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From the editor

Thinking forwards

Sometimes ideas come from all directions at once! This past few weeks I seem to have been bombarded multilaterally with the encouragement to think 'forwards', not backwards. In this issue of *bmj* we have an article by Stephen Cooper, an Australian reader, on Christian hope, which challenges us not to shy away from preaching about our eternal futures, but to think and speak carefully, prayerfully, and theologically about the subject. We might understand Paul Beasley-Murray's article on retirement as a step towards that eternal future—and it raises some different but challenging pastoral issues.

The topic of our future in God also arose this month in some Bible reading notes I was editing; then again in some published essays I read on sexual identity and on disability in the resurrection. A variety of views about our resurrected bodily state exists and each reader must explore the question for him- or herself—but the issue is a good one for our personal and prayerful reflection. In the resurrection, we may not be sure what our bodies will be like, but we are sure that we will be in the presence of the Risen Lord. *What difference does that make? What does God call us to become?* These questions have both an immediate and an eschatological dimension.

At the time of writing this editorial our politicians are seeking to find a deal with the EU over Brexit; Extinction Rebellion is demonstrating in London; Hong Kong is partially shut down; Turkey is attacking the Kurds. *What does God call us to become?* is indeed a good question. *For what do we hope?* One of the modest aims of *bmj* is to encourage us to reflect theologically together on ministry practice and perhaps to explore this very question in the contexts of our preaching, pastoring and mission. I commend all the articles and reviews to you on this basis.

May I also draw your attention to the new Essay Competition for 2020 (see p16)—we have now run this competition four times and each year has drawn some excellent entries. The winner for 2019 was published in July's issue and the runner-up (by Chris Friend, now a NAM) is offered in this one. Do think about entering—and we especially encourage those in training or the early stages of ministry (although no-one is excluded).

Meanwhile, every blessing as we approach Advent in just a few weeks and prepare again to celebrate our incarnate Lord. *SN*

‘Come, Lord Jesus’

by Stephen Cooper

C.S. Lewis defined Christian hope as ‘a continual looking forward to the eternal world.’[1] That’s a thought-provoking definition and prompts a host of questions. Do I, personally, have a clear mental picture about the future eternal world? Am I genuinely looking forward to that glorious reality? Is this hope, for me, a continual anticipation? Do churches today understand about the future eternal world? Are Christians continually looking forward to God’s promised future when Jesus returns?

I raise these questions because I am concerned about a lack of preaching and teaching in our churches about the Christian hope. In Australia, where I live, there are few Baptist preachers these days who prepare messages about the Lord’s return and what lies beyond it. There are many reasons for this. One reason is that pastors are aware of various interpretations of the theology of eschatology and are confused about which to preach. Another reason is that some in our congregations might disagree with our interpretation, and we are afraid of heated debate! Perhaps some of us avoid this subject because aspects of it seem negative and offensive, such as antichrist, judgment and hell. The media and popular culture often poke fun at subjects like heaven and hell, and that may cause preachers to be reticent about raising the topic. Maybe we are anxious about extreme ways in which some Christians and churches have distorted the truths about God’s promised future.

I suspect the main reason for many pastors is that we don’t personally spend enough time studying the Bible passages which describe the Christian hope, or meditate on and ponder those passages, letting them fire our imaginations and thoughts. The consequence is that we ourselves are not eagerly awaiting the return of Christ and yearning for the heavenly world. The early Christians were taught to pray ‘Come, Lord Jesus’ (Rev 22:20),2 but would many of us find it difficult to pray this sincerely, for we are not feasting our minds and hearts on the promises of scripture about the future kingdom of God.

J. Oswald Sanders, who wrote many helpful Christian books, died in 1992 at the age of 90. A month before his death, Sanders completed his last book: *Heaven—better by far*. He wrote: ‘Some time ago, as I realised that as my next major step would he heaven, I had better become more acquainted with my future home!...While the Bible

does not tell us all we would like to know about heaven, it does reveal all we need to know, and the picture it paints is so glorious as to leave one in breathless wonder…and anticipation'.[3] My conviction is that every pastor, and every Christian, should not wait until the end of life before we ponder the subject of Christian hope. Instead, the biblical promises and descriptions of the future coming kingdom should be a frequent topic for meditation.

In recent months, I decided to focus my biblical studies on the last four chapters (19-22) of the book of Revelation, the most detailed portrayals of the Christian hope in the entire Bible. I read through these four chapters each week, taking one chapter each day and slowing down my reading so that I allow the images and symbols to work their way into my imagination and heart. I've read through various commentaries on Revelation, deliberately studying various interpretations of details like the binding of Satan, the millennium and end-time battles (Rev 20).

I've come to see that the heart of Christian hope is clear and unambiguous. It's about three great truths. First, the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 19:11-16).4 Second, the end of the old order of evil, sin and death (Rev 19:17-20:15). Third, the beginning of the new, restored creation (Rev 21:1-22:5). These are the primary truths, which should be preached on regularly with conviction and passion.

Then there are secondary details, aspects of biblical hope which are not so clear and understandable, such as the order of end-time events, the place of Israel in God's future plans and the nature of punishment in the lake of fire (Rev 20:15; 21:8). There might be times when it is appropriate to preach on these secondary details—but I think they mainly should be taught in smaller groups with those interested in discussing these matters. The job of the preacher in regular congregational worship is to ensure that the heart of the Christian hope—the return of Christ, end of the old order and beginning of the new—is regularly taught and emphasised. Interestingly, my conversations with many members of Baptist churches (and other traditions too) reveal that there is a keen interest in the Christian hope, and disappointment that we preachers do not teach about these matters more often.

In his influential book *I Believe in Preaching*, John Stott argues that the preacher should plan messages over a year which cover the main aspects of biblical truth. Beginning with God the creator, sermons should cover the great themes of the OT, the life and ministry of Jesus, the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the life of the church, Christian ethics, and the Christian hope.[5] This scheme reminds us that, at least once a year, we preachers should proclaim the return of the Lord Jesus and what that entails. Another insight is provided by Bruce Milne in his *Know the Truth*. Milne points out that 'there are more than 250 clear references to the return of the Lord in the NT'.[6] My Bible contains about 250 pages for the NT, so that means there is an average of about one reference to the return of Jesus on every page!

What does that say to us about how often we should preach on this topic? Of course, it would be possible to preach too often on Christian hope, neglecting other important truths which the scriptures proclaim.

My study of Revelation 19-22 led to the preparation of three messages on Christian hope. The title of the series is 'Come, Lord Jesus' (Rev 22:20). The first message is entitled 'The heart of Christian hope', based on Rev 19:11-16 & 21:1-5. This sermon is about the glorious return of Jesus as the victorious warrior, the end of the old order and beginning of the new. I briefly mention the material in 19:16-20:15 (millennium, final judgement), but do not spend much time on this. John's vision introduces four images of the heavenly world: new creation (21:1), new city (21:2), new bride (21:2) and new Eden (21:3-4). The second message is 'The Christian's Eternal Home', based on Rev 21:9-27. I invited the congregation to become excited by the images and symbols as John portrays more details about the glorious eternal kingdom. The final message is 'Christian hope has implications', based on Rev 22:1-21. This sermon emphasises the moral and ethical implications that flow from God's promised future. I challenged the congregation to read Rev 19-22 each week and make these texts a regular subject for meditation. If you would like a copy of these three messages, please contact me *via* email. I also invited those interested in further discussion and study to join me at a time later in the week. During these sessions, we listened to questions and interacted about some of the secondary details which were not preached on.

There are so many Bible passages providing rich reflection on the Christian hope. The OT contains wonderful texts like Job 19:25-27, Ps 96:10-13, Isa 25:6-8 and Dan 12:2-3. Jesus had so much to say about his future return—think of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), parables of the kingdom (Matt 13:24-50), signs of the end times (Matt 24:29-44) and the three great parables of judgement in Matt 25. The NT letters are packed with references—such as Paul's words 'we eagerly await a Saviour from [heaven], the Lord Jesus Christ' (Phil 3:20), his stunning description of the resurrection body in 1 Cor 15 and his glorious portrayal of the renewal of the whole creation (Rom 8:18-25). What about Hebrews, which urges God's people to 'imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised' (Heb 6:12)? How about Peter's exciting portrayal of our 'living hope' (1 Pet 1:3-9), and the assurance of God's promised future with implications for today (2 Pet 3:3-15)?

Preaching about the Christian hope is not only necessary for Christians but should also be a vital part of our evangelistic proclamation to those who are not Christians. The early church's evangelistic preaching included reference to God's promise to 'restore everything' (Acts 3:21), that Jesus 'is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead' (Acts 10:42), and that 'God has set a day when he will judge the word with justice' (Acts 17:31). Paul's evangelistic ministry in Thessalonica lasted for only a few weeks (Acts 17:2), yet some Thessalonians responded to the gospel message

by turning to God, serving God, and 'wait[ing] for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath' (1 Thess 1:9-10). Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians reveal that instruction about the Christian hope was an important part of the formation of new believers in Christ (see especially 2 Thess 2:5, 15).[7]

It does take courage to speak about topics like the final judgement and hell. These subjects are mentioned frequently in the NT, so we are remiss if we ignore or minimise them. There will be times when it is appropriate to give messages on these themes.[8] On these occasions, we must ensure that we study carefully what the Bible actually teaches, and speak with solemnity, humility, sensitivity and love.

An important reason why we must study the biblical texts about Christian hope is that we often refer to these themes in funerals. I have sometime winced at funerals in Baptist churches, where the pastor or other speakers say things about death, the state of people who have died before Christ returns, and the nature of heaven. For example, consider this statement: 'she's now re-united with her husband'. It would be more biblically faithful and pastorally helpful to say 'she's now with Jesus, along with all the family of believers in Christ who have died'.[9] It is crucial for us to be very clear in our minds about what the Bible teaches, and to explain the truth clearly to others.

I have found the book I mentioned earlier by Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth*, is a very succinct, balanced and helpful exploration of the Christian hope (see Part 7, *The Last Things*).[10] Of particular help is his last section on Application.[11] Milne gathers the implications of the Bible's teaching on hope around eight words: hope, comfort, holiness, action, prayer, watchfulness, love and praise. One could easily develop those eight words into a preaching series![12] Milne rightly reminds us that the Bible's teaching on hope is not primarily designed to feed our curiosity, but 'summons us to commitment and obedience'.[13]

This article is a plea for preaching about the Christian hope. There are other ways, apart from preaching, in which Christian hope can be presented, and responded to, in corporate worship. Service leaders and pastors must ensure that Bible readings, songs, prayers and visual elements often remind the congregation about aspects of God's promised future.

Christian hope: 'a continual looking forward to the eternal world' (C.S. Lewis). The question is, are we preachers excited and passionate about the Christian hope? Are we often proclaiming the glorious return of Jesus, the coming end of the old order and beginning of the new? What about the Lord's people in our churches? Do they have a clear understanding of Christian hope? Are they continually looking forward to that wonderful reality, with eager anticipation? Are our churches being formed into 'eschatological communities'? Stanley Grenz writes that the vision of Christian hope

'should inspire us in this in-between era to seek to be the eschatological community in the present, proclaiming in word and deed the good news of the coming eternal community in which God himself will dwell with us'.[14] Are Baptist Christians able to pray, sincerely, 'Come, Lord Jesus' (Rev 22:20)?

Stephen Cooper is retired after 42 years of pastoral ministry in Baptist churches, theological education and parachurch ministry among university students. He continues to preach in various churches in Australia and teaches Baptist pastors in Zimbabwe. Stephen can be contacted on cooper.steve.j@gmail.com.

Notes to text

1. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan) chap 10, p104.
2. Other examples in the NT include 1 Cor 16:22 (*Marana tha*) and Rom 8:23.
3. J. Oswald Sanders, *Heaven—better by far* (Guildford: Highland Books, 1993) 1, 2 & 4.
4. Karl Barth emphasises this point that Jesus Christ is 'the Subject of hope', the 'origin, theme and content' of our 'confident, patient and cheerful expectation.' See *Church Dogmatics* (Peabody: Hendrickson; eds. G.W. Bromiley & T.F. Torrance, 1961) Vol IV Part 3.2, pp 902, 909, 915-6, 921-2, 924, 929, 931, 940.
5. John Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder, 1982), pp198-201.
6. Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth* (Nottingham: IVP; 3rd edn, 2009), p343.
7. See 1 Thess 1:9-10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-5:11; 5:23; 2 Thess 1:5-10; 2:1-15. See also Heb 6:1-2.
8. A helpful collection of sermons is provided by Bruce Milne, *The Message Of Heaven and Hell* (Nottingham: IVP; Bible Speaks Today Series, ed Derek Tidball; 2002).
9. My suggested words are based upon texts like Matt 22:30, 2 Cor 5:8 and Phil 1:23.
10. Another stimulating book about eschatology is by Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope*: *Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (London: SPCK, 2007).
11. Milne, *Know the Truth*, pp373-7.
12. Jurgen Moltmann also emphasises the practical outcomes of Christian hope. He argues that when Christians live in expectation of the promised future of the kingdom of God, they will not withdraw from the problems of society. The church will offer to all forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, and will work in the world for justice, community, peace, and human dignity and freedom for all people. See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London: SCM, 1967), especially 'Exodus Church', pp325-338.
13. Milne, *Know the Truth*, p373.
14. Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), p859.

Retired ministers matter

by Paul Beasley-Murray

Retirement Matters for Ministers is the title of a wide-ranging report based on my recent research into how Baptist ministers experience retirement. The research was based on 17 in-depth interviews and a lengthy questionnaire completed by 53 people. In this article I want to look at just one issue within the research: the sense of 'abandonment' felt by many retired ministers. It is important to say that as a result of my report, I have been assured that the Baptist Union and its associations will review, and hopefully change, some of its current policies with regard to retired ministers. However, I believe it is helpful for readers to understand what the policy has been in recent years. Here are some of the findings.

Have you had a pastoral visit or personal letter or phone call from your regional minister?

Almost four-fifths (79%) had experienced no contact with a regional minister since retirement. One respondent said: 'I wrote to him twice, but received no acknowledgement or reply'. Another said: 'Even after the death of my wife I had no contact'. Clearly some associations have different policies from others. In the South Eastern Baptist Association, I am told, every retired minister receives a Christmas visit from a regional minister bearing the annual gift of a Christmas cake. The South-Western Association has appointed pastoral care coordinators for retired ministers, who are accountable to one of the regional ministers. But such is not the norm elsewhere.

Are you content with the support you currently receive?

75% are not content with the support they receive. Indeed, one response was 'What support?'. Within the context of relationships with the Baptist Union and regional ministry, this is surely a cause for great dis-ease.

It is important to realise that the context of this question is the relationship with the Baptist Union and its regional ministers. In addition to the 25% who are content, a further 15% say that they are content with the support they receive, but they explicitly state that it is not 'thanks to Baptists', or at least not 'thanks to the Baptist Union and its regional ministers'.

One, who did not receive support from the association or Union, said: 'I don't expect

support from the Baptist family staff. You have to get on with it and find people to journey with'. However, he and his wife are in the unusual position of being in a church where there are two other retired ministers and their wives, with whom they meet up on a regular basis.

Other comments include: 'The silence was deafening and continues'; 'I would like regional ministers to know that I exist'; 'There was virtually no support from the Area Ministry team: it was left to the initiative of a locally well-known retired minister to bring other retired ministers and spouses together. I'm not complaining but it's almost as though we became 'invisible' to the BU and the Area'; 'It would be nice to have had regular follow-up from the regional team to make sure retirement was working'.

If you are not content with the support you receive, then how do you feel churches, associations and indeed the Baptist Union could better support retired ministers?

Regional ministers need 'to recognise that we have a vast library of gathered ministerial knowledge that is left untapped for the most part'. 'There needs to be some acknowledgement we exist—as it is there is no Baptist Union handbook (in which are names used to appear); and the names of retired ministers no longer appear in association handbooks'. 'It is a great shame that the Association makes no provision for retired ministers to meet from time to time. We do get a printed card from the team at Christmas, but that does not add up to pastoral care'. 'The Baptist Steering Group [of the Baptist Union] seems to assume that pastoral care of ministers was solely the responsibility of the local church (questions asked *via* the Baptist Ministers Fellowship & the Retired Baptist Ministers Housing Association): in other words, retired ministers are no different from other retired people'. One of the saddest comments was, 'I feel so far removed that I cannot offer any suggestions'.

Along with others one respondent urged: 'Make the visitation of retired ministers a high priority for area ministers, who seem to forget we exist but who would benefit from our wisdom/experience'. Another wrote: 'I know regional ministers' time is pressured and resources are limited, but I think one regional minister in each association should have responsibility for the retired minister in their area and keep in regular contact by phone or e-mail or by arranging meetings. A phone call once in a while to ask 'How you're doing' would be nice! By definition, pastoral care should be offered, not sought in an emergency'. Yet another said: 'I feel ministers enter ministry 'with a bang' (*eg* recognition at Assembly) and leave with a whimper. The Baptist Union is 'missing a trick' in not using the example of 'life-long' ministry as an inspiration to those coming into and possibly struggling in ministry. It's more about recognition than support really. There is also a reluctance on the part of some regional leaders to see the value that retired ministers could bring to ministers' meetings provided they did not harp back to 'how it

was done in my day' but encourage other ministers in their struggles which most of us have been through'. A similar comment was expressed by another respondent: 'For a number of years, I was a member of the Association Board of Trustees. One of my oftenrepeated suggestions was to draw attention to the number of "young" (newly retired) ministers living in the Association with a wealth of skills and experience that the Association might use to their advantage'.

Honouring the ministry covenant

At the heart of Baptist ecclesiology is the concept of covenanting together. John Smyth, for instance, defined a 'visible community of saints' as 'two or more joined together by covenant with God and themselves…for their mutual edification and for God's glory'. There has been an increasing recognition among Baptists of the need to rediscover their roots and realise afresh that, in becoming church members, we enter into a 'covenant' which involves 'covenant relationships'.[1]

In 2001 the Baptist Union produced *Covenant 21—A Covenant for a Gospel People* with a view to it being used not just within the local church, but also within associations and the Baptist Union itself: 'We come this day to covenant with you and with companion disciples to watch over each other and to walk together before you in ways known and to be made known'.

In recent years British Baptists have adopted a covenant understanding of the relationship between ministers (including retired ministers) and the Baptist Union: those who are accredited by the Baptist Union 'have entered into a covenant with the Baptist Union to live in conformity with the way of life this high calling demands and to receive from the Union such support, recognition and trust as befits those who serve Christ in this way'.[2] The *Ignite* report (December 2015) whose recommendations have been largely accepted by the Baptist Union Council and are in the process of being worked upon, states in its section on *Living in Covenant Relationship*, that 'we sense a need to re-state and reclaim our Baptist understanding of covenant ministry', but nowhere speaks of retired ministers as belonging to this ministry covenant.[3] This omission is regrettable—and hopefully in future discussions by the Baptist Union Council consideration will be given to how this ministry covenant can be made more relevant to the needs of retired Baptist ministers.

However, as the analysis of the data of this report on retired ministers shows, the current 'ministerial covenant' between the Baptist Union and retired ministers has—with some exceptions—largely broken down. For the most part there is no 'support', no 'recognition', and no 'trust'.[4]

Ministry beyond retirement

If, as almost all the respondents in this survey have stated, God has still a call on the lives of retired ministers, then this needs to be more clearly recognised by the Baptist Union and its associations. Retirement may mark the end of leading a church, but it does not mark the end of ministry. The pace of life may have changed, but most ministers when they retire are still keen to use their experience and energy in the service of God. Of course, the day will come when health and strength will fail, and ministers will need to make the transition from active retirement to a more passive form of retirement—but in the meantime many ministers have a good number of years before that they enter into their 'second retirement'. Yet currently most retired ministers receive no help from the Baptist Union and its associations to continue to live out their call—it is left to the retired to take the initiative to discover opportunities for service, and that is not always easy.

Many who entered ministry with a deep sense of God's call find that at retirement they are regarded simply as 'employees' whose time of service to the 'company' or 'firm' is over. This is a secular view of retirement and fails to recognise the ongoing call of God on their lives. When the time comes for ministers to hand over the responsibility of leading a church, the Baptist Union and its associations should help ministers to discover what God wants them to do next and where they can best serve him and his church. Not to do so is to deny tried and tested vocations and to deprive churches of a wealth of leadership resource.

Louis Armstrong, the great jazz musician once said: 'Musicians don't retire; they stop when there's no more music in them'. That too is how many retired ministers feel: they still have divine music in their souls and they will only stop giving voice to that music when they join the greater chorus in heaven![5]

A way forward

With much of Baptist Union life now delegated from the 'centre' (Didcot) to the 'regions' (associations), regional ministers have a key role to play in ensuring the well-being of retired ministers. Regional ministers are not to be equated with 'bishops'—Baptists have a very different understanding of the nature of the church from Anglican.[6] They do, however, represent the Baptist Union in their associations, and have a key role in implementing the covenant between retired ministers and the Baptist Union.

Precisely how regional ministers might implement the ministry covenant is open for discussion. Although the Baptist Union now has double—if not treble—the number of regional ministers compared with the old 'superintendency' system, there is no doubt that

with the delegation of so much Baptist Union life to the regions, they no longer have as much time to care for the ministers in their association as did the previous generations of area superintendents.[7] In my judgement the only way in which regional ministers can care effectively for retired ministers in their association is to delegate much of the day-to-day care to a small group of 'retirement officers'—perhaps made up of ministers in the first stages of retirement—who would serve as mentors and if not even as pastors to the ministers in their care. From time to time the 'retirement officers' would then report back to their regional ministers.[8]

The appointment of such 'retirement officers' does not remove from churches which have retired ministers in their congregations their duty of care. As with the Anglican system, the local church has a primary duty of care. Ideally churches and retirement officers would work together, with churches taking the initiative in informing retirement officers of any significant pastoral issues.

However, retired ministers need more than pastoral care—they need to be helped to discover how they might continue to respond to God's call. Retirement offices could have a key role to play: not simply in visiting but also in putting in place a programme of mentoring. The first six months of retirement could be regarded as a 'sabbatical' during which ministers could begin to adjust to what for most will be a new home, a new church, and a new community. After six months, however, many will be ready take on new opportunities of service.

My proposal is that, as with the Anglican system, retirement officers would help ministers prepare for retirement through one or more 'exit interviews' and continue to care for ministers in retirement through annual visits. The personal touch—and not emails—is what is wanted. Pastoral care will involve not simply being there for the crises in life—it will also involve helping retired ministers to find meaning ways in which they can continue to express the call that God has on their lives.[9]

Retirement officers will help regional ministers organise gatherings—at least once a year—when retired ministers and their spouses are invited to meet with the regional ministers, and ideally with the President of the Baptist Union too (would it be possible to encourage all presidents in their association visits to make time to meet with retired ministers?).

Inevitably there would be a cost to this new system of pastoral care for retired ministers. Although I do not envisage any remuneration for the new 'retirement officers', clearly their travel costs and other expenses would have to be met. Similarly, the costs of an annual social event for retired ministers would need to be paid for. The production and circulation of agreed guidelines for the pastoral care of retirement ministers which would need to go not just to retired ministers but also to all ministers in pastoral charge (otherwise how would they know they have a primary duty of care for retired

ministers?) would also entail a cost. However, I would envisage the limited costs would not be a burden on the funds of the Baptist Union and its associations.

The fact is retired ministers need to be honoured—rather than forgotten. They have borne the heat of the day—they have served God faithfully against all the odds. Retired ministers matter!

Paul Beasley-Murray is now a retired minister after long service to the denomination, and can be contacted on paulbeasleymurray@gmail.com. Copies of his full report are available from Peter Thomas (peter@pbthomas.com) at a cost of £5 + £2 postage. The guide mentioned at the start will be published by the BRF in February 2020.

Notes to text

1. "In a Baptist church, membership involves entering into a dynamic covenant relationship with one another - a relationship in which we commit ourselves not only to work together to extend Christ's Kingdom, but also to love one another and stand by one another whatever the cost". See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers: The Baptist Way of Being the Church* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, Didcot 2nd edition 2006), pp72-76.

2. Preface to the Ministerial Recognition Rules relating to the Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers, adopted by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain on 13 October 2016.

3. See *Ignite* Report 27-28.

4. One exception to this breakdown in the covenant is found in the concern shown by the Head of Ministries in cases where he is told—normally by a regional team minister—of the death of a retired minister. Andy Hughes, the current Head of Ministries, tells me that in such cases he sends a letter of condolence and a gift of £250 from the Baptist Union. However, it is important to note that this only happens when the Head of Ministries is notified of a death: for reasons of data protection the Baptist Pension Trust is not allowed to inform the Baptist Union of a death of a retired minister!

5. I am grateful for this analogy to Canon Hugh Dibbens, who in his retirement serves as the Evangelism Adviser in the Barking Episcopal Area of the Diocese of Chelmsford.

6. See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers*, pp122-124.

7. In *Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples* (Canterbury Press, Norwich 2005) ed by Christopher Ellis & Myra Blyth, p11, regional ministers are asked the following people-centred question: "Do you accept the charge from Christ to care for his people with all faithfulness and compassion, watching over the life of the churches with all humility? Will you care for the weak, bring Christ's healing to the broken hearted, lift up the downcast, and pray regularly for those committed to you care?"

8. It may be that in a Baptist context it would be more helpful to talk of 'association mentors for the retired' rather than 'association retirement officers'—the function rather than the term is ultimately what concerns me.

9. On a different but related note, ministers' widows also need to be cared for, for many of them have also served God faithfully. Perhaps their welfare could be part of the brief of the proposed 'Retirement Officers'?

bmj Essay Prize 2020

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 2020

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.

Entrepreneurship and ministry

by Chris Friend

The word "entrepreneur" originally comes from the combination of two Latin words *entre*, to swim out, and *prendes,* to grasp, understand, or capture',[1] conveying a sense of adventure and opportunism. Volland defines the entrepreneurial minister as 'A visionary who, in partnership with God and others, challenges the status quo by energetically creating and innovating in order to shape something of kingdom value',[2] while Male defines a pioneer as 'A person called by God who has the character and gifting to respond first to the Holy Spirit's initiatives within a particular context and to create, with others, something in response to these promptings that opens up new horizons'.[3] While these ministries are different, there are similarities. In this article I will evaluate Volland's definition of an entrepreneur, teasing out its characteristics, contrasting it with pioneering, and asking how the language of each shapes mission.

Carey Nieuwhof writes: 'If the church is going to reverse some trends and maximize potential, we need more entrepreneurial pastors, not more shepherds'.[4] How does being entrepreneurial help the emerging church? What characteristics are required? Cameron Trimble lists ten: 'they ask forgiveness, not permission; have a brand; take risks; are students of their ministry; inspire us with vision; focus on outcomes; think through possibility and practicality; are self-reliant; multiply through delegation; build networks'.[5] Volland writes: 'entrepreneurs are a gift of God to the Church in a time of rapid and discontinuous cultural change'.[6] Roxburgh describes discontinuous change as: 'disruptive and unanticipated…dominant in periods of history that transform a culture forever, tipping it over into something new'.[7] I think we are in a period of discontinuous change and I agree with Roxburgh's description, but how are entrepreneurs a gift to the church?

Entrepreneurs are in the business of transformation rather than evolution and this current period of church history requires the facilitation of that God-centred transformative approach. However, entrepreneurial transformation is not: 'Whole systems of church life…being formed on the basis of the CEO leader who takes charge, sets growth goals, and targets "turn-around" congregations'.[8] Simply to extrapolate a secular 'business' model and apply it to a church is to misunderstand the *missio dei* and the biblical values on which the church is based. No: this is about mission that has God at the heart of the vision and also the ability to enthuse and engage others to catch the vision and how that

impacts the kingdom. Entrepreneurs who seek after God start by defining reality and charting God's vision for the church: Moynagh writes that: 'The entrepreneur reads the environment to discover new openings'[9]—as a process of recognition. As part of a 'missional listening team' I concur with this and I have witnessed entrepreneurs in different missional contexts looking for 'new openings'. Examples are the Mighty Oaks coffee van, serving the late-night economy in Alnwick, reaching out with a social gospel by blessing the community with free hot drinks; or Soul City Church in Manchester, holding services from a cinema multiplex to be more contextually relevant.

But entrepreneurship is still a 'dirty word' for many in the church. Volland took a straw poll of people in Christian ministry to comment on the term 'entrepreneur' in relation to Christian pioneering and while there were positives, one response was: 'I loathe the use of the term "entrepreneur"'![10]

Is language the barrier? I remember listening to the founder and leader of a megachurch in the northwest and while he was obviously an impressive entrepreneur, it jarred with me when he talked about shaping the church around his character; this reference to 'the brand' I found unhelpful and it led me to consider other megachurches where 'lighting, brilliant worship and good coffee' are an 'essential' part of church. This is where the entrepreneurial language of the church lets itself down. Lyle Dennen is critical of Volland's approach and writes: 'All of us who, with Volland, want to bring the energy and creativity of the entrepreneur model into the Church should say: "Yes, we want a profit," but that profit is growing in our love of God and following more closely Jesus in the sacrificial service of others...of growing in holiness and compassion. Perhaps it would be easier and simpler always to refer to mission or social entrepreneurs'.[11]

Bolton and Thompson suggest 'We would like to redeem the word "entrepreneur" and give it a more positive image, linking it with concepts such as integrity and philanthropy'.[12] Volland's statement 'to help Christians for whom the term has negative associations to understand how it could also be considered useful in reflecting on the potential shape of Christian ministry and mission today'[13] is praiseworthy, but in his book, *The Minister as Entrepreneur*, I feel he devotes too much to making the word 'entrepreneur' acceptable for Christian mission today and not enough emphasis on the Christlike characteristics that should mark out all leaders. The church needs godly entrepreneurs to enact change in line with God's vision. My current minister is a strong 'shepherd' and by his own admission is not entrepreneurial, but I would argue that the church still strongly needs the shepherds; by encouraging entrepreneurship the church still needs to recognise the gift of the pastoral leader even and especially in an emerging church context.

Just as there are both business and social models of entrepreneur, so too the pioneer

cannot simply be characterised in one way. Dave Male believes that there are four types of pioneer exhibiting different characteristics for the various stages of mission. He feels that the *pioneer-starter* is strong at starting new projects but doesn't have the pastoral strength to see it grow to maturity; *pioneer-sustainers* can commence something new but have the pastoral and nurturing gifts to stay with it; *sustainer-pioneers* recognise the gift of the pioneer-starter in others but are strong on developing an initiative, they are good at holding the tension between the inherited model of church and the emerging context; *sustainer-developers* are similar but are likely to develop evangelistic courses or new services. He talks about the importance of the spectrum and adds: 'if your team only comprised of pioneer-starters it might be wonderfully creative and exciting, but also unstable and not able to consider some key longer-term issues of maturity and stability'.[14]

Biblical examples

Is there a biblical reference point for the language of entrepreneurship? A closer look at the life of Paul shows a man of God who exhibits entrepreneurial gifts not least in vision; he writes: 'It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known' (Romans 15:20), conveying the adventure and opportunism that I referred to earlier. He knew that to achieve this goal, he would need to enlist the help of the 'voluntary sector' thereby understanding the necessity of partnership. Chris Beales writes: 'He was a visionary, yes. But utterly, urgently pragmatic. And he was to prove, in time, to be perhaps the world's leading mass recruiter of local changemakers!'[15] Plummer writes 'Paul expected his churches to engage in centrifugal (outward-directed) missionary work that was in continuity with his own missionary labours.[16] Paul enthused people and engaged them in team. Christian entrepreneur Ray George adds: 'In the Church it's important that the leadership operates as a team. They must work together, pray together, eat together and share a joint purpose. And when that happens and everybody is in the right area of their gifting, it will work'.[17]

The language is similar in pioneering: Volland writes about Jesus that 'as a visionary, he articulates the alternative reality of the coming kingdom of God'.[18] Dave Male writes: 'His pioneering work cannot be contained by the old structures; new wine requires new wineskins. It will not work simply to patch up what already exists and hope it will somehow work'.[19] Jesus' vision was new and demanded a radical rethink. Interestingly, Jesus chose to enlist the 'uneducated' who were not so immersed in tradition but were prepared and excited to listen to a new vision. In partnering with them, Jesus demonstrated his 'highly collaborative approach to ministry'.[20]

In training alongside my wife for pioneer ministry, not only do we recognise God's call on us to be team but also that any future ministry requires of us a facilitating role—like Paul—to help others catch the vision. As such, we have formed a missional listening

team as we seek to involve others in the 'double listening'[21] process of discernment. This gives integrity to seeking out God's vision and imparting that to the wider body of believers. The language of vision is a comfortable and necessary component when pioneering in the emerging church context but Goodhew *et al* warn that vision should not be: 'so tightly defined that it squeezes out any possibility of an organic evolution as the Spirit leads'.[22] Ultimately that vision is shaped by 'fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith' (Hebrews 12:2). The Bible, not the boardroom, is where the language of entrepreneurship should start for the emerging church.

A useful lens for shaping mission

How then does entrepreneurship shape mission for the emerging church? Is it about challenge, innovation or both? Nieuwhof continues: 'Entrepreneurs...are never satisfied. While it can be frustrating to work with someone who is never satisfied, it's an essential gift in birthing what's new and expanding a current mission'.[23] By their very nature, entrepreneurs who challenge will not be popular with congregations who stick to the mantra of 'this is the way we've always done it'—but that methodology is a trajectory towards church extinction. It requires skill for the leadership team of a local church to steer the ship into uncharted waters. Roxburgh *et al* write: 'Missional leaders need to be skilful in engaging conflict and helping people live in ambiguity long enough to ask new questions about who they are as God's people'.[24] Volland adds, 'challenging the status quo is consistent with the being of God—and that in the context of Christian ministry it is an aspect of entrepreneurship which, although rarely comfortable, we should not be surprised to witness'.[25]

Paul confronted Peter (Galatians 2) because he was becoming an obstacle to the mission of the gospel. Paul knew the mission God had laid on his heart and he would not compromise for the sake of the gospel even when that brought him into conflict. Entrepreneurs in this context need to be resilient and keep the vision 'front and centre' in pursuing God's mission for a locality. But alongside challenge is creativity, Bolton and Thompson write, 'True entrepreneurs…use their innovative talents to overcome obstacles that would stop most people. For them every problem is a new opportunity'.[26]

In a modern-day missional sense, Christians Against Poverty came into being because of the entrepreneurial spirit, determination and innovation of one man, John Kirkby. He recognised the huge social problem of debt and poverty in the UK and 'With the vital ingredients of a church to partner with, a passionate person to be trained as a debt counsellor and the faith that God would provide'.[27] This organisation is now national and international and, crucially, partnering with churches has seen a missional door open up—as 'a bridge for social justice' extending from church to communities—resulting in thousands of clients finding faith in Christ. Just like Paul, John Kirkby recognised that the growth of the organisation could only happen through local believers and, while Paul

saw the *oikos* (household) model of church as growing the early church, John looked ecumenically to find churches which understood the mission of CAP to help people find Christ through debt relief. John is a social entrepreneur—driven by making a difference rather than making a profit—and undoubtedly, this entrepreneurial gift and the absolute sense of God's call on his life led to this innovative process and without question, he has shown resilience, determination and a constant focus on the mission to get through the challenging times.

What of the language of pioneering? Beth Keith is quoted: 'A pioneer is someone who sees future possibilities and works to bring them to reality...can imagine something new, something different, something alive'.[28] This resonates with the language of the entrepreneur in seeking to shape something for the kingdom through a fresh approach. Dave Male writes: 'often pioneer leaders feel they are on the edge, pointing to a new reality that might come to pass…This might require some criticism of present systems, but it must also be energising for the church if it is viewed as an alternative reality of living out the kingdom in the locality'.[29] This is the nub for the pioneer; being at the forefront of something new, they can see opportunities but also a painful road to get there. Pioneers, like entrepreneurs, need to accentuate the positives while being a wake-up call to the need for change.

Conclusion

As a pioneer MiT, I found that there was much to commend in Volland's statement. However, I think there are issues with how it is perceived in somehow being 'less holy' than the term pioneering and regarded with suspicion because of the perceptions of money-making and arrogance in the business world. I think that the church does need entrepreneurs but that those people need to exhibit Christlike characteristics as strongly as the innate gifts already mentioned in this essay. The values held need to be God's values. I also believe that not all pioneers are entrepreneurs, though it is plain to see that Paul exhibited both. When it comes to the emerging context, Goodhew *et al* sum it up well: 'The people of God do not need a few talented pioneering heroes [but] thousands of pioneers who lead by example and act to galvanise local churches into entrepreneurial communities capable of habitually creating and innovating to build things of recognised value around perceived local opportunities'.[30] If the church really is serious about mission in our emerging culture then it needs to embrace such language as it seeks to be more contextually relevant for the needs of a post-Christendom world.

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Sacred Space, Contemporary Spirituality

by Christopher Shenton Brown

Having grown up in the Baptist tradition, the places of worship that I have attended have been somewhat understated in their design, decoration and contents, since, as the well-rehearsed phrase goes, 'the church is not the building, but the people.' Such phrases reflect the view that one's physical environment has little or no significance for one's spirituality. However, a number of years ago I had an experience that was unexpected and powerful, and which challenged my beliefs regarding space, spirituality and how I encounter God. Furthermore, I am now training for Baptist ministry, and this experience has compelled me to explore and understand my own experience and also how an understanding of the relationship between sacred space and contemporary spirituality could shape my pastoral practice. I will use the pastoral cycle as described by J-L. Segundo[1] and as developed by L. Green.[2]

Experience

The Baptist tradition has significantly influenced and shaped my theology of spirituality and space, and although I had what I would consider a 'deep' spirituality, it was also quite narrow in terms of being focused on Scripture, sung worship, and prayer. Furthermore, the often implicit (but sometimes explicit) theology of space I received led me to believe that the spaces in which the church meets are of little or of no significance to one's spiritual life and encounter with God.

However, these beliefs were dramatically challenged some 10 years ago during a visit to Padova, Italy, for a friend's wedding, when, with some scepticism, I visited the Pontifical Basilica of Saint Anthony. As I entered this vast building, I was surprised to be deeply moved by the design, decoration and content of the building, by the silent and reverent atmosphere, and by the devotion of those believers who were engaging with the various areas of prayer, veneration and worship. Yet it was when I stood before a large painting of the crucifixion of Christ that I had a very powerful, intense and profound experience of the Holy Spirit: so much so, that I had to sit down on a bench opposite the painting. As I sat there and engaged with the painting, I encountered God in a very powerful and personal way, that through this painting in that space God was inviting me into a deeper understanding and experience of what Jesus had done on the cross. The range of emotions

and feelings I experienced during this encounter were strong, deep and complex, and included awe and reverence, love and peace, and unworthiness and grace, all of which led to a time of intense personal worship.

As I left the basilica I was challenged and changed, and so began a journey of what this meant for my theology of space and spirituality. Furthermore, since this encounter I have experienced similar such moments in quite different places and in different ways, from praying in contemporary 24/7 prayer rooms, to sitting in silence in my local 13th century Anglican church, to visiting places of pilgrimage. Such experiences have therefore compelled me to address the question at hand, both for my own spiritual journey and for those for whom I have pastoral responsibility.

Analysis

To assess how an understanding of sacred space might contribute to contemporary spirituality, one must first understand what is meant by the somewhat broad term 'spirituality'; then one can explore and analyse contemporary British culture to try and capture the spirituality that flows from it.

Spirituality—a definition. I would define Christian spirituality as the authentic and contextual pursuit of whole-life discipleship as followers of Jesus Christ, of deepening one's encounter, experience and relationship with the trinitarian God, of deepening one's understanding of God, of self and the created world, and which therefore impacts and transforms every area of one's life, in conformity to the will of God.

Postmodern Britain. I would describe contemporary Britain as a place where knowledge is contextual, local and pluralistic,[3] where a relative and liberal morality has become dominant,[4] where individualism, materialism and consumerism are powerful cultural forces, where mental health in both adults and children is deteriorating,[5] and where society is increasingly mobile (voluntarily and involuntarily),[6] virtual,[7] and fragmented.8 It is also a place that has challenged traditional seats of authority and in so doing, enabled minority voices in the spheres of race, gender, sexuality, and disability to be given a platform and to challenge many forms of social injustice, oppression and inequality, and has led to unprecedented progress in these areas of society.[9] Postmodernity has also loosened social constraints and expectations, allowing people the freedom to explore new and different ways of living, which has led to a rediscovery of the 'whole person' through integrated and holistic living—a major part of which is spirituality.[10]

Postmodern spirituality. Although statistics suggest that the institutional church is in decline,[11] private spirituality is thriving[12] in the form of the 'spiritual consumer'[13] who can survey all the ancient and modern spiritual and religious options in pluralist, multi-ethnic, multifaith Britain, and shape, blend, and even create their own personal

spirituality. Yet the traditional church has not been totally dismissed, since increasingly people are attending Christian retreats for spiritual guidance, there is renewed interest in monastic and contemplative wisdom and practices, and some are even returning to ancient forms of Christianity as their answer to the uncertainties of contemporary living.[14] There is also growing evidence that within this virtual, social media-driven society, there is an increasing desire to explore spirituality with others in real, physical community.[15]

Furthermore, the postmodern focus on holistic living, as well as the pioneering work on sexuality, has influenced feminist, liberation and creation theologians to explore embodied spirituality, where themes of embodiment, the lived experience, and God's good creation have led to a far more positive and integrated view of the relationships between God, self, and the material world.[16] Such work has been seen to have a positive impact on mental health and personal wellbeing.[17]

Therefore, contemporary postmodern spirituality may be defined as being holistic and embodied, affecting the whole person and the whole of life; it desires to encounter the divine; it is searching for deep historical roots, stability and consistency; it is seeking answers to the deepest questions of life as people wrestle with self-understanding, identity and relationships; it is often an individualistic pursuit where inner experience, personal journey and wellbeing are emphasised, and yet also shows early signs of desiring a physical communal experience.

Theological reflection

The focus now shifts to theological reflection on sacred space within the Judaeo-Christian tradition, recognising that, as McGrath writes, the relationship between theology and spirituality is two-way, and that, as the expression *lex orandi, lex credenda* captures, the way we pray and worship shapes and influences what we believe,[18] as does our understanding of what it means to be human.

Sacred space in the Hebrew scriptures. The first creation narrative tells us that it was God who first makes the distinction between that which is 'ordinary' and that which is sacred through blessing the seventh day and making it holy (Genesis 2:3). This distinction was then applied to natural space when God appeared to Moses at the burning bush and declared that space to be holy (Exodus 3:5), and then to built space when God commanded his people to construct the tabernacle (Exodus 25-26) and later the temple (Samuel 7:12-13), so that 'I may dwell in their midst' (Exodus 25:8, NRSV), emphasising that it is God alone who decides where He shall dwell (Deuteronomy 14:23). These spaces were not holy in and of themselves, rather the presence and the declaration of the holy God made them holy (Exodus 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11). Furthermore, there were specific instructions for the design, decoration, ornamentation

and use of these spaces, including worship, offering, sacrifice, atonement, and ordination, and so were very much relational spaces where everything communicated something of the holy presence and nature of God, and of humanity's relationship with God and with each other. Such sacred spaces thus spoke of God's universality and particularity (1 Kings 8:27), that the transcendent God could be found and encountered in that local space.[19]

Sacred space in the Christian scriptures. In the Christian scriptures we see a dramatic development where the focus of God's presence moves away from the temple to being embodied in Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnated Son of God who dwelt (Greek: *skēnoō,* 'to pitch his tabernacle'[20]) among us (John 1:14), and thus become the living, breathing tabernacle (John 2:13-22). Thus Jesus changed the way humanity encounters and worships God, in that such encounters are no longer geographically restricted to the temple, but take place wherever humanity encounters Jesus or his Spirit (John 4:21,23;14:7-14). Indeed, now both the individual believer and the body of believers comprise the new temple of God, filled with the very presence of God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22), thus making the physical body itself a form of sacred space (Romans 12:1-2).

Furthermore, Jesus' inclusive ministry embraced the 'other', the outcast, and the sinner, thus blurring if not wholly removing the once clear boundary between the sacred and the ordinary or profane. Indeed, holiness is no longer understood not as separation but as proximity.[21] Therefore, such encounters may be termed 'sacramental encounters',[22] for through encountering Christ or his Holy Spirit there is a transformative encounter with divine grace of God.

Yet this move away from the temple does not make built sacred space redundant, for the eschatological vision for the consummation of all things is the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:3;9-27). This is the ultimate sacred space where every space is filled with the presence of God, and so the sacred space theology of the incarnation does not replace that of the temple, but develops it and expands it by including embodied sacred space in the person of Jesus and in his body, the church.

Sacred space in tradition and contemporary thought. From the patristic period to today, the church's beliefs and practice regarding sacred space have been diverse, complex and often influenced by not just Judaeo-Christian theology, but also sociopolitical, economic, spiritual and cultural factors,[23] and have not been immune to abuse.[24] There have been those who have affirmed sacred space,[25] and those who have dismissed it,[26] with the dangers of pantheism and material idolatry for the former, and a Platonic dualism for the latter that regards the material world as evil. Yet since, as Sheehy & Sheldrake write, the creation, the temple, the incarnation, the resurrection, the sacramental system, the resurrection of the dead, and the new creation all proclaim God's good creation,[27] an affirming theology of sacred space is based upon firm

foundations. Indeed, Macquarrie writes of a 'sacramental universe' whereby since God is the creator of all things then there is 'a sacramental potentiality in virtually everything'.[28] Inge, however, focuses on how the sacramental encounter in the eucharist provides a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, and how the sacramental encounter in sacred space provides a foretaste of the heavenly Jerusalem.[29] Wright concurs, stating that 'a proper theology of space […must be] in terms of God's promise to renew the whole creation'.[30]

Furthermore, the architecture, interior design, decoration, ornamentation and use of church buildings throughout history provides us with a rich testimony of how people experience and encounter God in these spaces.[31] Sheldrake & Tavinor are surely right to state that such spaces offer a rich repository of spiritual and theological belief, and of the cumulative memory of those who attended such places,[32] so that such spaces transform undefined space into 'storied places' that have spiritual and communal significance.[33] Wright concurs, observing that 'there are…places sanctified by long usage for prayer and worship, places where…people of all sorts find…that God can be known and felt more readily',[34] that through God's gracious initiative his holy presence can be encountered in transformative ways. Indeed, as Inge writes, the 'landscape of the Christian world is dotted with places which have been recognized as being holy by virtue of sacramental encounter... and the resulting effect on the lives of men and women'.[35] Indeed, 'God relates to people in places, and the places are not irrelevant to that relationship but, rather, are integral to the divine human encounter'.[36]

My understanding of sacred space. Therefore, I believe that sacred space is any space where there has been and continues to be a sacramental encounter between humanity and God, where God in His grace and freedom has allowed His Holy Spirit to dwell, a space that is open to all, that leads to personal transformation and conformity to the image of Christ, that deepens one's understanding of God, of self, and of the created world, and that is a sign or foretaste of the heavenly Jerusalem in the new creation. I also believe that such spaces can then be enhanced to facilitate such sacramental encounters by the intentional design, decoration, ornamentation and use of that space, such that the environment communicates something of God, of self, and of the good creation in which one lives.

Action

This understanding of sacred space offers much for contemporary spirituality. Perhaps most significantly of all, as I discovered in Padova, sacred space can provide one with a sacramental encounter with the living God through the Holy Spirit, a transforming encounter with the grace of God that affects the whole person and the whole of life, a revelatory encounter that deepens one's understanding of God, of self, and of the world in which one lives. Sacred space offers a place where those in postmodern society who

reject the metanarrative and who struggle with the institutional church (and perhaps some of its teaching) can still discover the gospel.

In a broken, fragmented and transient society that is searching for identity, deep roots and stability, sacred space provides a doorway to an ancient faith that has endured throughout the centuries; it offers connections to generations past and present; it provides a deep well of ancient and rich spiritual wisdom and a reliable map for the spiritual journey. Sacred space provides a sacramental environment that is beneficial for mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health, it can provide a place of stillness and silence, of creative exploration and reflection, and of rhythm and peace. Sacred space offers private space for the individualistic spiritual consumer, and also communal space for those rediscovering the need for real community.

Therefore, while it remains true that 'the church is not the building but the people', I believe that an affirming theology of sacred space is crucially important for the Baptist tradition to engage with and embrace, as it continues to connect with and engage contemporary culture. By embracing one of its founding principles of freedom in worship,[37] the Baptist church is well placed to create and set apart theologically rich and accessible spaces through the intentional design, decoration, ornamentation and use of its space. One very easy and fruitful way of doing this is through creating a 24/7 prayer room, as described by the 24/7 Prayer movement,[38] which brings together the theologies of the temple, the incarnation, and of eschatology in ways that lead believers and non-believers alike into sacramental encounters with the transforming grace of God through the Holy Spirit.[39] This is an example of how the church can embrace sacred space in ways that resonate powerfully with contemporary spirituality, and how pastors can help to facilitate spaces and opportunities to develop personal spirituality in ways that are theologically rich, holistic, creative, and transformative.

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19. J. Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p41; T. Radcliffe, "The World Shall Come to Walsingham", in North (ed), *Sacred Space*, Chapter 4, p70.

20. W. A. VanGemeren, (ed) *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Vol. 3 (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1996), p811.

21. Radcliffe, "The World", in North (ed), *Sacred Space*, Chapter 4, p77.

22. Inge, *Theology of Place*, p91.

23. J. H. Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space—An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p200; McAlpine, *Sacred Space*, p67;

24. Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, pp75-80, 199; Sheldrake, *Spirituality,* p85.

25. For example Irenaeus and Origen, see Inge, *Theology of Place*, pp93-96, 98,99.

26. For example Jerome, *ibid*, and Gregory of Nyssa, M.R. Wynn, *Faith and Place—An Essay in Embodied Religious Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp139, 154, 168.

27. J. Sheehy, "Sacred Space and the Incarnation", in North (ed), *Sacred Space*, Chapter 1, pp15-17; Sheldrake, *Spirituality,* pp43-44.

28. J. Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments* (London: SCM Press, 1997), pp1, 7-8.

29. Inge, *Theology of Place*, p76.

30. N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, (London: SPCK, 2007), pp271, 272.

31. M. Tavinor, "Sacred Space and the Built Environment", in North (ed), *Sacred Space*, Chapter 2, pp23, 29, 33, 37-38; McAlpine, *Sacred Space*, pp34-66; Inge, *Theology of Place*, pp4-5; Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, pp66, 85-87; D. Davies, "Christianity", in Holm, *Sacred Place*, Chapter 2, pp41-45.

32. Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, pp85-86; Tavinor, "Built Environment", in North (ed), *Sacred Space*, p31.

33. Wynn, *Faith and Place*, p150.

34. Wright, *Surprised,* pp271, 272.

35. *Ibid,* pp73, 74, 91.

36. Inge, *Theology of Place,* pp52, 57, 58.

37. *A True Confession* (1596), Article 17, pp37,38 [accessed at http://eebo.chadwyck.com on 21/01/2019]; J. Smyth, *Short Confession of Faith in XX Articles* (1609), Articles 12-13, W. J. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith,* Revised Edition (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011, p94.

38. P. Greig, *Red Moon Rising*, (Eastbourne: David C Cook, 2015).

39. *Ibid,* pp98-99, 106.

for spouses of UK Baptist ministers in mission, ministry, training and retirement

...spur one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24)

What is Thrive?

Thrive encourages networking among spouses of UK Baptist ministers at all stages of ministry or mission, from training through to retirement. This includes those engaged to minsters, spouses who are bereaved or where the minister is taking time out of ministry. We believe God gives gifts to us all and that everyone married to, or engaged to, a Baptist minister has something to contribute to the lives of others in similar situations so that all may 'Thrive'. By linking together, we can inspire one another towards personal and spiritual growth in our roles at home, in church life, in our careers or through our talents or interests. Thrive also recognises that prayer is a core part of our faith. Through prayer we can lift each other up when times are hard and share praise in times of celebration.

What is already available?

Thrive encourages spouses to link up in whatever way suits them. Some people meet up in local social groups, many use our closed Facebook groups to link up for chat, discussion, fun and prayer in a confidential space online. An email prayer chain is also being set up.

Please tell us about any existing groups that we can help to promote, if appropriate. Alternatively, we'd love to hear ideas for other groups for similar interests, talents or situations that would benefit you and other spouses.

How do I get in contact?

Email thrive.baptist.networks@gmail.com

Web https://tinyurl.com/ThriveUKBaptistSpouse

Facebook Search for 'Thrive UK Baptist Networks public posts' and ask to join our private chat group. *NB: Other groups use Thrive or 'Baptist Networks' so please check for our logo.*

Reviews

edited by Michael Peat

Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy

by Luke Bretherton

Eerdmans, 2019

Reviewer: Stephen Heap

Questions about the 'common life', even about the possibility of there being a 'common', occupy politicians, commentators and maybe readers of the *bmj*. In tumultuous days, how to do democracy, how to engage across the divides, wherein is sovereignty, and what populism is about, form a significant background for the pastoral, liturgical and prophetic work of the church and her ministers. They may even come to the fore; what should the church be doing?

Into which arena steps Luke Bretherton with this timely and scholarly work. It does speak into the present situation but it is not an instruction manual. It is a rich intellectual resource for people of a faith which, like politics, is about the common life. As good theology it holds the potential to resource not just the intellect but discipleship, though, especially for a book on democracy, its language is not always the most accessible.

After an introduction to his themes, Bretherton gives some case studies in political theologies. It's an interesting selection. Humanitarianism, Black Power, Pentecostalism, Catholic Social Teaching and Anglicanism are the areas he covers. Next comes a section on what erodes and supports 'a common life.' The chapter headings of *Communion and Class; Secularity, Not Secularism; Toleration with Hospitality* reveal his concerns. In each there is much to ponder. What happens when notions of hospitality confront concepts of who is the host, for example.

Finally, to quote the introduction, Bretherton sets out 'a constructive political theology of democratic politics as a means through which to pursue the flourishing of creation' (p11). Much ground is covered. Different readers may find different routes through his thinking. Here is one: Bretherton writes 'The premise of democratic legitimacy is that each member of a polity has a say in the decisions that affect everyone' (p426). How to organise that 'say' may be the key question. It cannot only be about voting in elections, or referenda. That is part of it, but if people are to have a say, those elected need to engage in constant listening and responding to the voters. When that fails, populism emerges, argues Bretherton, for good or evil.

A key insight he offers is that democracy is not just about government. It is about how citizens engage in negotiating the common life of society. So Bretherton is launched into a discussion of how individuals do, or might, associate together to discern and seek what is good. While the obstacles to doing that successfully in an individualised and divided society are clear, his proposals are sufficiently cogent to instil a sense that here is something worth attempting. That

in itself may be an antidote to the cynicism and despair evoked as politicians and political systems struggle to cope. A brave church might even take steps to help groups reflect on where society is, where it might go, and what we, as citizens, can do.

Reimagining Britain: Foundations for Hope

by Justin Welby

Bloomsbury, 2018

Reviewer: Andy Goodliff

It is perhaps one of the roles of Archbishops of Canterbury to write books—and perhaps also to write books that contribute to the conservation around political and social issues. William Temple famously wrote *Christianity and Social Order* and Rowan Williams wrote *Lost Icons* a few years before his appointment, and then *Faith in the Public Square* as he stepped down.

There is a group of writings known as Anglican Social Theology. This is Welby's second book, and like the first it is a contribution to social theology. The first was a book on money, this second is more ambitious; it offers a vision of what it might be to British in the context of our current social and political times. There are chapters on family, education, health, housing and economics, and chapters that consider Britain in a global world. Welby is a not a theologian of Williams' stature, but for many this is a plus, because he writes and speaks with a bit more clarity. Welby here seeks to provide a narrative that tells the history of Britain and then seeks to reimagine it for the future, rooted in the values of community, courage and stability. There is a mixture of history, statistics and biblical reflection.

I think it is good to see Christians addressing the big issues of our day and we should always resist those who want to box us into religion in a private sphere. We should be having something to say about political and social questions. Hopefully this book will invite others, maybe even some Baptists(!) to be part of reimagining Britain, to not just act at the place of need (whether it be Foodbank, night shelter or debt crisis), but in offering a broader vision that is hopeful. A year on from the publication of Welby's book, we remain more than ever in need of a church engaged, with humility and grace, generosity and wisdom.

Rhythms of Faithfulness; Essays in Honor of John E. Colwell

Andy Goodliff & Paul W. Goodliff (eds)

Eugene: Pickwick, 2018

Reviewer: Steve Finamore

Back in college there were times when our studies involved books written by the great Baptist scholars of the past. At those points my tutor, Dr Rex Mason, would say, alluding to the old translation of Genesis 6:4, 'there were giants in the land in those days.' To my mind, there is still a handful of such giants left to us and among them is the incomparable John Colwell.

It is very fitting that a group of his friends, admirers and students have paid tribute to him by offering the essays collected in

this volume. The contributors, guided by the editors, have honoured John by structuring the collection around elements of the Daily Office of the Order for Baptist Ministry, with which he is so closely associated and around the themes explored in his book *The Rhythm of Doctrine* which offers an outline of Christian theology organised around the seasons and festivals of the liturgical year. Those, like me, who love good liturgy and the church's year but are content to sit to them lightly, should not be put off. The zealousness of the 'liturgically correct' surfaces at one or two points but nothing can spoil these very good, worthwhile and thoughtful essays.

There is no space to discuss each essay in turn and no doubt each reader will have their favourites. For me the highlights include Nigel Wright's, John's long-term colleague and ally at Spurgeon's, thoughts on Easter; John's one-time student, Steve Holmes' reconstruction and discussion of Passiontide; my colleague Helen Paynter's take on creation; and Paul Fiddes' discussion of Pentecost in which he respectfully outlines his disagreements with John about the ways in which God's grace is, or is not, mediated to us.

The editors have persuaded Stanley Hauerwas, who, like John, is a great advocate of the view that doctrine and ethics belong together, to provide a brief preface. He acknowledges that the contributors might be seen as 'Baptists who have gone Catholic'. He defends them against the charge. In the end, we Baptists are a part of the great church and so we must engage with its catholic traditions. However, at the same time, we should recognise and affirm the contribution our own tradition makes to the whole church. Most of the contributors navigate this tension very effectively.

John Colwell is a great Baptist and a great thinker. He has made an astonishing contribution to our shared life through his books, through his work in the formation of Baptist ministers, and through simply being John. This book engages with him in helpful and thoughtful ways and so makes a most fitting tribute. Some of these essays are gems and some are only very good indeed. They are all worth reading. Even more significantly, together they provoke a desire to investigate or to revisit John's own books and that's a wonderful added bonus.

The Study of Ministry: A Comprehensive Survey of Theory and Best Practice

Martyn Percy et al (eds)

London: SPCK, 2019

Reviewer: Sally Nelson

As a college tutor, I am interested in ministry and ministerial formation—and so I received this book with great pleasure! First impression: I won't be carrying it around with me much: it is over 700 pages long and 60mm thick—a weighty tome!

The back jacket blurb describes the book as 'the first comprehensive account of all

aspects of the study and practice of Christian ministry'. I was both intrigued and sceptical, but on reflection I think it is probably as decent a snapshot of the current national situation as you might get in a single book—though Baptists will not find anything about congregational practices and understandings of ministry here. There are 43 chapters and the vast majority are written by Anglicans and are about an Anglican view of the church. There is an attempt here and there to be more inclusive; but inevitably the flavour of the book is from the establishment and has to be nuanced for those of us with a different view of ministry and church.

This should not be taken to imply that the book is not of use or interest to Baptists. I enjoyed reading all the chapters in the first section, entitled *Understanding Ministry,* which along with some sturdy offerings on the philosophy and hermeneutics of ministry included some interesting perspectives on the portrayal of ministry in film, TV, and fiction—albeit Anglican clergy!

I also enjoyed reading the summary of legal battles over whether ministers are employees or not. This might sound dull, but is truly enlightening when it comes to the question of vocation *vs* profession, and the implications therein about how we conduct ourselves, set our boundaries, and value our time. There were other great chapters on power and conflict issues, well worth reading.

I think my reservations about this book are three. The first is that the chapters are quite short: reading them is like having a starter but no main course. Of course there are footnotes and references, but the chapters feel aborted. Secondly: it is a snapshot that is accurate at the moment but will not last. Cultural change is so rapid and the relationship between the church and the wider culture is so fluid that I am quite surprised this book was published at all. Thirdly, apart from a single chapter on Pentecostal ministries and one on Roman Catholic pastoral theology, it is as if the Free Church or other churches outside Anglicanism do not exist. With so many contributors this seems like an opportunity lost: it would not have been difficult to get a few from Methodists, Baptists, Salvation Army and others, and could then have laid a stronger claim to the stated intention of being a generic study of ministry. The back cover states: 'Covers all the major subjects, thinkers and approaches' and 'Draws on best practice and the most recent research from across the denominational spectrum'. I don't think so: unless this just means the CofE, in which case the title and blurb should reflect that.

Maybe this would be a fine book for a college library, as a picture of some forms of ministry in the first quarter of the 21st century. It is not one for many individuals to purchase, retailing full price from SPCK at £60.00 for the hardback and £48.00 for the e-book.

Mike Peat, our Reviews Editor, is always willing to hear from possible new reviewers. Contact him on mike.peat@bristol.ac.uk if you are interested.

Of interest to you

edited by Arderne Gillies

NEW PASTORATES AND PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS

Deji AYORINDE	To Pollards Hill (September 2019)
Richard BELLINGHAM	From Heads of Valleys to Bromley Common (November 2019)
Chris BISHOP	To West Cliff, Bournemouth (November 2019)
Louise BROWN	To Didcot (Associate) (September 2019)
Matt CADDICK	Counterslip, Bristol, from Youth Worker to Pastor (September 2019)
Joe EGAN	From Enfield, Associate to High Street Tring, Co-Minister (October 2019)
Ruth EGAN	From Enfield, Associate to High Street Tring, Co-Minister (October 2019)
David EVANS	From Chaplain, Plymouth University to Morice, Plymouth (July 2019)
Adam GRANT	To Barrowby (October 2019)
Ian FORSYTH	From Milford to Gunton, Lowestoft (September 2019)
Elfed GODDING	To Bethania, Leeswood (September 2019)
Wale HUDSON-ROBERTS	John Bunyan, Cowley (in addition to Faith & Society, BUGB)
Tim HANCOCK	From Locks heath Free to Newcastle under Lyme (September 2019)
Jonny HODGES	From Moorlands to Ilford (July 2019)
Dawn JOHNSON	From Cambridge Heath Salvation Army to Loughton (September 2019)
Alec JOHNSTON	To Blackburn (November 2019)
Lesley LAWRENCE	From Albany Road, Cardiff to Church of the Resurrection, Cardiff (September 2019)
Fiona LEE	From Alvechurch to Bradninch (January 2020)
Phil LEWIS	From Bethlehem, Thomastown to Bwlch Y Sarnau

Adrian LLOYD	From Bilston to Bideford (November 2019)
Ian LOVELL	From Sandown, IOW to Salendine Nook, Huddersfield (Autumn 2019)
Jon MAGEE	From Providence, Coseley to Perry (August 2019)
Richard MATCHAM	From Barton, Torquay to Taunton (Autumn 2019)
David MEIKLE	From Brazil to Portslade (August 2019)
Bill MILLER	From Maidstone to Cambourne (September 2019)
Martin MILLS	From Alcester to Norton, Stockton-on-Tees (Autumn 2019)
Stephen PASSMORE	To Enon, Sunderland (August 2019)
Ian PATTERSON	From South Africa to Pantygwydyr, Swansea, Youth Pastor (October 2019)
Lars PETTERSON	From Portfolio Ministry to Hatch End (January 2020)
Iain POPE	From Holly Lodge, Ipswich to Totterdown, Bristol (January 2020)
Fiona PRESTON	To Headland, Hartlepool (January 2020)
Charlie RADBURN	From Chaplain, Marie Curie Hospice to Emmanuel LEP, Chatteris (September 2019)
Nigel RICHARDSON	From Danbury Mission to Eythorne (August 2019)
Pam SEARLE	To Sutton, London (September 2019)
David SHEPHERD	To Halthern (September 2019)
Carol SOBLE	Ross on Wye to Raglan (October 2019)
Margaret SWIRES	From Forest Gate, Blackpool (interim) to Matson, Gloucester, Church & Community Worker (September 2019)
Chris WILLIAMS	From New South Wales to Lisvane, Cardiff (October 2019)

MINISTERS IN TRAINING

Tim ALLEN	Spurgeon's to Purley (Associate) (September 2019)
Allan BARBAZZA	Spurgeon's to King's Cross (Summer 2020)
Simon BARTLETT	Bristol to Rosebery Park, Bournemouth (September 2019)
Jonathan BEER	Regent's Park to Romsey (Summer 2020)
Joao BOLZAN	Spurgeon's to Chiddingfold (MIT placement) (September 2019)

Cath BROWN	Spurgeon's to Bures (Summer 2020)
Karen CASE-GREEN	Spurgeon's to Millmead (Associate) (August 2019)
Stuart CONWAY	Spurgeon's to Rayleigh (September 2019)
Pam DAVIES	Regent's Park to 57 West (Summer 2020)
Barry DORE	Spurgeon's to Ruislip (Summer 2020)
Sarah DUCKER	Northern (St Hild College) to St. Philip's, Sheffield (Summer 2020)
Ed GREEN	Northern to Hoole with responsibility for Church Plant at Blacon (Summer 2020)
Helen HARRIGAN	Regents Park to Laindon (MIT placement) (September 2019)
Lee JENNINGS	Northern (St Hild College) to Hope Community Church, Aintree (Summer 2020)
Stevan KIRK-SMITH	Spurgeon's to West Kingsdown (September 2019)
Jon LINFORTH	South Wales to Bethany, Caldicot (September 2019)
Oliver McMULLEN	Spurgeon's to Teddington (July 2019)
Pholani NCUBE	Spurgeon's to Shotgate (MIT placement) (September 2019)
Tim PARSONS	Spurgeon's to Borstal (MIT placement) (September 2019)
Alex PUGH	Regents Park to Andover (MIT placement) (September 2019)
Manoj RAITHATHA	Regent's Park to Pinner (MIT placement) (September 2019)
Deb STAMMERS	South Wales to Holyhead (Part-time) (Summer 2020)
Gill THURGOOD	Northern to Guiseley (July 2019)
Martin WILLIAMS	Spurgeon's to Baldwyn's Park (MIT placement)

CHAPLAINCIES, EDUCATIONAL APPOINTMENTS, MISSION & OTHER SECTOR MINISTRIES

Jez BROWN	From Preston, Paignton to Lead Chaplain, Devon Partnership Trust ((December 2019)
Gavin CALVER	Evangelical Alliance, from Head of Mission to CEO (October 2019)
Jane DAY	From Missioner, Methodist Church of South Africa to Faith & Society Team, BUGB (September 2019)
Joy DIMOND	To Community Listener to Stow (September 2019)

Roger GRAFTON	From Tabernacle, Penarth to Military Chaplaincy (September 2019)
Ewan HUFFMAN	From Creech St Michaels to Lead Chaplain, Hinkley Point
Nicholas MORRIS	From Northcote Road, Battersea to Chaplain, Northcote Lodge School (September 2019)
Osoba OTAIGBE	From LOA to Bible Society, Church Relationship Manager (October 2019)

RETIREMENTS

Geoff ANDREWS	Brixham (August 2019)
Charles CROSLAND	Shrewsbury (September 2019)
Terry GRIFFITH	Trinity, Bexleyheath (April 2020)
Peter STEVENSON	Principal, South Wales Baptist College (September 2019)
Susan STEVENSON	Team Leader, South Wales Baptist Association (September 2019)
Graham WOOLGAR	Sutton (September 2019)

DEATHS

Barbara BATTARBEE	Retired (Sheffield) (early 2019)
Alan BEST	Retired (Kingsteignton) (September 2019)
Simon FARRAR	Retired (Wellington) (September 2019)
Andy GILBERT	Findon Valley (June 2019)
Gerald HEMP	Retired (Shrewsbury) (September 2019)
Ken JARVIS	Retired (Chesham) June 2019
David PARSONS	Retired (Seaford) (August 2019)

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

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