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the baptist ministers' journal

January 2020 volume 345

contacts for the baptist ministers' journal

Editor: Sally Nelson, 4 Station View, Church Fenton, Tadcaster LS24 9QY; revsal96@aol.com

Book reviews: Michael Peat, The Multifaith Chaplaincy Centre, The Grange, 1 Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1TB; mike.peat@bristol.ac.uk

Of Interest To You: Arderne Gillies, Greenhill, 39 South Road, Chorleywood, Herts WD3 5AS; rev.arderne@btinternet.com

Paper Journal distribution: Jem Sewell, 2 Westbourne Park Villas, London W25EA; jembmj@gmail.com

Electronic Journal distribution: Ron Day, 2 Poplar Rd, Histon, Cambridge CB24 9LN; ronald.day@ntlworld.com

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useful contact details are listed inside the
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From the editor

Prophetic, political, Baptist?

The dominating themes of 2019 seemed to have been politics and climate change—the former dominating debate in the UK! How did Baptists respond? I was challenged in this new year by one of our students as we returned to theological college. She commented that the key prophetic voices of last year came from a teenage girl and 94-year-old man, neither of whom professed to be Christian. 'Wake up, people!', she rightly said.

The church has the role of prophet in our generation, proclaiming the story and values of Jesus Christ in our world, but sadly it often seems to articulate something more like a whisper in the wider discussion. I mentioned a lecture in political theology to an unchurched friend and she was astonished to hear that theology could be considered to be political at all—she understood it as a cosy sedimentation of old stories.

In this issue it therefore seemed right to present a sermon about our Christian responsibilities when voting—the December General Election came too fast for us to feature it in October's issue, but there will always be other elections and decisions for us to make. I would be interested to know how your own church responded to recent political events.

We also publish two responses to Paul Beasley-Murray's feature in October's issue on the treatment of retired ministers—these articles necessarily touch on the deeper debate about what ordination means for Baptists, and I commend them to you as we reflect this new year on our being and our doing.

An additional task is for us all to thank David Warrington, who has just stepped down as Secretary of BMF after several years of efficient service. We are indebted to him for keeping us to the task and indeed for all his wisdom as a member of the BMF Committee prior to his official term. Bless you, David. Our AGM is on 27 February (see p14) and all members are welcome.

Finally, may God bless your vision, your work, and your churches in 2019. SN

How do I place my cross?

by Philip Clements-Jewery

A sermon preached on 24 November 2019 at Oakes Baptist Church, Huddersfield.

The question I have felt drawn to for this morning's sermon—I believe by divine guidance—is this: How do I place my cross? I'd like you to notice that that's a carefully worded question. I'm not addressing the question of where shall we shall place our crosses on the ballot paper at the election. That's an individual decision and it would be quite improper and impertinent for me to tell you how to vote. It's a matter for you alone. No, the question is how; that is, by what process do we come to make up our minds how we will vote.

So this sermon also has a subtitle: *Christian values in an uncertain and divided society.* What are the principles to be followed as we make up our minds how to vote? I'm fully aware that each one of us will apply these principles differently, so that no doubt every viewpoint will be represented in our midst. That's fine. No problem with that. Just that we are all very clear about the fundamental biblical, Christian, values upon which we base our choices.

So I give you Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 2, verses 1-11:

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To be clear before we consider this famous passage in detail, I suggest that when Paul says ‘be like-minded and of one mind’, he is not thinking about Christians all having the same ideas and agreeing about what we think. He has in mind something at a much deeper, spiritual, level: a unity that comes about as we:

Adopt the mindset of Christ. And this, above all, implies a willingness to value other people and their needs more than our own, counting them better than ourselves and looking to their interests, as Paul puts it. A willingness to serve rather than to be served. Isn't that what Jesus himself said, that he, the Son of Man, came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom? Philippians 2 says that Christ literally made himself a slave for our sake.

According to Paul, the values we derive from the example of Jesus, and which must guide our living as Christians, are the values of love, compassion, humility and selflessness. I suggest that such values should govern not only our relationships within the Christian community, but also with people beyond in wider society.

We are all aware of how dirty and poisonous discussion and debate in the public square has become. Our political representatives, especially women, are subject to horrid online abuse. Often, instead of being listened to politely, people are interrupted and shouted down. Antisemitic and Islamophobic remarks are becoming more commonplace, even if those who make them are forced to apologise and in some cases withdraw their candidacy for the election. Truth is too often thrown out of the window. Instead what we are given is fake news, with videos, for instance, being edited to present a political opponent in a false light. It used to be said, don't believe everything you read in the newspapers. Or, it needs to be added, on Facebook and YouTube.

We have a witness to make here. As followers of Jesus we need to uphold the values of trust, honesty and integrity. Those values mean that we should have nothing to do with abuse, whether verbal or online. People with whom we disagree still deserve our respect and have the right to be listened to before we jump in with our counter-arguments. Here's a relevant quote:

I met those of our society who had votes in the ensuing election, and advised them: 1. To vote, without fee or reward, for the person they judged most worthy; 2. To speak no evil of the person they voted against; and, 3. To take care their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side.

Do you know who said that? Anybody like to guess? It was John Wesley, speaking to fellow Methodists (our society) in October 1774. Granted, there was no secret ballot in those days. Back in the 18th century everyone knew who you voted for—if you had the vote, that is. Candidates might even bribe voters to vote for them. Debates and discussions took place not in TV studios but in village streets at public hustings. Elections in those days were a real rough and tumble. Of course, bribing voters still

happens today, but in different ways: I mean the promises made to voters if they will vote for this or that party. But Wesley's advice still carries weight 250 years later.

Just one other thing under this heading. How do we show love for people in the mass as as opposed to love for an individual? Love is personal, and it's hard to love people as a group. However, on the level of society as a whole, love is expressed as justice. Jesus walked in the steps of the prophets before him who declared the justice of God. He was concerned for the little people, the ones he described as harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd, the people at the bottom of the heap, discriminated against, lacking the power to change their situation. If you want an example of how many people struggle in our so-called gig economy today, go and see Ken Loach's recent and very bleak film, *Sorry we missed you*.

To give another example, here at Oakes BC we rightly express love for people in need by supporting the Welcome Centre (a foodbank in Huddersfield). Some of us may wish to follow up the suggestion that the Welcome Centre itself makes, which is for those who receive it and don't really need it: to donate our winter fuel allowance to the Centre. But foodbanks are only a sticking plaster—a necessary one, of course. Justice requires us to ask why people have to go to foodbanks in the first place. What does the prophet Micah say to us? Act justly, love mercy. And this brings us to my second heading.

Consider the needs of victims. Jesus was a victim. Philippians 2 tells us that he became obedient to death, even death on a cross. In his suffering and dying he was God's supreme sacrificial victim for the sin of the world. But as he died he was also the victim of the spite and hatred of his opponents, the fears they had for their privileged status. He was the victim of a weak and spineless Roman ruler; the victim of the cruelty of the soldiers who whipped him and nailed him to the cross.

The wonder and the glory of it all is that his victimhood was voluntary. He chose to suffer and to die. He didn't have to. It was love that kept him on the cross—love for the world, love for you and me—to reconcile us all to God.

Today's victims of injustice, of course, did not choose to be such. But Jesus the Victim identifies himself with them. What did he say?

I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me...Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

We could identify very many different kinds of victimhood. But today, perhaps, the people we should have to the forefront of our concern are the victims of the climate emergency. Some of you may have watched on BBC2 recently the last in the present

series of Simon Reeve's *Journey through the Americas*. If you didn't see it, do watch it on catch-up. It was what he found in the Central American country of Guatemala that was most disturbing. The programme made it quite clear that what is driving the migration of Central American people towards the US is ultimately down to climate change. The destruction of the rainforest has led to drought, which in turn is leading to famine. No wonder these people want a better life somewhere else.

But it's also people living in the Don Valley who have recently been flooded out of their homes, or those who live in eastern Australia and the west coast of the US whose lives have been devastated by wildfires, who are also beginning to experience the consequences of climate chaos. Even so, it's the poor in the global south who in the end will suffer the most. And they will come knocking on our door. In fact, they already are. By far the most important issue facing us now—and, indeed, the whole population of the planet—is what we have done and are still doing to God's creation. In the name of the Christ who as Victim identifies with all unjust victimhood we must hold politicians to account in this matter. We need to cut the carbon much more quickly than we are at the moment.

In short, the message here is exactly that which Paul tells the Philippians. When we vote, as Christians we must be looking not to our own interests but each of us to the interests of others.

The final section of our passage in Philippians 2 invites us to:

Remember who is really in charge. Today, the last Sunday in November, is kept by many Christians as a celebration of Christ the King. He alone is the true king. We have a higher loyalty than that which we owe to any human ruler. It is Jesus who is Lord. Jesus is Lord! Beware of reducing that wonderful affirmation of faith, as it so often is reduced, to 'Jesus is my personal Lord and Saviour'. Yes, he is that. But he is also much, much more than that. He is the Lord of the whole earth. At his name every knee must bow and every tongue confess.

In New Testament times, when the known world was ruled by the Emperor in Rome, for Christians to confess that Jesus is Lord was to deny that title to Caesar, however much successive emperors claimed it. It was either Caesar or Christ. Those who chose Christ above Caesar suffered and died for it.

As Christians, we cannot, we must not, place all our trust and hope in whatever government or Prime Minister we have after the election. For those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord no human ruler possesses absolute and unquestioned authority. His Lordship relativises all human lordship, cuts it down to size.

Actually, the Lordship of the Almighty and the subordinate status of human leaders is a theme that runs through the whole Bible. Here's an example, Psalm 146.2:

Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God.

Or what about Psalm 47:

God is the King of all the earth…God reigns over the nations...the kings of the earth belong to God.

All of which means that there may come occasions when we have to stand with Peter and protest that we have to obey God rather than any human authority when it asks of us what is due to God alone. A modern example is that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Christian who stood against Hitler and paid the price by being hanged by the Gestapo. Do we ever consider that our confession of Jesus as Lord may possibly lead to us, too, becoming disloyal citizens?

In the normal run of things, of course, there is no clash between our confession of Jesus as Lord and our duties as citizens. As Jesus put it, we can usually render both to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. Our special contribution to the good of society is prayer. Paul puts it like this when he wrote to Timothy:

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Conclusion

So what's the message from scripture for us as we go to vote on 12 December? Simply this. It's your Christian duty to vote, but also to vote in a Christian way, worked out prayerfully as you yourself see it under the supreme Lordship of Jesus Christ, at whose name in the end every knee must bow and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Philip Clements-Jewery is now retired from Baptist ministry but continues in active membership at Oakes. Philip says: I received a lot of positive feedback from members of the congregation who were there that Sunday. I thank God for this, as I feared I might have been sticking my neck too far! What I found disturbing, however, was to hear from one person that they had never before listened to a sermon in such a topic. It makes me wonder why preachers might be neglecting to preach on Christian social responsibility. Contact Philip on philip.clementsjewery@gmail.com.

Were Paul's missionary journeys real?

by Pieter J. Lalleman

At Sunday school, or in Bible class, you may have picked up the phrase 'the missionary journeys of Paul'. That was also how I first heard this term, which I now find pretty misleading. Strictly speaking, however much we use it, 'Paul's missionary journeys' is not a biblical term: it is not part of Luke's vocabulary in Acts and the headings in our Bible translations generally avoid it, although it does occur on many maps of Bible lands.

In this article I want to offer an alternative reading of Acts 13-20, to throw some new light on these chapters. Let's first look at the movements and the 'rests' of Paul during his so-called second and third missionary journeys.

Not always on the move

In Acts 15:36 Paul departs from his home church, Antioch in Syria, to visit the churches in Asia Minor which he had previously founded and to offer them any assistance they might need. According to 15:41 he is successful with this plan and manages to strengthen the existing communities. The short indications in 16:1,4 and 5 say the same. (Can you see how wrong the chapter division is? No new story begins in 16:1.) Paul does not break new ground here, but he builds existing communities.

Then for a while he gropes in the dark about his next destination, but in the end the Holy Spirit leads him to Europe. There he passes by a few smaller cities, Samothrace and Neapolis (16:11), making his way to the first major town he encounters, Philippi. In this town Lydia comes to faith and subsequently opens her house to Paul and his companions (16:14-15). Everything indicates that Paul intends to spend a longer period of time in this influential city, but he is captured and unlawfully tortured. After the earthquake which offers him the opportunity to escape he still does not run away, but the city's 'magistrates' twice request that he leave their city (16:36,39), and so he does. Note that Paul does not depart from Philippi voluntarily.

The same pattern is repeated immediately afterwards: Paul ignores a few small places (Amphipolis and Apollonia) to reach the large, strategic city of Thessalonica, and he seems intent to settle down there. However, his stay lasts less than a month (17:2) because 'the Jews' provoke unrest, with the result that he is forced to leave the city. So we

see that twice Paul tries to make a large, centrally located town the centre of his work, and that twice he finds a willing audience for the gospel, but both times he is forced to leave after a relatively short time. In the stories about Corinth and Ephesus we will see that in those cities Paul did manage to do what he had probably intended to do in Philippi and Thessalonica.

Paul's stay in Athens is different, because here the gospel is received almost entirely with scorn and unbelief. That will be the reason why the apostle moves on to Corinth rather quickly. In Athens he was probably unable to start a healthy Christian community, for we never hear any more about the Greek capital in the Bible.

How different is the situation in Corinth, Paul's next destination! Admittedly, most Jews in the city do not warm to the gospel of Jesus Christ (18:6), but among the pagan population the message of Jesus finds an interested hearing. Almost as an aside, Luke notes that Paul stayed in the city for a year and a half (18:11), plus an additional 'considerable time' (18:18). As so often happens, Luke's indications of time are not very exact, but Paul's ministry in Corinth probably lasted at least as long as his journey there from Antioch *via* Philippi, Thessalonica and Athens. This means that we can conclude that on this 'second missionary journey' Paul was not always on the road: he spent more time in strategic cities than travelling. The church in Corinth is clearly very important for his work. The city of Corinth had a very strategic position in the Roman Empire, with ships travelling there from all over the Mediterranean.

Ephesus

Whereas the second journey was partly the result of some unintended and involuntary events, the plan for Paul's third trip is already fixed at the end of the second. The reason for this is that the Jews of Ephesus show a remarkable interest in the gospel, asking Paul to stay longer in their town (18:20). Paul does not do so at that moment, but he promises them that he will come back later—and he keeps his word, enabling Luke to report how Paul lived and worked in Ephesus for two whole years with much fruit (19:8,10). Thus the so-called 'third missionary journey' is not a breathless trek from place to place, but firmly focused on an extended stay in a large, centrally located city. (Ephesus was one of the largest cities in the world and the most important city of Asia Minor.)

When you now look back to the 'first missionary journey', you can readily see the same pattern there: Luke describes how Paul and Barnabas spent 'a long time' in Iconium, only departing from this city when it was necessary to save their lives (14:3-6).

All this means that Paul's ministry did not merely consist of spending nights in roadside inns. Put in modern terms, he did not normally jump out of a car to put some tracts in

letterboxes, then to speed on to the next village. He made real, personal contact with the inhabitants of several large cities, sharing his life with them. After they came to faith, he spent time on their education and socialisation so they became mature followers of Jesus.

It is good that in our time we see developments in the same direction. We now understand that evangelism is more than preaching a short evangelistic message and quickly moving on to the next village or neighbourhood. Effective evangelism requires that we open our homes and our lives to share them with the people around us. If we had studied the example of Paul better we would never have thought that handing out tracts at the exit of a railway station deserved the name 'mission'.

Jews and Gentiles

Luke states that during Paul's stay in Ephesus 'all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord' (19:10). As always, Paul began his actual work in Ephesus with proclamation and teaching in the synagogue (19:8), but as usual this had only limited positive effect. For that reason, over time Paul increasingly focused more—or exclusively—on the pagan population. In the report on the 'first journey' Luke emphatically mentions the synagogues on Cyprus (13:5) and Paul's speech in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia (13:14-42), but no Jew in Cyprus seems to have come to faith in Jesus, and in Antioch the Jewish leaders mainly argue with Paul and Barnabas, after which the apostles see more fruit on their work among the Gentiles (13:44-52). In Philippi Paul searches in vain for a synagogue to start his work (16:13), but in Thessalonica (17:1), Beroea (17:10), Athens (17:17) and Corinth (18:4) the local synagogue is again the first place where he speaks.

If we addressed our evangelistic efforts to our Jewish compatriots, we would probably encounter the same kind of resistance as Paul did, but should we therefore not make the attempt? I would argue that the gospel is still ‘the power of God for salvation...to the Jews first…’ (Rom 1:16).

All

It is of course great that 'all the residents of [the province of] Asia' heard about Jesus thanks to Paul and his helpers. Yet the word 'all' (Greek *pas*) must be read against the background of the fact that Luke frequently uses it in an exaggerated way. In Acts 1:1, for example, he states that in his first book (the gospel) he wrote about 'all' that Jesus had done on earth; in 17:21 he characterises ‘all’ inhabitants of Athens as lazy and in 19:17 he says that 'all' people at Ephesus hear about a particular incident. In this and other cases we should read 'all' as 'many' without thinking of it just as one hundred per cent.

But even so, it is great that so many inhabitants of Asia heard the gospel as a result of Paul’s

ministry. This brings me to my next and final point: Paul did not work on his own, which is another reason why the expression 'the missionary journeys of Paul' is misleading. We have to reckon with the combined efforts of 'Team Paul'.

Team Paul

When he is first commissioned, the apostle is still called Saul, but more importantly, he is named as the second person after Barnabas, who at that time could be regarded as the team leader (13:1,4,7). From 13:9 Luke begins to call him Paul and from 13:13 he is mentioned as the first member of the team. But what matters is this: Luke shows that Paul always makes his journeys in the company of at least one other evangelist (plus probably some personal servants). Think about it: at first he is together with Barnabas and Mark, for the 'second journey' he chooses Silas (15:40) and soon Timothy becomes the third member of the team. The 'we-passages' in Acts 16 and 20 suggest that Luke himself was from time to time also a member of the team. For the 'third journey' Luke initially only mentions Paul, but in 19:22 it suddenly becomes clear that Paul is in the company of Timothy and Erastus, and according to 19:29 he also has Gaius and Aristarchus as travelling companions. These things indicate that Luke had not introduced the complete team to his readers. In 20:4-6 you find yet more names of travelling companions who are team members.

When we ask how it was possible that 'all residents of Asia' heard the gospel, the simple answer is that Paul did not work on his own. The members of his team would have travelled to the towns and villages around Ephesus, and many of them probably also settled down there for longer spans of time.

The letters

The information we have gained from Acts is confirmed and supplemented by what Paul himself reveals in his letters. To begin with, most letters were not written by him alone but by several team members. In 1 Corinthians Sosthenes is his co-writer, in 2 Corinthians it is Timothy; and you can look at the other letters for yourself. Paul would not mention these team members if he did not have valid reasons for doing so. On the one hand these references show that the co-writers were with Paul 'on the mission field', because as far as we know not a single letter was written in Antioch or in Jerusalem. On the other hand the references confirm that not only Luke, but Paul himself is acutely aware that he is a member of a team.

The closing verses of most letters are at least as important for our subject, for in these places the writers give an insight into who are with them and which journeys are being undertaken. Again I am taking 1 Corinthians as my example, the letter that Paul wrote during his long stay in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8): both Timothy (16:10) and Apollos (16:12)

are at work with him, while Aquila and Priscilla have a meeting in their house (16:19). Not all letters contain so much data, but just read who all are mentioned in Philippians.

Colossae

You get a nice impression of teamwork when you check how the church in Colossae originated. Paul himself probably never went to this town, which was situated somewhere in in the hinterland of Ephesus; it is likely that Epaphras, who is mentioned in Colossians 1:7 and 4:12, was the church planter. When you see this, you understand even better how Team Paul operated. Paul and his people were living in a central location (in particular, Corinth, Ephesus and finally Rome) from which team members travelled to the surrounding towns and villages, settling there for long periods of time and building healthy congregations.

When the emancipation of women began, it was said that behind every successful man stands a supportive woman. Something similar is true for Paul. I am not out to diminish his greatness, but an important element of this greatness was exactly that Paul surrounded himself with a good team of co-workers, whom he used well to fulfil the command that he had received from the Lord Jesus (see Acts 22:15, where we encounter another exaggeration of Luke, and 26:16-18). For us, this means that people who want to be effective for Jesus should ask themselves what can and must be done in a team. It also means that no one is so good or so special that they should not form a team around them to work more effectively.

Pieter J. Lalleman teaches biblical studies at Spurgeon's College and can be contacted on p.lalleman@spurgeons.ac.uk.

Notice of BMF Annual General Meeting

27th February 2020, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London

All members are welcome to come along to our AGM at 12 noon and to stay on for our committee meeting, finishing no later than 3pm. The AGM includes election of officers (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer), and reports on the past year, including the accounts.

If you are interested in joining the committee as we seek to discern the future for BMF, we would love to hear from you. In particular, we are seeking a secretary (an important role, but not too onerous). Please feel free to contact me or any of our committee members to find out more (see inside back page for contacts).

Tim Edworthy, Chair.

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.

Contact the editor if you have any queries.

Retirement and ministerial identity

by John E. Colwell

While grateful for Paul Beasley-Murray's article, *Retired Ministers Matter* (*bmj* vol **344**, October 2019, 10-15) and for the thorough research that underlies it, the material raises for me a quite basic question concerning ministerial identity which I do not believe Paul addresses.

One of the members of the home group we attend is a retired airline pilot. Clearly he enjoyed his job immensely even though it involved much time spent away from home and, as with most people similarly employed, he would have described himself as a pilot—what he did to a significant degree defined his identity. Speaking to him a couple of days he ago he confessed that, just a year after retiring, he would not now be safe to fly a passenger aeroplane. He no longer identifies himself as a pilot. Some years ago I was speaking to a local pub landlord who was comparing his 'job' with mine: as with Christian ministry, being a landlord was a 24/7 commitment, a way of life rather than just a 'job'—but a retired landlord no longer identifies himself as a landlord, even though he may still pull the occasional pint. If your identity derives from what you do then that identity changes when you cease to do it. My father spent over 30 years working on a factory line, leaving the house before 6am and never returning before 6pm, often working on a Saturday morning because he needed the overtime. I don't think my father ever thought of his job as defining him (though he took great pride in his work) but his life changed dramatically the day he retired. My pilot friend has adjusted well to retirement, enjoying a happy marriage and pursuing various interests for which he previously did not have the time. Others adjust less well, not having engaging interests they mope around the home under the feet of an increasingly long-suffering spouse. But, apart from a pension and perhaps an annual old colleagues' reunion, ties with previous employment are severed. I suspect it remains rare to find a human resources department of any commercial or industrial enterprise taking much interest in retired employees (though I'd be delighted by any exception).

If we understand Christian ministry functionally, whether in terms of the pastoral care of a local congregation or (as is increasingly the case) in terms of missional leadership, then that identity terminates on retirement: you cease to be a leader when you cease to lead; you cease to be a pastor when you cease to fulfil that responsibility within a local church. If your identity derives from what you do then that identity lapses when you cease that function. Certainly you may have been called to fulfil that function but, as with other

vocations, a calling to ‘do’ comes to an end when the doing comes to an end. Of course there can be expressions of gratitude for past service, an honouring of past service; of course there can be meetings for retired ministers of the Probus nature, where these ministers can maintain contact with each other and perhaps listen to an invited speaker; of course there can be the occasional meal together—all such provisions are of value to many and should not be despised—but they all are gratuitous, they are neither a right nor an entitlement. And if Regional Ministers also are primarily ‘missional leaders’ it is difficult to see how the ongoing pastoral care of retired ministers fits within that brief—in this respect (sadly as is so often the case), we reap what we sow.

But what if we understand Christian ministry primarily as a *call to be*; what if our function derives from our identity rather than the other way around; what if we do what we do because we are what we are rather than we are what we are because we do what we do—in such case surely retirement (especially in a free-church context) presents a far deeper crisis and challenge.

A Roman Catholic priest may retire as a parish priest but he never retires from the priesthood: ordination is a separation of life for life. A retired Roman Catholic priest generally continues regularly to say mass, to support the local parish priest both in sacramental ministry and in the ministry of the word. Nor generally will such continuing ministry be perceived as a threat by the parish priest to his leadership, principally because Roman Catholic priests rarely understand their role in terms of leadership. Generally such continuing ministerial assistance is welcomed. And when the mental or physical health of a retired Catholic priest finally fails he is respectfully cared for in a dedicated home or monastery: his identity as a priest is not dependent upon his ability to function as such.

But within a free church context the situation is otherwise: generally for those of us who understand ministry in terms of word and sacrament, who understand ordination as a separation to be and only consequently as a separation to do, no such future presents itself upon retirement from pastoral charge. Initially there may be invitations to lead worship and to preach but these tail off with the passing years or may never begin if we have moved to an entirely new location. And eventually a brief obituary appears in the *Baptist Times,* confounding the assumption of some who thought we had died years ago.

When I was ordained over 45 years ago, probationary studies and the senior friend scheme were at best patchy in their effectiveness. Changes in the provision for newly accredited ministers, a more rigorously monitored programme of ministerial development, and especially a structured scheme of mentoring, have transformed the initial phase of ministry. Yet it was hardly surprising that some of the students at the college where I taught asked concerning the years that followed this initial period,

seeking a lifelong form of structured accountability beyond the local church, both for ministry and for Christian discipleship. With such provocation I was delighted and honoured to be asked to join with those seeking to establish an 'order' for Baptist Ministry. Our positive motivation was to establish a community of mutual accountability that encouraged the disciplines of a rhythm of prayer, of retreat, of spiritual direction, and of an examen expressed within a series of searching questions posed within local cell groups meeting (roughly) every six weeks. For some of us, at least, the establishment of the Order for Baptist Ministry also provided a home and a source of mutual encouragement precisely for those who understood ministry as a way of being, as a means of presence, as a mediation of word and sacrament, in distinction to the functional and leadership notions of ministry that have seemed to predominate. I don't think any of us gave much thought to the implications of what we were doing for the situation of retired ministers.

When the Order was first established there were just three of us within the South West Baptist Association meeting every six weeks within a cell. Nearly 10 years later there are three cells within the Association involving 13 of us. During those 10 years I retired from the pastorate—my retirement made no difference whatsoever to my involvement in the Order either nationally (we meet together once a year in Convocation) or in the local cell group. A couple of times I have asked the others within the cell whether they really want an ageing and retired academic meeting with them: they may just be being gracious in saying that they still value my presence but they also point out that to withdraw from the cell (and the Order) would be to deny the very understanding of ministry that I have spent so much effort promoting and defending. Moreover, my involvement in the cell and the wider Order issues not infrequently in an invitation to lead worship and to preach and, perhaps more significantly, in the request from some members of the cell and the Order to meet with them individually with the opportunity to listen and to encourage. All this reinforces a continuing identity even though function has largely ceased. Of course, the day may come when physical and mental powers decline, but I have a group of colleagues in the cell who, committed to candour, will have the honesty and grace to tell me and, nonetheless, to hold me in this established relationship.

Whether different Associations are deemed to provide adequate or inadequate support for ministers in retirement may well depend on the assumptions concerning ministry that we bring to that assessment, functional or ontological, a way of doing or a way of being, a being defined by doing or a doing deriving from being. But if the latter is your understanding of ministry and of ordination there is now a home for you and a network of encouragement, challenge, and support.

John Colwell lives in Budleigh Salterton and can be contacted on jcolwell@btinternet.com. See also www.orderforbaptistministry.co.uk.

Retired ministers: free to serve!

by John Claydon

I was intrigued, stimulated and challenged by Paul Beasely-Murray's article in the October 2019 edition of the *bmj,* entitled *Retired ministers matter*. Of course they do! Paul has shared valuable research that provides a challenge to the Baptist family: to the Union, Associations and active ministers, but also to retired ministers themselves. While I welcome Paul's contribution, I want to suggest that there are other observations and insights to be offered.

Here I should come clean and say that I write not only as a Regional Minister Team Leader, but also as one who is less than two years from retirement. It may be that once in retirement I may view matters differently. During my time of serving in a local church, I have been blessed to have retired ministers and also ministers from other countries within the congregation, the latter taking time to study full-time for doctorates at Durham University. It seems that there are a number of issues raised by Paul's article including the nature of the covenant between ministers, the appropriate place of pastoral support, the nature of the call to ministry with opportunities to serve, accountability, and the nature of retirement.

Ministers and covenant

First, I want to offer some reflections on the nature of covenant between ministers. Whatever we say about the accredited list—and I am committed to accreditation—the issue of covenant is by no means straightforward. We are a covenant people, with our prime covenant being the one we have in Christ with God. As Baptists we are also in a covenant relationship with one another as signified in church membership. Following on from this, our churches, Associations, and colleges are in covenant together within the Union. All ministers, accredited or otherwise, of all churches, are similarly in a covenant relationship because they serve in covenant-related churches. The nature of the so-called covenant relationship of accredited ministers is a development and further expression of the implicit covenant between all ministers whether accredited, unaccredited or lay.

As a local minister I never made a distinction in the way that I related to our various types of ministers, and as a Regional Minister I have not distinguished between them, except for the necessary matters relating to accreditation. This policy has included retired ministers,

whom I have valued and always sought to include, recognising the wisdom they bring but also the implicit covenant of ministry which I do not see ending upon retirement. If there is an implicit covenant between ministers, and if we take seriously the Baptist Core Value of being an inclusive community as well as the more recently articulated value of 'feeling like one team', then there are implications for the way we engage with and enable the gifts and experiences of retired ministers to be used for the good of God's kingdom within and through our Baptist family. This inclusion covers ministers' fellowships.

I have always believed that retired ministers should be part of ministers' fellowships, although I have also met many who feel that retired ministers should not be present. My reasoning has been simple in that we honour and include those who have served in the past, recognise and seek their wisdom, acknowledge that they still serve and are still called even though they may be without office, and understand that we can be mutually enriched together. However, I do recognise the danger that retired ministers can exercise too much influence in those groups whose primary purpose is the support and encouragement of those in active ministry. That said it would be right to recognise the God-given resource that we have in retired ministers: a resource that is increasing in size with a significant number of ministers retiring in the coming years.

Prime place of pastoral support

As disciples of Christ we are always part of a local church. Whether our ministries are based within the local church or in other contexts such as pioneering, college, national, regional or parachurch situations, we remain members of a local church, which is a requirement for remaining on the accredited list, although there are certain exceptions.

In ministry we find many forms of formal and informal support, but when certain challenges face us there are those appointed to whom we can go, whether they be Regional Ministers or someone else. In retirement, when we lay down the office of ministry, the prime means of support is the local church and its pastor. That is not to say that the Union and Associations have washed their hands of retired ministers, but simply to recognise the reality that as disciples we find support and accountability within the local church: it is in essence who we are as Baptists. However, there may well be times when it is entirely appropriate that a retired minister should seek the pastoral care, support and guidance of Association staff who should also be mindful to offer support at critical times. Clearly, retired ministers should be kept informed of Association and Union activity and the means of support, but this is a two-way street. We cannot assume that Associations have knowledge of when a retired minister moves into their area. However, I am sure that all are open to contact from those who have recently moved into their Association and to finding the best way of keeping in touch and offering support.

Called but not invited

Upon retirement we are able to reflect upon our lives and note where the calling of God has been confirmed by the calling by a local church, or some other body, to exercise ministry. Our gifts and experience have been given a legitimate place to be used and we have been accountable to the local church or organisation we have served. Since leaving college I have served in three pastorates and have served two Associations; these have been the places or scenarios for my ministry. However, how are we to view retirement?

I was particularly struck some years ago by the words of a local Anglican minister who, looking forward to retirement, referred to it as a new calling. This is very helpful, but this calling is of a very different nature to that to which we have become accustomed. It is primarily the calling to *be* as much as to *do*, to be available as much as to be in an office, to respond but not to impose. Unless one takes on a particular role in response to a call from a church or other body, retired ministers have the wonderful liberty to offer their gifts, insights, wisdom and experience as appropriate. Retired ministers will need to be proactive in seeking engagement and opportunities for service, and yet at the same time exercise patience and grace in waiting for invitations or openings, and do so with no anticipation of a right to be used. It is quite possible that a retired minister may have come to that place in life where she/he simply need to rest and be refreshed, but others may be keen to serve and be deeply involved. However, that keenness to serve needs to be tempered with a patience that does not impose, but respects, offers, seeks and waits. For some this will be a wonderful opportunity to be released from responsibility and await new opportunities, but for others it will be challenging and a time to engage with spiritual disciplines of trust, patience and discernment.

It is natural that many will want to continue to serve in retirement, and even to take on responsibility, but the openings may simply not be present in their location. I am impressed by those who, rather than bemoaning their lack of opportunity to serve, offer themselves to other churches, other denominations and into the voluntary sector outside the church. It seems to me that ministers have many gifts beyond preaching, teaching and pastoral counselling that can be taken into the community and that they can be a blessing to the wider world and a witness for Christ in a world they may not have accessed before. The former General Superintendent (what we had before Regional Ministers), John Nicholson, offered himself to the National Trust and to a political party. John remained a blessing to the church, but I am sure was a blessing to many outside of the church and perhaps in a way that had not been so easy while in ‘active’ ministry. In a very different way I was impressed by a retired missionary who spoke of the time he could give to people as he passed them in his village. In retirement he was able to loiter in conversation, offer a listening ear and potentially a form of pastoral support and Christian witness.

Service without responsibility and accountability?

I recall a conversation with a retired minister many years ago who was greatly enjoying being a moderator in the Midlands. However, he took delight in telling me that while he enjoyed it, he was aware that he could always stop anytime. I sense the pleasant privilege of such a scenario, but I also wonder sometimes whether we might, in retirement, want to serve without accountability with a sense of seeking to use our own gifts in our own way, because for years we have operated within the constraints of the situation in which we have served. I can understand this, but we will have almost certainly preached about fellowship, responsibility and accountability and probably against being a one-person band and yet, in retirement, we may find ourselves in that situation of not being called and therefore have a lessened sense of accountability to a church or other appointing body. This is an important matter and whilst we may want to appeal to our own conscience, common sense and the Holy Spirit's leading, it is probably just as important for retired ministers to find networks of support and accountability as it is for 'active ministers'. In the end this may simply mean being faithful disciples serving in the local church, putting the gifts that we have used in ministry on hold whilst we serve in other ways just as others do. It may mean not necessarily using what we consider to be our prime gifts, but using our other abilities in such a way that enhances the life and mission of the church. Just as retired ministers can see the local church as the prime place of pastoral support, they can also see it as a clear locus for service and accountability. This is not to preclude opportunities that may come from outside the local church.

Retirement and expectations

The nature of our expectations and hope is important as ministers approach retirement. Retirement is a gift and a privilege, yet within our society we have come to take it for granted. Many ministers will say that they do not believe in retirement and that ministers never retire. It might be more appropriate to say disciples never retire and that we all seek to go on in our walk with God and in service of Him. It is clear for example from Numbers 8:23-26 that the Levites were to retire from certain responsibilities, although they continued to be counted as part of the ministry and did other things. With the privilege of retirement comes the privilege of choice about location and how to engage in opportunities of service. Once a retired minister is ready to engage in service it is right to take initiatives and seek openings, but to avoid being frustrated at doors that don't open or appear slow to do so. Retirement is a new season as well as a new calling, and retired ministers definitely do matter.

John Claydon is Regional Team Leader of the NBA and can be contacted on johnclaydon@thenba.org.uk.

Books: the *After Christendom* series

from the Anabaptist Mennonite Network

The Anabaptist Mennonite Network is working in partnership with several publishers to produce a major series of books on the meaning and significance of the end of Christendom in western culture. Many Christians have focused on the challenges and opportunities of the perceived shift from modernity to postmodernity in recent years, but fewer have appreciated the seismic shifts that have taken place with the disintegration of a nominally Christian society. Although the term 'post-Christendom' is used more often now, it is generally not used with great precision and is frequently confused with postmodernity.

Christendom and post-Christendom

'Christendom' was a historical era, a geographical region, a political arrangement, a sacral culture and an ideology. For many centuries Europeans have lived in societies that were nominally Christian. Church and state have been the pillars of a remarkable civilisation that can be traced back to the decision of the emperor Constantine I early in the 4th century to replace paganism with Christianity as the imperial religion.

Christendom, a brilliant but brutal culture, flourished in the Middle Ages, fragmented in the Reformation of the 16th century, but persisted despite the onslaught of modernity. It exported its values and practices to many other parts of the world through both mission and conquest, but it has been slowly declining during the past three centuries. In the 21st century Christendom is unravelling. What will emerge from the demise of Christendom is not yet clear, but we can now describe much of western culture as 'post-Christendom'.

Post-Christendom is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence. This definition, proposed and unpacked in *Post-Christendom*, the first book in the *After Christendom* series, has gained widespread acceptance.

The *After Christendom* series explores the implications of the demise of Christendom and the challenges facing a church now living on the margins of western society. The various authors all write from within the Anabaptist tradition and draw on this long-

marginalised movement for inspiration and insights. They see the current challenges facing the church not as the loss of a golden age but as opportunities to recover a more biblical and more Christian way of being God's people in God's world. The series addresses a range of issues, including social and political engagement, how we read Scripture, youth work, mission, worship, and the shape and ethos of the church after Christendom.

Book summaries

Post-Christendom: church and mission in a strange new world by Stuart Murray (2004; revised edition 2018)

The first volume in the series investigated the coming of Christendom in the 4th century, identified the main components of the 'Christendom shift' and traced the development and subsequent decline of Christendom over the following centuries. After explaining why Christendom as a political entity disintegrated during the 20th century, the book examines the Christendom legacy, which consists of vestiges in church and society and a mindset that may persist long after Christendom itself is defunct. Three final chapters suggest ways in which church and mission may be reconfigured in light of the end of Christendom. *Post-Christendom* raises numerous issues that will be further explored in the books that follow.

Church after Christendom by Stuart Murray (2005)

The second book explores various questions. How will the Western church negotiate the demise of Christendom? Can it rediscover its primary calling, recover its authentic ethos and regain its nerve? The author surveys the 'emerging church' scene that has disturbed, energised and intrigued many Christians. He listens carefully to those who have been joining and leaving the 'inherited church'. Interacting with several proposals for the shape the church should take as it charts a new course for its mission in post-Christendom, the author reflects in greater depth on topics introduced in *Post-Christendom* and the practical implications of proposals made in that book. *Church after Christendom* offers a vision of a way of being church that is healthy, sustainable, liberating, peaceful and missional.

Faith and politics after Christendom: the church as a movement for anarchy by Jonathan Bartley (2006)

For the best part of 1700 years, the institutional church has enjoyed a hand-in-hand relationship with government. Indeed, the church has often been seen as the glue that has stopped political systems from disintegrating into anarchy. But now for the first time in centuries, the relationship has weakened to the point where the church in the UK can no longer claim to play a decisive part in government. *Faith and politics after*

Christendom, published in 2006, offers perspectives and resources for Christians and churches no longer at the centre of society but on the margins. It invites a realistic and hopeful response to challenges and opportunities awaiting the church in 21st century politics.

Youth work after Christendom by Nigel Pimlott & Jo Pimlott (2008)

This book was an unexpected but very welcome addition to the series. The authors had read *Post-Christendom* and had realised that this perspective on mission and culture had many implications for youth work, especially youth work on the margins of society. Youth work, in fact, was another lens through which to investigate the Christendom legacy; just as post-Christendom was a new lens through which to search for appropriate and creative forms of youth work in a changing culture. If youth culture represents the leading edge of cultural and societal change, or at least reflects the pressures and possibilities emerging in our society, this volume may be one of the most important in the *After Christendom* series. For if we can re-imagine and re-shape youth work for a post-Christendom culture, perhaps other dimensions of ecclesial and missional transformation will follow.

Worship and mission after Christendom by Alan & Eleanor Kreider (2009)

Alan and Eleanor Kreider were American Mennonites who lived in England for 30 years and were at the heart of the emerging Anabaptist movement here. Their jointly authored book explores the relationship between worship and mission and how this relationship is crucial in post-Christendom. In worship the followers of Jesus are equipped to participate in the mission of God. This book explores the dynamics of the kind of worship that will equip and inspire us to be missional disciples.

Reading the Bible after Christendom by Lloyd Pietersen (2011)

This book is in three parts: in the first section the author provides an historical overview covering biblical interpretation pre-Constantine, the effects of Constantine on reading the Bible and the contribution of 16th-century Anabaptists to biblical interpretation. The second section forms the heart of the book in which the author takes the reader book by book through the Bible, pointing out what can be seen when reading from the margin. In the final section two brief contemporary applications of such readings are explored: reading the Bible for spirituality and for mission. The book's thesis is that reading the Bible should be a communal activity and so the author opens ways of reading to enable readers to explore the contents of scripture together.

Hospitality and community after Christendom by Andrew Francis (2012)

Shared meals can change lives. From the radical Anabaptist tradition, Andrew Francis grew up experiencing hospitality in many contexts. He applies this to Christian congregations: through the use of Communion and prayer breakfasts, house groups

which always gathered for meals, self-catering church weekends and outreach events built around food, folk renew their interest in both discipleship and the 'Jesus community'. Biblical narrative interwoven with contemporary examples explore shared food and lives. This book challenges traditional notions of religious community, offering models for today. 'Table liturgies' for congregations and home groups, and a bibliography (with cookery books) are included.

Atheism after Christendom by Simon Perry (2015)

To be atheist is to reject the gods of the age. Throughout western history, those gods have included: the gods of Greece, whom Socrates opposed and was hence executed on the charge of 'atheism'; Roman Emperors, gods whom Jews and Christians resisted and were hence persecuted as 'atheists'; the pseudo-Christian god of Christendom, against whom Christian groups like Donatists and Waldensians, Lollards and Anabaptists rebelled and were outlawed as 'atheists'. The god of Christendom was eventually pronounced dead by Friedrich Nietzsche. Since then, atheists have continued to rebel against this dated and defunct god. Now that we live in a post-Christendom era, the New Atheists boldly oppose the god of a bygone age whilst dutifully worshipping the gods of our own age. These new gods resemble very closely the old Roman gods, Mars (celebrating the visible, military supremacy of 'us') and Venus (worshipping the economic structures that defend our privilege at the expense of 'them'). *Atheism after Christendom* is a call to both atheist and Christian, to be faithful to their atheistic heritage.

Women and men after Christendom by Fran Porter (2015)

This book argues for Christian understanding and practice that takes the hierarchy out of gender relationships. It demonstrates how the structures and mindsets of male dominance and female subordination have been and still are perpetuated, and offers alternative understanding rooted in biblical and theological reflection. From the gospel witness and the lives of the first Christians, through the patriarchal gender order of Christendom, to the challenges of equality movements, and the impact of our theological imagination on the social relations between women and men, this book traces how unequal gender power relations are both entangled and defied, inviting Christian communities to explore non-hierarchical ways of relating between women and men.

God after Christendom? by Brian Haymes & Kyle Gingerich Hiebert (2015)

Whatever is happening in history, whatever deals are struck between church and state, whether Christians are influential or vulnerable in society, marginal or in power, God remains God and that is good news. At least it is so long as God remains God and not some being, even a Supreme Being, made in our image. This book revisits the long tradition of Christian speech about God in the conviction that in Scripture and the story

of Christian reflection there are resources to help keep the church in the way of faithful discipleship, even in the face of contemporary temptation to focus on who or what is less than God. Beginning with the Bible, the authors move to explore some classic Christian affirmations and why they remain crucial, to reflect on how we now speak of God, facing issues of evil and suffering and why faith in the true God must always lead to worship and peace.

Relationships and emotions after Christendom by Jeremy Thomson (2016)

Relationships and emotions are essential to all our lives, and yet loneliness appears to be rising in westernised societies. Some people find their own feelings hard to recognise, difficult to express or impossible to handle; others are intimidated by emotions strongly expressed by people they live or work with. This book explores the small-scale interactions of our lives and the somewhat larger-scale dealings of our churches and local communities, often marred by low intensity antagonism. It begins with the relationships and emotions of Jesus and explores the interface between theology and psychology to illuminate social interaction and encourage personal reflection. As Christendom unravels, it appeals for followers of Jesus to live out a style of social relationships that is emotionally healthy, that handles conflict constructively, that challenges injustice creatively, and that forgives graciously.

Missional discipleship after Christendom by Dan Yarnell and Andy Hardy (2018)

It is not a changing culture, reduced resources, or a rescinding Christian memory that creates the greatest challenges for the church in the West. It is the lack of a clear commitment to the intentional, authentic, and contextual expressions of missional disciple-making, which will shape current and future generations of followers of Jesus to express the values of the Kingdom today. This book offers stimulating historical, biblical, and theological reflections on discipleship and considers some of the possibilities and opportunities afforded to us by our post-Christian context. Missional discipleship allows the *missio dei* to shape us in our engagement our practices and sustain us in the lifelong journey of becoming and developing disciples that follow Jesus today.

Theology after Christendom: forming prophets for a post-Christian world by Joshua Searle (2018)

Christianity must be understood not as a religion of private salvation, but as a gospel movement of universal compassion, which transforms the world in the power of God's truth. Amid several major global crises, including the rise of terrorism and religious fundamentalism and a sudden resurgence of political extremism, Christians must now face up fearlessly to the challenges of living in a ‘post-truth’ age in which deceitful politicians present their media-spun fabrications as ‘alternative facts’. This book is an attempt to enact a transformative theology for these changing times that will equip the global Christian community to take a stand for the gospel in an age of cultural despair and moral

fragmentation. The emerging post-Christendom era calls for a new vision of Christianity that has come of age and connects with the spiritual crisis of our times. In helping to make this vision a reality, Searle insists that theology is not merely an academic discipline, but a transformative enterprise that changes the world. Theology is to be experienced not just behind a desk, in an armchair, or in a church, but also in hospitals, in foodbanks, in workplaces, and on the streets. Theology is to be lived as well as read.

Continuing project

The existing books are not intended to be the last word on the subjects they address, but an invitation to discussion and further exploration. Several more books are to be published, including:

Security after Christendom (John Heathershaw)

Interpreting the Old Testament after Christendom (Jeremy Thomson)

Singleness and marriage after Christendom (Lina Toth Androviene)

Sacraments after Christendom (Andrew Francis and Janet Sutton-Webb)

Public service after Christendom (Doug Hynd)

Offers

We are happy to make some of these books available at a discount:

Post-Christendom – revised edition (Stuart Murray): £10.00

Faith and politics after Christendom (Jonathan Bartley): £3.00

Youth work after Christendom (Jo & Nigel Pimlott): £2.00

Reading the Bible after Christendom (Lloyd Pietersen): £3.00

Hospitality and community after Christendom (Andrew Francis): £3.00

God after Christendom? (Brian Haymes & Kyle Gingerich Hiebert): £5.00

Women and men after Christendom (Fran Porter): £10.00

Relationships and emotions after Christendom (Jeremy Thomson): £10.00

To order, please contact stuart@murraywilliams.co.uk.

Reviews

edited by Michael Peat

God be in my Mouth: 40 Ways to Grow as a Preacher

by Doug Gay

St Andrews Press, 2018

Reviewer: Michael Peat

Doug Gay has been teaching ministry students in Glasgow about preaching for over 10 years. This book gathers insights he has gained as both a preacher and teacher into a concise work that considers the craft of preaching in various respects: over 40 chapters usually of just a few pages each. This format is intended to create a resource of succinct nuggets of wisdom from which the reader can select as and when advice on a particular aspect of preaching is wanted. Sample sermons prepared by the author for particular occasions (*eg* a funeral) or as an example of the way sermons can helpful echo the form of their text (*eg* contemporary beatitudes preached at an infant baptism and communion) enhance this purpose. But I would recommend finding time to read the book from cover to cover as well. In under 150 pages, Gay offers an engaging, often entertaining, and properly practical primer, with valuable things to say about the whole journey from identifying what texts to preach on when, through wrestling with a text to be preached, to the actual delivery of a sermon and its relationship to the preacher's lifelong discipleship.

A key part of the book's appeal to me was Gay's honesty and humility throughout. Sometimes, this is expressed through explicit empathy with those who approach preaching with trepidation—and which of us doesn't!—as well as caution about the power that preaching confers on preachers, and thus the importance of listening carefully to the congregations we serve. At other times, it emerges as the author acknowledges his debt to other preachers from whom he has learned much himself. Thomas Long's work is one such conversation partner in several chapters, including one entitled *How literary form informs the sermon* which, for me, was one of the highlights of the book.

There were one or two moments in the book when I felt the aim to be concise left the commentary so short on detail as to hinder clarity: the chapter called *On learning to read* was both tantalising and frustrating in this respect. But these moments can be experienced positively as a prompt to delve into the underlying texts, identified in footnotes, which have clearly had a significant influence on the author.

Those considering, or embarking on, a ministry of preaching, would be well equipped and, I hope, encouraged by reading *God be in my Mouth*. More experienced preachers may derive a mixture of familiar and new insights from it, but usually well expressed so that they instill confidence or provoke thought as needed. Whether you consider yourself one of the former or the latter, I wholeheartedly recommend it.

Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain: An Anthology.

by J. Aldred

London: SCM, 2019

Reviewer: Glen Marshall

This an important though by no means flawless anthology. It is important because it deals with the fastest growing part of Christ's church worldwide and here in the UK. It is flawed because, like nearly all anthologies, the quality of the contributions is patchy. This, though, is a commendable flaw since it is largely a consequence of Aldred's determination to orchestrate a wide range of voices, some of which are more at home writing academic essays than others.

The contributors include two from The Redeemed Christian Church of God, two based at the university of Birmingham, and two based at Mattersey Hall (the main Assemblies of God training College). One writer is an independent charismatic, two are mainstream charismatics, four come from black majority charismatic traditions and five from classic Pentecostal churches. Eight are academics, two are from the charity/third sector, one is embedded in mainstream ecumenism and two are primarily local church-based. There are three African writers, four of Afro-Caribbean heritage and six are white British.

I'm not sure just how representative this spread is of the range of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity in the UK, but it certainly offers a welcome breadth of perspectives.

There are 13 chapters presented in four parts. Part one is historical; part two explores the diversity of the movement (s); part three focuses on the relationship between Pentecostals, charismatics and the Christian mainstream. How long, I wonder, before we are talking about the relationship between historic Christianity and the Pentecostal mainstream? The final part presents Pentecostal and charismatic perspectives on sociopolitical issues.

It was encouraging to see Andrew Davies in his chapter on heritage and hope adding his voice to the growing chorus that questions the old orthodoxy that Pentecostal history can be traced back to a single source in the Azusa Street revival. Instead, as Davies points out, evidence points towards multiple, more or less independent, sources across the world during the first 15 years of the past century. William Kay's look at the distinctive marks of the movement(s) is an excellent survey, rich in bibliographical sources, well written, condensed, informative and bang up to date. Other highlights included Dionne Lamont's uncovering of the significant part played by Pentecostal women in history and today and Mark Sturge's sympathetic and well-reasoned analysis and critique of prosperity teaching.

It has been said that Baptists, tinged as many of us are by the charismatic movement, stand in a unique place between historic denominations, the evangelical mainstream and Pentecostalism. I hope that means that at least some subscribers of the *bmj* will be interested in reading or at least dipping into this worthwhile book.

Luminaries: Twenty Lives that Illuminate the Christian Way

by Rowan Williams

SPCK, 2019

Reviewer: Michael Peat

In this short and thoroughly readable book, Rowan Williams offers a series of reflections inspired by an array of historical figures he has found to be 'beacons of illumination'. These are people whose life-story can, one way or another, help us better to interpret our own lives and the world we inhabit in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These luminaries are drawn from a diverse range of historical epochs: the book begins with the apostle Paul, ends with Oscar Romero, and takes examples from several centuries in between. Martyrs, scholars, reformers and literary figures are in the mix. Many of these pithy reflections began life as sermons or extracts of presentations that Williams was invited to give, *eg* at commemorative events. Collected in a single volume, they underline the welcome truth that heavenly light can break through in all manner of ways, situations and people.

Furthermore, Williams repeatedly reminds us that the, often surprising, spiritual riches revealed in these lives in no way depend on their bearers having a flawless character. St Paul's sometimes intemperate anger, Augustine of Canterbury's nervousness, the shortcomings in Charles Dickens' character that equipped him astutely to portray tragedy in the lives of his fictional creations, Florence Nightingale's obstinacy; such human qualities are shown to play their part in forming each character as their own unique illuminator of gospel truth. So another gift of Luminaries is that it can creatively answer the need all ministers have, at times, to reassure both themselves and others that God calls each of us as a mixed bag of qualities, and can use our apparent weaknesses no less than our perceived strengths!

Let me offer two examples from the book that illustrate the way in which it informed and stretched me. The first was a sobering challenge to this Baptist to ponder Williams' suggestion that what may appear as bloated repetition in Thomas Cranmer's liturgy in *The Book of Common Prayer*, can in fact reinforce the importance of allowing patient and nuanced attention to the eternal mystery of the divine Word. Secondly, a fresh angle on addressing social needs emerged for me from Williams' observation that Dickens, through his fiction, above all resists a 'boring' view of human beings. As Williams puts it, Dickens 'loved the poor and the destitute, not so much from a sense of duty as from a sense of outrage that their lives were being made flat and dead...He wanted them to expand into the space that should be available for human beings to be what God meant them to be'. These examples offer provocative food for thought for worship and social engagement respectively. Insights and vignettes from this book quickly found their way into my sermon preparation, bearing out Williams' expectation that as we mull over the stories of these

luminous individuals, 'we may find that there are ways in which telling these stories can become a dimension of what we offer to one another and to the wider world as good news'.

SCM Study Guide To Preaching

by P.K. Stephenson

Norwich: SCM, 2017

Reviewer: Glen Marshall

I write this review as a former student of Peter's and a former colleague. He has taught me a lot about preaching. It's good to have a slice of his wisdom gathered in one place. This is a most welcome addition to the SCM Studyguide series.

I find that books on preaching can be placed in one of two broad categories: those that are genuinely informative and those that are truly inspiring. The first type teaches me how. The second type preaches to me. Both are important—we preachers need to know what we are doing and we need stirring up to keep on doing it. This book is more informative than inspirational. This is not to say that it is dull (far from it), but its true value lies in the breadth of knowledge that it captures and the clear and helpful way in which it makes that knowledge available. I have started using it as the main textbook for my second year BA course on homiletics. No other book does what this book does anywhere near as well as this book does it.

You might not appreciate the riches that are on offer here by looking at the contents page. There are five parts: part one looks at why preaching matters; part two offers guidance on preparation; part three deals with sermon design; the focus of part four is delivery; the final part touches on issues relating to the life of the preacher. All important stuff, but all seemingly fairly standard. However, within the familiar framework you will find lots of well informed, up to date, helpful information as well as guidance on a wide range of issues such as ways of finding something worth saying; the crucial importance of context; the principles of good interpretation; narrative preaching; poetic preaching; imaginative preaching; episodic preaching; the place of performance; a consideration of whether or not to use PowerPoint and if you do use it, how to use it well—and much more.

Another great strength of Peter's book is the way it is set out. Each chapter begins with a URL that takes you to a short video introduction. Each chapter includes pause for thought sections and lots of practical examples. All of this helps to make sound learning clear and accessible. It is clear that Peter is not only a good preacher but also a good teacher. (No: they aren't the same thing.) Then there's the appendixes. Don't ignore the appendixes. They include further guidelines, scripts and notes from example sermons, and a set of questions to use when seeking feedback.

Many of those who listen to sermons seem to have little idea about what goes into growing a good one. Too many of those who preach appear to be only slightly better informed. It will help a good deal if this book is widely read, carefully studied and, most importantly, as with preaching, acted upon.