Ruins, Release*, and finally *Return*. The islands serve to facilitate the idea of a journey until the final section on 'the recovery of joy'. This is well written, imaginative, and makes an excellent link between the Psalms and the reality that many experience, of feeling that they are in the depths of despair. It did not quite work for me, mainly because I was reading it. I would have preferred to have heard it, as I feel that format would have worked much better for me.

Theology after Christendom: Forming Prophets for a Post-Christian World

by Joshua Searle

Cascade, 2018

Reviewer: Sally Nelson

The test of a good book is, I believe, not primarily 'do I like it?', but 'does it make me think?'. In fact I liked most of this book and I defy anyone to say that it doesn't make them think.

Part of the fascinating and eclectic *After Christendom* series, this book is aimed at theological educators, asking for a profound reappraisal of what is being done with the gospel both in colleges and the academy. On the back cover David Coffey describes the content as a 'fierce critique of shallow Christian discipleship and irrelevant theological formation', which has effectively marginalised the churches.

Searle begins by arguing that academic

theology has become so distanced from life that the church has lost the ability to speak theological truth into culture—in other words, the church is no longer prophetic. I agree wholeheartedly and feel intense personal frustration with church growth and missiological practices that are (often unwittingly, because of a lack of theological reflection) predicated upon what is essentially a market mentality.

It is interesting that other voices such as Black, feminist and disability theologies now take a similar view to Searle of white, male, western theology: that its forensic and philosophical/historical approach to the gospel simply does not address the real lives of people, and certainly not those who are outside the cultural legacy of the West. Searle comments that if graduates 'can discourse at length upon nuances of Trinitarian theology, but have nothing to say about relationships, popular culture, the human costs of a post-Christian society…then how do they expect to engage with the world in a meaningful way?' (p58). In this book, he frequently dialogues with some very different voices to explore the point: notably Bonhoeffer and Berdyaev.

Searle then explores the process by which theology has been marginalised within the academy—this is known territory, but rather than simply bewailing the state of theology he offers a helpful move into how we can re-envision teaching and formation: by a focus on lived faith rather than dogma or belief, and on the vision of the Kingdom of God, rather than on mission and apologetics designed to make the church bigger. Part of this vision means developing an ability to 'see' the Kingdom that has already come and working in solidarity with it, rather than assuming that the church is the sole 'proprietor' of the Kingdom. This is a huge step away from Christendom assumptions, but even a moment of honest theological reflection on what we are doing will reveal its necessity.

The book moves on to offer suggestions (imperatives?) about changing theological formation, with a discussion of the obsolescence of fundamentalism, the politics of power, and the need for a spirituality of solidarity and compassion. As a convinced Baptist I am definitely persuaded of the eternal significance of speaking—in a way that helps to reveal truth—from a marginal place or a dissenting space; and I believe we must encourage expressions of our Baptist life that are brave enough to reoccupy that space, often sacrificially. We are not immune to the lure of being big and powerful (after all, it has pragmatic advantages)—but that is not necessarily the expression of Kingdom to which we

have been called.

I was less convinced by Searle's critique of sacramentalism (there are excellent points made, but I do still think sacraments have a purpose in the lives of disciples); and also I sometimes felt a bit depressed by the overall picture painted both of church and society, since clearly there is real and experienced grace, hope and kindness to be found in both, of which we should not lose sight in our critique.

Also, as a theological educator myself, I do see colleges which offer really sound formational routes (though of course it can always be better), and I am hopeful for the future while not being naïve about the challenges of contesting a post-Christian culture—one can teach doctrine in the tradition, while simultaneously introducing faith questions about justice, personal ethics, discipleship, spirituality and Kingdom.

I hope many theological teachers will read this book and respond to it in some way. It is always painful to change, but as Jesus said, 'My Father is still working and I also am working' (John 5:17). It seems right to end with a word from Searle: 'A day is coming when Christians will finally realize that they are sent by God not to serve and sustain the church, but to redeem the world in the power of Christ's compassion' (p193). Amen, and amen.

Sing out for Justice. The Passion and Poetry of the Hebrew Prophets

by Ray Vincent

Christian Alternative, 2017

Reviewer: Pieter Lalleman

Ray Vincent (1936) is a Baptist minister and author of two more books. The imprint Christian Alternative publishes much that is decidedly on the liberal side of the church, if its authors are still in any church at all, so my reading began with some apprehension. In 12 short chapters Vincent introduces the prophetic books as a group, but also prophetic elements in the other scriptures. The book includes many relevant quotes from the prophets.

Vincent knows his Bible background and presents them in an accessible and illuminating way. We get almost a potted history of Israel. (It's not the most orthodox version…) Most prophetic books receive attention, Isaiah most of all by far, but not in a systematic way. Vincent's interest is really in the meaning of these books for today. As he memorably writes, 'While the content of the Scriptures has now been fixed for many centuries, their meaning is still developing' (p29). Hence he emphasises the prophet's passion for justice: 'Justice was a central theme for the prophets from early times. It would of course be anachronistic to attribute some kind of social or economic theory to them, or to call them socialists. Their concern

sprang from their understanding of Israel's God as a God of righteousness and fair dealing…' (p33).

The implications of the prophets' message for today are made crystal clear. Some other aspects of the prophetic books are also addressed, such as the battle against idolatry and for monotheism. Three quarters of the way Vincent loses focus a bit and morphs into a current affairs commentator: 'Europe and North America share a culture that has been shaped by the Christian faith, and the preaching of the Hebrew prophets behind it. However, in many ways Christianity has become part of the problem' (p126).

This is very accessible book without footnotes or bibliography, which can be used by individuals or groups. Preachers can find inspiration here for some powerful sermons! Yet it is disappointing that at times Vincent distances himself from the prophetic message. He also struggles with the idea of prediction and messianic prophecies, and rather thinks that 'Dreams can change the world', as one of the chapters is called. This means that the book has to be handled with care. I finish by quoting another memorable sentence, this time on Jonah: 'We could say that whether that "great fish" existed or not, we can be certain of its species: it is an enormous red herring!'

Of interest to you

edited by Arderne Gillies

NEW PASTORATES AND PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS

Hany ABDELMASIH	From Canada to Regional Minister, LBA (October 2018)
Steve ANSELL	From Chesterfield to Hereford (October 2018)
Carol BOSTRIDGE	From Portfolio Ministry to Regional Minister, LBA, Part-time (Sept 2018))
Clive BURNARD	From Mutley, Plymouth to Regional Minister, YBA (October 2018)
Winston BYGRAVE	From West Hendon to West Hendon (part-time) and Regional Minister, LBA (part-time) (October 2018)
Tim CLARKE-WOOD	To St. Andrews Street, Cambridge (Assoc) (September 2018)
Matt CLIFF	To Chenies (May 2018)
Adam CORNS	To Queen Street, Ilkeston (Assistant Pastor) (September 2018)

Simon DOWNING	From Aston Clinton to Aldwick, Bognor Regis (Sept 2018)
Malcolm DRUMMOND	From Palmers Green to New Life Church, Palmers Green (July 2018)
Alexandra ELLISH	From Church 1v23, Harold Hill to Arnott Road, Peckham (Sept 2018)
Ross FERGUSON	To Lincoln (September 2018)
Dave HIBBIN	To Yeovil (September 2018)
Maureen HIDER	From Oldfield Free to Leavesden Road, Watford (September 2018)
Jonathan HIRST	From Dukinfield to Kay Street, Rawenstall (Associate) (Sept 2018)
Dawn JOHNSON	From London Church Coordinator, Christian Aid to Community Centre Manager, Cambridge Heath, Salvation Army (May 2018)
Lee JOHNSON	From Stoke Newington to Regional Minister, LBA (October 2018)
Steve JONES	From Ainon, Bryncoch to Riverside, Port Talbot (part-time) and Sports Chaplaincy (part-time) (September 2018)
John MALL	To Handsworth (half-time) (July 2018)
Winston MILLWOOD	To Alperton (Transitional Pastor) (August 2018)
Jo MIZEN	To Watnall Road, Hucknall (September 2018)
Adrian ROBERTS	To Zion, Mirfield (July 2018)
Phil ROBINSON	From Streatham to Whetstone (January 2019)
Gerry STANTON	From Pollards Hill to Union Church, Crouch End (September 2018)
Dave TUBBY	From Northfield to Heaton, Newcastle (August 2018)
Andy WARNER	To Oundle Road, Peterborough (June 2018)
Andrew WHITE	To Northumberland Heath (Assistant Pastor) (June 2018)
Robert WHITTINGTON	To King Street, Abertillary (June 2018)
David WOOD	From Bromley Common to Green Street Green (October 2018)
Lucy WRIGHT	From Worcester Park to Eltham Park (October 2018)

MINISTERS IN TRAINING

Alex ANDERSON	South Wales to Mumbles, Swansea (Assistant, Part-time) (Sept 2018)
Jonathan BLAKE	Spurgeon's to Rayleigh (September 2018)
Kenny BROWN	Northern/St Hild to Clayton, Bradford (September 2018)
Dave BURTON	Northern to Colwell, Isle of Wight (July 2018)
Alison DAVIES	Spurgeon's to Urban Expression, Shrublands (June 2018)
Andy EYRE	From Children & Youth Worker, Norwich Central to Dormansland (Minister in Training placement) (September 2018)

Kevin JOHNSON	Bristol to Castle Hill, Warwick (October 2018)
Ali TAYLOR	South Wales to Stevenage (Associate) (September 2018)
Kate YOUNG	Spurgeon's to Cotton End (September 2018)

CHAPLAINCIES, EDUCATIONAL APPOINTMENTS, MISSION & OTHER SECTOR MINISTRIES

Julie AYLWARD	From Borstal, Rochester to Chaplain, HMP Elmley (p/t) (August 2018)
Tony GREEN	From Baldwins Park to Chaplain, Darent Valley Hospital (September 2018)
Eleanor KELSEY	Bristol to Chaplain, HMP Norwich & HMP Wayland (September 2018)

RETIREMENTS

Nigel ARNOLD	Hope Church, Gilwern, Abergavenny (April 2018)
Frank GOVEIA	Rye Lane, Peckham (January 2019)
Paul HARRIS	Reheboth, Briton Ferry (July 2018)
Kirsteen MACAULAY	Foleshill, Coventry (April 2018)
Richard OWEN	Ashurst Drive, Gants Hill (September 2018)
Alan PIKE	George Road, Erdington (April 2018)
Karen SMITH	Tutor, South Wales Baptist College (July 2018)
Phillip STAVES	Lead Chaplain, Kettering General Hospital (April 2018)

DEATHS

Alan F DAVIES	Retired (Oakham) May 2018
Terry DUERDEN	Retired (Oswaldtwistle) May 2018
David MIDDLEMISS	Military Chaplain (until Oct 2017) June 2018
Maureen PRIESTLEY	Retired (Leicester lay preacher) May 2018
David SILVESTER	Retired (Southampton) May 2018
Joanne STARK	(Maldon) April 2018
Jeff TAYLOR	Retired (Desborough) June 2018
Richard WALKER	Retired (Waterlooville) April 2018

ANNIVERSARIES

David & Sylvia HUGGETT	Diamond Wedding 30th August 2018
Peter & Kathryn MORGAN	Golden Wedding 3rd August 2018
Graeme & Christine STOCKDALE	Golden Wedding 27 July 2018