

**the baptist ministers'
journal**

October 2011 volume 312

A priestly ministry

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Conflict resolution

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Caring for the dying

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From the editor

The saints come marching in...

Recently a friend visited Italy, and returned with a postcard of Annigoni's painting of the Last Supper. I didn't know this painting, but the artist's interpretation of the mood of the Supper was really interesting.

The only figure pictured with real clarity is that of Jesus, who wears a red garment, exudes a sense of calm, and is surrounded by light, a distant cross looming over his head. The rest of the painting can best be described as chaotic! The table itself is a rough trestle covered with an untidy cloth. The disciples are seated in isolated clumps, not nicely spaced out, and all are in shadow. Some look tired; some look angry; some furtive; some might be the worse for wear! Only two are near Jesus.

This cluster of unprepossessing men is Jesus's main support group! As he anticipates the establishment's plans for him, the reality suggested by Annigoni is that he is leading an assortment of disorganised and divided individuals—yet from this unpromising start was born the church. These men were actually saints in the making.

At the summer Hearts and Minds Consultation at Regent's, Steve Holmes presented a paper that triggered (among other things) a discussion of what constitutes a saint. The consensus was that a saint is not so much a 'holier-than-thou' person as someone who is at the forefront of proclamation of the Kingdom of God. This kind of saint may well be thought of as an eccentric and possibly even a heretic until history puts the story into a context.

I am prompted to ask: who are the 'saints' in my congregation? Possibly not just the ones we first thought of, who are helpful, kind, and selfless; but also those who are a pain, those whose ideas are uncomfortable, those who challenge us at every step because of their commitment to Christ. Maybe these unlikely ones round our tables will be the builders of tomorrow's church.

Ministry has never been easy, but faces new problems in recession-blighted, post-modern Britain. In this issue there are several offerings on pastoral work today. One of our vital tasks is to discern and liberate the truth, and to set free the 'saints' to do their work of regenerating the church. Share your wisdom and experience through these pages. *SN*

A priestly ministry?

by John Colwell

τολημρότερον δὲ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ἀπὸ μέρους ὡς ἐπαναμνησῶν ὑμᾶς διὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθείσάν μοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς τὸ εἶναι με λειτουργὸν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, ἱερουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα γένηται ἡ προσφορὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.

I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:16)

I count it a significant honour to address the BMF—though it may be discouraging to acknowledge that, after nearly 40 years of ministry, I still find myself reflecting somewhat uncertainly concerning the nature of that ministry. This hesitancy has been compounded by the increasing difficulty of speaking within our Baptist context of a separated and ordained ministry without someone raising the objection that all Christians are called to ministry.

Usually this protest is expressed with reference to the priesthood of all believers into which all are baptised, with the implication that this priesthood of all somehow ‘trumps’ any reference to a distinct and particular call to a distinct and separated ministry. As a signal instance of this objection I recall Paul Beasley-Murray’s piece within the *Baptist Times* marking the 40th anniversary of his ordination, and the subsequent letter in the correspondence column ‘reminding’ Paul that he was ‘ordained’ at his baptism. One does not have to serve long on BU committees or Council to encounter similar objections: whenever an issue relating to ordained ministry is under discussion a contending declaration of the priesthood of all believers is predictable.

The objection, of course, may arise from an entirely appropriate concern to avoid the pretensions of clericalism and to preserve a perceived proper balance between lay and ordained representation within the committees and structures of our Union (though I suspect that those raising the protest would repudiate the terms and the distinction they represent). While this concern may be appropriate, it is the form of the objection and its implicit undermining of the validity of a separated ordained ministry—not to mention a ministry which, as in this text, might be expressed in priestly terms—that prompts my reflection.

I strongly suspect that many of those who so glibly bandy the words ‘priesthood of all believers’ have little or no awareness of the history and original reference of the phrase—indeed, the finesse with which the phrase is often cited suggests that many may assume the phrase to be biblical. Though the precise phrase is absent in the works of Martin Luther, this emphasis on the priesthood of all is rightly attributed to him: it is Luther who affirms that we are all consecrated as priests through our baptism—though he seems to make the affirmation without prejudice to the continuing validity of a separated and ordained ministry.

The Reformation

In the context of the Reformation the concern, of course, was to contend that all Christians could come before God through Christ’s priestly mediation. Yet Luther’s principal concern, here and elsewhere, appears to be more focused on the affirmation that all baptised Christians are called by God to serve the gospel; that whether you are the butcher, the baker, or the candlestick-maker this daily task is as much your vocation as is the call to serve the church in ordained ministry.

More generally we find in other Reformation writers, including our own Baptist forebears, a rejection of the sacerdotalism that had developed in the later Middle Ages (an emphasis on priestly power deriving at least in part from John Duns Scotus’ qualification of instrumental causality as it had been represented by Thomas Aquinas). But this general rejection of priestly power was only very rarely a rejection of ordained ministry itself; the Magisterial Reformers, together with most Anabaptist and Baptist writers, tended to affirm the continuing validity of ordained ministry even expressing this in mediatorial terms with respect to word and sacrament. As I have argued elsewhere, God tends not to bypass his creation in his encounters with us within creation: ultimately he is fully present to us in the human flesh of Jesus of Nazareth and, correspondingly, he renders himself present to the church through word and sacrament and through those he has separated to this ministry, just as he renders himself present to the world through the church and the everyday lives of her members—the latter mediation need not nullify the former.

I suspect that few Baptists would have questioned this summary in the 1950s and early 1960s, when my family first began worshipping at a Baptist church. There were several features that distinguished the experience from the mission hall from which we had come: there was a choir that sang an introit, an anthem, and a dismissal; there was a proper pipe organ; we chanted a psalm every Sunday morning

and sang the Lord's Prayer; but the greatest distinction by far was the rôle of the minister.

In the first place there *was* a minister. In the second place he always wore a clerical collar. In the third place it was the minister who clearly was responsible for worship, for the ministry of the word, and for pastoral care. And, perhaps most significantly, it was the minister who always presided at the Lord's Table—it would have been quite unthinkable in that Baptist church at that time for a deacon to have substituted for the minister at communion: if our minister was absent and no other ordained minister was present, then communion was cancelled. And even a cursory knowledge of English Baptist history confirms that this deference to an ordained minister, particularly at the Lord's Supper, was commonplace.

Brethrenism and the charismatics

Such a description will seem to many younger hearers and readers both foreign and bizarre—the change of ethos in most Baptist churches in all of these respects within a mere 50 years is astonishing (not least when one reflects on the relative stability of the tradition over the previous century). And, with due humility, I suspect that people of my background are largely responsible at least for one element of such change. Since the 1950s in this country Open Brethrenism has been in marked decline and many whose roots were in Brethrenism have gravitated to Baptist churches (and many have brought their theological prejudices with them).

If many Baptist churches today have an eldership either alongside or in place of a diaconate, if the minister is seen as a member of that eldership (albeit the leading elder), if that minister and those elders are perceived as 'leaders' rather than as ministers of word and sacrament, if a theology of ordination is reduced to the pragmatics of recognition and accreditation, and if (consequently) it is taken for granted that just about anyone can preach or preside at communion, the aroma of Brethrenism is unmistakable. And if this displacement of ministry by notions of leadership is promoted, at least in part, in rejection of a priestly clericalism, is it not a little ironic that (though we ought not to read too much into the derivation of words) the Greek word usually translated as 'priest' (a derivative of which occurs in our text) gives us our word 'hierarchy'?

That the influence of the charismatic movement has compounded this mutation, particularly with respect to an understanding of a distinct and separated ministry, is ironic to the point of contradiction. How is it that a spirituality that draws its inspi-

ration so heavily from 1 Corinthians, passages that attest distinctions of gifts and ministries, concludes by encouraging this ‘anyone can’ culture (though if Restorationism is now the dominant charismatic influence on our churches it should be noted that Restorationism is thoroughly Brethren in its ecclesiology)?

It is this ‘anyone can’ culture for which the phrase ‘priesthood of all believers’ seems to have become a catchphrase—though this can only be perceived as a corruption of its Reformation significance. The phrase, of course, never occurs in Scripture—the phrase that does occur in Scripture, in both Old and New Testaments, is ‘royal priesthood’, an ascription that John Calvin takes as referring to our inclusion in the single priesthood of Christ, a priesthood of all participating in his unique and ultimate priesthood rather than an individualistic priesthood of ‘each’. Moreover, we should note that this royal priesthood referred to in 1 Peter and Revelation echoes the application of the phrase to Israel in Exodus 19:6—a royal priesthood of all Israel which is without prejudice to the separated priesthood of Aaron and his descendants.

What kind of ministry?

It must be conceded that, beside these references to a royal priesthood of ‘all’, the usual Greek noun translated ‘priest’ (*ἱερεύς*) is never used in the New Testament in relation to a separated Christian ministry, but the related verb (*ἰερουργέω*) is used just once in a personal and particular sense, within Romans 15:16—it is this single use of the term that renders the verse so interesting. My question, then, is whether Paul’s unapologetically priestly understanding of his calling and ministry can inform and renew an understanding of ministry for us. The pressing contemporary question, I believe, is not whether ordained ministry is functional or ontological, or whether or not ordination is indelible, but the more basic question of what it is that we are separated by ordination to be and to do—address this question, and perhaps a response to these other contested issues will follow in its wake.

In coming to the text perhaps I ought to begin by clarifying what is *not* being claimed. In the first place I would not pretend that this text represents an adequate basis for a theology of a separated ministry or a theology of ordination—the text is descriptive rather than definitive and such a theology, I believe, should be established more generally in response to the New Testament. Ephesians 4:11ff speaks of those given to the church by the ascended Christ as the means through which the

church comes to maturity; the Lord Jesus calls all to love him and to follow him but he does not call all to feed his sheep (John 21:15ff); in the context of prayer and fasting and in response to the prompting of the Spirit Barnabas and Saul are ‘set apart’ for the work to which they have been called (Acts 13:1ff). Paul, in this text towards the end of his letter to the Romans, is justifying the ‘boldness’ he has assumed in addressing them, that justification rests on the validity of his calling and of the ‘grace’ given him, but the verse which forms our focus is describing this calling and this grace rather than seeking to establish it.

Neither is there anything immediately and explicitly eucharistic in this verse. We all are aware that the issue of ‘lay presidency’ is one of the more contentious questions of ecumenical encounter: my ordination would not officially be recognised within the Church of England and certainly would not be recognised within the Roman Catholic church; in such contexts I would be considered a layman and my celebration of communion would be deemed invalid. While I have already alluded to the older Baptist practice of deferring to an ordained minister in a service of communion, this is not a point I would want to press.

Passover and priests

Assuming that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, perhaps we should note (and the church should recall) that, in essence and origin, the Passover was not a priestly rite. Certainly it customarily was celebrated by the head of the household (*pater familias*) but, notwithstanding priestly allusions in the accounts of Hezekiah’s reforms (2 Chronicles 30) and Josiah’s reforms (2 Kings 23:21ff and 2 Chronicles 35), and notwithstanding a possibly more centralised celebration of the feast within Second Temple Judaism, a priest was not required for the celebration of the Passover—the feast may have been patriarchal but it wasn’t sacerdotal. One could therefore conclude that though ordained presidency is appropriate it is not essential; communion, like the Passover, is not a priestly sacrifice.

This final point could be taken as refuting Catholic notions of the eucharist as a sacrifice, a re-presenting of Christ in bread and wine, but my objection is to sacerdotal understandings of the eucharist rather than sacrificial understandings of the eucharist. The Passover was and is a participatory sacrificial meal—it simply doesn’t require the ministrations of a priest. The eucharist, I would argue, is similarly a sacrificial meal; a re-presenting of Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice rather than a repetition

of that sacrifice; a genuine participation in the sacrifice of Christ just as the Passover is a genuine participation in the Exodus story. In the eucharist, as in the proclamation of the gospel, Christ crucified and risen is made present again by the Spirit—and here, perhaps, we arrive at the positive significance of this verse.

In coming to the text itself it might be helpful to begin with the central phrase of v16 ('...with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God'). As already mentioned, the word used here and somewhat tendentiously translated in the NIV in terms of a 'priestly duty of proclaiming...' is the present active participle of a verb that occurs nowhere else either in the New Testament or the Septuagint. In Philo and Josephus the verb is used of the priestly offering of sacrifices or of the performing sacred rites, in Plutarch, similarly, the passive voice of the verb is used of the sacrifices being offered. Whatever we make of the rest of the verse, then, the priestly significance of this word in the central phrase of v16 seems incontestable—as John Ziesler comments, '...the terminology of this verse is strongly redolent of that of the Temple' we have here 'the transfer of Jewish cultic language to the Christian community'.

The next question is whether this central phrase reiterates and expands on the first phrase ('...to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles') or whether it relates not at all to the first phrase but rather introduces the third phrase ('...so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit'). That the final phrase is introduced by the conjunction 'so that' (*ἵνα*) strongly suggests that the final phrase represents the outcome of the previous two phrases rather than merely an expansion of the second phrase—which renders it surprising that, contrary to grammatical probability, commentators tend to link the middle phrase with the final phrase, evading the possibility of an unequivocal priestly understanding of the first phrase.

The meaning of ministry

Certainly the noun translated 'minister' in the first phrase of v16 (*λειτουργόν*), though often used in a sacral or cultic sense, is sometimes used of service more generally and is used in the Septuagint of the ministry of Levites as well as the ministry of priests. However, if the second phrase of this verse qualifies the first phrase, then we surely are compelled to accept that the apostle understood his ministry to the Gentiles in priestly terms: through the proclamation of the gospel

Paul, in a priestly and mediatorial sense, believed himself to be the means of the presence of Christ among the Gentiles.

Some may object that this is reading rather too much into a simple genitive: might not Paul simply be saying that he is a ‘servant’ of Jesus Christ? This may be the simpler reading but the genitive is also capable of this stronger sense—that Paul’s priestly ministry is a making present of Jesus Christ to the nations—and the explicitly priestly language of the middle phrase of the verse encourages this stronger sense. And what is Christian ministry if it is not, by God’s grace, a making present of Christ? What is Christian preaching if it is merely a matter of intellectual persuasion? Why would we or Paul need ‘grace’ for such—surely we would merely need competence?

To restate the obvious, it is the function of a priest to represent God to the people and the people to God—consequently, in the final phrase of v16, the dynamic of priestly ministry is reversed: Paul fulfils this priestly responsibility to the nations in order that he might present those nations as a priestly sacrifice to God. The word here translated ‘offering’ (*προσφορά*) again generally finds its place in a priestly and sacrificial setting, reinforcing the imagery of the verse as a whole. Interestingly, John Ziesler links this offering of the Gentiles to the promise of the fulfilment of God’s purposes that Paul has lauded in Romans 11: this priestly ministry which is Paul’s apostolic calling is the means through which God brings about his universal purposes of salvation.

However, that Paul adds the adjectival phrase, ‘sanctified by the Holy Spirit’, draws us back to the introductory phrase at the end of v15: that Paul has this priestly ministry in the first place and continually is a consequence of the ‘grace’ God gave him just as the offering of the nations as an ‘acceptable’ sacrifice is dependent upon the sanctifying work of the Spirit. God brings about his purposes in the world by his Spirit, the making holy of the nations as an offering before God is one element of this universal purpose, but here as elsewhere, what God does by his Spirit he does through the flesh and blood of his servants: it is God’s grace to, in, and through, Paul that constitutes the manner in which the Spirit achieves this sanctifying purpose.

Partly in protest against the objectifying of grace in the mediaeval western church, Reformed theology tends to restrict the use of the term ‘grace’ to the character of God himself. This is a justifiable and understandable corrective but it can be overplayed through a passing over of the breadth of uses of the term within the New Tes-

tament. It is hard not to conclude that here, as in other places, grace represents not just a calling to the apostle but also a gift to the apostle and a deposit within the apostle: he is what he is and does what he does solely through this gracious calling and gracious indwelling; that he can be the means of the presence of Christ to the nations and that he can be the means through which they are made holy by the Spirit and offered to God as an acceptable sacrifice is entirely an outcome of the grace of this calling.

Neither can the grace spoken of in this verse be ‘generalised’ in terms of a priestly ministry of all believers: Paul is speaking specifically and particularly of the ministry entrusted to him. And while this is the only place in the New Testament where Paul uses this explicitly priestly language, the threefold dynamic of this text recurs throughout the Pauline corpus: that Paul’s ministry is a presenting of Christ, that it issues in a presenting of the nations as mature in Christ before God, that this ministry is wholly an outcome of the gracious calling Paul has received and the gracious fulfilment of the promise implicit in that gracious calling. The question is whether that which is specific to Paul is similarly specific to all those who similarly are called and separated to a ministry that is pastoral but also truly apostolic, prophetic, and evangelistic.

Both through our contentious use of the phrase ‘priesthood of all believers’ and in a proper rejection of sacerdotal clericalism, Baptists generally are reluctant to speak of ordained ministry in priestly terms. As here I have argued, there is nothing in these verses (or elsewhere) that encourages a priestly understanding of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, nothing here or elsewhere that detracts from the unique and ultimate priesthood of Christ, nothing here or elsewhere that qualifies the freedom of every man and woman to approach the Father through the Son and by the Spirit.

But perhaps there is in these verses an encouragement to view all separated Christian ministry—by which I mean ministry that is the outcome of a specific call and a specific promise of grace—in priestly terms. Indeed, is not this precisely the promise of ministry, that Christ will make himself present in us and through us; that the Spirit through us will sanctify and perfect those to whom we are called to minister? And if this is the true nature of our calling it is certainly more than mere function, it is the calling, orientation, and promise that pervades the whole of life.

John Colwell is minister of Budleigh Salterton Baptist Church and was previously Tutor in Christian Doctrine at Spurgeon’s College. The text of this article formed his presidential address to the BMF at Blackpool in 2011. A fully referenced version is available from John, who can be contacted at jcolwell@btinternet.com.

What are you?

by Sue Barker

In *Retreats*, the annual magazine of the National Retreat Association, one can find many courses on the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Enneagram. Once you have been on such a course, friends are likely to ask, 'What are you?'. I will offer brief descriptions both of the MBTI and the Enneagram, but for further explanation of the different personality types a list of further reading is given.

In recent times spirituality has been typically expressed in different ways. Philip Sheldrake describes spirituality as 'the human response to God that is both personal and ecclesial—in short, "life in the Spirit";' while Roy Kearsley stresses that 'repentance is a moral act involving the turning of the whole person in spirit, mind and will to consent, and subjection, to the will of God'. I prefer to think of spirituality as our relationship with God, as opposed to our knowledge of God, which is theology. As with any relationship, there is change and growth in becoming more Christlike, and this is found in each of the descriptions.

The Myers-Briggs

The MBTI was based on Jung's work, started by Katherine Briggs (born in 1875 in the US) and developed by her daughter Isabel Myers, who was disturbed at the number of people asked to undertake tasks for which they seemed to have no aptitude during WWII. It was difficult for an unqualified woman to break into the psychological establishment in the US, and it was not until 1975 that the Consulting Psychologists' Press took over the publication of the MBTI. From that moment it took off and has now become the most widely used psychological instrument in the world. The MBTI is made up of two pairs of attitudes and two pairs of functions.

Attitude: Extrovert/Introvert
Function: Sensing/iNtuitive
Function: Thinking/Feeling
Attitude: Judging/Perceiving

Each of us uses all, but prefers one of each pair, and it is these preferences which

make up our 'type', which consists of four letters: E or I; S or N; T or F; J or P.

Many people can work out their type from descriptions of the attitudes and functions, but to obtain a more accurate typing and to discover how much of a preference one has, it is very useful to go on a Myers-Briggs workshop. Once booked for a workshop, a questionnaire is received, consisting of 150 questions devised by Myers-Briggs. The form is returned and a qualified evaluator plots the result on a scale of preference from 0-70. These results are only for the person concerned and cannot be compared with other peoples' results because the score is the difference in preference only and does not measure abilities or development.

Preferences in life and worship

By studying the MBTI we can see how different people prefer to get their energy, to take in information, and to analyse that information. These preferences not only affect the way we live at home and at work, but also affect our spiritual lives, influencing the way we prefer to pray, how we like our church services, and all aspects of church life. By acknowledging our type, we begin to understand why we may sometimes find some forms of spiritual activity lacking in meaning, fulfilment or satisfaction, and rather than feeling guilty or thinking that there is something wrong with us, we may wish to explore other ways of prayer and worship.

The MBTI can help to explain why some people prefer to worship with their senses stimulated, as within Roman Catholic churches; while others enjoy strong biblical preaching to get them thinking, and yet others prefer a charismatic service. It could also explain why prayer meetings are often attended by only a small proportion of a church's congregation, and why some folk get benefit from going on retreat, whereas for others it seems to be a boring waste of time!

In a recent television programme on silence, we could see that for some, being quiet and alone suited them; while others took several days to adjust to that way of life—but, having discovered it, they found it a profound experience, showing that prayer and silence is needed by us all but are far more difficult for some personalities.

Different personality types will prefer to pray in different ways, be attracted to different gospels, and like to sing different hymns and songs. Morton Kelsey, in *Companions on the inner way*, admitted that 'it is often difficult for us to see how those of a totally opposite type from ourselves can be Christian!'. This statement has been of the greatest help to me as I have realised that both those I have found difficult,

and those who have found me difficult, are of a different type to myself!

As well as each individual having a personality type, churches will also have distinctive personality types, which may be very different from that of the minister! So we have to be very careful within our churches if we want to introduce change. We often say that people do not like change, but it could be that a church is suited to the present form of worship. Introducing a more informal form of worship will not suit those who prefer order, whereas some changes will help others to grow in their spiritual lives.

Although we are aware that we grow and develop physically from babyhood, through teenage years into adulthood, middle years and old age, we often do not realise that our personalities go through a similar maturing process. It is believed that our MBTI type never alters, but in mid-life we can start to discover and use aspects of our 'shadow' type. I am an INFP and my shadow type ('opposite') is ESTJ. By undertaking academic study in my 40s I was forced to use my T function and J attitude. By using the shadow type, the differences in our preferences become smaller, and as a result we become more balanced and whole people. However, one of the problems of exploring the MBTI is that once we have found our type we can use it as an excuse for the way we behave and prefer to worship!

The Enneagram

While the MBTI concentrates on preferred behaviours, the Enneagram looks at our way of coping with life, which in turn influences the way we act. There is mystery and secrecy surrounding the Enneagram and its history. It is thought to have originated in Afghanistan nearly 2000 years ago, with links into early Christianity in Persia and then into Muslim Sufi circles in central Asia and India. Until the 20th century it remained an oral tradition, with the Sufi master only imparting that aspect of the Enneagram relevant to the student's personality.

It was introduced to the US in the early 1970s by Oschar Ichazo, who studied the system in Chile, and from there the Enneagram was passed on through (oral) lectures. Around the same time it was also taken up by G.I. Gurdjieff, who was an early pioneer in adapting Eastern spiritual teachings for use by modern Westerners. Gurdjieff developed the basic diagram of nine points in a circle (Enneagram means 'nine points'). Although the teachings were passed on to others, including religious orders, especially the Jesuits, part of the instruction was to keep the method a secret. However, by the 1980s this part of the instruction seems to have been dropped as many

courses have been held and books published.

The Enneagram identifies nine personality types and their inter-relationships; the basic idea being that very early on in life we realise that we are unloved, which leads to some form of compulsion. It is the way in which this happens that forms our Enneagram types. Each type is known by its number, but in some books each type is named after the compulsion. Because many of us find it difficult to acknowledge our compulsions, which can be thought to be negative, other authors use the gift of each type to give a more positive description. The nine types are as follows.

One: the Perfectionist or the Reformer

Two: the Giver or the Helper

Three: the Performer or the Achiever

Four: the Tragic Romantic or the Individualist

Five: the Observer or the Investigator

Six: the Devil's Advocate or the Loyalist

Seven: the Epicure or the Enthusiast

Eight: the Boss or the Challenger

Nine: the Mediator or the Peacemaker

The Enneagram was originally developed as a spiritual tool to be used by the Sufi master, to help their directees to grow spiritually, but the way it is now presented in books and short courses does not generally encourage people to grow, but is usually just for the interest of the student.

Discovering one's type

The Sufi master would discover the personality of the student through the answers given to the master's questions. There was no one set of questions: the next question asked would depend on the previous answer. It was a time-consuming occupation and although we now have books to study, it can still take a long time to discover one's type. Many have found that although they thought they were one number, further study has revealed that their first decision was wrong. This could be because within the Enneagram we can have elements of a neighbouring type and move from one type to another depending on whether we are feeling secure or

are under stress. Serious study of the Enneagram can show us our compulsions, and those things which hinder us from becoming the person God created.

On one course I attended, the tutor had made a 3D illustration of the Enneagram, looking like a nine-sided tepee, with the nine lines reaching from the nine points on the base to meet at the top. As we each mature, we travel up from the point of our type and at the same time become closer to the other types. This helps to explain why for some people it is difficult to know their type.

Growing up in Christ

Whereas within the MBTI we grow and develop by using our under-developed shadow side, within the Enneagram, spirituality and development are intertwined. Some people have tried to link the two methods of typing, (these ideas can be found on the internet). However, both personality typings were designed to be used as a shorthand method of getting to know the personality of another. In recent years they have become a tool for people to discover more about themselves. By accepting who we are, acknowledging our faults and our type, and knowing that God still loves us despite all our failings, we can grow spiritually. At the same time, the personality typings can be used in superficial ways for ourselves or to second guess the personality of others, including biblical characters.

There are books on both the MBTI and the Enneagram which explore the issue of Jesus's personality type and the conclusions have been that he is a perfect balance of all the personality types. Part of Jesus's divinity is that he was the perfect human *being* and in our spiritual development we can be described as human *becomings*.

One of Susan Howatch's characters explains that 'by putting yourself under the microscope in this way, you've learned something you didn't know before—and that's definitely a step forward on the spiritual journey where our first task is to know ourselves as well as we can in order to grasp what we can become'. That is how we should use these personality typings: as a tool to enable us to go forward in our walk with God. The MBTI and the Enneagram are only tools, 'something useful up to a certain point'. We cannot rely on manmade tools to guide us spiritually, but must keep our eyes on Jesus, our one true counsellor; be aware of the love of God; and be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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Conflict resolution

by Jeremiah Dawood

I joined the Baptists about seven years ago, and I am still learning about this great family around the UK. The journey is long but it is also exciting!

The issue of conflict resolution has been on my heart for many years. I have been reading and asking God to show me how we can learn from one another regarding this difficult issue, which we all face week in and week out. We all share that desire to maintain healthy, good and godly relationships with everyone around us, especially those whom God has entrusted into our pastoral care.

The problem, I believe, is that we have chosen to deal with conflict by avoiding it. Even in general church meetings I have observed that some members will not even share points of view about important issues—simply to avoid any type of conflict.

Maybe our past experiences (rightly) have led us to adopt this way of ‘avoidance’. The difficulty is that the church is suffering enormously from this strategy. Many people are hurt, and a good number of godly Baptists are leaving through the back door! The issue is huge, and here I will focus only on one possible answer: confrontation.

Confrontation is very difficult, and there is no easy way to do it. Many will say we should teach and confront ‘in love’. In reality, when we confront someone, love often has a very limited presence in the situation, which creates a lot of pressure on the course to resolution. The outcome is that when conflict arises, we are drawn into the fear of what may happen, which in turn leads us to avoidance.

To confront or not confront?

I would like to suggest three categories of confrontation.

Foolish confrontation. This type of confrontation *must be avoided at all costs*. If, from previous experience, we know that regarding a certain person confrontation will lead nowhere but to all kinds of foolish argument, we must simply avoid it.

Positive confrontation. This is a type of confrontation *we must attempt*. Some of our members are waiting to be challenged and confronted in love over many issues in their lives. We have to try not to be afraid of a difficult outcome, but in love to attempt to teach and correct people, and to learn. We always need the wisdom and courage of God to help and assist us in this hard journey.

Desperate confrontation. This type of confrontation is *essential*. For example, some abusive relationships may have developed in a congregation over many years. People have accepted the situation so that they can avoid confronting the abusive people. We choose not to confront them: but, as a result of this avoidance, godly people are suffering and may leave the church. We are giving a huge opportunity to evil to come into our midst and to divide and rule. Ministers are suffering quietly as this pain afflicts the church. We must seek God’s strength and wisdom to enable us to confront abusive people to protect the body of Christ.

What do you think? What are your experiences of conflict? I look forward to hearing your response, and together we may learn from God to be better servants of the King.

Jeremiah Dawood is pastor of East Ham Baptist Church and can be contacted on jdawood@swissmail.org.

In extremity

by Eric Eyre

I feel my partner's disability means I have also become disabled—there was so much we could have done together, but that has now gone.

I feel my life is on hold.

My role has radically changed: from being dependent on someone else, I now find he depends on me.

I often feel very angry and then guilty.

These are some of the feelings I have heard expressed as I have committed myself to a ministry to the carers and cared for as they face the challenges and issues of an end of life prognosis. After 36 years as a Baptist minister, I became involved with patients and their carers at Willen Hospice in Milton Keynes, as part of the chaplaincy team. I also support and counsel the partners of those who have had a heart event and are going through a programme of rehabilitation at Milton Keynes Community Cardiac Group. (I have personally lived with the uncertainty of my wife's health problems—for more than 40 years she has struggled with a serious heart condition, and there have been times when I was uncertain whether she would pull through.) I have been humbled as I have seen the expressions of committed love, loyalty and dedication as couples and families have shared their journey together. This does not mean there are no moments of anguish and despair.

Caring for others

It is in our nature to withdraw from issues relating to end of life needs, but we will all face this situation eventually, either as a carer or in being cared for—and the church is called to be involved. We read in the scriptures that we must look after widows and orphans in their distress (James 1:27). The grace and comfort we receive is to be a ministry of comfort to those in need. 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

The word ‘comfort’ (*parakaleo*) is translated to ‘be called alongside to help’—to share someone's journey. A later English translation is to ‘come forth’—helping people who are in need to emerge from their dark and difficult situations. Is this not at the heart of the gospel of salvation?

In this article I will look at practical ways in which we engage with both the carers and the ones they care for, both in our personal encounters and in our vocational calling, whether voluntary or employed.

I am always deeply moved by the dedication and commitment of the hospice staff and the volunteers at the cardiac group. Their compassion and care is a constant challenge. The word ‘compassion’ is used many times of Christ's ministry. We read ‘When he saw the crowds he had compassion on them’ (Matthew 9:36); and ‘The Lord is full of compassion and mercy’ (James 5:11). Henri Nouwen writes of compassion—the root of the word means literally to ‘suffer with’, and so to show compassion means sharing in the suffering of another. Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter places of pain, to share in brokenness, confusion and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery; to mourn with those who are lonely; to weep with those in tears.

Another word we use is ‘empathy’. It comes from the Greek word *empathia*—the prefix ‘em-’ means ‘the other person’ (them); while *pathia* means ‘feelings’. Someone has described it as ‘your pain in my heart’.

Before I visit the patients and the carers I pray that I will be given compassion and sensitivity to be ‘situationally aware’—to discern when to stay and when to go, and if I should ask if the person would like me to pray for them in my own prayers or pray with them now. I need to know when to listen and when to comment, and sensitively to use the ministry of touch—possibly a touch of the hand.

Narrative sharing

What do you say to people as they try to cope with a terminal prognosis, facing both the end of life and a parting from those they love? It is important to help people to tell their stories, particularly for carers. At Willen we always ensure that both the patient and the carer can have time apart to share feelings that they may be inclined to suppress when with each other. The sensitive questions of Jesus Christ after he had risen from the dead to the distraught disciples on the Emmaus Road are a good example of narrative sharing. It is essential that one is a good listener and shares the feelings ex-

pressed in the telling of the story.

Virginia Ironside (in *You'll get over it*, published by Penguin in 1997) writes: 'One of the reasons people need to talk so much about a death is because they suffer from compulsive feelings of wanting to take control again and again. Telling people is not always just born out of a desire to talk things out, or a desire for sympathy, or as a way of getting the truth to sink slowly in. It's a way of clawing back the power into your life. You have no power over death, but you do have power over the story'.

An effective carer must develop the capacity to listen and help the patient to put into a framework all that is happening to them by sensitive questions like 'Are you saying that...?'; or, 'How does that make you feel?' I sometimes ask the questions: 'What do you feel you have lost?' and 'What do you feel you have gained?'; and 'What are your fears?' or 'In what area do you feel you need help?'

One patient puts it like this: 'I have needed endless kindness and the opportunity to tell the story, express my anger and grief and to ask questions. There have been comparatively few people who have proved safe enough really to talk to. I have needed to know that they could cope with my blasphemies and distress, and to be sure they will not judge me for anything I might say that they will really listen and hear me'. We share the person's journey without giving lots of advice; we let the story take us where it will; and we are there to offer (at their invitation) our compassion and the grace of God.

Bereavement bearing

The process of bereavement begins with the disclosure of the facts of the person's illness, and people have different coping mechanisms. It may be denial, or fight, or resignation—a sense of giving up. Some will want to talk, others will not. It can cause tensions in a relationship when the patient and carer are trying to cope in different ways. One hears comments like: 'He will not talk about it'; or 'He has gone into his shell'; or 'I feel I am treading on eggshells—I have to be careful not to upset her'; or 'She wants me there all the while—I have a job to get to the shops'.

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross suggested in her 1969 classic, *Death and dying*, that there are five primary responses to bereavement: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. These are not only evident after the death but also during the process of grieving on the journey. Each day will be different, and these feelings may come and go as you journey with the carer and cared for.

Some of the losses are loss of role, loss of ability, loss of future, loss of physical strength and mental ability. People in their losses can also find gains; some develop deeper relationships, and family and friends become more precious. Some people want to put their houses in order; some want to plan their funerals and make provision for their families. They can be helped in this. Others will find a new or rekindled faith, needing forgiveness for the past and new hope beyond this life.

Spiritual caring

What do we mean by 'spiritual care' or 'spiritual health'? We do not mean just religious belief. In palliative care, particularly in the hospice movement, importance is given to the physical and also the spiritual wellbeing of those in end of life situations. On our spiritual assessment form at the hospice, where we ask people to write about their feelings, we state: 'Spiritual health: even if we do not hold specific religious beliefs, we all have feelings and we all have views of the world and about life and about how we should live it and what's important, and what's right and wrong, and who we love and who we don't. It's these inside things we can refer to as 'spirit'. Here at the Hospice we try to take care of your spirit as well as your body'.

We must not underestimate the help we can give by listening without the temptation to offer advice or platitudes or explanation. We can listen to God and when appropriate bring a person's needs in prayer to a God of infinite grace. The call on our lives is not to live in the protective comfort of our fellowship but to dare to share compassion; by being a part of the journey of suffering to help people bear the burden of their losses, and to relate to their spiritual needs.

In the eye of the storm

And the heat of the blast

He is there in His power and His care.

And whatever the depth and the darkness and trial

He tells us He'll always be there.

(Millard)

Eric Eyre is retired from Baptist ministry, but works as a chaplain at Willen Hospice, Milton Keynes. He can be contacted on eric.h.eyre@tesco.net and can provide a list of resources for pastors to use when dealing with caring, bereavement and loss. This article was published in Perspective in Summer 2010.

Points of view

Attendance on Sunday by Geoff Whitfield

Many congregations have been diminishing in size, and many churches are no longer able to provide stipends to support ministers. Ministers do, however, seem able to find employment in non-congregational settings through various chaplaincies—so why are congregations declining in the face of expressed pastoral need?

Encounter time. I wonder if research will be done to assess the amount of time spent by ministers in face to face encounters with people, as distinct from face to face encounters with their laptops. Do ministers work in an office, or truly with their people? Bishop Kenneth Cragg told me, not too long ago, that when he was a curate, he and his parish priest would work through the houses in the streets of the patch, Cragg on one side and his chief on the other! At the other extreme, I knew of one Baptist probationer who spent his three-year period on a further degree, rather than ‘working the streets’. How do ministers reckon to speak with relevance to their congregations, if they do not know their ‘parishes’?

In my early years as an industrial chaplain, working with Bill Gowland at the Luton Industrial Mission, the role comprised visiting, more visiting, and still more visiting. That way you got to know your area and your people. In the morning, we would go to the personnel and welfare offices to collect the list of those in hospital or sick at home. The remainder of the morning was spent in going round the factory floor speaking to all and sundry. For the first few weeks it was very tough but, because in the afternoon we visited those off work, the word would go round that the ‘padre’ had visited them. At least once a month, we would visit the night shift in the early hours, or the shop stewards’ meeting. The padre became a familiar face and—maybe because he was not paid by the company—he would be unlikely to be seen as anything other than a person of objective concern by the shop floor workers, the offices, and the management. It was just another example of visiting the flock and earning the right to be heard in the widest possible way.

The Sunday revolution. The churches may not yet have come to terms with Sunday trading and the ways in which commerce, entertainment and business opened up pleasant alternatives to Sunday worship. This could be another factor in the steady decline of congregations, combined with the difficulty of providing meaningful material to those who still come to church. What is the relevance of the gospel and its ap-

plication for the church? Is it as stimulating as entertainment for teenagers and family outings together in the country or on the beach in summer?

Education and protest. Moreover, the expansion of university education after the Robbins Report of the 1960s brought more education to young people, who would then vigorously question traditional belief systems. The pleasure-seeking generations of the 1960s and thereafter had a different view of life, particularly when it was followed by all that was associated with war, protest, and the freedom to challenge the establishment—whatever that meant. True, the church was involved in many protest movements like CND, the Committee of 100 and the anti-apartheid movement. Many churches gladly allowed their premises to be used by campaigners, especially those involved in nationwide marches on London. These were heady days of heart and upheaval, with questions about meaning and purpose, and everything open to question. For many, the encounter with Christ brought meaning and purpose to life in ways that had been previously been unimaginable. I wonder whether ‘thy will be done on earth’ may still have a stronger appeal for those with a societal or political outlook.

An outdated message? Perhaps there is also an important theological drift to be noted. The teaching in many churches still addresses a person’s sense of guilt and sin, provoking personal unworthiness and fear of the future. This analysis is followed by presenting the appeal of Christ the Redeemer, who gives a sense of being loved and precious by his death on the Cross. Thus people find a new status as the sons or daughters of God, infinitely precious in this life and the next. The existential vacuum is thereby filled for the person who believes. Today in Britain we are less likely to think in terms of guilt and self-loathing, and fear of eternal punishment. Maybe it is not only the methods we use, but the message we convey in a post-Christian society—if indeed it were ever truly Christian—that has to be considered?

Geoff Whitfield is now retired but helps in the chaplaincy at Sussex University. He can be contacted on geoffreywhitfield@btinternet.com.

***Worship, music and words* by Anthony Thacker**

This short piece is a response of thanks to those who have helpfully commented on my piece, *Worship wars* (*bmj* January 2011)—both in print, and by email.

The piece focused on music because it started from comments about songwriter Graham Kendrick, and because, as an amateur songwriter myself, it highlights one of the

questions of worship and subculture today that I find worth evaluating. For myself, I have been motivated by the observation that contemporary songwriting has narrowed the range of themes, particularly in terms of the paucity of material relating to the challenges of suffering and other factors provoking doubt. How different are the Psalms! As a result, I have personally felt challenged to write contemporary versions of all the Psalms (music and words) without cherry-picking (currently I've reached Psalm 55).

Mike Ball rightly notes that increasing numbers of children, teens and younger adults don't join in the singing. This may also be a generational development.

As for words, both Mike Ball and Geoffrey Griggs rightly note that earlier writers had their share of doggerel, though with Brian Hill accept that the current diet is thinner. Their observation about the way in which Scripture—and a purposeful 'environment of worship'—can be squeezed out by the preference for sustained singing is timely.

As for theology, whether your sympathies are with Mike Ball or Colin Sedgwick on songs proclaiming penal substitution, I'm sure Bob Allaway is right, that the minister has the responsibility to rule out songs he or she considers unsound or unsingable. However, many of our churches have already passed on the process of choice to a worship leader, whose priorities may indeed be musical, and whose sensitivities may not be to the impact of his or her choices on the whole congregation.

The challenge remains to find and use the forms that carry us closer to God.

Anthony Thacker is minister of Hinckley Baptist Church and can be contacted by email on minister@hinckleybaptist.com.

The positives of modern music by Daniel Hatfield

I have been in post at my first church for just over 18 months, and as a young minister (aged 25) called by God to an 'old' church (50% over 70 when I arrived), you can imagine that I came across the 'worship issue' rather early on. Even so, I had to deal with an unexpected set of circumstances far sooner than I could have anticipated when, after only one month, our organist went back to Hong Kong for a year and we were unable to find a replacement! Consequently I decided to pick up my guitar (and I am not what you would call a natural musician) and started strumming away to the best of my ability. By God's grace and the help of one of my deacons who also played guitar, we not only 'got by' but began to expand our repertoire of songs as we sought to incorporate old and new hymns and choruses in the musical life of our church.

Having had to deal practically, and painfully, with the voices of those who wanted hymns played on the organ versus those wanting to do away with the organ entirely; seeking God's voice amidst the cacophony of humanity, I feel we have come to a place of godly balance in our musical worship life as a church. We agreed at a church meeting to have two organ Sundays a month, but not to advertise when they were since we felt it inappropriate for disciples of Christ to 'pick and choose' when they gather based on personal musical preference.

Given this positive movement with relation to musical worship, incorporating both old and new, simple and complex, I was disheartened to read Michael Ball's article in *bmj* (April 2011), which seemed to paint a wholly negative view of the contemporary musical worship scene in the BU and beyond. I would like to offer a critique of his article, followed by what I hope is a positive contribution to some of the issues raised.

I noted a tone of despair in phrases like: 'Sunday services seem to have been turned into a religious *Top of the pops* session in which novelty is a major criterion for content. I frequently come away from them feeling totally depressed in spirit and alienated'; while other comments seemed divisive, such as: 'I do wish I were not presented with the penal substitution/satisfaction theory of the atonement (which I find both offensive and vacuous) by Stuart Townend'.

Regardless of one's perspective on the penal substitution debate I feel that, since this issue is complex, it should be treated intelligently and seriously. I felt that the comments: 'Today's worship songs are frequently mind-numbingly repetitive...they are often theologically suspect, or at best, unbelievably narrow'; and 'Regarding the music, I would like to challenge much of it, not because of its age, syncopation or style, but because it is bad' were critical in an unbalanced way. But even if the current situation is dire, isn't the gospel a message not of despair, but hope? Not of division but of unity? Not of criticism, but of encouragement?

My plea is this: even if things are as bad as they have been presented to be, acting *harshly* will damage further, not redeem, the situation. Rather, let us seek out the good and 'strengthen what remains and is about to die' (Revelation 3:2). Shane Claiborne suggests (*The irresistible revolution*, Zondervan 2006, p24) that: 'There is a movement bubbling up that goes beyond cynicism and celebrates a new way of living, a generation that stops complaining about the church it sees and becomes the church it dreams of'. It is my hope and prayer that 'the generation' spoken of here will not be limited to those of a certain age bracket, but will include all of Christ's followers in the church today.

Some say that in worship we both express an overflow of what God has put in our hearts

by the Holy Spirit and also take time to focus on God. Worship leader Tim Hughes writes (*Passion for your name*, Kingsway 2003, p39) that: ‘The more we gaze at him as we worship, the more like him we gradually become’ (cf 1 John 3:2b). Historically, the purpose of worship was less meditative (by using repetition and focusing on the central characteristics of God) and more didactic (by using song as a vehicle for teaching the illiterate masses).

Often ‘the worship debate’ will swing like a pendulum between these two ideas of what worship is meant to be about: meditation (expressed in simplicity and repetition), or teaching (expressed in theological depth and complexity). But why do we have to go fully for one or the other? Can we not recognise the benefits of each type of worship for what it is, and seek to move forward with a richer diversity in our musical worship?

This conclusion is similar to that of Ian Stackhouse (*The gospel-driven church*, Paternoster 2004) in his attempt to reconcile exuberance and simplicity in worship with a focus on serious discipleship and catechesis through musical worship. He proposes (p63) that we ‘retain a sense of liveliness in worship, all the while rooting this fervour in the historicity and factualities of the revelation’. I truly believe that the possibility of church worship services across the BU which incorporate content to feed the mind and a focused intimacy to expand the heart are a vision worth pursuing as we seek to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Being mindful of the theological depth and content of our musical worship I would like to defend (against Michael’s critique) the occasional use of war/soldier imagery in worship music, since the Bible also makes occasional use of it (Ezekiel 37:10; Colossians 2:15; 1 Timothy 1:18; 2 Timothy 2:3; 1 John 5:4)—as long as it’s clear that the battle we’re fighting is a spiritual one (Ephesians 6:12).

With regard to Michael’s other points, here are some suggestions of contemporary songs to fill the gaps perceived in the church’s repertoire.

If you feel that in worship there is a lack of content about:

1. the life and teaching of Jesus, see:

Lost in wonder (Martyn Layzell); *In Christ alone* (Keith Getty & Stuart Townend); *Hallelujah* (Shawn McDonald); *Where you go I go* (Brian Johnson);

2. feelings about God in difficult times, see:

When the tears fall (Tim Hughes); *Blessed be your Name* (Matt Redman); *Your love never fails* (Chris McClarney); *Voice of truth* (Casting Crowns); *Soul cry* (Misty Edwards);

3. nothing about social or political justice, see:

God of justice (Tim Hughes); *Now is the time* (Delirious?); *From the inside out* (Joel Houston); *Where you go I go* (Brian Johnson).

If you feel that modern songs have:

1. biblical metaphors used of Jesus...largely narrowed down to king...and victim', see:

You are holy (one hundred hours); *Consuming fire* (Tim Hughes); *Majesty* (Delirious?); *To you O Lord* (Graham Kendrick); *Superlatives* (Mark Beswick); *Take my heart* (John Janzen); *Lovesick* (Misty Edwards);

2. responses that can be fulfilled within the four walls of the church and the few hours spent there worshipping, see:

Everything (Tim Hughes); *The heart of worship* (Matt Redman); *At the foot of the cross* (one hundred hours).

May God strengthen us all as we seek to lead God's people into a deeper experience and knowledge of him through music.

Daniel Hatfield is pastor of Mill Road Baptist Church, Cambridge and can be contacted on daniel.hatfield@hotmail.co.uk.

***Matters of the heart* by Clive Jarvis**

I agree with Brian Hill's comments (*bmj*, July 2010) about the words we are at time asked to sing in church, but as one who has the responsibility to choose them I would note that in any and every era great words have been destroyed by terrible tunes and terrible words have been embellished by great tunes. I doubt I am alone in having sung such stirring words as 'O breath of life come sweeping through us' to a funeral dirge or wondered askance at the poetry of 'Isn't he beautiful, beautiful isn't he, isn't he, isn't he, isn't he, isn't he!'

It doesn't seem to me that it matters whether the tune or the words come first as both are necessary components of the hymn/song. Surely the poet will discover the words first whereas the musician the music and both can be called upon to enhance the work of the other. Certainly when Rowland Hill asked in a sermon of 1844 preached at the then influential Surrey Chapel 'Why should the devil have all the best tunes?' it was because he wanted to encourage Christian musicians to step up to the plate—poets and authors perhaps there were aplenty.

What is a hymn? The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines it as, ‘Song used in Christian worship, usually sung by the congregation and written in stanzas with rhyme and metre’. The *Columbia Electronic Encyclopaedia* tells us a hymn is a ‘song of praise, devotion, or thanksgiving, especially of a religious character’; *Wikipedia* that a hymn ‘is a type of song, usually religious, specifically written for the purpose of praise, adoration or prayer’. Finally, the *Oxford Online Dictionaries* describes a hymn as ‘a religious song or poem of praise to God; a formal song sung during Christian worship, typically by the whole congregation’. According to these definitions, everything we sing is a ‘hymn.’ The distinctions we try to make between, hymns, spiritual songs, choruses and whatever else are personalised nonsense.

It is perhaps disturbing to think that a word we are familiar with might have such a plethora of understandings as the simple word ‘hymn.’ We may rebel at the idea that the word ‘wicked’ is used by young people to mean ‘really good’ but it is, and that is what it means to them. Actually this process is especially prevalent in academia where words are highly context bound and words simply understood in everyday language have quite complex and diverse meanings to different academic schools of thought—one such word is ‘collaboration’, which in business schools across the world has deeply divergent, non-complementary understandings attached to it.

This thought leads me to Brian Hill’s description of the phrase ‘time of worship’ as ‘tragic in its presumption’ and I agree with him, if his presumptions about the presumptions of the phrase are correct. For me this phrase does not for a moment imply that everything else present within an act of worship is not also worship. In my understanding and practice, one of the key purposes of the so-called ‘time of worship’ is to provide the very opportunity for space, time and reflection that he longs for. I take issue with Brian when he says ‘...the material within much modern worship so often fails to allow the mind to grapple with the gospel’, because the fault lies not, I would contend, with the material but with the conduct of the worship he criticises, and the individual minds concerned.

In the church in which I currently pastor, we have two services on a Sunday morning, the distinction between them being more ones of length and pace rather than content—the task of leading worship is shared by many and I am often surprised how frequently some of the same songs are chosen for both services by different people. Our worship tends to a three-fold pattern of gathering and preparation/the word of God/response to the word of God, with our monthly communion service woven into the order sometimes as preparation, and sometimes as response. My point is this: charismatic and modern though we are in style and format, we are by no means be-

ref of a clear theological understanding of worship and of what, under God, we are seeking to achieve in worship. Our purpose is always to honour God, to encounter God (in all aspects of our worship), to listen to God, and to be transformed (even if just a little) by our time spent together in his presence.

Evelyn Underhill, the English Anglo-Catholic writer, described worship as ‘throwing yourself at the feet of God.’ It is not about what we do, or how we do it, but why we worship God. Christian worship in so many of our churches falls short of what it could truly be, simply because it has become about how I worship, not about the One I worship. The Lord, we know, is uninterested in the outward things, but very interested in what is in our hearts. The bitter and foolish arguments over worship that have blighted the church for centuries (this is not a modern phenomenon) have done little to enhance the standing of churches in our communities, and nothing to honour the Lord.

In tension with this, however, I do also understand that God has made each of us unique and that we are ‘fearfully and wonderfully made.’ I understand that how we worship personally has an impact upon the genuineness and the vitality of our worship. I am the first to admit that there are styles and formats of worship that if subjected to on a weekly basis I could not personally cope with. The Lord does not have a preferred style: he doesn’t favour Wesley over Kendrick or Redmond; rather, he loves the genuine worship of all his children and appreciates the efforts of all who try to enhance that worship as writers, musicians and leaders. Let’s not even consider those pre-Wesley days when in early Baptist churches there was no singing, no music and the introduction of the organ (the instrument of the devil!) was the major debating point in Baptist church life.

Questions of style and format are our questions, not the Lord’s, and while it is our nature to be concerned with these things, they need to be set in their true context. Sensible churches find a place where as a congregation it is possible to worship the Lord together. Sensible people accept that place or realise they must find another and that they have no right to dictate to others—much harder for a church in transition, perhaps because of a change in its make-up over a period of time, or because of perceived or otherwise spiritual movements in society; but the guiding thought should never be personal preference and the result should never be dissension and conflict. That this is all too often the outcome is a measure of our sinfulness, not our righteousness.

Worship is about Jesus—it is not about us, and until we truly understand and accept that fact we may not be qualified to enter into any discussion at all.

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Reviews

Edited by John Houseago

The church's healing ministry— practical and pastoral reflections

David Atkinson

Canterbury Press, 2011

Reviewer: Bob Allaway

This book is a balanced and helpful one, whose first chapter recognises the wide variety of Christian approaches to healing ministry. The author commends Moltmann's definition of 'health as the strength to be human' (as God intends). Such a definition avoids the idolatry of healing in 'prosperity gospel' preachers. It is possible to experience 'healing' without being physically healed. This theme is developed in the second chapter, *The pain that heals*, a reflection on Job.

In the third chapter, *Emotional health: Christians and counselling*, he speaks of how he and a group of varied practitioners, ministering to the gamut of people's needs, set up a Christian counselling service. There is much practical wisdom here, as well as in the following chapter, *Standing with the vulnerable: justice and*

forgiveness, which speaks sensitively of ministry to the abused.

The final chapter, *Healing and the kingdom of God*, is a brief survey of biblical history, whose goal is seen as God 'establishing a new humanity, focused in the covenant people'. This process reaches its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, who is 'in himself what true humanity was meant to be. He is the Whole Person'. True humanity also involves a right relationship with 'the whole created order', so 'God's kingdom is creation healed' (Hans Küng). It is in this context that the author considers miracles as 'signs of God's new order in our world'. A physical healing may be such a sign, but so may 'a new insight into a person's emotional needs', or other things that 'point us to God and open us freshly to God's ways, and...lead to lives of fuller gratitude and deeper worship'. As a retired Anglican bishop, he concludes by seeing how these insights can be worked out in the eucharist.

Who might benefit from reading this book? It could make a good introduction to pastoral counselling. Those wanting a guide to healing ministry, generally, might find it frustrating. I kept wishing the author would 'unpack' material. The book's brevity, occasional useful stories and relatively easy language might suggest it could be given to 'the person in the pew' who enquires about healing.

However, I suspect most such would be scared off by the constant quotations from academic authorities. It could, perhaps, make a good present for a Christian GP!

Web-empowering ministry

Mark M. Stephenson

Abingdon, 2011

Reviewer: Ronnie Hall

Most churches have a website. Most churches don't use their website to its full potential, and some churches don't give it much thought at all. If you have ever thought about using the internet as a resource for church then this is an enormously helpful book. Its premise is simple: we live in an age of technology (particularly the young), and a presence on the internet is essential. The website is the one place that potential visitors or even potential ministers (which of us has not checked a church website after looking at the Pastoral Vacancy List?) will look.

This book covers all the bases. It first convinces you of the need to expand your internet ministry. It then talks about the reality of the work involved but makes the point that your internet presence is at least as important as the effort that goes into outreach events. It gives useful pointers into building an internet ministry team and the author is honest enough to talk

about the mistakes that his church made and how we can avoid them. The author is also realistic enough to say that the web presence has to be appropriate to the church—not many churches can afford to pay someone as a full time webmaster.

Not all chapters are immediately useful. There is some very technical information with perplexing acronyms like CSS, XML, TYPO 3 CMS. Unless you are planning to do all the technical work yourself then you don't need to bother with the technical chapters. In reality, once you've decided what you want from a website from reading the book you get someone with expertise to do the technical stuff.

Overall, I would recommend this book if you think your church website needs updating, or if you want to know what the possibilities are. I have passed my copy onto my church webmaster and no doubt our website will be enhanced. I am now more aware of what people are looking for from a church website, how we can encourage communication, and most importantly how we can keep the website up to date. Having no website at all is apparently better than one which is out of date. A sobering thought for all church leaders.

***Gospel for starters by Mike Smith
(Reviews, July 2011)***

**Please contact Mike if you have problems
getting this book, on 01484 845344.**

Prayers of the people

Karen E. Smith & Simon P. Woodman (eds)

South Wales Baptist College/
Regent's Park College, 2011

Reviewer: Philip Clements-Jewery

This valuable collection of prayers for public worship has been published in honour of John Weaver, and includes prayers written by some of our contemporaries, listed towards the end of the book.

At the beginning there is a superb extended theological introduction by Paul Fiddes, for which alone the book would be worth the price. Fiddes addresses the issue of whether public prayer should be read or spontaneous, and then includes themes that are familiar in his writing, relating prayer and worship to the theology of the divine dance and participation in the life of the Triune God, which caused me to reflect on the rightness of invoking the Trinity at the beginning of a service, as do our Anglican and Catholic friends. When we gather for worship we should not forget that we are stepping into the divine life of the Triune God.

The book is divided into sections according to the different types of prayer in public worship, with additional sections for liturgical seasons and special services,

including the usual sacraments and ordinances (except, strangely, in a book by and for Baptists, prayers for use at baptism). Each section is prefaced by a few apt quotations from Baptist writers, past and present. As befits a publication originating from Wales, a few prayers appear in Welsh alongside their English versions (but not, strangely again, the prayer for St David's Day).

In the few weeks since receiving the book for review I have tried it out on two different congregations, asking for feedback at the end of the service. By and large it has been well received, although one or two have commented that the prayers are too long, particularly some from the first section, *Prayers of gathering*. Some prayers are, perhaps, a little too specific in places and their contemporary relevance may pass sooner or later.

Prayers of the people will certainly never replace *Gathering for worship*, although it will prove to be a useful supplement. As ever, books of prayers can be used as a stimulus to those preparing prayers for use in public. They need not be quoted verbatim, but can provide launchpads for the prayerful preparation of worship.

One more thing. Is it too much to hope that, like *Gathering for worship*, these prayers might also be published in an electronic form? With the advent of tablet computers the leading of worship is

becoming increasingly paperless, so a CD of these prayers would be a helpful additional resource.

I will continue to use this resource in my preparation for and leading of worship, and I warmly commend it to *bmj* readers.

Worship matters: a study for congregations

Jane Rogers Vann

Westminster: John Knox, 2011

Reviewer: Brian Talbot

Sunday worship services should be central to the life and witness of every Christian and local congregation of believers. Vann claims that few people truly understand what is happening during a service and why, and how. Her purpose in writing the book is to eliminate the barrier between the preacher and the other participants in this act of Christian worship. She aims to offer advice not just towards church leaders, but also to a wider range of participants in worship services.

The author, a seminary professor of Christian education in the US, was inspired to write this book by two things. First, interaction with local congregations, which nurtured her own liturgical spiritual formation. Secondly, Ostdiek's classic *Catechesis for liturgy*. Ostdiek's work was written for Roman Catholic congregations

to assist the process of liturgical renewal. Vann hopes that her work will contribute similarly to the Protestant churches.

There are eight chapters considering aspects of worship, of which six contain questions for further discussion and reflection. The opening two sections are more general, exploring why Protestant Christians so rarely reflect in any depth on the subject of worship, instead restricting our comments to the mechanics or stylistic preferences in worship. Vann also invites her readers to look at how we worship in the larger congregation and asks whether our expressions of worship are engaging the senses and the whole person or whether they were exclusively cerebral and didactic.

Chapters three and four cover architecture and fixed spaces and the transformation of the premises during specific seasons of the church year, for example at Christmas and Easter. It is suggested that many worshippers underestimate the impact these choices make on our worship services. She also makes some comments on the blessings and dangers of the use of modern technology in services. Using our bodies in worship, the use of the Christian calendar, and two chapters on verbal communication in church, from the spoken word to singing and the place of music provide the other topics under consideration. Most Baptists would welcome these questions.

Leaving church: a memoir of faith

Barbara Brown Taylor

Canterbury Press, 2011

Reviewer: Colin Cartwright

'BB Taylor sings the blues', could almost be the subtitle of this personal reflection on ministry. This label would not, however, do justice to the lyrical range of this honest and moving book. Taylor's division of her memoir into three sections, *Finding, Losing, Keeping*, is itself thought-provoking. There is more finding than losing here, but there is plenty for keeping along the way.

The book may not be one to wave around at ministers' meetings. But it provides a feast of spiritual food for thought. It is clearly no 'manual for church ministry', but it would be difficult to find many books which give a similar depth of realistic insight into the nature of the calling to ministry, as well as reflections on the nature of the church.

From the experience of two very different US pastorates, Taylor retraces the steps which led her to take the gut-wrenching decision to lay down her dog collar. There may be too much focus upon clerical garb for many 'unfrocked' Baptists to identify with, but the interior world she describes will be familiar territory to many UK ministers.

Indeed a clear sense of 'territory' is one of the hallmarks of this book. Taylor's descriptions of the glory of God in creation and the generational history of the Indian tribes continuing to celebrate the land, provide an invaluable counterpoint to her story.

The short list of recommended reading itself represents a spiritual treasury worthy of further exploration. The *Reader's guide* at the end, which includes a series of questions from each chapter, would provide a valuable launchpad for a ministers' group or house group discussing the book.

One quote: 'Dumbfoundedness is what all Christians have most in common'. Next stop: *An altar in the world*, Taylor's most recent work.

Talking about God in practice: theological action research and practical theology

Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney & Clare Watkins

SCM, 2010

Reviewer: Jem Sewell

I had hoped from the title that this book would either encourage me as a pastor or the congregation to talk about God or

maybe to increase our confidence or relevance in communicating the faith.

However it turns out to be a highly technical evaluation—even a sales pitch for of a social science tool for evaluating what might be good practice in professional fields where there is a complex array of institutional and political structures—for instance, healthcare.

The book is aimed at professionals either in the church or in faith-based organisations. The intention is to recommend a tool for the evaluation of activities and theology by using an action—reflection cycle (learning, action, experience, reflection, learning *etc*). Interestingly it comes from a Catholic Anglican dialogue and this is heavily reflected

both in the contents and outlook of the book.

I did find the idea of working with different internal theologies both challenging and helpful. Formal theology might be what I learned at college; normative theology might be what I get from scripture, liturgy or tradition; espoused theology might be what is locally expressed in a congregation or faith based organisation; and operant theology is what is practised. These distinctions helped me to identify some of the tensions I perceive in myself and others in theological discussions.

Despite a worthwhile aim, I suspect this book is too technical and jargon-filled to be of general interest.

Grants from the Whitley Trust

Ministers may like to know that the Whitley Trust not only sponsors the annual Whitley Lecture but can award small grants towards the costs of publishing Baptist scholarship.

If your study or research may benefit the wider Baptist community then please contact the Secretary, Sally Nelson, on revsal96@aol.com, for information about how to proceed with an application to the Committee.