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the baptist ministers' journal

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From the editor

Slow ministry?

There is some current interest in 'slow' activities—'slow' radio (for example, a few broadcast minutes of wind blowing in the trees, water lapping against the shore, or a dog barking repetitively in the distance); or 'slow' food, which is pretty self-explanatory! But what about 'slow' ministry?

Roland Sokolowski's article on patience (this issue) explores the forgotten virtue, or maybe necessity, of waiting. In our fast-paced society we have come to think that things need to happen quickly, all the time. Is this always a good thing?

In part of his article, Roland explores how church meeting consensus takes time, and is thus perceived as a frustrating way of doing church. A leadership team with delegated powers can certainly get on with the job much more quickly—but perhaps we may too uncritically abandon our heritage of covenanted decision-making. Can we be dissenters in a new way: refusing to be hurried into corporate practices that disenfranchise groups of people?

A related question of course arises about ministry and ministerial formation, since ministers still have an impact on church culture. In the introductory chapters of his recent book, *Shaped for Service* (reviewed in January's *bmj*), Paul Goodliff advocates an extended, patient, holistic formation process for those preparing for ministry, arguing that '...life-long formation is the reality for all ministry' (p6). This lengthy process is seriously countercultural: as a denomination we may feel we have no time to waste, no money, and poor cultural 'visibility'. These anxieties may engender a desire to prepare ministers quickly and cheaply, and to prioritise the selection of those who culturally will 'make a splash'. But, as Paul observes, shortcuts in formation may mean that ministers effectively drown in the long term challenges of enduring difficulties in ministry: 'Formation must in no small way prepare men and women to encompass disappointment, bear each others' disloyalty, carry each other's pain and suffering, and sometimes share it' (p22).

What are your thoughts about 'slow' living, church life, and ministry? Is this a luxury that Baptist can no longer afford? Or is it the erosion of our Principles? I'd be interested to hear from you. *SN*

Losing patience?

by Roland Sokolowski

It's 2:30am on Friday 3 November on Regent Street. Already 100 people are lined up in a pre-release queue outside the Apple store, waiting to get their hands on the iPhone X. This is patience today. I'm talking about short-term inconvenience for the coming reward. We can wait for a while, but only because we can't wait for the latest tech. Likewise, we'll sit intently with trigger finger twitching, poised to scoop the eBay auction. The clock ticks down to zero and if you're anything like me, you've underbid and the item is gone! We will surrender our time if we are persuaded that it'll get us ahead of the pack: but aside from the nervous frenzy of getting something exclusive, we don't like waiting.

Cultural change appears to be accelerating. Even a nation renowned for its love of queuing is losing its patience. Despite my efforts not to look disgruntled, the shopping assistant who has kept me waiting for no more than 30 seconds apologises to assuage any ire headed her way. What happened to her with the last customer she kept waiting, I wonder? In a reversal of the proverb, patience appears a vice and not a virtue; waiting is for losers, for those that can't keep pace, for the backward and the timid. Here I argue that we ought to take stock of what patience is and isn't and what effect taking patience seriously might have for church life and mission.

The change of pace in the UK and the erosion of our patience is not unopposed. There are still advocates for deceleration—for example, the slow food movement founded by Carlo Petrini during the 1980s in Italy. But can slow food, by definition, ever overtake its more convenient rival? Regrettably, no amount of 'slow movements' seem finally to convince the general market of their worth. Will paying attention to the distinctively Christian dimensions of patience yield anything of practical ministerial use? I hope it might and I offer here a view that impatience is directly challenged by the resources of early Christian tradition.

Resources: Tertullian and Irenaeus

I am indebted to the work of Alan Krieder for bringing to light the focus early Christians gave to patience. In *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* Kreider argues that patience was a supreme virtue and one that was distinctively articulated and modelled by Christians against the backdrop of Graeco-Roman society.[1] Christians were patient, but

by no means passive. They lived counterculturally, largely ignoring the prevailing economic and political forces, and creating their own unique corporate life. To achieve this they were concerned with deep initiation and discipleship. They valued formation above affiliation; it was hard to become a Christian, and hard to remain one against adverse and sometimes hostile conditions. How Christians modelled patience challenged and eventually changed Graeco-Roman society. It didn't look impressive from the outside, but God was operating organically through the church.

The word that translates into 'patience' in English biblical texts is stronger than widely supposed. The oldest extrabiblical references are commonly rooted in the military metaphor of 'holding position' or 'steadfastness'. Patience is linked to the key verb 'to remain' (or abide) most famously found in John 15 and is unanimously used by the New Testament writers in its positive and virtuous sense of hopeful endurance. It is not passive resignation, nor is it stoic impassivity in the face of divine will. Rather, Christian patience is an active participation in God's redemption of all creation, characterised by God's unlimited tolerance and kindness and worked out in Christ Jesus.

One could argue that early Christians had little choice but to be patient, marginalised and persecuted as they were. But patience was more than a necessity become a virtue. For the late 2nd century writer Irenaeus, patient commitment to the slowness of God's work is humanity's salvation. For him the God revealed in the Old Testament is the God of longsuffering and forbearance, the Creator who plays a long game as suffering Redeemer. Because God is both Creator and Redeemer the believer is constantly refashioned by God and thus drawn into God's life. Christ is formed not as an adult but in the womb and lives a span of years, suffering not just the cross but the strain of the entire human condition from birth to death. Christ gave himself to finite time in the incarnation and to the will of God for that time. By contrast it was impatience with God's economy that led Adam to shortcircuit God's intentions in Eden: thus impatience is a paradigmatic sin, a pre-emptive desire to break out of time-bounded creation.[2] God would have given Adam eternal life, but Adam was impatient with the time and place God gave to foster relationship to Him. As on the grand scale of the created order, so in the progress of an individual believer Irenaeus points to the slowness of salvation which begins on earth and stretches on past death into eternity, a never-ending ascent into the life of God. Followers of Christ need to know what is it to be human before they can move into the divine life.

Irenaeus' theological opponents were the so-called gnostics who, in his view, exemplified the vice of impatience. Despite recoveries of some corroborating material we don't know exactly what beliefs Irenaeus was combating. What we do know is that he insisted on theology that took notice of a process of formation, that valued the gift of time and the gradual nature of both creation and redemption. Irenaeus contrasts his vision of Christian formation as gradual accommodation to the presence of God and incremental advance into God's life with the gnostic vision of salvation. For him the gnostics preached a

redemption myth loosely based around Christian texts. Salvation for them is found by decrypting the text, ignoring the sweep of salvation history and the long road of ethical formation into the likeness of Christ, for a short cut to instant assurance. The gnostic claims to have risen above the stresses of life and already to have entered into a state of perfection, even to have attained divinity. For Irenaeus, this spiritualisation is a betrayal of the One whose chose embodiment and a life of obedience.

Early church historians have much to teach us about the character of Christian communities in the first centuries after Christ. The numerical weakness of Christian groups left them at the mercy of cultural tides that were beyond their control. Nonetheless, they endured accusations of immorality, impiety, disloyalty to their cities and to the empire for centuries before the establishment of Christendom. Into this context of adversity, they wrote about patience.

The first treatise on any virtue by a Christian writer was De Patienta (*ca* 204AD), in which Tertullian admits that he is not a patient man, and so is unqualified to speak on the subject. Nevertheless, beginning with the patience with of God—displayed in his longsuffering support for creation—and continuing with an exposition of the same patience displayed in the incarnation, Tertullian concludes that patience is God's nature.[3] The appropriate response is imitation of Christ's patient submission and is held in contrast to the vice of impatience. Exegeting Genesis 3 in the same manner as Irenaeus, Tertullian recounts the 'nativity of impatience in the devil himself' which through temptation infected both Eve and Adam. Impatience is at the root of their sin because they refusal to delay gratification and thus 'every sin is ascribable to impatience'.[4] Having made this diagnosis, Tertullian offers practical and pastoral guidance for believers affected by financial loss, bereavement and physical abuse. Believers are not to assert their rights, but to learn the way of Christ. This make strike us as naïve, but nonetheless the resilient and hopeful witness of Christians undeniably had long term impact. It endured as the Roman Empire fell apart.

Christian patience is an active participation in God's redemption of all creation

To summarise, a Christian sense of patience makes sense against the backdrop of a groaning creation, longing to be liberated, and the titanic struggle between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of God. Patience affirms the

movement of the God towards creation which bears with conflict, struggle and outright resistance to see the kingdom come one day. The manifestation of patience is both forbearance—living well with God's timing—and resilience—riding out the storms for the sake of what lies ahead. These dimensions were significant not only in the lives of individual believers but crucially also aggregated in Christian gatherings to change the surrounding culture.

That was then and this is now. If we accept that the early church witnessed well to the God of patience, what will we do today, faced with the modern, technological, industrial and commercial empires of our time? What follows is only a brief sketch of how we might respond but one that I hope might stimulate further thought.

Calling out impatience

Baptists ought to know a thing or two about going slowly. Often I hear the lament that Baptist churches do things ten times slower than any other bodies! This is undoubtedly frustrating. We have something of a reputation as change-resistant and this needs to be distinguished and disentangled from virtuous patience. I would argue that the kind of patience that is described above and which is our inheritance (should we choose to claim it) is a quiet but persistent ferment, pressing against the cultural currents. We are not concerned with resolute defence of fixed positions but rather the careful building of consensus, conviction and confidence. We want to enable individuals to mature in Christ in an often adverse environment. Believer's baptism and with it, proper initiation, is essential in this venture. Further, we want to aggregate individual growth in Christ so that together we more fully and faithfully emulate Christ's way. This is hard work, but we should recognise that our means of church governance is designed for this specific task. Church meeting is our gift to the worldwide church and also our guard against impatience.

I was heartened to see on a Baptist online collaborative portal the following proverb:

If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.

I do not see this as a denigration of pioneer ministries, which are often supported by the Baptist family anyway, nor to suggest that absolute consensus is needed at church meeting—clearly not always possible however desirable it may be! Yet as a guide for the ordinary operation of a Baptist church we could well adopt this slogan. As the parable of the sower tells us, short term results prove nothing; it is what endures that matters. This is not a stodgy call to 'faithfulness' over innovation. Rather, a plea to look beyond the logic of what apparently 'works' to the deeper question of what kind of disciples we are making and whether a church comprised of such a body of believers can endure.

In the past 25 years the church in the UK has pursued branded courses like never before. I've benefited from attending them and seen folk come to Christ through them. All the

same they are a time-bounded, condensed, version of what arguably should be happening slowly and gently all the time through the entire lives of every believer—and for this they can't be a substitute! The fruit of the Spirit is patience, and fruit takes time and attention to be pollinated, to grow and to ripen. The fact that Alpha wasn't originally about outreach, but about enriching those already worshipping at Holy Trinity Brompton, says a lot. Alpha arguably worked because it gave time and process to relationship with Christ and his body. I believe that the time and care that we give to people as ongoing works of God and not as 'targets' for point commitment will repay. But do we have the ability to call out impatient initiatives and to do so positively and confidently?

If we recover Kreider's idea of 'patient ferment' then we are not to huddle together hoping that the conditions that are hostile to Christianity will lift soon. Instead we are to get on with the tough business of living out our approximations to Jesus where we are. This leads to the ethical challenge we can present to those around us.

I have suggested that patience makes sense as a virtue seen in the theatre of war, where the norms of the host culture are antagonistic to the way of Christ. Increasingly, with the demise of Christendom, we recognise this struggle, which is witnessed to throughout the New Testament, building to the climactic showdown between good and evil found in the book of Revelation. Nowhere, however, does Revelation commend a rearguard action through protest and placard, rather it calls for 'patient endurance and faithfulness on part of the saints'.[5] It may be that in the future we need to return to the patient ferment of the early church.

Economic patience

As the balance of economic dominance tips against the West, and perhaps (in the wake of Brexit) particularly against the UK, I believe the way in which believers deal with financial losses and stagnant or falling standards of living will be significant. As budgets are squeezed, both households and churches will be tempted to divert resources away from the steady social projects in which they are quietly but effectively engaged. If there is a storm brewing, can we demonstrate the resilience needed to ride it out? How can we deploy the scant resources we do have to plug gaps in our creaking welfare system?

The economic 'common sense' of our time that prosperity solves social ills is so embedded in our culture that it is difficult to recognise. But in adversity, specifically in the measures applied during austerity, we see the failure of the 'trickle-down' theory in the widening gap between haves and have-nots. To return to the Apple store queue and online shopping, no single thing is a bigger threat to consumerism than patient people: people who buy things when they need them. If we delay purchases for as long as

necessary or voluntarily downgrade rather than upgrade, we may stand accused by some of road-blocking the future. With global consumption running at an unsustainable level, this is clearly not so. Impatience is a market-sponsored virtue, but it is socially and spiritually corrosive. Clearly, we won't win this argument overnight but small acts of resistance accumulate. A little yeast eventually works through the whole batch.

On the personal level we hear about the immense value of resilience as a mental resource that enables people to cope with difficulty. This 'bounce back' quality is another guise of patience, the refusal to capitulate under the weight of pressure. But how is resilience nurtured? M. Scott Peck has offered us the insight that what we invest relationally in our children—time and care over their formation—will enable them to be resilient adults, who can delay gratification because they have habituated that patient attitude. Though written 40 years ago I recommend reading *The Road Less Travelled* for its remarkable synthesis of Christian and secular insights.[6] It is time over and above money that our families and churches need us to contribute. We should be concerned not only with conversions, but with the formation of rounded disciples of Jesus Christ able to bear the storms of life with sustaining faith.

It is halfway through Advent as I write. I enjoy the season's particular intensity and even its pressures because something great is coming. But this season of hopeful waiting is a way to look at all of life. We are not on a four-week course that ends smartly so that we can move on with our lives. No, the course we are on is life and this is how God planned it to be: salvation through adversity into glory. There are no short cuts open to us, no paths that avoid the span of years that God gives us. Individually we will face the dependency of early years, the upheavals and trauma of puberty, the challenge to own faith, the final confrontation of death. Corporately we will face austerity, marginalisation and injustice. Jesus taught us as much. In all this patience will mark us as true followers of Jesus Christ.

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Notes to text

1.Alan Krieder, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016, p2.

2.Irenaeus discourses at length on this theme in *Against Heresies.* book 4, chaps 37-39.

3.Tertullian, *De Patientia*, 3.

4.Tertullian, *De Patientia*, 5.

5.Revelation 13:10, 14:12

6.M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Travelled: The New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth.* London: Arrow, 1990, revised edn.

The forgiveness of sins

by Tim Carter

The phrase 'forgiveness of sins' features in the Apostles' Creed as a convenient way of summarising the salvation made available to us through Jesus: it does not denote any particular theory of the atonement and so this part of the creed can be recited with integrity by Christians of any theological persuasion. Christians who say, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins,' might mean, 'I believe in the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement,' or, 'I believe in the justification of the ungodly by grace through faith alone,' or simply, 'Thank you, Jesus, for loving me enough to forgive my sins.' Most of us, I suspect, would associate the forgiveness of sins with the death of Jesus in our minds, but would the earliest Christians have interpreted the phrase in that context?

The origins of the Apostles' Creed are shrouded in mystery, but the phrase 'forgiveness of sins' is found in the *Epistle of the Apostles*, a text dating to the mid 2nd century, which purports to be an account of the apostles' experiences of Jesus. Chapter 5 records, 'Then when we had no bread except five loaves and two fish, he commanded the people to lie down, and their number amounted to five thousand besides children and women, whom we served with pieces of bread; they were filled, and there was some left over, and we carried away twelve baskets full of pieces, asking and saying, "What meaning is there in these five loaves?" They are a picture of our faith concerning the great Christianity that is in the Father, the ruler of the entire world, and in Jesus Christ our Saviour, and in the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, and in the holy church and in the forgiveness of sins'.

How did the early Christians interpret the forgiveness of sins?

So the 'forgiveness of sins' features in what may well be one of the earliest summaries of the Christian faith, but why should this particular phrase, as opposed to any other, be used to denote salvation? A clue lies in the fact that every 2nd century Christian writer who mentions the forgiveness of sins does so in the context of baptism. The *Epistle of the Apostles* refers to the baptism of life and the forgiveness

of sins (42); *The Shepherd of Hermas* mentions going down into the water and receiving the forgiveness of sins (*Mandate* 4.3.1); *The Epistle of Barnabas* speaks of Israel not accepting the baptism that brings the forgiveness of sins (11.1); Justin Martyr refers to receiving the forgiveness of past sins in water (*First Apology* 61), and also speaks of 'washing for the forgiveness of sins' (*First Apology* 61; *Dialogue* 44.4). Theophilus of Antioch talks of receiving forgiveness of sins through water and a bath of regeneration (2.16). Irenaeus mentions Peter calling Cornelius to be baptised for the forgiveness of sins (*Adversus Haereses* 3.12.17); he also refers to the baptism of the Marcosians for the forgiveness of sins (1.21.1), and speaks of receiving baptism for the forgiveness of sins in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (*Apostolic Preaching* 3). In the 2nd century there is thus a clear link between the forgiveness of sins and baptism.

It is likely that the fivefold summary of the Christian faith in the *Epistle of the Apostles* was based on baptismal catechesis or on the questions candidates were asked on the occasion of their baptism. In his *Apostolic Tradition*, Hippolytus records that baptismal candidates are asked whether they believe in God, the Father Almighty, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, the Holy Spirit, the holy church and the resurrection of the flesh (21.12 -18). Four of these questions cover the same ground as the *Epistle of the Apostles*, with 'the resurrection of the flesh' replacing 'the forgiveness of sins'. According to Hippolytus, the forgiveness of sins is mentioned in the prayer following baptism, where God is thanked for making the candidates 'worthy to obtain forgiveness of sins through the washing of regeneration' (22.1). Later in the third century, Cyprian records that baptismal candidates were asked if they believe in eternal life and forgiveness of sins through the holy church (*Epistle* 69.2). In the 4th century Jerome records the practice after baptism of asking, 'After confession of faith in the Trinity, do you believe in the Holy Church? Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins?' (*Dialogue with the Luciferians* 12). Here, the baptismal confession and interrogatory correspond exactly with the five-point summary found in the *Epistle of the Apostles*: so it appears that the phrase 'forgiveness of sins' may have found its way into summaries of the Christian faith as a result of the phrase being associated with baptism: this is highly appropriate, since the connection between the baptism and the forgiveness of sins goes all the way back to John the Baptist.

Baptism, repentance and faith

John preached 'a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) and in Luke's gospel, repentance and forgiveness are both hallmarks of Jesus' ministry. At the end of Luke's gospel, Jesus sends his disciples out to proclaim the forgiveness of sins in his name. Early manuscripts offer different readings of Luke 24:47: the earliest manuscripts refer to a proclamation of repentance *for* the forgiveness

of sins (NASB), which is the same message preached by John the Baptist: in this case, one might ask whether Jesus' death and resurrection have made any difference at all, and it may be that the wording of Luke 24:47 has been assimilated to Luke 3:3. According to most later manuscripts, the good news is the message that, following Jesus' death and resurrection, repentance *and* forgiveness of sins are now available in Jesus' name (ESV, NIV, NRSV). Acts 5:31 suggests that this is correct reading inasmuch as here Jesus gives repentance and the forgiveness of sins to his people, defined as all those who believe in his name (Acts 10:43-44; 11:15-18): for Luke, both repentance and forgiveness are divinely enabled gifts.

In Acts 2:38, Peter calls on everyone to repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. That's the model: forgiveness is given to those who repent and are baptised in the name of Jesus. When Simon Magus is baptised as an expression of faith but without repentance, he is severely rebuked (8:8-24); the Ephesian disciples, who only know John's baptism (of repentance), need to be baptised again in the name of Jesus (19:1-6). So for Luke, baptism needs to express both faith in the name of Jesus and repentance: thus both are necessary for people to be forgiven.

The separation of baptism from repentance

In the 2nd century *The Shepherd of Hermas* states that people are correct to teach that repentance is only possible on the occasion of one's baptism when one receives forgiveness for past sins; 'repentance' in this case is understood as the requirement that those who have been forgiven must turn from their life of sin. However, the Shepherd goes on to declare that both those who have recently believed in the Lord, and future believers, have received forgiveness for their past sins, but they have not received repentance; however, for those who were called some time ago the Lord has established a single opportunity for repentance, because he is aware of the weakness of the human heart and the extent of the devil's cunning (*Mandate* 4.3.1-5). Here 'repentance' comes to mean, not a turning away from sin expressed in baptism, but rather an opportunity to do penance in order to receive forgiveness for post-baptismal sin. *Hermas*' offer of an opportunity for post-baptismal penance was always controversial, but it originated in a pastoral concern: the forgiveness of sins had become so closely associated with baptism that people were anxious about whether they could be forgiven for post-baptismal sins. The response of *Hermas* was misguided, inasmuch as this revised interpretation of repentance suggests that it is possible—even necessary—for us to atone for our own sins in some way. In reality it is God alone who atones for sin, though we are inclined to forget this when we talk of making atonement for something that we ourselves have done. Luke's perception that repentance is a gift of God delivers us from the error of supposing that our repentance earns or secures God's forgiveness: everyone who takes that path ends up feeling desperately guilty. Luke assures us that, as people who have

been forgiven in Christ, repentance takes place as we are empowered by the Spirit to turn away from sin towards God

Infant baptism and original sin

Childhood in the 2nd century was frequently perceived as a period of innocence: Tertullian claimed that every aspect of the birth of pagan children was so steeped in idolatrous superstition that the devil trapped their souls at the very portal of their birth (*A Treatise on the Soul* 39). With Christian children, however, it was different: on the basis of 1 Cor. 7:14, Tertullian argued that when one of the parents is sanctified, the child is made holy on account of the parent's seed (39.4). Accordingly, Tertullian sought to deter Christian parents from bringing their children to be baptised: '…let them come when they are growing up, when they are learning, when they are being taught what they are coming to: let them be made Christians when they have become competent to know Christ. Why should innocent childhood come with haste to the remission of sins?' (*On baptism* 18.5).

Why indeed? The problem was that the infant mortality rate was high, and if death was perceived as being the result of sin, then maybe children were not so innocent after all. If a sick child could not be restored to health, parents would want their child baptised to provide some assurance of salvation, and baptism was always associated with the forgiveness of sins. Origen points out that people were asking about the practice of baptising little children for the forgiveness of sins: 'Whose sins are they? When did they sin?' His answer was that baptism provided cleansing from the pollution of childbirth (*Homily on Luke* 14). It was later in the third century that Cyprian argued that children who were baptised received forgiveness, not for their own sins, but for 'the sins of another'—Adam (*Epistle* 58.5). Thus it was from the strong association of the forgiveness of sins with baptism that the doctrine of original sin was born.

Forgiveness of sins in the New Testament

We have seen that, from the second century onwards, the phrase 'forgiveness of sins' was regularly used in connection with, and sometimes as a metonymy for, baptism. How does that square with New Testament usage? The earliest occurrence is found in Mark 1:4, where John the Baptist preaches 'a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (1:4). Luke also includes this in his summary of John's preaching (3:3), and says of John in Zechariah's prophecy that he would go before the Lord to give the knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins (1:77). At the end of Luke's gospel, Jesus sends the disciples out to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations (24:47). In Acts, Peter calls on the crowd at Pentecost to repent and be baptised for the forgiveness of sins (2:38) and tells the Council that God has exalted Jesus to his right hand

as Lord and Saviour to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins (5:31); in his sermon to Cornelius, he also declares that everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through his name (10:43).

Paul takes up the theme at Antioch: the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed through the risen Jesus (13:38); before Agrippa he recalls how the risen Lord commissioned him to open the eyes of the Gentiles, turn them from darkness to light and the power of Satan to God, so that they might receive the forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in him (26:18). Colossians 1:13-14 speaks of God delivering us from the domain of darkness and transferring us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Whereas a link between the forgiveness of sins and baptism is explicit in Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38 and implicit in Luke 1:77, none of the above references make an explicit link between the forgiveness of sins and the cross, so it is natural to see why the early church associated the 'forgiveness of sin's with baptism. The closest the New Testament comes to basing 'the forgiveness of sins' on the atoning death of Jesus is Matthew 26:28, where Jesus declares at the Last Supper that the blood of the covenant is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (26:28). The 'blood of the covenant' evokes Exodus 24:8, but there is no reference to forgiveness in this OT context. In the Levitical prescriptions found in Leviticus 4:1-35, sacrificial blood is poured out at the base of the altar to make atonement so that the sins of those who bring the sacrifice can be forgiven, and Matthew's choice of language invites his readers to interpret Jesus' death as a sin offering which effects atonement and so brings forgiveness. Thus the cup word in Matthew's gospel portrays the blood of Jesus as both the blood of the covenant and the lifeblood poured out on the altar to atone for and redeem the lives of many (Leviticus. 17:11; cf. Matthew 20:28).

Forgiveness of sins in Luke's gospel

For his part, Luke talks about forgiveness more than any other NT author, and in his gospel forgiveness is made available to those who repent (3:3), have faith (5:20; *cf* 7:50), forgive others (6:37; 11:4), or show love (7:47); in the parable of the prodigal son, told to counter those religious leaders who criticised Jesus welcoming sinners, God is portrayed as a father eager to forgive his errant son the worst behaviour on the flimsiest signs of repentance (15:11-32), a God whose forgiveness does not seem to require atonement effected by a redemptive sacrifice at all. Luke certainly omits the ransom saying found in Mark 10:45, but according to the most reliable manuscripts he does include Jesus' reference to the cup at the Last Supper being the new covenant in Jesus' blood (22:20-27).

Unique to Luke is Jesus' prayer from the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know

not what they do' (23:34). While this prayer is missing from the earliest and most reliable manuscripts (Papyrus Bodmer XIV-XV and Codex Vaticanus), it is found in Codex Sinaiticus and other later manuscripts, and the omission may plausibly be attributed to scribes who interpreted the ruined temple and the Jews' perpetual exclusion from the city following the Bar Kokhba revolt as evidence of God's judgment against his people, and omitted Jesus' prayer on the basis that it had apparently gone unanswered.

Jesus' prayer should therefore be accepted as original to Luke's gospel, and uniquely among the evangelists Luke stresses the innocence of Jesus in his passion narrative (23:4, 14-15, 22, 47). Thus Luke portrays Jesus the innocent victim of a gross miscarriage of justice, praying for the forgiveness of his torturers. After his crucifixion, the one who tells the disciples that the message of forgiveness must be proclaimed in his name is the one whose hands and feet remain damaged from the nails which fastened him to the cross (24:39-40). The message of forgiveness now comes in the name of one who has been crucified, one who has been in the place of the victim of injustice and who therefore knows the cost of forgiveness. The proclamation of forgiveness means that the Father, who has watched as his innocent Son was betrayed, mocked, beaten up, spat upon, whipped, humiliated and finally subjected to a slow, painful and shameful death, is indeed willing to answer the prayer of his dying Son and forgive the perpetrators.

This, then, is how Luke grounds the forgiveness of sins in the death of Jesus. His understanding of forgiveness is of a different order from the forgiveness we find in Matthew's gospel, where God, the wealthy creditor, cancels the sins of those who are indebted to him and provides, through the blood of his own Son, a sacrifice by means of which their sins can be forgiven. The divine forgiveness proclaimed at the end of Luke's gospel is not a forgiveness graciously extended by a superior God to his indebted creators: it is an altogether more radical notion of forgiveness, offered in the name of the Son of God who has been victimised and tortured by those whom he now forgives. Luke does not present us with a transactional, sacrificial understanding of atonement where God's wrath needs to be appeased by the sacrificial death of his Son before God can bring himself to forgive us; instead, he offers us a relational understanding of forgiveness, which is securely grounded in Jesus' death, because in the person of His Son, God freely chose to occupy the place of the innocent victim, and from that position of suffering and vulnerability, to extend his forgiveness to a sinful world. At least, that's what I think when I recite the creed and say, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins.'

Tim Carter is minister of Brighton Road Baptist Church, Horsham. His book, *The Forgiveness of Sins* ***is available from James Clarke, Cambridge, and is reviewed in this issue of bmj. Contact Tim on tim.carter@brbc-horsham.org.uk.***

He truly walks on water!

by Pieter J. Lalleman

In antiquity there were stories about gods who could walk on water, and about people who wanted to do so at all costs. The New Testament tells us that Jesus just does it, and in doing so, he shows that he is no ordinary person.

The Greeks and Romans worshipped numerous gods and of course there were all kinds of stories about them. Gods who had authority over water or over the sea were supposed to be able to walk on water. Thus it was said that the sea god Poseidon (or Neptune) could do so, and also his son Orion, who later was killed because of his misconduct (he was made into a constellation). Such stories were timeless and vague: no one had ever seen Poseidon or Orion. Poseidon also gave the power to walk on the sea to another of his sons, Euphemus,[1] and to the legendary hero Heracles (Hercules),[2] but ultimately there are only a few stories about this ability. Walking or riding on water was clearly seen as something that was impossible for humans: whoever was able to do it, had to be divine…

This is probably the very reason why some kings attempted it. In the East, the boundaries between royals and deities was sometimes rather thin, as we also see when the later Roman emperors were deified, at first after their death and later already during their lifetime. They wanted to be called 'Lord and God'. The first historical person who actually 'went over water' was king Xerxes of Persia—and the reliable Greek historian Herodotus speaks at length about this event.[3]

In the year 480BC, Xerxes wanted to cross the Hellespont or Dardanelles Strait between the current Turkey and Greece with an invading army. To achieve this he had a pontoon bridge built—but, as soon as this was done, a heavy storm wrecked the structure. Thereupon the king penalised the sea by whipping it and a new pontoon bridge was built. Ships were tied together and then anchored; cables were laid upon them and on top came a road built of planks. In this way it seemed as if Xerxes walked across the sea from Asia Minor into Europe with his army. Herodotus narrates that a spectator compared Xerxes to the Greek high god Zeus.

This story is also told by the later orator Dio Chrysostom (2nd century AD) who adds that, according to contemporaries, by walking on water Xerxes had delivered a divine performance, so that he was even compared with Poseidon.[4] Whoever could walk on

water was divine. Even if it was counterfeit in our eyes, according to the people of the time Xerxes displayed his divine powers in this way: the forces of nature were subject to him.

Alexander and Caligula

The story goes that part of the Pamphylian Sea withdrew in the face of Alexander the Great and his army, so that they could cross safely on dry ground.[5] Even the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus believed this story,[6] yet this drying up of the sea is not the same thing as the ability to walk on water, even if both cases involve a display of power over the depths. It is more a repetition or imitation of the miracle that allegedly took place during the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.

A great example of pretence is that of the Roman emperor Caligula, who walked across the Bay of Naples in 39AD. The historian Suetonius tells us that Caligula built a bridge of cargo ships between Baiae and Puteoli which was over three miles long. On the first day he put on a gold coat and rode back and forth over this bridge on horseback; on the second day he sat in a horse-drawn carriage that was followed by a company of soldiers.[7] In the 18th century, remnants of 'the bridge of Caligula' were still visible.

Several reasons are given as to why Caligula did this; one is that he wanted to outdo Xerxes. It is also said that the sea was calm on the days in question and that Caligula explained this by saying that the sea god Neptune (Poseidon) was afraid of him.[8] But Josephus writes that Caligula saw himself as a god and believed that he therefore had the divine right to walk on water.[9]

Jesus

So we see that there were legends about gods who could walk on water, and that some humans had the ambition to do the same—yet no human had ever done it without trickery. The story of Jesus' walking on the water is found in three of the four Gospels (Mark 6:45-52, Matthew 14:22-27, John 6:16-21). For the purposes of this article we can take these versions of the story together. It is a very short story, unadorned and without references to extrabiblical persons or to the Old Testament. The evangelists clearly show that Jesus' walking on the water is meant to help his disciples, not to focus attention on himself. It also seems to happen without advance planning.

It is striking that in the period after Christ the interest in walking on water increased considerably. The legendary hero and philosopher Pythagoras (yes, he of the theorem!) was suddenly credited with the ability to walk on water. Pythagoras had lived in the 6th century BC, but most stories about him were only written down much later. Hundreds of years after Christ, the anti-Christian philosopher Iamblichus suddenly credits Pythagoras with the ability to walk on water...[10]

We have already seen that the orator Dio Chrysostom praised king Xerxes. In another of his speeches, Dio tells us that many people are dreaming about their ability to walk on water.[11] The motif of dreams about walking on water is also found in a serious study on the interpretation of dreams by the 2nd century author Artemidorus of Daldis.[12] It looks likely that this interest arose after the life-story of Jesus of Nazareth had become known.

We can almost certainly see the influence of the stories about Jesus in the writings of the rationalistic critic and satirist Lucian of Samosata,13 who also lived in the 2nd century. Lucian wrote about Christians in a negative way. In *True History* he tells how his main character first sails on a sea of milk, which later turns into ordinary water. There he sees people running across the sea with feet made of cork. These people are thus called Cork-feet and they are on their way to their country of Corkistan. They speak Greek, like Lucian himself, and for a while they travel with him, until they have reached Corkistan.[14]

It is fairly evident that in this little story Lucian is ridiculing the idea of walking on water. He does this in such a way that it appears that he is specifically targeting the stories of the Christians. At the same time it is clear that he is unable to put forward any gentile person who has truly walked on water. Lucian's audience probably included Jews and Gentiles—in his lifetime the stories about Jesus were already fairly well known to Gentiles, even though there were as yet few copies of books of the Bible around. Lucian had probably also heard Christians talk about Jesus.

The influence of Christian stories is also visible in another book by Lucian, the biography of Peregrinus Proteus. Peregrinus had been a Christian for a while and had pretended to be a miracle worker: later he turned his back on the faith. One day during his time as a Christian he and a company of women were hit by a severe gale during a boat trip. Instead of attempting to be brave, all Peregrinus could do was to whine.[15] The way in which Lucian tells this story suggests to many that he makes a mockery of the story about the stilling of the storm by Jesus.

Zarathustra or Zoroaster, the legendary Persian wise man, also walked on water. But although he probably lived approximately at the time of Isaiah and Jeremiah, his life story was only written down hundreds of years after Christ, which means that the historical reliability of any story is very low. On the whole, it is striking that in the time after Christ we encounter more stories about dreams and stories about heroes from the past, but not about any real historical persons. Apparently the ability to walk on water was not given to many.

The Old Testament

The gospel stories about Jesus' walking on water are strikingly short—at the same time they are specific because they give us a place and time of action. Given what we know about the authors of Mark and John, it is likely that these evangelists assume that their

readers know at least part of the background that I have described above. By exploring this background, we can also throw light on the depth of the gospel stories.

However, we must not forget that the Old Testament tells us that the God of Israel is Lord over the water. Various miracles attributed to Jesus are the kinds of acts which were also performed by human beings in the Old Testament, such as feeding a large crowd (for that, God used Moses), healings and the resurrection of dead persons (as Elijah and Elisha did). But no-one in the Old Testament had the ability to walk on water except God himself. That is expressed in texts such as Job 9:8, which says about God:

He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.

And in a passage which mentions things that God can do but are impossible to humans, God asks Job:

Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? (38:16; see also Habakkuk 3:12-15).

These words, which were obviously known to the early Christian hearers and readers of the gospels, make clear to us that by walking on water Jesus shows unequivocally that he is God.

This explanation is confirmed when we look at a detail in Mark 6:48b, which states that Jesus wanted to pass by the ship with the disciples. At first sight this is an incomprehensible detail. Why does Jesus not approach his disciples? We understand this when we see that in this verse the same word for 'pass by' is used as in the Greek translation of Exodus 33:19,22; 34:6 and 1 Kings 19:11. This suggests that in the same way that the Lord God appeared to Moses and Elijah by passing them by, so Jesus intends to pass by his disciples. This is then not a strange element in the story. It is not Jesus' intention to remain unseen, but to appear as God had appeared. This element puts even more emphasis on his divinity. Unlike Xerxes and Caligula, Jesus is not after human admiration, nor does he need an artefact to walk on water. He simply makes his abilities available in service of his disciples and of his church.

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Notes to text

1. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 1.179-184
2. Seneca, *Hercules Furens*, 319-324
3. Herodotus, Book 7.33-34, 45, 53-56
4. Dio Chrysostom, *Third Oration*, 29-31
5. Menander, fragment 924 K
6. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, II.16.5 = 2.347-348

7. Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 4.19.1

8. Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 59.17

9. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, XIX.1.1 = 19.6

10. Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, 91.

11. Dio Chrysostom, Oration 11, 129

12. Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica*, 3.16

13. *cf* Orestis Karavas, 'Luciano, los Cristianos y Jesucristo' in Francesca Mestre and Pilar Gómez (eds), *Lucian of Samosata, Greek Writer and Roman Citizen.* Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2010, pp115-120.

14. Lucian, *True History*, 2.4

15. Lucian, *Death of Peregrinus*, 42-44.

For further reading

B. Blackburn, '"Miracle working qe>ioi a)ndrej" in Hellenism (and Hellenistic Judaism)', in David Wenham & Craig Blomberg (eds), *Gospel Perspectives* Vol 6: *The Miracles of Jesus*. Sheffield: JSOT, 1986, pp185-218.

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A 100-year old jewel

by Fred Stainthorpe

It is a sobering thought that the contents of all secondhand bookshops are volumes that people have discarded. However, readers often want other people's rejects and sometimes one comes across a real gem.

This happened to me some years ago. I was about to leave the Cinema bookshop in Hay-on-Wye when I noticed *The Centenary Celebrations of the BMS*. Its flyleaf read '12.5p' so, quick to snap up a bargain, I took it to the counter. The attendant turned over another leaf and said 'That will be £5.00'. However, having put my hand to the plough, I did not look back.

The contents were well worth the outlay, for the book contained all the sermons and

addresses given at the special meetings held at Nottingham, Leicester, Kettering, London and Northampton during 1892-93, the Centenary of the BMS.

The numerous 'off-the cuff' remarks indicate that a number of hearers must have been engaged in taking down the speakers' words in some form of shorthand. This is quite remarkable in the days before tape recorders. Another feature is the number of prominent laymen who spoke as dedicated and informed supporters of foreign mission. It might be difficult to find many such people nowadays.

Comparisons with 1992

Reading such a book inevitably draws comparisons with the 1992 Bicentenary Celebrations. The first is that people 100 years ago had to be good listeners. Every meeting called on two or three speakers who obeyed the injunction of Isaiah 58:1 to 'speak without restraint'. Prominent names such as F.B. Meyer, A.T. Pierson and Alexander Maclaren figure in the list and many preachers from other denominations came to bring a word from the Lord. They all gave good measure, pressed down and running over! The occasional flash of humour comes through in their messages but they were intent on stretching their hearers' minds as well as stirring their hearts. Biblical, theological and historical themes formed the basis of their discourses. No fewer than seven speakers addressed (at length) the 'Missionaries Meeting' at Kettering. Six female speakers were present at their Meeting in London while the Young People's Sermon, which assumed a greater knowledge of the Bible than many in a present congregation would possess, would have taxed the endurance and thinking capacity of many of those present.

Inevitably the speakers looked back to the beginning of the Society. They reworked Isaiah 54:2 in many ways, commenting on the fact that 100 years previously there had been effectively no Protestant missions anywhere. Now they were rejoicing at the growth of the Church in India, West Indies and more recently China and Africa. The deaths of some of the Congo pioneers were sufficiently fresh in their minds to form the basis of many an appeal to their hearers.

Their messages contained many repetitions, but each retains its individuality. Common to them all is the theme of thanksgiving to God for His blessings on the work (not 'glorying' as some said) and an increasing appreciation both of the faith of Carey and his colleagues and of their qualities as people. The Centenary was more of a novelty for them than for us. We look back to 1892 as a remarkable stage in the history of missions but they saw 1792 as a beginning. Mission had resumed then.

Workers in all the BMS fields described vividly how the gospel had transformed the lives of many people. It had brought people to the knowledge of God and in so doing had challenged the ancient faiths of India and China. The barriers of caste and many other

harmful practices were beginning to crumble. In India, the gospel had abolished *suttee*, the ritual immolation of widows, and had begun the great work of education. It had addressed the paganism of Africa and had helped to sweep away slavery in the West Indies. Ministers such as J.G. Greenhough of Leicester, who had visited these places, added their testimony and Jackson Fuller, the only black speaker, made his original contribution. Things were really moving.

Speakers noted the way in which mission had developed. The necessary learning of 'native' languages had led to the translation of the scriptures in many. In turn this had given rise to literacy and education. The compassion of Christ had led to the giving of medical help at first in an *ad hoc* way but later in more developed fashion. In India especially, women missionaries had been enabled to enter the Zenanas (women's living quarters) and so had made contact with women to whom male missionaries would never have been allowed to talk (p389 *passim*). Throughout it all, the indigenisation of the church was proceeding—although not as rapidly as some speakers would have liked.

Of course the speakers' outlook evidenced late Victorian optimism and culture. 'Bringing these men into contact with our Western life raises them to a level to which they could not otherwise be so easily raised' said the Rev T.M. Morris. Nowadays we would not necessarily endorse all his opinions about our way of life. 'Fetishism is dead!' declared Hugh Price Hughes, 'Mohammedanism is dead, Brahminism is dead, Confucianism is dead!' Looking at the resurgence of these religions today we might not have shared his optimism. The speakers' understanding of scripture was profound but their political and historical views were provisional and fallible, as are ours.

Nevertheless, the mood of expansionism was strong. The Society was appealing for a special fund for £100,000 but it also wished to send out 100 new missionaries and to lift its annual income to £100,000. Several speakers alluded to this but rightly placed the emphasis on people rather than on pounds. 'An awakened church will be a liberal one' said one. William Landels remarked, 'As regards the proposal, we have no fault to find with it as far as it goes but...we have no right to limit our efforts even to that. We may aim at a minimum but no maximum can properly be named'.

True to form, Robert Arthington, that gadfly of the churches, wrote to the Evangelical Missionary Alliance in London, offering £30,000 if the Centenary Celebrations were made 'the occasion of a great extension of Gospel diffusion in the dark places of the earth'. So far as I know, nobody has made a similar offer this time!

In some places, great Ladies Meetings were held. Their entry into the missionary force in the 19th century had made it possible, in India at least, for the Society to broaden its work. 'Up to that point', said W.J. Price, 'the missionary enterprise was pretty much like a boat with one oar'. The missionaries were reaching the male part of the population but the female portion remained, to a large extent, untouched. 'The Zenana

Mission, adapting its work to Indian social life through educational and medical work, has done much to emancipate women not only there but elsewhere'.

Speakers were very much aware of unreached peoples. R.H. Lovell of Bromley showed an illustrated hand card representing the world's population. Three-fifths of those shown had never heard the gospel. He encouraged people to put such a card in their hands whenever they prayed 'Thy Kingdom come' and would have endorsed Hugh Price Hughes' words 'The very first duty of the Christian Church, I say, is to be missionary. Everything must give way to that; that must be done whatever else is left undone'.

Appeal inevitably followed thanksgiving and exposition. Speakers called for 100 new missionaries to enter the lands where millions had never heard the gospel. They pleaded with parents to 'release' their daughters for overseas work; an interesting insight in to contemporary parental control. They called for simpler living and for greater, even sacrificial, giving and for a greater volume of supporting prayer.

We naturally compare their celebration with that of 1992. They had no multimedia events, no roadshow or home-grown musicians. No leaders of national churches visited them to bring greetings, nor would they have dreamed of meeting in Westminster Abbey for a service of thanksgiving; and I do not know of many Centenary souvenirs. Six speakers addressed their Young People's Meeting and each of them gave good measure. The only light relief came from the Stockwell Orphans Choir whose handbell ringers were listened to 'with great delight' and the Bloomsbury Chapel Gymnastic Club also deeply interested the young people 'with a display of wonderful feats'.

In one respect, however, they seem to have surpassed us. Whenever speakers mentioned the Centenary Fund, they spoke as runners breasting the tape. People in the churches had contributed valiantly to it and they had almost reached their target. The back of the book, 232 pages in total, contains detailed lists of personal and church contributions which make interesting and challenging reading. Missionary personnel stand out in their generosity and the final total showed a surplus of £15,000! This compares favourably with the appeal made in 1992 which fell far short of its target.

On 2 October 1892, many of the churches in the denomination made a special offering for the fund. It would be a splendid act of fellowship and commitment if every church in BUGB could give the whole of their offering on the first Sunday of October 2018 to finish the fund!

This then was the jewel I unearthed for £5.00. It is impossible to give an adequate account of its contents but look out for it in secondhand bookshops. It will be worth any price you might pay.

Fred Stainthorpe is now retired from Baptist ministry but can be contacted on fredandjohn1@hotmail.com.

A Declaration of Principle

by John Smuts

Like many others I read up on the Reformation for last year's events. Digging up church history notes on how much Luther loved beer. Working through new books on the subject. Even listening to lectures online. As we pass the 500th anniversary since Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, it is only natural to look again at the past to view the present with more clarity.

One thing that struck me has been how much the BUGB Declaration of Principle is a reflection of *sola scriptura*. As any good historian will tell you when examining past documents it is important to explain what is unusual; to consider what is not there as well as what is on the page. Look at the first point of the Declaration.

The Basis of the Baptist Union is:

1. That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws.

Zwingli could have drafted that himself! In 1522 he wrote *The Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God* where he argued that Christ ruled the church, through his word, not through the Pope. (Although, judging from the analogies he uses, he was more of a wine than a beer man himself.[1])

Of course, in the context of the Reformation, the main contestant for authority was the church. However, in 1873, when the Baptist Union first introduced the Declaration of Principle, other appeals to authority were widely recognised. Along with the ecumenical creeds and the tradition of the church, 19th century believers also looked to reason and experience in their pursuit of the truth.

Hence the Declaration of Principle is very significant in what it does not mention. It is the Lord Jesus, 'as revealed in the Holy Scriptures', who is the 'sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice'. Wow! I hadn't noticed before how strongly worded it is.

Baptists tend to emphasise the freedom of the local church in interpreting the scriptures without paying much attention to the limits the first part of the statement imposes. The aim of the church meeting is to discern the mind of Christ, as revealed in the holy scriptures.

We have freedom to interpret them as we feel the Holy Spirit guides us but in so doing we cannot appeal to reason, experience, tradition or any number of other authorities.

The more I think about that the more I wonder how many of our churches are breaking the Declaration of Principle on a regular basis? Including the church where I am pastor! While the scriptures give no specific commands as to the colour of the carpet or how much to spend on the new projector we frequently discuss matters directly addressed in the Bible where 99% of the discussion concerns what society thinks of the issue, what science tells us, or what the latest social research demonstrates.

Now, please don't misunderstand me. I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't be engaging with all those other sources—it is the weight we give such things in our church meetings that is the key. The Reformers did not reject general revelation or the use of reason either. *Sola scriptura* simply stated that the authority of the Bible trumped them all.

And I'm quite surprised by how *sola scriptura* the Declaration of Principle is.

John Smuts is pastor at Rayners Lane BC and can be contacted on pastor@rlbc.org.uk.

Note to text

Martin Luther was famous for his passion for beer—he loved local beer, boasted of his wife's brewing skills, and launched a movement that helped promote hops. One of his most famous quotes shows how much he loved to drink beer and talk about the gospel: 'I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And then, while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my Philip [Melanchthon] and my Amsdorf [Nicholaus von], the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing. The Word did it all'. Zwingli, on the other hand, compared the Word of God to a good strong wine in his book. Hence it appears that Zwingli was more of a wine than a beer man!

Reviews and articles in bmj

We welcome the contributions of readers to the pages of *bmj.* If you think you could write book reviews for others to enjoy, get in touch with Mike Peat and let him know your areas of interest: mike.peat@bristol.ac.uk.

The editor is always willing to look at articles—maybe you can draw from a dissertation or a piece of research which needs a wider readership? Or you may just wish to comment on ministry practice, or offer a theological reflection of some sort. All we ask is that it be of interest to working Baptist ministers.

Articles should be less than 3000 words, with endnotes not footnotes. Please do not use formatting because it will have to be removed prior to publication. Email the article as a Word document to revsal96@aol.com, and the editor will consider it.

Reviews

Editor: Michael Peat

What is the Bible? how an ancient library of poems, letters, and stories can transform the way you think and feel about everything

by Rob Bell
William Collins, 2017
Reviewer: Robert Brown

Bell's 10th published work seeks to provide lay Christians with his guide to what the Bible 'is' and how to read it, based on his assumption that there are significant numbers of believers who have got these things wrong. Though not stated explicitly, one can see how the book is targeted at American Evangelicalism. It is split into two parts: the first contains Bell's main thoughts and the second is a pre-emptive Q&A. Both lack footnotes and passage references. It is written in Bell's typical sermon style, which some may love while others may find a hindrance.

The main thesis of the book is that the best way to read a biblical passage is to read it within its historical context. A key example that Bell gives is that one should read the gospels with the recognition that Jesus was a 1st century Jew. Bell describes his context-based hermeneutics as 'a whole new way' of reading, which is an uncomfortable claim. It may be new to those who have never thought to read a passage in context, but it certainly is not new to those who have ever engaged with a commentary or studied a modern exegesis textbook. Bell's prioritisation of context leads to the (theoretical) simplifying of an 'application' type stage in biblical exposition. In Bell's perspective, preachers do not need to engage in complex gymnastics to bring a passage into the modern world, but rather simply need to read it as a powerful text within its own historical context, which in turn will highlight insights for today.

One may have noticed that Bell's main thesis, in my opinion, is not actually about what the Bible is, but rather about how one should read it. What does he say about the Bible's nature, then? Bell makes the point regularly that the Bible was written by human beings and is thus a library of ancient human documents connected with the trajectories of early Christianity and ancient Judaism. However, the key question, which Bell unfortunately fails to address (despite chapters entitled: *Is it the Word of God?* and, *Is it inspired?),* is: was the Bible in some way composed by God? The absence of an answer means, in my opinion, that he fails properly to answer his own title question. One cannot help but wonder if Bell deliberately avoided stating that he thinks the Bible was not composed in some way by God to mitigate an aggressive response like that he received from his earlier *Love Wins*.

The value of this book depends on the beliefs the reader holds about the Bible; those with more conservative views will probably find themselves most challenged by it, and those who are new to the topic will be most educated by it. Ultimately, the book does make good (though not new) points.

Re-imagining the Bible for today

by Anna-Claar Thomasson-Rosingh, Sigrid Coenradie & Bert Dicou
SCM press, 2017
Reviewer: Robert Draycott

This is a book that 'does what it says on the tin'. I have just preached on Bible Sunday and reading this book has directed my thoughts and also helped me face the challenge of leading a series of Bible studies. When speaking of the Bible in church settings we face the double challenge of helping those who do read to read with understanding and insight, while reassuring

those who are weekly 'hearers of the word' that they are not unworthy or defective Christians.

I would heartily recommend this book, but to whom? To those Christians to whom the Bible is a closed book because they are aware that 'homophobia, misogyny, slavery and even apartheid are being…or have been defended with the Bible'. I would also recommend it to those Christians to whom the Bible is an open book full of answers, full of certainties. I too would agree with Yvonne Sherwood, who is quoted as saying 'Our modern sense of the Bible is so limited, so closed, so pious, that it will inevitably be blasphemed against from within the Bible itself".

The authors give four reasons to start reading the Bible: first, 'it is delightful'. Secondly, 'the Bible was and is a defining factor in our culture'. Thirdly, 'the Bible redefines the sacred'. Fourthly, 'the Bible invites questions'. One of the authors then explains that she believes 'that the Bible is the cultural expression that is most like a Celtic "thin place". It is the one that is easiest to use by the Spirit for our enjoyment, growth in wisdom, challenge and spiritual maturity'.

The central section of the book has five chapters entitled *Sacrifice, Vulnerability, The Planet, Economy*, and *Ruth*. I found this last chapter very helpful when preparing a Bible study on that story, 'from a totally different culture and from a bygone era (which may become) significant if we allow the story to speak to us in our own context'.

The chapter on *Sacrifice* was thought-provoking, dealing firstly with the sacrifice of Isaac, and then that of Jesus. This chapter concludes with a section on cinematic and literary approaches to the sacrifice of Jesus. This is one example of how the 're-imagining' of the title operates in a manner that relates to contemporary issues with which Christians are engaging as part of their mission to communicate– both through the Bible, and sometimes despite what it is claimed to 'say' by people who should know better.

The forgiveness of sins
by Tim Carter
Cambridge: James Clarke, 2016
Reviewer: Simon Woodman

This book begins with the observation that (despite the hymn's assertion 'He died that we might be forgiven'), the phrase 'the forgiveness of sins' is only explicitly tied to the death of Jesus in Matthew's account of the Last Supper. Clearly, there is more to the forgiveness of sins than a theology of the cross, as the Lord's Prayer's correlation of 'our' forgiveness with the forgiveness we offer to others might indicate. Tim Carter offers a meticulous and sensitive engagement with this potentially pastorally fraught subject, recognising that any talk of forgiveness cuts to the heart of the human condition of sinfulness, affecting deeply both those who have sinned, and those who have been sinned against.

Grounding his analysis in a thorough engagement with the Jewish background to the New Testament, Carter shows that in the Jewish tradition it is predominantly God who forgives, with human responsibility in the face of sin being to right wrongs according to the principle of *lex talionis*. Atonement is similarly seen as something which has its origins within God, calling forth a human response, but beginning with God's compassion and faithfulness.

The human activities of prayer and sacrifice are the expression of heartfelt repentance, which is received by God and met with forgiveness; while the tradition of interceding for forgiveness is seen to be rooted in the prayer of an individual (Moses) that God would forgive the many (Israel). The response of God to the sins of the nation is cast in terms of God's sovereignty to forgive, with the stories of exile exploring Israel's journey from God's

judgement to God's forgiveness.

Carter's reading of 'the forgiveness of sins' in the New Testament is offered against a background of the Roman occupation of Israel, with the parallels between 'occupied Israel' and 'exiled Israel' providing a theological context for Jesus' offering of forgiving of sinners. Those who had 'sinned' were popularly blamed for the plight of the nation under Rome, which meant that Jesus' forgiveness of tax collectors and prostitutes relocated the blame away from the vulnerable and outsiders in society, placing it instead firmly at the door of those who had colluded with Rome: the chief priests and Jewish authorities. The execution of Jesus is thus the unmasking of the real 'sinners' as being those who put him to death.

The atoning effect of Jesus' death is then examined, as Carter explores the link between the shed blood of Jesus on the cross, and the Eucharistic practice of the early church to drink wine symbolising blood shed 'for the forgiveness of sins'. Carter suggests that Christ's blood affects atonement primarily because it represents life, and can therefore be used by God to sanctify, cleanse, and forgive. Christological atonement is thus a creative appropriation of the Jewish ban on blood consumption, as the lifeblood of Jesus is poured out for the life of the world, and symbolically consumed in an act of liturgical appropriation.

The significance of the cross for forgiveness of sins is seen to be that of God becoming a victim of injustice, and then offering forgiveness from a position of weakness and vulnerability. This opens the way for those who would follow the example of Christ to die to sin, receiving forgiveness and rising to new life through the waters of baptism. Carter concludes by reasserting that forgiveness is the sovereign prerogative of God, who offers forgiveness to sinners through the life and ministry of Jesus. The task before those who would follow the path of Jesus is therefore that of freely offering the forgiveness that they have already received, through repentance and Baptism.

Martin Luther: Catholic dissident
by Peter Stanford
Hodder & Stoughton, 2017
Reviewer: Michael Bochenski

The beginning of what has become known as the Reformation is often traced back to October 1517, and to Wittenberg, Saxony, when a Catholic priest Martin Luther sent a plea for reform of the church, the Ninety-Five Theses, to the then Archbishop of Mainz. 500 years later in 2017, themed tours around Germany, seminars, lectures and papers, and a range of books about Luther's life and times, theology and writings, all became part of 'Reformation 500'. Peter Stanford's impeccably researched and beautifully written Martin Luther: Catholic Dissident proves to be a very fine example indeed of a response to this anniversary. He writes, '...for sheer selfless courage, Luther is impossible to outdo, and cannot but be admired.'

In this very fine book Stanford reflects on Luther's character, theology and times. In the first section—Friar Martin—we are introduced to Luther's mood swings, his religious doubts and discoveries, his shock at observing at first hand the Rome of his day, his practice of reading the Bible cover to cover twice a year, and his conversion inspired by the Epistle to the Romans. Before this he lived, writes Stanford, '...as if lightning were about to strike him at the next moment'. The transformation of this troubled, deeply anxious monk into the leader of a movement that changed both Europe and the popular face of Christianity is powerfully captured in these pages.

In the book's second section—The honourable, our dear respected Dr Martin Luther—his

survival against all the odds is outlined in ways that read at times like a thriller novel. We read here of his protection by Elector Friedrich—'truly a gift from God'. Of his courage when summoned—as 'the Saxon Hus' by the combined powers of Pope and Emperor to answer charges of rebellion and heresy. Of his struggles with *Anfechtung*—evil's onslaughts on the soul. Of his indefatigable work translating the Bible into popular German: 'For the entire Church is full of books while the Bible is neglected'. Of his affirmation of the humanity of the priest and of the right to marry: 'What nonsense it is that marriage, which is a natural right, should be forbidden and condemned. It is the same thing as if eating, drinking, sleeping were forbidden.' And of the growing regionalisation and nationalisation of Christianity his reforms led to, as the principles of *cuius regio cuius religio* changed a continent and religious landscape. All come alive in these pages as we witness Luther become the leader of what was indeed ' …one of the first modern mass movements'.

The book's third section—'Pope' Martin—unpacks Luther's role as an international leader characterised by '...a combination of courage and caution, principle and pragmatism'. This is, however, no hagiography. Luther's warts are in evidence here too—a fickle turning on the peasants when, encouraged in part by his writings, they found themselves in revolt; a spineless condoning of Philip of Hesse's bigamy, and his, at times, horrific anti-Semitism, for example.

The measure of this outstanding book, however, is how well Luther's flaws and strengths are blended in its pages to produce a truly satisfying biography. His love for his wife Katharine von Bora shines through: 'I never advise anyone to delay (getting married) even for a day'. As do his anxieties about his children or the mixed delights of his Table Talk as afficionados hang on his every word. All combine, in Stanford's skilled hands, to create a helpfully balanced picture of the man.

Toward the close of his book, Stanford reflects on the limitations of Luther's vision and achievements and, in particular, the way that his reforms can be said, ironically, to have begun what has become a relentless trend towards the privatisation of religion. As a practising Catholic, Stanford also notes the powerful impact for good Luther has had on his own religious tradition—albeit over centuries and not months: '...today's Catholicism has finally caught up with its most significant critic, borrowing his words to produce some of its own most inspiring recent statements—notably about the Church being the people of God and the priesthood of believers'.

As he concludes: '[Luther is] a man for his age, but also for every age since, right up to the current day.' It was going to take an excellent book indeed to move me from Bainton's *Here I Stand* as my 'go to' book on Luther. Stanford succeeded!

Challenge and change: English Baptist life in the eighteenth century

edited by Peter Morden & Stephen Copson

Baptist Historical Society, 2017

Reviewer: Ruth Gouldbourne

As part of a process of building on previous accounts of Baptist history and development in England, the Baptist Historical Society has been producing new century volumes. These are not simply updates of the previous century histories, but new books drawing in new writers and new forms of scholarship. This latest, tackling the 18th century, is a collection of essays which offer both overview and detailed consideration of a series of topics.

The first three essays, examining in turn General Baptists, Particular Baptists and New Connexion Baptists through the long 18th

century, offer a helpful broad sweep account which gives the reader a secure understanding of the strands of Baptist life, the issues they were facing and the resources with which they met demands and opportunities. The final essay, examining relationships with other Christian communities similarly takes a wide view and places Baptists in their wider context.

The other essays take topics that might be considered more 'internal', examining and exploring significant aspects of life within the different Baptist strands, and indeed, within individual congregations. Questions of education, culture, forms of occupation, involvement in politics and domestic life are at the heart of these essays, as they seek to help the reader engage with the close-up experience of being Baptist in the 18th century.

As is inevitable when a group of different authors working alone are researching within a limited set of archives, there are moments of repetition, when the same stories are told in different essays; but since they are different essays, the accounts are approached from different points of view, and differing insights are drawn from them. The repetitions can make reading the book from beginning to end feel rather frustrating—but then, this is not a book that is designed to be read from beginning to end as a continuous narrative. Rather, it is like looking in different windows to see lives far removed from ours and yet familiar; and seeing the same things but from different angles.

There are times when the essays assume a certain background knowledge of the long 18th century; I would have appreciated a short introductory essay telling some of the wider history of England at that point: politics, wars, economic position. But the collection definitely succeeds in provoking the desire to know more, and explore more deeply.

Gathering disciples: essays in honour of Christopher J. Ellis

edited by Myra Blyth & Andy Goodliff
Pickwick Publications, 2017
Reviewer: Karen Smith

Many readers will be aware of Chris Ellis' ministry as a pastor or Baptist College Principal, as Baptist Union President or as a contributor to the Baptist World Alliance. For many years, of course, Ellis has encouraged us to think about worship. His book, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Free Church Worship* (2004), as well as his work on *Gathering for Worship*, edited with Myra Blyth and his work as one of a group of editors on *Patterns and Prayers for Worship* (1991), will be part of a lasting legacy to Baptist worship in Britain and beyond. While acknowledging Ellis' emphasis on liturgical theology, this collection of 13 essays gives us the opportunity to celebrate another aspect of his work and ministry as a composer of over 40 hymns.

Recognising that Baptist theology over the years has often been 'sung' in congregational worship, the theme for each chapter is provided by a hymn written by Ellis. This structure allows for a wide-ranging discussion of themes including: Baptist theology, worship, discipleship, doctrine, the sacraments, ecumenism and mission. Contributors approached the chapters in different ways. Some simply analysed the hymn. Others offered a personal reflection, and still others a wider discussion of the theological theme before turning to a discussion of the hymn. This varied approach to the interaction with the themes is in itself a reminder that one of the treasured aspects of hymn singing among Baptists is that it allows for both personal experience and corporate expression of shared faith.

These essays are a fine tribute to Chris Ellis and serve as a reminder to those who say that

'Baptists have not done very much theology', that perhaps they need to listen to how they have sung their faith.

Advancing practical theology: critical discipleship for disturbing times

by Eric Stoddart
SCM Press, 2014
Reviewer: Ronnie Hall

There are all kinds of different theologies out there. We talk about biblical theology, pastoral theology, systematic theology among others you can think of. For us as pastors, chaplains, educators we have a particular interest in practical theology. For the purposes of the review practical theology has elements of what we would call black, liberation, pastoral, political, feminist theologies.

The book itself builds on the works of pastoral theology written in the past 50 years. What is interesting is the style of the book itself and how the story it tells gives a manifesto for practical theology to inform and challenge future developments in Christian living. The book is first of all autobiographical. The life story being told is an interesting one and Eric tells it with great humour. What does it mean for someone to be a Scottish Baptist minister, to go to South Africa and see marginalisation, to leave the Baptist Church and eventually be a Scottish Episcopalian? The story is relevant because the inner dialogue that happens leads the author to know that he is first and foremost a practical theologian, meaning that theology is something that is done (whatever that means, that is part of the exploration) but can also be subject to the same intellectual criticism as, say, biblical theology.

The autobiographical element encourages all of us to think about our own faith convictions, where have we been theologically? Where are we going? Have I changed over the years? Why or why not? What difference does it make?

The book is also a case study. One of these is particularly relevant as it describes the language and theological thought process of the Scottish independence referendum. That may sound quite out of date now but if you insert 'Brexit' into some of that discussion it gives a wonderful theological nuance to a very live topic. It made me think a little bit more carefully about the language that is used around Brexit and how that language does have theological implications. It is very interesting.

I have no wish to spoil Eric's manifesto for what a radical practical theology will look like, I leave that for you to find out for yourself. I will only say that this theology is as 'real' as any other and highly relevant to us. Pastors may not think of ourselves as theologians but we are. We think about God and put that into practice.

This book is intended for anyone with an interest in theology that is defined as 'doing something'. It will be of particular benefit for students, especially those embarking on degrees with a strong practical theology element, like the DMin or DPT offered by a confederation of universities. It is well worth a read.

The spy, the rat and the bed of nails

by Mark Roques
Thinking Faith, 2017
Reviewer: Ronnie Hall

The UK is changing rapidly: technology savvy, very tolerant of some things and increasingly intolerant of other things. It is a bewildering place to live at times but we still have the responsibility for sharing our faith. The communication of the Christian message is part and parcel of who a Christian is and it is still important for evangelical Christians. But how do we communicate that message?

There are any number of books on communication theory, apologetic techniques,

how to read a society or culture. Very few of these books can be described as fun. This book is fun. It is a very easy read. I do confess that I found the writing style a bit grating. There were far too many daft references to James Bond for my taste and the humour wore me down. But for that it was an effective communication because I am now thinking about references to James Bond in my day to day work in the prison as a way of telling Bible stories. So whilst it grated, it worked. But the grating was probably not the author's intent.

The book is not an academic textbook but a series of stories around suggestions of how we can talk to people. The author makes a very good point that Jesus' technique in the parables is to start with a question, then tell a story and then finish with a question. With lots of suggestions the author simply says we can do the same. He points the reader towards sources of information and subtly (through the inevitable James Bond parallels) makes the reader think of examples from their own experience.

It was almost shocking to think that the examples that Jesus used in His stories may not be true. For example was someone really walking about with a plank in their eye like a character from Monty Python? There are stories all around and while they may be post-truth they can still point towards the one who is the source of all truth.

I really enjoyed this book and I will refer to it often. I work in a secular environment and it was good to read something that was useful in my work. I will also say that while all the James Bond references were annoying, the critique of Hobbes throughout was very well thought out and a great reference for why things are the way they are today. Highly recommended.

Musings of a clergy child: growing into a faith of my own

by Nell Goddard
Bible Reading Fellowship, 2017
Reviewer: Bob Little

With not one but both parents serving as C of E clergy for the past 20 years or so, Nell Goddard has ample 'clergy child' qualifications. She is one of many who, over the years, have had no choice about their formative years being intimately entwined with 'the church', with its myriad joys, sorrows, innocent and intended affronts—all of which are heavily tempered with ecclesiastical life's Byzantine politics.

On a personal note, being a 'child of the manse' (rather than the vicarage), I've had several similar experiences to the ones set out in Nell's book—and experienced many of the same feelings and frustrations. In that context, the meditation entitled *Clergy child's lament*, which begins the book, shows a remarkable restraint and maturity.

Similarly, the *Introduction* which follows this meditation, not only explains the structure and rationale of this slim volume but also sets out a viable philosophy from someone who's learned lessons from experience and has concluded that, 'I would rather have had the inconveniences, the pain, the difficult memories, the frustrations and the scars of growing up in ministry than to not have been there at all...I hope and pray that you will find in this book an encouragement to let your faith grow ever deeper as you journey with the God who has called you by name and made you his own, no matter what'.

The book is based on Nell's blog. So, it isn't 'continuous prose', nor is it necessarily intended to be read in a traditional, linear way. There are 20 *Tips for Clergy Children*, followed by six *Letters* and 20 *Musings*. These cover such things as dealing with parishioners who, unthinkingly, treat your home and

possessions as theirs; coping with personal comments about your love-life, and how to respond when the church has hurt you.

Not everyone with a church-focused upbringing will agree with Nell's viewpoint or conclusions but, laudably, she approaches her subject with openness and honesty. She makes transparently genuine attempts to offer wise and helpful insights. Moreover, Nell makes a coherent case for clergy children finding meaning and fulfilment in life by remaining within the church. Many clergy-parents would hope that their children reach the same conclusions. This book might help them.

A unicorn dies: a novel of mystery and ideas

by Paul S Fiddes
Oxford: Firedint Publishing, 2018
Reviewer: Richard Kidd

It is not everyday that one of our longer-serving Baptist ministers publishes a novel, and certainly not one with an international theological reputation like that of Paul Fiddes. *A Unicorn Dies* is, by any measure, a significant achievement. One Amazon reviewer made a comparison to the dynamic plot of a Dan Brown, and there is truth in that—but without all the cynical sell-out to the blockbuster marketplace. It is not short on sexual intrigue and innuendo, and there is a fair bit of violence, but the sex is not merely sleazy and the violence is not merely gratuitous. Both the sex and the violence are measured by the demands of the plot— which is very engaging. I have never quite understood how a novelist can hold us in suspense over the solution to a murder-mystery right up to the last couple of pages; while it still holds true that, when you then look back, it is quite clear that one with a nose for clues like Conan Doyle could have seen what was happening all along.

This novel is worth reading, however, not just for the shades of Dan Brown in the capacity of its plot to keep us reading but, equally significantly, for the shades of Umberto Eco, which mean that the reader is never far from fascinating material culled over years of skilled theological and philosophical research and reflection. When, I ask myself, did I last read a novel and learn so much about the philosophy of a thinker like René Girard, layered into the text in such a way that, not only did I understand it, but I also learnt hugely more about its real importance for today's gratuitously violent world. I suppose the answer might be, in the novels of Iris Murdoch—although I know she went to some lengths to deny this.

For the keen theologian, however, there is also a feast of learning embedded in Paul Fiddes' wide-ranging research into the long history of the diverse mythologies that have evolved around the image of the unicorn. Throughout the novel I was gaining fresh insight into the tortuous complexity of the crucially important role unicorn mythologies have played in shaping our understandings of Christ in the western world, and especially in competing approaches to the Christian concept of atonement. What a fascinating and creative way to explore where we as Christian thinkers locate ourselves on the lengthy spectrum of interpretations concerning Christ's sacrificial and atoning love—all the way from Augustine to Abelard.

You will gather that I enjoyed reading this novel. It held me from start to finish, and I will read it again, if only to think some more about Girard, violence and Christian interpretations of atonement. I am not sure whether this novel will ever sell at quite the rate of the next Dan Brown, or in the numbers of an Umberto Eco or an Iris Murdoch; but, of course, it might just surprise us all. I for one hope it will get the recognition it surely deserves, and I am already looking forward to the next instalment of Giles' adventures in the second volume of this creative trilogy. I hope that my colleague Baptist

ministers will give it the attention it deserves: that they will take a little pride in their covenant connection to its author, that they will enjoy a racey read, and that they will discover a rich resource for theological reflection into the bargain—not bad really, given the price.

To become a reviewer:

contact Mike Peat with your details and interests

mike.peat@bristol.ac.uk

Of interest to you

edited by Arderne Gillies

NEW PASTORATES AND PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS

Steven ANDERSON	From Biggleswade to Scotland (March 2018)
Josiah ANYINSAH	From Grace Community Baptist Church to Boston Road, Croydon (amalgamation of these churches) (December 2017)
Colin BAKER	From Grays to Caversham (April 2018)
John BERNARD	From Coldharbour Lane, Grays to Langley Free (May 2018)
William BOOKER	From Methodist ministry to Open Door, Market Deeping (Nov 2017)
Danny BRIERLEY	From Chawn Hill, Stourbridge to Chester Road, Sutton Coldfield (March 2018)
Peter BURNS	From Castle Hill, Warwick to Nailsea (March 2018)
James CLARKE	From Disley to Scarborough (Youth & Children's Worker) (September 2018)
Philip COFFIN	From Cuffley to Markyate (April 2018)
Andrew COWLEY	From High Street, Tring to Leigh Road, Leigh-on-Sea (April 2018)
Chris DAVIS	To Colne Avenue, Southampton (Jan 2018)
Malcolm DUNCAN	From Gold Hill to Dundonald Elim (March 2018)
Nicholas EVANS	To Christ Church, Aberdare (Jan. 2018)
Joe FORSON	To Anderson, Reading (Community Minister) (January 2018)
Bruce FRANCIS	From overseas to Stradbroke (May 2018)
Tony FROST	To Greenhill Community Church, EMBA (February 2018)

Ruth GOULDBOURNE	From Bloomsbury Central to Grove Lane, Cheadlehulme (May 2018)
Karl HANTON	From e:merge, Bradford to Bolton Villas URC, Bradford (Feb 2018)
Ian HARE	From King's, Stotfold to Mitcham Lane, Streatham (February 2018)
Tasha HEDMAN	To Penge (Lay Pastor) (February 2018)
June LOVE	From Gunton to Southwell (April 2018)
David MIDDLETON	From Chaplain, Sheffield NHS to Newport, Shropshire (April 2018)
Phil MARSDEN	From Taunton to Central, Chelmsford (April 2018)
Peter MONTAGUE	To Totteridge, High Wycombe
Trevor NEILL	From Yardley Wood to Selsdon (August 2018)
Ian PARRY	To Grangetown, Cardiff
Gordon PENMAN	From Oakwood to Beltinge (January 2018)
Ellen PRICE	From Regional Minister, EMBA to Trinity, Derby (May 2018)
Manoj RAITHATHA	To Barking (Transitional Minister) (January 2018)
Chrissy REMSBERG	From the USA to Beacon Church, Stafford (January 2018)
Fred RICH	From Riddlesden URC (part time) to Riddlesden URC (part time) and Allerton Congregational (part time) (January 2018)
Maggie RICH	From Idle, Bradford to Kerry, Zion Newtown and Sarn (Nov 2017)
Nigel RILEY	From Middlesbrough to Charnwood Road, Shepshed (Sept 2018)
Gethin RUSSELL-JONES	From Rhiwbina, Cardiff to Ararat, Whitchurch, Cardiff
Vanessa RYE	From Didcot to Princes Risborough (June 2018)
Chris SHORT	From Park Street, St Albans to Victoria, Eastbourne (Senior Min)
Matty STEEL	To Stockton (March 2018)

MINISTERS IN TRAINING

Brenda BRUNDRITT	Spurgeon's to Foots Cray (July 2018)
Luciana DAMASCENA	Regent's to West Worthing (Summer 2018)
Gareth DAVIDSON	Bristol to Chepstow (half time) (September 2018)
Nick DRURY	Northern to Opengate, Bognor Regis (Youth Pastor) (Sept 2018)
Leigh GREENWOOD	Northern to Stoneygate, Leicester (August 2018)
Ken LIVINGSTONE	Northern to Stockport (June 2018)
James MARTIN	Spurgeon's to Pershore

Garry STEEL	Spurgeon's to Desborough (September 2018)
Kate WHITING	Spurgeon's to New Life, Guildford (Summer 2018)
Elaine YOUNGMAN	Spurgeon's to Morden (July 2018)

CHAPLAINCIES, EDUCATIONAL APPOINTMENTS, MISSION & OTHER SECTOR MINISTRIES

Doug ATHERON	From Coedpenmaen to Cynon Valley Missioner/Hospital Chaplaincy (April 2018)
Gareth DYER	To Training & Development Officer (South Wales) for the Wales Synod of the URC (March 2018)
Rachel HUGHES	To Chaplain, Sobell House Hospice, Oxford
Adrian KLOS	From Chaplain, Hull & East Yorkshire Hospitals to RAF Chaplain (February 2018)
Tim PRESSWOOD	From Regional Minister (Transition) (NWBA) to Regional Minister (Church Life) part time & Openshaw Connection, part time (NWBA) (January 2018)

RETIREMENTS

Stephen ASHBY	Berkhamsted (January 2018)
David BIRD	Harborne (December 2017)
Simon BODINGTON	Ewhurst (January 2018)
David CORAM	Norbury (May 2018)
John GOODE	Carlton, Nottingham (March 2018)
David HUGHES	Bourne, Lincs. (May 2018)
Robert JONES	Wimborne (February 2017)
Elizabeth JORDAN	New Life, Northallerton (December 2017)
Juliet LLOYD	Stanwell Road, Penarth (December 2017)
Peter MILNER	Queensbury, Nottingham (January 2018)
Philip PORTER	Tiverton (April 2018)
Steve REED	Chaplain, Musgrove Park Hospital (November 2017)
David PRIDDY	Ashford Common (March 2018)
Simon PROUT	March 2018
Graham WHITE	January 2018

DEATHS

Florence BIGNELL	Retired (Taunton) December 2017
Reg BOTTOMS	Retired (Cirencester) January 2018
Flo BUCKNELL	Retired (Little Sutton) January 2018
David CAVE	Retired (Liverpool) November 2017
Graham CLAY	Retired (Stratford upon Avon) January 2018
Rowland COLE	Retired (York) February 2018
Hugh CROSS	Retired (Plymouth) December 2017
Dafydd DAVIES	Retired (Cardiff) December 2017
David GREEN	Retired (York) February 2018
Rosalie HALL	Retired (Hereford) January 2018
Kenneth KING	Retired (West Worthing) December 2017
James PERKIN	Retired (Canada) December 2017
Gladys ROSIE	Retired (Bridgnorth) January 2018
Ken TATTERSALL	Retired (Bristol) February 2018
Alex WRIGHT	Retired (Glenrothes) January 2018

ANNIVERSARIES

Gordon & Margaret TUBBS	Golden Wedding 6th April 2018

MATTERS FOR PRAYERFUL CONCERN

Douglas PARISH	Retired Lay-Pastor of Porton Baptist Church, whose wife Betty died in February 2018 after 70 years of marriage.

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.

BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2018 AGM & LECTURES
Thursday May 10th

Bloomsbury Central Baptist church, Shaftesbury Avenue, LONDON WC2H 8EP

AGM at 1.30 and lectures from 2pm. Anticipated close 4pm

"Journeying to justice: Where do we go from here?"

Revd Gale Richards, minister of Zion Baptist church, Cambridge, co-ordinator of the Baptist Union of Great Britain Black and Minority Ethnic Women Ministers' network, and co-editor of "Journeying to Justice: contributions to the Baptist Tradition across the Black Atlantic"

"Diversity and Unity - some reflections on European baptistic gathering communities"

Revd Dr Keith G. Jones, formerly Rector of the International Baptist Theological Seminary (Prague)

These lectures are free

BHS members and non-members welcome