

Editorial

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<https://doi.org/10.25782/jeps.v21i1.694>

Teaching and learning, learning and teaching, go hand-in-hand. Drawing energy and inspiration from a religious tradition includes faithful and creative teaching, a kind of catechetical exercise. However, it also requires openness to new influences, ability to navigate a way through changing context, and learning to express ‘old faith’ in new forms and contemporary language. Baptist tradition is not an exception, and the present issue of the *Journal of European Baptist Studies (JEBS)* brings together ten articles which all, in one way or another, enable a reader to engage in the teaching-learning process of doing theology and reflecting theologically within the framework of the Baptist story. In turn, it enables a wider conversation and mutual exchange of ideas with other Christian traditions.

Ryan Andrew Newson sets the scene for this issue with his article ‘Inhabiting the City: Envisioning Baptist Ways of Doing Theology amidst Pluralism’ which he first delivered as the 2020 McClendon lecture, in an event organized by James Wm McClendon Chair, Vrije Universiteit, in cooperation with IBTS, Amsterdam. Newson points out the need to be receptive to others and stand against positions of superiority and the authoritarian use of power. The article, however, being inspired by McClendon’s writings, argues against ‘false neutrality’ and seeks how we might articulate a Christologically oriented vision ‘that can help guide people, Christian and otherwise, into an uncertain future’. This, no doubt, requires an attitude of learning and an ability to express one’s convictions — both in narrative and practice. The author claims, ‘I will argue that Baptist theology is best done as Christians live and move in the city – emerging out of the social world

of overlapping convictional communities where Christians share much with neighbours and strangers alike.’

The next article in this issue, by Valerii Alikin, gives a detailed account of the state of affairs of formal theological education in Russia. The first part of the article is an illuminating description of the role and aspirations of Russian Orthodox educational institutions. The challenges for Protestant schools, such as Baptist and Pentecostal, include strict legal requirements imposed by the state structures and a need to develop a fresh vision for training ministers, developing faculty and cooperating in wider academia. Alikin hopes that Russian Protestants, despite major hindrances, will gain official recognition for their theological educational endeavours and will succeed in entering ‘the public space through presenting sound scholarship and quality research’. Stuart Blythe takes the wider notion of learning-and-teaching into a curricular area. The article explores how preaching in the liturgical context and the teaching of preaching in the classroom are both expressions of practical theology. Teaching preaching is a supportive practice with the aim of serving the Christian Church and enabling the embodied life of Christian people. It requires teaching ‘what students actually need to learn if their theological education is to be enable them to do what they need to do as preachers’. Blythe argues for a pedagogical experience that extends beyond theoretical knowledge — episteme. The learning-and-teaching process has a goal to put into practice both ‘wisdom’ and ‘skill’, and not to rely simply on the ‘knowledge about’. Laura Dijkhuizen opens another aspect of learning — in the broad sense of the concept — describing the role of focus groups in finding meaning among female leaders within the Dutch Evangelical Movement. The heuristic approach, exploring the praxis of the Evangelical female leaders, and combining action and reflection, helps to reach a more integrative understanding of what is going on in the lives of the focus group participants. In addition, the article helpfully depicts the difference between method and methodology in empirical theology and throws light on a researcher’s role and aims in using a particular qualitative method — in the setting of focus groups.

The discussion in the following articles moves to the question of catholicity, which can also be understood as learning from and identification with the rich historical tradition of the Christian Church. Steven Harmon opens an insightful conversation, asking the questions: What is Baptist catholicity? What do Baptists learn as they apply the notion of catholicity, both in a quantitative and qualitative sense, to their tradition? The article is a helpful introduction to the topic, with comments into additional aspects of ecumenical relations and ecclesiology. However, the author is convinced that the Baptist tradition, in mutual relationships with different ecclesial patterns, should share its ecclesial gift with others. This gift becomes visible ‘in the way they do theology as a relentlessly pilgrim community’, seeking to be fully under the rule of Christ. Lon Graham turns to a case study and investigates Andrew Fuller and how his catholicity has been understood. On the one hand Fuller emphasised what he called a ‘catholic spirit’, on the other hand, his contemporaries were not fully convinced of his catholicity. The article analyses Andrew Fuller’s nuanced views in comparison with John Ryland Jr and John Wesley. However, rather than engaging with current debates concerning catholicity, the author’s aim is ‘to provide historical perspective on how one of the chief theologians of the Particular Baptists understood relations to those outside of his theological and denominational tradition’. It is a helpful addition to the present theological explorations on catholicity and Baptists, providing a diachronic dimension to the discussion. Stephen Holmes engages in polemic with Kegan A. Chandler (see *JEBS* no. 2, 2019) on the issue of anti-Trinitarianism in early Baptist life and thought, with focus on Matthew Caffyn. While in agreement with Chandler that Caffyn should be seen as a representative of General Baptist tradition, Holmes strongly argues that historically it would be misleading, and without evidence, to view early Anabaptists and General Baptists, at least until 1660s, as unorthodox in their views about the Trinity. Besides the specific argument about orthodoxy or unorthodoxy of the General Baptists and Caffyn, the article offers material for reflecting on the method and logic of re-constructing historical movements.

The last third of this issue keeps the reader in the area of historical research. Mary Raber focuses on an important Russian evangelical leader William Fetler (Basil Maloff) and his ministry outside Russia and the Soviet Union. Fetler, exiled in 1914 from Tsarist Russia, spent most of his active ministry time abroad, in the USA and Latvia, as an evangelist and tireless organiser. He arranged the translation and publication of Russian Bibles and other Christian literature. In exploring a historical figure, the article touches, however, a very acute present-day issue: How does being an exile shape a believer's identity and Christian activities? Fetler's exile experience added authority to his evangelical and fundraising messages, and it 'gave him the freedom to minister in ways that would not have been possible if he had stayed in Russia'. Ian Randall takes the reader to twentieth-century Cambridge, providing insights into the Robert Hall Society, a Baptist Students' Society in the University of Cambridge, covering the years from the 1950s to the 1980s. The article places special stress on the spiritual dynamics of the Society, from times of finding its place in the setting of pan-denominational student groups, to renewed spiritual vigour after some years of decline and struggles. Although the Society came to an end in the early 1990s, its legacy is wider: through its members and the ideas emerging in the Society, and with its aim of preparing members to future service, it contributed significantly to the Baptist denomination in the United Kingdom. Lee Spitzer's historical study investigates how the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) has viewed its relations with the Jewish people. Spitzer argues that before the rise of Nazism, the Jewish people were given minimal attention in the BWA documents. It was only in the 1930s that the BWA, based on its core convictions, condemned in the words of a Resolution, all racial animosity and any form of oppression 'toward the Jews, toward coloured people, or toward subject races in any part of the world'. After the Holocaust and the emergence of the state of Israel, the BWA pronounced a balanced position concerning the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, avoiding however, statements about antisemitism. In the twenty-first century, the BWA resolution urged Baptists to 'demonstrate their

opposition to antisemitism' and express solidarity with people of other religions. The article relies on a detailed analysis of sources.

Over the years, the International Baptist Theological Study Centre Amsterdam (IBTS) has strengthened its network of researchers and has looked to publishing the results of their research. The *Journal of European Baptist Studies* is an element in the network of the research community, which is bringing international scholars, and also IBTS faculty, research students and alumni into conversation, exchanging ideas and building academic links. In this issue of *JEB S* the authors represent a number of aspects which form the core of IBTS understanding of its mission and theological aims. It is encouraging to see three articles by IBTS alumni published in this issue. It is good to see IBTS staff and adjunct faculty contributing to ongoing discussion in the field of Baptist studies. In addition, it is meaningful and enriching to welcome other authors, who share thinking with IBTS and offer the results of their research and expertise. The editorial team of *JEB S* hands this issue over to the readers, with a hope that these texts provide an opportunity to reflect on learning-and-teaching experience in its widest sense. How to face new challenges in a pluralist society? What does the teaching and learning of preaching require in the classroom and beyond? In what ways do Baptist relations with other traditions and with our own historical story inform us, and enable fresh interpretations?