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From the editor

The Greatest Illusion?

In the messy wake of the EU Referendum there have been all kinds of interesting discussions—about democracy, about motives, about demographics, about politics generally. I feel particularly indebted to Norman Graham, who posted a helpful agenda for Baptists on the Baptist Collaboration Facebook site. He says, ‘Whatever the vast array of differing opinion regarding our place in the EU within our Baptist family of churches, our union with one another via our union with Christ transcends all other relationships, political ideologies and loyalties’. Our commitment is to serve Christ (not any earthly ruler), to build his Kingdom (not any earthly state)—and to do so by upholding the principles of the Nazareth manifesto (above any party political brief). Thank you, Norman, for the sanity of your remarks; and I trust that I have rendered the spirit of them correctly here.

Pondering further, I have a personal anxiety about our ongoing western bondage to the great god of independence, currently manifested in the guise of national sovereignty. Being parent of a child who is severely disabled in all ways, I am acutely aware that independence for some is very obviously an impossibility—and indeed, most of us lose it in the end, when we are led by others to ‘where we do not want to go’. Since we share a common human inter-relationship under God, I am minded to assert that total independence is a mere illusion for human beings. It is of course a short step from independence to isolation, and my prayer is that as individuals and as a nation, whatever else happens, we do not end up in that bleakest and most inhuman place.

I hope you enjoy the wide variety of articles in this issue of *bmj*. As ever, if you wish to contribute something, do get in touch.

Finally, please join me in thanking Sarah Parry for the 19 years in which she has faithfully served as chair of the *bmj* editorial board. I am not sure how many editors she has seen come and go! She has cheerfully been there throughout. We also thank James Chapman who is standing down from the board, and welcome Andy Goodliff and Stephen Copson as new members. Please encourage colleagues to join the BMF (see the website) and to get on board with *bmj*—so that we can continue to foster relationship among ministers and other Baptist leaders.

Christ has set us free

by Rosemary & Richard Kidd

Since our first encounter with Freeset in Kolkata, we often find ourselves thinking about freedom—for Donovan (see quote below) was surely right to caution that freedom is a word to use sparingly; it is precious as gold and extraordinarily difficult to pin down.

For readers who have not yet discovered Freeset, it comprises a growing network of ‘freedom businesses’ in West Bengal, originating in Sonagacchi, Kolkata. Today, in 2016, its core business, Freeset Bags and Apparel, employs more than 200 women, offering them the choice to earn a good living, rather than ‘standing in line’ in one of India’s most notorious red-light districts. The scale of Kolkata’s sex-trade is hard to comprehend; every day Sonagacchi attracts thousands of men prowling the alleys and looking to buy sex from the 10,000 or more women trapped in the trade. In total contrast, Freeset attracts traders from around the world looking to buy high-quality handmade goods (bags, tee-shirts, scarves...), enabling its employees to choose freedom from the sex-trade and to live dignified and fulfilling lives. If you are a British Baptist, you might well already own a Freeset bag, possibly without knowing it; they were distributed on various occasions to all the delegates at national and international Baptist conferences.

The main factory in Ramesh Dutta Street, in the heart of Sonagacchi, is such a joyful place of welcome. We first passed through its unremarkable iron-barred gate in the summer of 2012, little suspecting what an impact that visit would have on these first few years of our shared lives as retired Baptist ministers. Since then we have spent several months around the factory and the wider region of West Bengal. We have helped to develop education programmes for would-be volunteer workers; we have helped to stimulate theological reflection around the concept of ‘freedom business’; and we have become committed advocates of Freeset in the UK and beyond. We have also met

Freedom is a
word I rarely
use—without
thinking...
mhmm!
(Donovan,
1965)



some fantastic people: people whose lived model of Christian discipleship we admire greatly.

The whole venture began around the turn of the millennium when a New Zealand Baptist missionary couple, Kerry and Annie Hilton, made Sonagacchi their home with their young family, initially helping women to make and sell bags using sewing

machines in their tiny kitchen. Today, The Gateway, the latest addition to the Freeset plant, is a 2000 square meter building recently purchased for approximately £1.6 million, located at the entry into Sonagacchi and ripe for a further expansion of Freeset's work. It will provide more workspace, as well as units for crèches, healthcare for women, and warehousing for the expanding activities of other freedom businesses.

In the past few years, other factories have begun to proliferate in rural areas, strategically identified as regions from which many young women, still no more than girls, are trafficked into the city for a life in the trade. Freeset Fabrics, based in Murshidabad north of Kolkata, now taps into a long tradition of local weaving skills, and employs another three dozen women from poor families. It is hoped that, by raising their income, these families will no longer become so desperate that the only way they can stave off starvation is to sell a daughter into the sex-trade, even though there will continue to be girls who are kidnapped or tricked into slavery. All the more important, then, that there are more and more freedom businesses appearing in Kolkata and West Bengal: including Sari Bari, Freeset, Love Calcutta Arts, Loyal Workshop and 8th Day Café. Together, they now offer employment to more than 400 women.

People often ask us why it is called Freeset. Come on, now...Freeset? SETTING FREE! (see Galatians 5:1).

So how and why has it captured our imaginations so deeply; we think of it as one of the most stunning examples of Christian gospel-ing that we have ever seen. What, then, can it teach us about the potential vitality of Christian mission more generally? This article lists some of the lessons we might learn; it will be representative rather than exhaustive—and not in any particular order of importance.

An offer of choice

The driving energy of Freeset is released by the offer of choice. It reminds us of Jesus saying to a man with serious disabilities, ‘Do you want to be healed?’ (John 5:6). Of course he does; but the pathway to freedom is rarely an easy one. In Sonagacchi we are talking about women who have not known the experience of making choices for many years, if ever; everything is chosen for them by pimps and madams, who manage their bodies and dominate their lives. Without a hint of coercion, Freeset opens the possibility of these women making a choice, a very big choice that can herald the beginning of a new life. The best advocates of Freeset are, of course, the women themselves, those who have already found freedom through Freeset, and now work tirelessly, not simply to make bags and earn a living, but to release further resources that will offer other women freedom too.

The courage to choose

It takes enormous courage for women to abandon the deceptively secure environment of the brothels, however violent and degrading they might be, and to trust that people from a distant land will take them seriously and offer them genuine care—long term. Freeset has had to prove that it is not a five-day wonder, as too many international mission agencies have been. Freeset intends to be there for the long haul. Women receive huge support to help them make the choice, but it is crucial that there are no strings attached when you become a worker for Freeset. Most of the women are Hindu or Muslim, and there is no suggestion that Christian conversion is part of the deal—although, the evidence on the shop floor is that, evangelistically, Freeset has been surprisingly effective. Over time, numerous women have come to discover and trust for themselves the Jesus who inspired this freedom venture in the first place, and whose story they have now heard.

Language matters

Freeset takes great care to tell it as it really is. That is why, for example, we favour terms like sex-slavery rather than sex-worker, which can easily give the impression that the sex-trade offers a credible form of employment. Whenever possible, we also avoid the term ‘prostitute’ as it suggests that the responsibility for the trade lies with the women rather than the culture which trades in their bodies. Most importantly of all, Freeset totally rejects all language about ‘rescue’—preferring, as we have heard, to speak about offering choice. Too many agencies play up the language of rescue because, although it is not the right word, it often serves them well. Funders like this language because it signals drama and heroism. The problem is that it is the agency and their agents who emerge as the heroes, and not the women who have made the

heroic choice. Freeset is not there to draw attention to itself, other than to deflect attention to the women themselves and their neglected humanity; it works to give the women a voice in places where typically they have remained silent and hidden.

Holistic response

Freeset models a profoundly holistic response to human need. The overwhelming majority of women starting work with Freeset arrive with major health problems—what else would we expect after long years in the sex-trade? One arm of Freeset, therefore, operating under the name Tamar, works to address a wide range of physical and counselling needs. Many of the women arrive with children, which means that crèche and nursery provision is essential. It is wonderful to hear these women articulate the measure of liberation they eventually experience, as they learn new skills and begin to find a place in the wider community, their heads held high in a way not known to them since earliest childhood.

Non-judgmental

Nowhere is the discipline of non-judgmental acceptance more important than in the context of Freeset's work. These women have already been judged repeatedly, and many of them carry huge burdens of guilt projected onto them by the society in which they live. As everywhere in history, it is these women who are the first to be labelled sinners; rather, that is, than the punters who abuse them. As if that were not enough, many of these women are deemed to have brought shame on their families. Even when it was their own families that sold them into slavery, they are rarely welcomed back home. They might have made a courageous break from the sex-trade and started to earn a good living with Freeset, but the shame still remains. Given time and commitment, Freeset has enabled just a few of its workers to reconnect with their family roots, but that is never an easy road to travel. One of the extraordinary ironies is that, even though 'prostitution' is officially illegal in India, supposedly respectable parents will encourage their young sons to visit a brothel as part of their initiation into manhood, actually paying for the cost of a visit.

Wonderfully liberating

Freeset is a remarkable outworking of what many of us only learned as theory when we first studied 'liberating theologies' and 'processes of conscientisation'. Sometimes this has been a source of amusement—both for ourselves and our Freeset friends. Rosemary and Richard repeatedly discover people 'doing' liberating theology (orthopraxis) on a massive scale, with hardly any clue that there are others all around the world who have already developed a theological language to describe what they are doing. We are in no

doubt that Freeset deserves to stand alongside the work of liberating Latin American pioneers, Black Theology movements in N. America and various liberating movements across Africa and Asia. Some of us were attracted to the theory; folk in Freeset got on with the praxis. One of our hopes is that, as the work of Freeset becomes even more widely known, it will take its rightful place alongside these other liberating gospel movements. When this happens, both theorists and practitioners will all be the richer.

Preaching as being and doing

Freeset preaches the good news of Jesus, simply by being where it is and doing what it does. For us this has been especially focused by working at material from Luke's Gospel in and around the Freeset community. We have come to love, with fresh eyes, the story of Jesus' encounter with Simon the Pharisee in Luke (Luke 7:36-50). In that story a woman—usually, possibly wrongly, taken to be in the sex-trade—enters the story clearly occupying the role of 'outsider'; what right has she to be at Simon's table? As the narrative unfolds, however, it becomes abundantly clear that she is no more an outsider than Jesus; what is he doing giving credibility to a woman like her? The narrative, however, is brilliantly constructed so that, in the end, Simon is exposed as the 'outsider' in his own home, and Luke shows us how Jesus, a person for others, reinstates the woman as a valued companion, alive in the grace of God, no more and no less a sinner than Simon or any other human on the planet. Freeset does just this for women too: women who have been labelled by their families, by their communities—and by far too many Christians—as the ones in need of forgiveness. By the offer of choice, Freeset enables such women to take their rightful place again in human community, implicitly pointing a finger at the real source of wickedness, the unbridled self-interest of all those who profit from the sex-trade.

Freedom 'to' and freedom 'from'

As soon as we begin to reflect on the nature of human freedom, we meet a paradox. On the one hand, when we see a woman trapped in the sex-trade, the first thing that probably comes to mind is 'freedom from'; we long to see this woman free 'from' the sex-trade. On the other hand, this kind of 'freedom from' also opens a window onto 'freedom to'; as she acquires new skills, she also gains new dignity in the community. What, however, about those for whom the trap will never be released, the door never opened? In an extreme case, we can think of some amazing women—Etty Hillesum would be a good example—who never discovered a way of escape, eventually dying in one of the Nazi death camps. Her letters, however, leave it beyond any doubt that she also knew enormous personal freedom, 'freedom to' despite the lack of 'freedom from'—far more freedom than many of us can even dream about—and others testify that she was an inspiration and source of hope to many around her. It looks, then, as if

‘freedom to’ can flourish even in the absence of ‘freedom from’. We conclude, then, that we must always look for both. We must never neglect the importance of ‘freedom from’, but neither must we underestimate the value of ‘freedom to’, in its own right.

Learning from those on the underside

This is very tricky indeed. It is all too easy for those of us who enjoy prosperity in the West to find ourselves glorifying the virtues of poverty and the poor, and many Christians whose lives have been deeply touched by the briefest of visits to poor communities have fallen into the trap. Once again, however, this is a paradox—for neither must we be fooled into thinking that the rich have a monopoly on virtue and wisdom. Jesus told us plainly enough that it is not the case. Walking, then, the tightrope of this paradox, Richard wrote a poem to try and express something of the personal impact of an important encounter associated with our times in Sonagacchi. On one particular visit we regularly bought our eggs from an old man who sat hour after hour on a tiny patch of pavement selling his eggs, just eggs, to folk like ourselves. It was always a delight to do business with him. When we returned many months later he had gone from his accustomed place on the pavement and no-one seemed to want to tell us where he had gone; until, that is, one of the other traders broke the news in words we had never previously associated with death: ‘He has expired’, he said. We found this deeply moving and the poem reads like this:

The Egg Man

“The egg man has expired!”

Legs tight-folded, just a hint of Gandhi,
there he perched days in-and-out,
eggs abounding. Bright-eyed, ears near
smile-joined, his pavement emporium,
wordless ode to possible joys
in a sorrowed world. Each egg,
handled with special care, laid gently
in its paper bag, we felt important
as he tended our modest purchase.

What a loss to the world.

“The egg man has expired!”

In the moment the news broke for us, we knew that our lives would always be the better for our brief encounters with the egg man, and we want to honour him in this short article. With him, we also want to honour all those who touch the world for good, offering the fruit of their ‘freedom to’, while never fully enjoying the privilege of ‘freedom from’.

What might retired Baptist ministers do?

Let’s be honest. This is going to be pretty limited. Small, however, should not be equated with insignificant. We have found ourselves increasingly caught up as advocates of Freeset in other parts of the world, especially back home in the UK. This has become a mixture of raising awareness and fundraising for projects like The Gateway. Rosemary has taken a lead in organising various Freeset events, mainly through church contacts: advertising Freeset’s work, selling their products and encouraging donations. Richard has been developing an entirely new line of work selling his paintings and his books of poetry in support of Freeset, especially The Gateway. In fact, this has been going so well that he is now starting a small charity, Painting For Freedom, that will channel funds from his sales to Freeset in the most advantageous way. We have continued to encourage folk who work on the ground in Sonagacchi to join together in producing a substantial piece of writing that can help to put the values and insights of Freeset into the wider community of Christians working in similar fields; we probably have a continuing role to play in this—being the ones with the luxury of time for reading and writing.

We never cease to be amazed by the rate at which Freeset continues to expand its vision and its work, and we intend to stay with it as long as we are able—able to keep up, that is. If our short account of its work touches you in any way too, there are several things you might do. You might, for example:

- look at the Freeset website, www.freesetglobal.com;
- consider using some of their products (especially printed bags and tee-shirts) to promote your own conferences and community events;
- think about ordering a selection of Freeset products from the UK distributor, www.globalseesaw.co.uk for sale in your local community;
- consider a visit to Kolkata to experience one of Freeset’s regular three-week ‘Encounter’ events; a good way to test whether Freeset has a place in your own future calling too.

If all else fails, why not have a look at Richard’s website, www.paintingforfreedom.co.uk. There are paintings and poems on offer—and even a button to make a donation to Freeset!

Richard and Rosemary Kidd are now ‘retired’ from their respective Baptist ministries in the UK. You can find out more about Freeset from the website above.

Philemon: a narrative exegesis

by Pieter J. Lalleman

We slaves do not have easy lives. We have no rights. They can do with us whatever they want. 'Living tools', the philosopher Aristotle called us.

But society is dependent on us - and knows it. We are the teachers of their children. Many people even in the upper classes can neither read nor write, but they do want their children to learn, to advance in society. So, one of us slaves acts as their teacher.

That's not too bad—but agricultural slaves and especially those working down the tin mines live a wretched existence. No, it's better to be a slave-steward in the home of one of these stonking rich people. In fact, strange as it sounds, many people sell themselves into slavery to improve their social position. You know, most teachers, administrators and doctors are slaves. And they get to live and work for the great landowners in their country mansions and villas! Other slaves have more menial jobs but they at least enjoy the protection and provision of their masters.

Luke and I talk about these things, how such stewards are to act. Luke is the friend of Paul, and now he's also my friend. Luke knows what Jesus said about these things.

We agree that it is a good thing that slaves are often released once they reach a certain age. That's at least something to look forward to. I heard that in one of the churches founded by Paul, in Corinth in Achaje, freedmen are playing a major role. That seems like a good thing to me.

I ran away. Why? I just could not bear the thought. I can read well but I cannot teach. I'm also unsuitable as a steward. I just wanted a better life and to have some fun. So I thought I could go to the jail where Paul is, the friend of Philemon, and that's the best thing I've ever done! Paul is such a nice guy! He can speak so wonderfully about Jesus. It always touches me, again and again, even when his fellow prisoners don't listen to him. So over time I wanted to follow this Jesus, just like Paul. I took the decision to join The Way and I'm really pleased with it!

But now I have to go back—and I am very sorry about this. Philemon will be mightily surprised when he sees me again! I had never expected to go back myself. But Paul insists that we must stick to the rules which say that runaway slaves have to be returned to their masters. He has written a letter to Philemon, which I have here. And I

have even read it! Look, its form is that of a conventional letter, with a formal opening and conclusion. But it's quite a long letter compared to other letters I have seen. Most of it Paul dictated to the secretary but the last bit he wrote himself.

I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favour you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary (vv12-14).

Yet I firmly believe that one day slavery will be abolished. Why? Because Jesus' teaching was so radical. You know what he did? He taught women! One of them was called Mary, I believe, and her sister was called Martha. Luke says that Martha complained to Jesus because Mary only listened to his teaching. Martha thought that Mary had to help in the kitchen, but Jesus said that Mary could listen to his teaching. Compared to what I know about the Jewish culture that was quite startling!

Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for ever—no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow human and as a brother in the Lord (vv15-16).

Do you hear this? Paul is suggesting that I am a brother to Philemon. He himself already recognises me as 'a beloved brother'. Whew! When the other followers of The Way read this, they will surely also recognize me as a brother, won't they? And your brother cannot possibly be your slave at the same time? People who read this letter will have to come to the conclusion that slavery should be abolished!

Paul is asking Philemon to welcome me as he would welcome Paul himself (v17). That's quite something! Paul is putting himself and me on the same level. But otherwise he is merely trying to influence the conscience of Philemon. Why is he not more radical in his requests? As an apostle of the Lord, he surely can issue orders?! I would have written a very different letter! Paul only makes an appeal to love. However, as a good friend and as a follower of Jesus Philemon will hardly be able to refuse the request, I suppose. And at the end Paul very cleverly announces that he wants to come to Colossae as well, so that's extra pressure on my dear owner (v22).

I took the
decision to
join The
Way...

It's time to go. The letter carrier is ready for the trip to Colossae. I still hope that I come back here! Return as a free man, that is. And when the time comes that people take Paul and Jesus seriously, all slaves will one day be free. When believers accept that we slaves are their very brothers and sisters, they surely cannot but release us! Let's be honest!

Pieter Lalleman is Tutor in Biblical Studies at Spurgeon's College.

Notes to text

1. Quoted in David A. deSilva, *An introduction to the New Testament: contexts, methods and ministry formation* (Leicester: IVP, 2004), p669; cf Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of early Christianity* (2nd edn, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp56-58; Simon Jones, *The world of the early church: a social history* (Oxford: Lion, 2011).
2. Luke is with Paul, see verse 24; cf Luke 12:42-48 and chapter 16.
3. cf Acts 6:9.
4. cf the use of 'son' in verse 10.
5. cf Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22.
6. cf v19, Galatians 6:11 and E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and first-century letter writing: secretaries, composition and collection* (Leicester: IVP, 2004).
7. cf deSilva, Introduction, p670.
8. See in particular 1 Timothy.
9. 1 Peter 2:12-20.
10. Luke 10:38-42.
11. Luke 8:1-3.
12. cf the 'we' in Acts 21 and 27:1.
13. See v8 and deSilva, Introduction, pp671-673, 675.
14. I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament theology* (Downers Grove / Nottingham: IVP, 2004), p364.
15. Richards, *Paul and first-century letter writing*.
16. cf the presence of Archippus in Colossians 4:17 and Philemon 2.

A therapist's response

by Sue Clements-Jewery

I begin with a confession. I am an avid reader of the *bmj*. As the non-ordained half of a partnership into whose manse/home the magazine has popped for several decades, I have made it my business to read (or skim) most of it, sometimes before husband Philip could get his hands on it. In the early years of his ministry it was much more about connecting and catching up with moves, along with hatches, matches and which holiday property was being offered for bargain rent. (Now, sadly it's retirements and despatches that are more of interest!)

Then, almost 20 years ago, I joined the CMCS counsellor register, and began to bring together my experience as a sexual and relationship psychotherapist with that of a ministerial spouse. As time went by, my counselling path took me further into counselling people in ministry in a couple of Anglican dioceses so I actually began reading articles (well, the ones that caught my eye) and reviews of books which appeared relevant to the flourishing of ministers. At the end of 2015 I retired from counselling but continue to work as a supervisor of a number of ministers from other denominations.

Ministry or therapy?

Over Philip's time in ministry, and mine as a therapist, we would from time to time compare notes—not, I hasten to add, content and identifying details; but on the processes our caring work had taken us into. Like living in a parallel universe? Of course, to some extent, I lived in both. He would envy me because I knew that when clients came to talk to me they were usually motivated to make some changes in their lives, whereas often people offloaded onto him but weren't ready necessarily to move on...I would be struck by his ability to change the levels with relative ease, going deep with some people and then managing to be alongside them in a different way in the business of running the church. For me in my much more boundaried work, I had to explain to clients that if we bumped into one another in the outside world I would wait for them to speak first before greeting them!

When I read Rob Trickey's *Shock absorber ministry* article in the April 2016 edition of *bmj*, I sensed that instead of running along parallel tracks, ministry and therapy have some areas of overlap to explore. So here goes.

Rob reminded us that Christ loved the church and gave himself for her,' a calling for every disciple but 'especially and intensely true of those called to pastoral leadership'. Following in the footsteps of Jesus who 'took upon himself all that was thrown at him' he suggests that integral to the calling 'is the absorbing of pain, anger, confusion, rejection, sometimes even hatred, of the communities we serve'.

However, it was the next sentence in the article which leapt out at me: 'We take these things to ourselves, drawing their sting, creating a space in which healing and reconciliation can take place'. What is being talked about here is akin to the psychoanalytic concept developed by Wilfrid Bion of *holding* or *containment* (based on a summary by Linda Finlay).

Containment: Bion's theory explains how a mother receives unwanted and/or overwhelming projections from an infant, processes them and then returns the experience to the infant in a modified, palatable form. This process also occurs in therapy with the therapist acting as a 'container', taking in thoughts/feelings from the client and re-representing them so they are both more understandable and less potentially destructive. Bion's view is that infants become overwhelmed by their experience as they lack sufficient internal controls. The mother's containing function involves helping the infant develop a capacity for self-regulation. This infant takes in (internalises) this sense of being contained and experiences the mother's emotional availability and then will eventually develop their own capacity to do the same.

Of therapy it can be said that 'What is needed is a form of holding, such as a mother gives to her distressed child. There are various ways in which one adult can offer to another this holding (or containment). And it can be crucial for a patient/client to be thus held in order to recover, or to discover maybe for the first time, a capacity for managing life and life's difficulties without continued avoidance or suppression.

The therapist provides a similar function helping the client work through their emotions with a reflective, 'Adult' therapist. In this way the client learns to think through and understand their emotional experience and to contain their own feelings. reaction/need (eg crying) and the meeting of that need (feeding, comforting).

Bion extended his theorising to describe social groups as a type of 'maternal container'.

If we pursue this train of thought we gain insight into how churches can function as the 'maternal container', helping people to bear the unbearable in their lives. The role of the pastor or caregiver can be seen as akin to that of the parent/therapist, absorbing the pain and modelling that it is survivable, giving support to enable the person to grow through it. The latter is not always so easy because some of those we care for may express resistance to giving up their status of need and pain. Just as the mother (or other parent figure) absorbs her baby's pain and distress, and by loving in this way helps the child to learn that difficult feelings can be survived, so the pastor or carer—by not being

overwhelmed by the disclosures given to them—helps the person learn that they can survive and grow. Infants whose mother cannot (for whatever reason) provide containment tend to grow up with heightened anxiety and fear. Adults who missed out on this experience may go through life struggling to manage negative feelings.

Shock absorbing: the costs

So 'shock absorber' is an apt image for ministry but not a comfortable one. What is the cost? How much shock can a body or system take? We often speak of 'overload' and 'breakdown' when a person has ceased to function well. Many of my ministerial clients have come with these issues which indicate they have absorbed, often without realising it, many of their flock's difficult feelings, just as the mother does with the new baby. One of the most useful questions I was ever asked in supervision (and continue to use when delivering supervision) was: To whom do these feelings belong? You, or the client? In the therapy world there is an awareness that those in the helping role inevitably absorb some of the distress they are exposed to; and if it is unattended to and unprocessed, it will remain in the system of the listener.

From body psychotherapy (a fairly new kid on the therapy block, at least in the UK) we gain an understanding of secondary traumatic stress, a term used to describe the impact on the carer/therapist of absorbing the pain of others. Roger Higgins points out that 'just as traumatic stress can affect people physically, cognitively, emotionally, behaviourally and spiritually, so can secondary traumatic stress'.

Continuous or extensive exposure to the pain of others takes its toll, and the one on the receiving end may become exhausted, feeling overloaded and helpless. They may experience symptoms of stress such as increased anxiety, sleeplessness, minor infections, and a shutting down of emotional reactions so that they are 'dead' inside (compassion fatigue). Where the person's issues resonate with their own, or where the 'case load' is heavy, ministers/carers may find themselves overwhelmed, or they may reduce their engagement with those who are hurting.

Today many ministers tell me they don't 'do' pastoral care—there's a visitation team for that. They have different priorities. Others talk about the challenge and privilege of caring for those, often on the margins, who have deep issues and need a heavy investment of love, time and support, resulting in their being less time available for church members. Who decides on these priorities, and how?

There is often a mismatch between the minister's and the church's understanding of what ministry involves. So I am minded to ask whether we have confused loving the church with building the kingdom? We don't have to think very hard to work out where Jesus would be in this one. We can, however, be sure that he would be spending time building relationships. Without strong relationships a minister is much less likely to be

able to lead people anywhere. And caring for people isn't just about making them feel better, it should encompass a commitment to their growth and development and ideally be courageous enough to confront when necessary. All that is possible only when trust has been built up through investment in relationships.

Accountability and supervision

Counsellors and therapists are now encouraged to monitor themselves, manage their workloads and take regular breaks. Emotional intelligence is an integral part of counsellor training to enable the development of self-awareness. Of course, therapists are required to have regular supervision (I was in practice for 35 years, had supervision 10 times a year throughout that time and wouldn't have dreamed of operating without it). We also have very rigid boundaries with fixed time slots for those with whom we work. These afford some protection and space to recharge before continuing the journey with the client. It goes without saying that in ministry working patterns are much more fluid, days off may become nibbled at the edges, holidays not always taken...and accountability? or even supervision...?

My interest in developing supervision for ministers began whilst I was director of Bridge Counselling Services. From time to time we would receive requests from ministers, asking for the kind of supervision we offered to our counselling team. So we dipped a toe in the water. Then in 2008 APSE (Association for Pastoral Supervision and Education) was founded. APSE is a network of people and organisations involved in pastoral supervision, and interested in training pastoral supervisors. Members include healthcare chaplains, local clergy, spiritual directors, theological educators, church education officers, and pastoral counsellors. Some denominations are now promoting supervision for all clergy. Our Baptist structure makes that difficult but I was encouraged when one RMTL told me recently he had invited someone from APSE to talk to ministers.

Supervisors may be recruited from qualified and experienced practitioners in other professions with the requirement that those who wish to be accredited have to demonstrate their capacity to work and think theologically. Also there are training courses for ministers with no previous experience of supervision.

What can supervision offer to those in ministry? It provides space for three functions (adapted from Inskipp & Proctor, 1993):

1. *Normative*: considering responsibility for standards and ethics. (Is what I am doing the best or only way to do this?)
2. *Formative*: sharing the responsibility for the professional development of the supervisee's skills, knowledge and understanding. (How can I develop and become

better at what I do?)

3. *Restorative*: providing opportunities for the discharging and recharging of batteries. (How can I take care of myself so that I can sustain myself for the long haul?)

All three functions are vital for effective ministry but it is particularly the restorative function which pays attention to what the supervisee has absorbed in the course of their work, and provides an opportunity to explore options for renewal and recreation. It provides far more than simply offloading what has been dumped on us. It can help us process the difficult stuff and find resources for enabling our own and the other person's growth.

If you're still reading and haven't already been put off by the psychobabble earlier, I'd like to end by recommending a book written for Christians and especially for those in leadership. Kate Middleton (that's the Kate Middleton who is a psychologist, church leader and director of Mind and Soul, a Christian mental health organisation!) has written a self-help guide called *Refuel: how to balance work, life, faith and church without burning out*. In this practical book she tackles stress and how we can handle it positively. It is accessible, jargon free with short chapters and self-help questions.

Sue trained as a counsellor with Relate and worked as a UKCP registered sexual and relationship therapist, supervisor and trainer for many years. A senior accredited supervisor with APSE, she now offers supervision to ministers.

Notes and sources

APSE Association for Pastoral Supervision and Education:
www.pastoralsupervision.org.uk

Babette Rothschild with Margaret Rand, *Help for the helper: self-care strategies for managing stress and burnout*. Norton, 2006.

Kate Middleton, *Refuel: how to balance work, life, family and the church without burning out*. DLT, 2015.

Roger Higgins, *Self-care for therapists*, in *The Psychotherapist* (magazine of UKCP) Spring 2015.

Linda Finlay, *Relational integrative psychotherapy: process and theory in practice*. Wiley, 2015.

Reflections in a mirror

by Helene Grant

One in 14 people over 65 have a diagnosis of dementia¹—so most church congregations will have at least one affected family though, sadly, often those affected by dementia become separated from the church community. Because dementia affects cognitive abilities as well as relational ones, pastoral sensitivity and creativity is needed to encourage everyone along a spiritual path that may seem ever more confusing.

By using Paul's metaphor of 'seeing in a mirror' (1 Cor 13:12), this reflection explores the role of the pastor seeking to minister to the whole community. The aim is for everyone to grow in love, and for the church to find ways of including those who may feel they are losing their place in the community because of dementia.

The pastor as spiritual guide

Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, describing the gifts needed to 'build up the church': 'if one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it' (1 Cor 12:26). He goes on to describe for them an 'excellent way' of love at the heart of community, which requires individuals to give themselves fully to one another. Paul suggests that now Christians have a partial understanding of the love that is expressed in God: *for now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known* (1 Cor 13:12).

However, God's love is never partial and Paul challenges the Corinthians to love one another as God has loved them in Christ. He understood that the gifts of the Spirit were shared, ensuring that the body remained reliant on all parts to become mature in faith.

The basis for Paul's understanding of love in community stems from Jesus' command to 'love one another as yourself'. This seems to imply that a 'sense of self' is necessary if a person is able to love others. A 'sense of self' is built on experience, thought and memory and for Christians is also tied to a personal understanding and experience of God.² Memories of church, worship and experiences of God are vital to a Christian's understanding of self and of belonging in community. The challenge for dementia sufferers, and their faith communities, is that as the recognition of self fades, so does the memory of encounters with God.

Although Paul uses the image of a mirror to reflect on the relationship between God and humans, it may also be helpful when considering the relationship between people who suffer from dementia and their communities. People see dimly because the image is distorted, either through the angle of perception or because of a loss of light. The clarity of relationship blurs as the disease progresses. Love demands relationship and the problem for those with dementia is that they have increasing difficulty with relationship because they no longer have the ability to reflect the memories which have created that relationship; they 'see in a mirror dimly'. The community to which the sufferer belongs may find it difficult to know how to be in relationship when there are no longer any shared memories.

...for now we
see in a mirror,
dimly, but then
we will see face
to face...

The dim, and darkening, mirrors of memories of relationship between individuals and community reflect a distorted image which will ultimately be resolved in the love of God. By seeking to help the whole community engage in relationships from different perspectives the pastor may be able to help reduce the distortion in the present, and encourage the community to embrace more fully the light of God's love. This may have the effect of deepening relationships with God and across the community.

In seeking to walk with others, a pastor should ensure that none are excluded from experiencing, and growing in, the love of God. Unfortunately because of the effects of the disease, those suffering with dementia, along with close family and friends, are often detached from the community at a time when they need the strength and comfort offered by others.

Dementia and the faith community

Dementia is one of the most feared diagnoses of the 21st century.³ The disease slowly destroys the brain with the resulting gradual but unremitting loss of memory, cognitive and physical abilities. This is beyond distressing for the individual and those close to

A specifically Baptist Trust Fund that could benefit you...

Despite its name, The Psalms and Hymns Support Fund could be a resource for you or someone you're aware of in the Baptist family who is in need.

The fund is a registered charity (no. 1089179) established in 1925 which exists for the specific relief of Baptist widows, widowers and orphans of ministers, missionaries and accredited church workers and also for the relief of retired Baptist ministers, missionaries and accredited church workers.

Over the years, by means of small but strategic grants, it has provided support to Baptists in those categories who were recognised by the Trustees as 'in need, hardship or distress'.

Grants are available on an annual or one-off basis and applications are most welcome. If you would like to find out more please contact the fund's treasurer, Rev Steven Hembury who will be pleased to advise further.

them, and many people have described dementia as a ‘fate worse than death.’⁴

Even those who seek to offer spiritual guidance may find themselves at a loss for adequate words to help. At times the temptation for pastors and friends is to ignore the needs of the dementia sufferer because ‘they won’t remember that we have visited them’. The disease becomes a real barrier to love in community, but it must not prevent the effort to come alongside and offer support. Being vulnerable to the pain and suffering of others enables the pastor not only to learn and grow, but also to share in that suffering. While it is never possible truly to experience all that another person experiences, this shared suffering is Christ-like and brings those affected into a closer relationship with God. It is here that ‘the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words’ (Rom 8:26).

Building relationships

As the pastor builds relationships with those who live with dementia, the importance of personhood is central. No one has complete self-knowledge; in many respects, the self will always be ‘seen dimly’. The problem for a person with dementia is that the mirror no longer reflects even ‘in part’ what was known. When individuals with advanced dementia look in the mirror, they do not know who they are seeing.

This ministry is
based on the
belief that no-
one ever ceases
to be ‘somebody’
before God...

The task for the pastor and church community is to find ways of continuing to express the love of God. This ministry is based on the belief that no one ever ceases to be ‘somebody’ before God. If God knows and loves an individual before s/he is able to think, reason, remember and care for him/herself, then God still knows and loves that individual when he/she no longer recognises who is in the mirror.

Ministry based on this understanding of the reality of God’s love allows the church family the opportunity to find different ways of communicating and sharing—perhaps by sharing simple tasks or by using tools such as memory boxes; or by simply spending time with the other. These actions also help to sustain

the spirituality of those who are caring closely for the dementia sufferer. In this way the ‘mirrors of memory’ which help give a sense of identity to both the sufferer and those closest to them can be repositioned to help provide a more focused sense of belonging.

This inclusive ministry follows the example of Jesus, who was especially concerned for anyone who was excluded. It is often difficult to spend time with someone who has dementia because conversation becomes harder—but it is important because a sense of belonging and remembering helps communicate to the sufferer, and those closest to them, that God continues to love and cherish them.

Despite fears that corporate worship may become difficult because of behavioural or comprehension difficulties, it is important to find ways of including those closely affected by dementia. Good teaching will help to minimise fears that worship will somehow be disturbed. For example, members of the congregation of a similar age or background might be invited to recall favourite hymns or prayers from their younger days. By using these items in short worship services, the earlier memories of the confused person may be recalled, giving an opportunity to join in worship.

The dementia sufferer and the pastor

To develop a relationship with someone whose cognitive and physical abilities are deteriorating, the pastor must first acknowledge that she/he also can only ‘see in a mirror dimly’. Relationship between people always demands vulnerability and a genuine acceptance of our own weakness and need. Only then may the pastor reach out and truly get to know the sufferer.

For a Christian with dementia the fact that that God may no longer seem alive in memory or thought creates a sense of loneliness and fear. For the pastor this opens the opportunity to share the love of God who is present in ‘the land of forgetfulness’ (Psalm 88:12)—though simply stating that God does not forget can unintentionally emphasise the perception that dementia is a living death and that God makes things right only at the end of time. This is neither helpful or true. The challenge, as the disease progresses, is to experience the ‘living God’ who is present at all times.

To help a person who cannot remember, or communicate, to experience the presence of God requires the pastor to be more creative and more tactile than would perhaps be his/her normal practice. A variety of prompts can help the fragmented mirrors in the mind to reflect a memory—often singing favourite hymns or repeating the Lord’s Prayer: simplicity, repetition and regularity are key. It can be in that moment that the reality of God is somehow experienced.

The gift of time is one of the most important ways that God's love can be practically demonstrated.⁵ To spend time with someone is to value them and all that is important to them. For the person with dementia this generates positive feelings that remain long after the memory of any visitors have faded.⁶

The time given to building relationships is important to the pastor, too. A loving relationship develops as the pastor learns patience from, and spends time with, the dementia sufferer. Both are shaped 'in Christ' as the gift of time deepens the relationship. All that is learnt is helpful as opportunities are sought which shed light onto the dim mirror of memory and faith.⁷ This shaft of light is not about finding a cure for dementia, or minimising its devastating effects. It is about being part of a painful journey and believing that in the midst of it all God may be experienced and his love shared.

The carer and the pastor

The painful journey of dementia is also experienced by those who love and care. The pastor's role in supporting and encouraging these close family and friends is not about trying to find a cure for their pain. It is about helping them to discover God's love and presence in the midst of suffering.⁸

Perhaps one of the more significant areas for support is in dealing with a sense of loss and the continuing struggle to hope. These feelings can be expressed in anger, guilt and denial and often reoccur as the sufferer deteriorates and more skills and memories are lost.⁹

The pastor should be aware of the pressures on carers—perhaps by providing or arranging practical assistance. By releasing a loved one from the demands of care, even for a short time, the sense of separation experienced is lessened and hope is reinforced. It is the hope that, for themselves and their loved one, the separation they are experiencing is transitory. God is known and experienced, however fleetingly, in the present, and also restores all relationships in the course of time.

Knowing that, while 'now we see in a mirror dimly but one day we will see face to face' does not negate the strength or variety of feelings that the individual may experience. Guilt, for example, is often faced when the decision is taken to move the dementia sufferer from the family home. The pastor must stand alongside those who are struggling with the loss of the person they have always loved and known and his/her presence may serve as a reminder that God has not abandoned their loved one and not abandoned them. It may also be helpful to encourage a re-engagement with activities which were helpful in the past, such as hobbies and attending fellowship groups.¹⁰

Conclusion

It is clear from this reflection that the pastor has an important part in the spiritual nurture of all those affected by dementia. The pastor's role here is no different from spiritually nurturing any member of the community; each person will have different needs and ways of relating to God. Because the pastor knows that everyone sees through 'a mirror dimly', and no-one can see or know completely, she/he can help the whole community to draw closer to one another and to God through the varied experiences of life as they walk together along this painful path. Dementia brings its own particular challenges, but the pastor who offers spiritual guidance can never assume that she is further along the road than the rest of the community—although she may be looking in the mirror from a different angle. For the spiritual guide, the key thing is realising that in an ongoing relationship with God and others, all can continue to learn what it means to say 'faith, hope, and love abide, [but] the greatest of these is love' (1 Cor 13:13).

Helene Grant is a NAM serving at Christ Church LEP, Nailsworth and is studying for an MTh at Regent's. A fuller version of this reflection, with bibliography, is available on request.

Notes to text

1. www.alzheimers.org.uk
2. Kate Read, 'What is dementia?' in James Woodward (ed), *Between remembering and forgetting: the spiritual dimensions of dementia* (London: Mowbray, 2010), p2.
3. www.alzheimers.org.uk
4. John Swinton, *Dementia: living in the memories of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), p113.
5. See Higgins & Allen, *Worshipping with those with dementia*, p73 and Treloar, *The terminal care of people with dementia at home*, p102.
6. Shamy, *A guide to the spiritual dimension of care for people with Alzheimer's Disease and related dementia*, p76.
7. See Higgins & Allen, *Worshipping with those with dementia*, pp72-73, and Shamy, *ibid*, p72 and p75.
8. Christina Ryan Claypool, 'An Alzheimer's caregiver's journey: learning to love unconditionally,' in *Our Generation's Magazine*, November 2013 (Lima, OH).
9. Shamy, *ibid*, p165.
10. Shamy, *ibid*, pp171-172.

Remembering Baptists

by Andy Goodliff

Over the past six months I've begun to share a series of tweets that remember Baptists on the day of their death (#rememberingbaptists). This list is admittedly self-selected and yet also evolving, and without doubt there are names I have overlooked, or of which I am ignorant, that should be included. The list is an attempt to create a form of calendar of saints for Baptists.

I have written about this project elsewhere;¹ more recently, Paul Fiddes, Brian Haymes and Richard Kidd have written an excellent book on the theology of the communion of saints.² In the final chapter of their book they offer some helpful ways of recollecting the saints that might be included in the church's worship.³ The purpose in wanting to share these names from our history is to begin to overcome a lack of historical consciousness among most Baptists. Outside a few names, *eg* Helwys, Spurgeon, Carey and Bunyan,⁴ many of those who have shaped our Baptist story are unheard of. In remembering these particular lives, alongside knowing our story better, I hope we are open to learn from their witness and wisdom, to what Stephen Holmes has called *Listening to the past*.⁵

In drawing attention to these names I'm not suggesting that they are any more saintly than any other Christians,⁶ but instead that their lives have played a significant role in our identity as Baptists and, in some cases, among the wider church.⁷ We name them as those who have offered an example or vision of being Christian, as those who have helped us move forward. In doing so I am following the argument of Stanley Hauerwas for the necessity of witness.⁸ Hauerwas' theology is full of witnesses—for example, John Howard Yoder,⁹ John Paul II, Dorothy Day, Jean Vanier, Rowan Williams and the witness of church communities like Broadway Methodist Church and Aldersgate Methodist Church.¹⁰

Below is my current list as it stands. The most glaring omission is that of Thomas Helwys. As we do not know when he died, it is difficult to select a day other than at random—suggestions welcome.

I offer the list as a possible aid for others and as a means of generating a conversation on its merits (see over page).

January

- 2 **Johann Oncken**, preacher, Germany, 1884
- 14 **Ernest Payne**, General Secretary of BUGB, 1980
- 31 **Charles Spurgeon**, preacher, 1892

February

- 1 **James Henry Rushbrooke**, pacifist, pastor, 1947
- 11 **Muriel Lester**, pacifist, 1968
- 23 **George Beasley-Murray**, New Testament scholar, 2000

March

- 5 **Hannah Marshman**, missionary, 1847
- 9 **Athol Gill**, pastor and scholar, Australia, 1992
- 12 **John Howard Shakespeare**, General Secretary of the BUGB, 1928
- 12 **Violet Hedger**, 1992, pastor
- 12 **Stanley Grenz**, theologian, USA, 2005
- 13 **Gustavo Parajón**, 2006 BWA Human Rights Award, Nicaragua 2011
- 14 **Dorothy Hazzard**, cofounder of Broadmead BC, Bristol, 1675
- 16 **Marianne Farningham**, writer, 1909
- 28 **F.B. Meyer**, pastor, evangelist and writer, 1929

April

- 4 **Martin Luther King**, pastor and civil rights activist, 1968
- 5 **María Cristina Gómez**, school teacher, El Salvador, 1989
- 17 **Timothy Richard**, BMS Missionary, 1919
- 26 **Glen Stassen**, scholar and advocate of Just Peacemaking (2014)

May

- 7 **Andrew Fuller**, pastor and theologian, 1815
- 12 **H. Wheeler Robinson**, scholar, 1945
- 20 **Peter Standford**, pastor, 1909
- 23 **Samuel Sharpe**, deacon, Jamaica 1832

June

- 9 **William Carey**, missionary and founder of BMS, 1834

July

- 3 **Carlyle Marney**, pastor, USA, 1978
- 18 **Benjamin Keach**, pastor and theologian, 1704
- 25 **John Fawcett**, pastor and hymnwriter, 1817
- 25 **Walter Rauschenbusch**, theologian and pastor, USA 1918
- 30 **Frank Pais**, activist and pastor, Cuba, 1957

August

- 28 **John Smyth**, pastor and part of first Baptist congregation, 1612
- 31 **John Bunyan**, spiritual writer, 1688

September

- 15 **Daniel Turner**, pastor and hymn-writer, 1798
- 19 **Hanserd Knollys**, pastor, 1691

October

- 17 **Thomas Grantham**, pastor, 1692
- 19 **Helen Barrett Montgomery**, social reformer, educator, USA, 1934
- 29 **Clarence Jordan**, pastor and found of Koinonia Farm USA 1969
- 30 **James McClendon**, theologian, USA 2000

November

- 8 **David Russell**, scholar and General Secretary of BUGB, 2010
- 11 **Anne Steele**, hymn writer, 1778
- 15 **William Knibb**, missionary and anti-slavery campaigner, 1845
- 19 **Dan Taylor**, General Baptist pastor of the New Connexion, 1816
- 20 **John Clifford**, pastor and campaigner, 1923

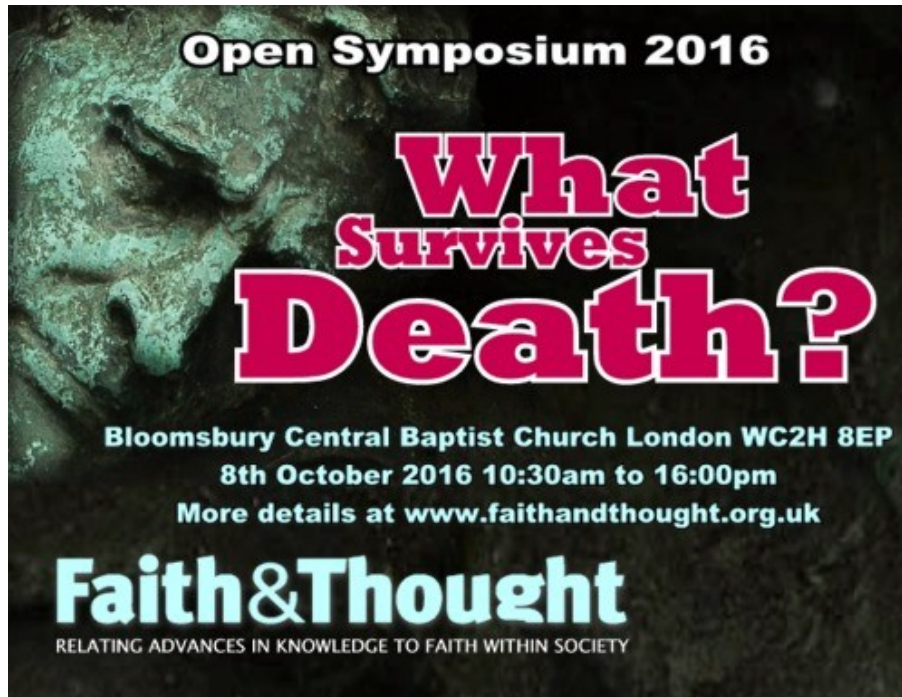
December

- 17 **John Rippon**, pastor, 1836
- 18 **W.T. Whitley**, historian, 1947
- 24 **Lottie Moon**, missionary, 1912
- 29 **William Kiffin**, pastor, 1701

Notes to text

1. Andy Goodliff, 'Towards a Baptist Sanctoral?', *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 13.4 (May 2013).
2. Paul Fiddes, Brian Haymes and Richard Kidd, *Baptists and the communion of saints* (Baylor, 2014).
3. I was especially interested in the suggestion of how the saints may play a part in those preparing for baptism.
4. Here I draw attention to Peter Morden's two books, *C. H. Spurgeon: the people's preacher* (CWR, 2009) and *John Bunyan: The people's pilgrim* (CWR, 2013) as two examples of making our Baptist history readable and accessible. We need more of this.
5. Stephen R. Holmes, *Listening to the past: the place of tradition in theology* (Paternoster, 2002).
6. In my view, following Paul, all Christians are saints (Rom. 1.7; 1 Cor. 1.2; Eph. 1.1; Phil. 1.1; Col. 1.2). See Fiddes *et al*, *Baptists and the Communion of Saints*, pp.8-11.
7. Two Baptists—John Bunyan and Martin Luther King are part of the calendar of saints in the Church of England (in the case of Bunyan) and the Episcopal Church in the US (in the case of Luther King).
8. Stanley Hauerwas, *With the grain of the universe* (SCM, 2003 [2001]).
9. The choice of John Howard Yoder is increasingly controversial following the uncovering of his sexual abuse towards women. For one account see David Cramer, Jenny Howell, Jonathan Tran & Paul Martens, 'Scandalizing John Howard Yoder', *The Other Journal*, July 2014 <http://theotherjournal.com/2014/07/07/scandalizing-john-howard-yoder/#>. Hauerwas' own account can be found in *Hannah's child* (SCM, 2010), pp.242-247.
10. See in particular *With the grain of the universe* and *Sanctify them in the truth* (T & T Clark, 2016 [1998]).

Andy Goodliff is minister of Southend Baptist Church. The references can be found at the end of this article and the calendar itself is to be found overleaf. Contact Andy with your responses and suggestions.



Book reviewers!

If you would like to review, please contact Michael Peat and let him know which areas you are interested in.

Reviews

Editor: Michael Peat

Rediscovering a ministry of health: parish nursing as a mission of the local church

Helen A. Wordsworth

Wipf & Stock, 2015

Reviewer: Paul Ballard

Parish nursing is both a new phenomenon and a ministry that has deep roots. The church has always been concerned for the ministry of healing and care. This has taken different forms down the centuries, from the hospitality of the monasteries to the deaconesses of the 19th and 20th centuries, not least among Baptist churches. Parish nursing as a new phenomenon can be seen as a response to and an acceptance of the professional standards and practices of modern regulated nursing. It started in Chicago in 1985, but has now spread widely not only in N America but now increasingly in the UK. Helen Wordsworth is well placed as an advocate. A nurse by training, she has also been a regional mission enabler, helping congregations to develop their community ministry. More recently she has been CEO of Parish Nursing Ministries UK, facilitating a number of pilot schemes.

Parish nurses are fully qualified nurses who work out of the congregation. They are part of the ministry of the church,

caring for the whole person and reaching out into the wider community. They can work with individuals and families, both those attached to the community of faith and beyond, supplementing and complementing the provision of the statutory health services. They can also develop structures and networks that meet specific needs or offer groups support. Whether full-time or part-time, salaried or volunteers, they become part of the ministry and mission of the congregation, often spearheading the pastoral care team. Their distinguishing mark, therefore, is that, although they will meet the needs of any or all, without prejudice, they are there specifically in the name of Christ. In this parish nursing is at the spearhead of 'integrated mission'.

Thus they work with a comprehensive model of health that encompasses a holistic view of the person, mind, body, emotions, and spirit shaped and rooted in communal relationships. The aim is to enable people, step by step, as appropriate, starting where they are, to grow into a fuller and deeper reality that, in theological and biblical terms is called health and fulfilment which is ultimately to be found in God.

All this goes, to some extent, against the secularised models of medical care that we are used to in the UK. Indeed, some have come into parish nursing because they feel they can exercise their sense of vocation more readily. However, the experience is that, despite some resistance and suspicion, given sensitivity and care, it is possible to build creative working relationships with the statutory health services, indeed being welcome and

enriching to both. The professional skills of the parish nurses guarantee an accepted quality of service. This is also facilitated by the growing recognition that 'spirituality' (whatever that means) is a vital dimension of health and wholeness.

This book came out of a thesis. It can be said to be in two parts. The first seeks to embed parish nursing in the theology and practice of the local mission. The second offers a reflection, through the analysis of questionnaires and structured interviews, on the actual outworking of parish nursing in practice. This produces not only evidence of the value of parish nursing but some valuable vignettes reveal instances of real ministry. It is, therefore, both a careful and comprehensive introduction to principles and practice, a real resource for any who want to explore the possibility of developing this specific ministry and also useful as a way of reflecting on the nature of health and healing in practical terms.

Vital truth: the convictions of the Christian community

By Nigel Wright

Cascade 2015

ISBN 978-1-4982-2574-8

Reviewer: Sally Nelson

Nigel Wright's great gift for delivering theology in an accessible and readable format is not compromised in this single-volume paperback theology book. From a Baptist perspective he examines key doctrines and practices of

the Christian community and assembles them into a 'toolkit' to help us in our thinking about our faith—and it is inviting to the reader, while still covering a lot of important material.

The title, *Vital truth*, reminded me very fleetingly of Bruce Milne's 1982 *Know the truth*, a single-volume doctrine textbook beloved of evangelical Bible college students in the 1990s. But there the similarity ends. A brief comparison of the contents pages of the two books is really interesting and shows how emphases (though not the vital truth itself!) have changed. The Milne volume begins classically with the authority of scripture and the meaning of revelation—followed, as in so many introductory texts, by the doctrine of God, Jesus, the Spirit, a short section on the church (at least it is there!), and the last things.

Nigel Wright's *Vital truth* covers all this doctrine too, but the book's approach and balance is very different, reflecting the changed climate of postchristendom culture, and faithful to his subtitle, *The convictions of the Christian community*. Wright begins and ends with a discussion of the community of faith. His focus on the church as the lived centre of experience of Christian faith achieves two key goals.

It breathes life into what historically felt like dry material. Wright's book, rather than giving 'answers', will open discussions, offer ideas, and make connections.

By focusing on the Christian community it trains our attention on the

key mechanism available to us for challenging and transforming our host culture. The church is potentially THE countercultural sign of the Kingdom, if we can live in the shape of Jesus—and therein lies our need for doctrine in the first place.

Things have moved on in theological writing—and thank goodness they have. *Vital truth* is great for students at an early stage of theological education, and also for preaching ministers who want to refresh their existing knowledge; it could also, because it comprises short, accessible chapters, be used for study groups in the church to consolidate a Baptist approach to doctrine. It is a gift to encourage our thinking and wrestling with the person of Jesus and the character of the community that bears his name and image.

Six books on recent Baptist theology

Reviewer: Andy Goodliff

Here are six books of excellent Baptist theology to remind us where we have come from and help in the task of what it is to be a Baptist people today.

Stephen Holmes, *Baptist theology* (T & T Clark, 2012)

Steve is well known to lots of us and this short-ish book (179pp) is an example of why he is often first on the list among associations and churches looking for someone to help us think theologically. *Baptist theology* offers a guide to what it means to put 'Baptist' in front of

theology. The first few chapters offer a quick guide to the Baptist story. Later chapters explore our distinctives on church, freedom of religion and mission. This book would be great for a church book group.

Curtis Freeman, *Contesting catholicity: theology for Other Baptists* (Baylor, 2014)

This book from Curtis Freeman, Professor of Theology at Duke Divinity School, North Carolina, is arguably the most important piece of Baptist theology since Paul Fiddes, *Tracks and traces* (2003). Freeman argues that to be Baptist is to be part of the catholic (universal) church, but that our existence presents that catholicity as contested. In other words, Baptists are not and should not consider themselves a sect, separate from the rest of God's church, and the rest of God's church should receive, listen and engage with Baptists as those with something to offer in our share desire to follow Christ. The second half of the book is a set of essays on how Baptists have thought about God as Trinity, ministry, church, scripture, the Lord's Supper and baptism, which weave story and theology together.

Paul Fiddes, Richard Kidd & Brian Haymes, *Baptists and the communion of saints* (Baylor, 2014)

At first glance many Baptists might see this title and think, 'we don't do saints.' And on that basis that is one reason this book is worth reading. This is a creative book at the same time is rooted in our being Baptist. It takes a marginal doctrine in our Baptist life and argues for its

importance. As you might expect from Paul Fiddes this is centred in a theology of covenant. The final chapter on the difference the doctrine makes may well make you think differently about how you lead worship, offer pastoral care with the dying and bereaved, and prepare candidates for baptism.

Rodney Wallace Kennedy & Derek C. Hatch (eds), *Gathering together: Baptists at work in worship* (Pickwick, 2013)

This collection of essays is a great place to think about worship. There are chapters on prayer, creeds, preaching, eucharist, baptism, music as well as chapters on using the Christian year and mission. The first chapter by Kyle Childress tells the story of how he journeyed with his church to become to take liturgy more seriously. When worship can be so superficial, this book demands that we think more theologically about the shape, content and purpose of our worship.

Simon Woodman & Helen Dare (eds), *The 'plainly revealed' Word of God? Baptist hermeneutics in theory and practice* (Mercer, 2011)

This book has probably not had the attention or readership it deserves. This is a fine collection of essays from the likes of Paul Fiddes, John Colwell, Chris Ellis, Sean Winter, Rex Mason and Simon Woodman, among others. How do Baptists read the Bible? A pressing question for us today. This book will help us all as

ministers, whether local, regional or national, find ways to read the Bible together as Baptists. When we are asking whether it is still possible for us to stay in relationship with one another when we disagree over how we read and interpret scripture, here are some important attempts to answer that question.

Steven Harmon, *Baptist identity and the ecumenical future: story, tradition, and the recovery of tradition* (Baylor, 2016)

This is something of a sequel to Harmon's earlier book, *Towards a Baptist catholicity* (Paternoster, 2006). He is committed to Baptists being part of the ecumenical conversation, again like Freeman, not just for our benefit, but also that of the wider church. The book is set in the light of recent conversations between the Baptist World Alliance and the Roman Catholic church, in which to surprise, possibly shock to many Baptists (and probably equally Roman Catholics) found a considerable amount of common ground. Harmon's argument offers Baptists a reason to make our ongoing commitment to ecumenism a priority and at the same time in a way that is particularly Baptist. When many of us are disillusioned with, or ignorant, of what is happening ecumenically—where the Week of Prayer of Christian Unity is given scant attention—Harmon calls us to get involved (an earlier book by Harmon is called *Ecumenism means you*).

