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Table of Contents

Editorial

Toivo Pilli

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This issue of the *Journal of European Baptist Studies* is published at the end of the year 2024, which has marked the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the International Baptist Theological Seminary, now the International Baptist Theological Study Centre (IBTS Amsterdam). The journal is the biannual publication of the Centre and has appeared for twenty-four years, since 2000. This issue contains nine articles from a wide range of topics and research areas, from biblical hermeneutics to Christian education and Baptist history. This, no doubt, reflects the variety of authors who contribute to the journal, forming a network of scholars who — in their turn — are part of the research community that IBTS strives to develop and strengthen.

A research community is important. IBTS has defined its mission as not only offering a PhD programme, but as building contacts and academic relationships between Baptist scholars or scholars whose work helps to enhance European Baptist studies in the wide sense of the word. One might use the expression 'baptistic studies', if preferred. The journal is one avenue where these relationships are deepened and ideas are discussed. This is why *JEBS*, besides printed copies for subscribers, is open access as soon as the issue is published (jebs.eu).

This issue begins with a question: 'What is normative for British Baptists?' The author, Anthony Clarke, argues that the answer should be sought from the multi-dimensional confession 'Jesus is Lord!' What this means — in the life of the churches and individuals, and in the document the *Declaration of Principle* — and what conclusions may be drawn when different hermeneutical keys are used, is the focus of this article. No doubt, readers from different countries can make some comparisons with their own context. The second article, by Einike Pilli

and Meego Remmel, turns to Baptist education and mission, analysing the Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary project to help students become more missional and increase their ability to be involved in a meaningful dialogue with secular society. Recently, the Seminary developed a master's programme 'Theology and Society'. The story of this process, with its theoretical background and practical implications, shows how missional efforts, curriculum development, and problem-based learning can work together in preparing future leaders, offering them tools for Christian witness in a secular environment. The third article in this volume is also a reminder of the Baptist central conviction of mission. However, this piece of research uses an historical approach. Brian Talbot discusses Scottish Baptist overseas mission efforts in the late twentieth century and describes changes in overseas missionary ministries by the end of the century. While evangelism, church planting, educational and medical work remained important, 'there was now a greater emphasis on alleviating suffering and injustice and in development work'.

Baptists, whatever their theological challenge, have always tried to bring the Bible as a guidance into their discussions. This is why it is only to be expected and welcome that one article in this issue is devoted specifically to the interpretation of a biblical text. Ksenija Magda demonstrates how re-reading Matthew 18 and 19 with an historical critical methodology may broaden the readers' ethical view on reconciliation and forgiveness, avoiding, however, increasing the abuse of victims. She gives the reader a warning: quick solutions for complicated issues, forced on the victims by the power of the church or their formal leaders, may cause more harm than healing.

The next two articles offer glimpses into the life of Slavic Baptists, both using an historical method. Constantine Prokhorov gives a survey of the life and ministry of Gavriil Mazaev (1858–1937), a Baptist leader who came from a Molokan family and later considerably shaped Siberian Baptist life as a leader, organiser, and evangelist. The author also unfolds an historical narrative about Mazaev's several imprisonments, and finally his death under the Soviet repressive authorities. The other historical piece of research takes the Ukrainian

Baptist story in the Orthodox context as its main subject. Roman Shvets focuses on Ukrainian Baptist and Orthodox relations from 1917 to the present day. The author is convinced that even if there have been different phases in their mutual understanding and misunderstanding, there has been a move towards more positive dynamics, particularly during Soviet times when all churches were 'in the same boat'. Under the Communist and atheistic regime, all churches were persecuted in one way or another. Nevertheless, as the author argues, negative experiences have not fully disappeared from Baptist and Orthodox relations, and there is still a long way to go towards respect and appreciation from both sides.

Leslie Francis, Bruce Fawcett, and others have published a study in the field of the empirical psychology of religion that explores personal, psychological, and religious factors shaping attitudes towards sexuality and substances among young Canadian Baptists and their leaders. The data showed that young Baptists and their leaders had similar attitudes towards sexuality, but that young Baptists held stricter positions than their leaders on the use of substances. The study confirmed the centrality of intrinsic religiosity in shaping attitudes within both moral domains of sexuality and substances.

The last two articles in this issue of *JEBS* continue a discussion that began some years ago between Kegan Chandler and Stephen Holmes. To what extent were the early General Baptists theologically orthodox in their views on the Trinity and Christology? The published articles can be seen as a good example of an academic debate, illustrating challenges and questions a researcher in history meets when analysing written evidence from the past and the theological context where this evidence is found. The journal thanks both authors for the thorough academic conversation!

The book review section in this *JEBS* issue includes ten reviews, summarising the contents of the publications and giving a fair account of their merits. They demonstrate in a concise form the ways in which the books evaluated could be helpful in research, teaching, and learning. The book review section is an integral part of *JEBS*, and contributions come from three main sources: IBTS students, IBTS teaching staff and

research fellows, and the wider community of pastors and theologians. The journal strives to review volumes that are related to IBTS's three research areas: identity, practice, and mission. In libraries there are sometimes displays of recent acquisitions. *JEBS* book review section is something similar, offering quick and annotated access to the main ideas of the recent literature in the field of baptistic studies.

On What Do We Agree?: The Idea of the Normative in British Baptist Life

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Abstract
This article seeks to explore what might be considered normative in British Baptist life. It seeks to explore behind the *Declaration of Principle* and argues that the foundation statement is the multi-dimensional confession 'Jesus is Lord' and examines the particular way that this has been understood by Baptists, discussing some implications of this for individuals, local churches, and a union of churches. It then suggests that the *Declaration of Principle* is one way that the confession 'Jesus is Lord' is further explicated but that as a contingent and contextual document, it could be developed in different ways, and the article ends by considering some of the current issues that have been addressed to the *Declaration of Principle*.

Keywords
Baptist identity; lordship of Christ; *Declaration of Principle*; normativity

Introduction

What is 'normative' in Christian theology? By normative here I mean something that is agreed together to be authoritative. Or to put it differently, what do we take to be normative? The phrasing of these two forms of the question alerts us to important issues. The first question offers a more objective approach, suggesting that there is that which is appropriately, even universally, normative — in other words there is agreed theology which stands over us and to which we adhere. The second question reframes this more subjectively, recognising that the normative may be that which I, or we, choose as much as that which compels me from outside.[1] The distinction between the two aspects is

[1] See Stephen P. Turner, *Explaining the Normative* (Polity Press, 2010) for a broader philosophical discussion of the wide use of normative ideas.

not always straight forward as they are constantly intertwined; a church, for example, might choose to accept a confessional statement as normative, on the basis of its content, which then functions for that group in a more objective way.

The concept of 'normative' theology as a phrase has become more significant through the development of models of practical theology such as the *Four Voices* developed by Helen Cameron and others, which lists the normative voice alongside the espoused, operant, and formal.[2] When using this model in the past, I have suggested that the 'normative' voice might be reframed for British Baptists as a 'representative' voice, on the basis that there is in fact very little that can be definitively described as normative — it is really only the *Declaration of Principle* [3] — but there is much more that is clearly 'representative'.[4] Often documents, such as those agreed by the Baptist Union Council, emerge from a wider process of deliberation and so have a genuinely shared sense of authorship. But they do not have the status of being 'normative' in the sense of being authoritative and binding for churches. If much of what British Baptists rely on is better described as representative rather than normative, what can we suggest is, or ought to be, normative for British Baptist life?

In wrestling with questions of normativity, Nigel Wright declares that 'Baptists are orthodox Christians, more than willing to affirm the faith of the church expressed in, for instance, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds'.[5] I have no wish to question the place of Baptists within wider orthodoxy, but it does beg the question of who decides, both for this generic group called 'Baptists' and for the wider church.

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[2] Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney, and Clare Watkins, *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (SCM, 2010), pp. 53–56.

[3] See, 'Declaration of Principle', Baptists Together, n.d. <https://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/220595/Declaration_of_Principle.aspx> [accessed 23 September 2024]; for the Baptist Union of Scotland's slightly different version, see 'Who We Are', Baptist Union of Scotland, n.d. <https://scottishbaptist.com/about-us/who-we-are/> [accessed 23 September 2024]. Other Unions or Conventions will have different normative documents.

[4] See the discussion in Anthony Clarke, *Forming Ministers or Training Leaders: An Exploration of Practice in Theological Colleges* (Wipf and Stock, 2021), pp. 19–20; and Anthony Clarke, 'Listening to the Voices', in *Sharing Faith at the Boundaries of Unity*, ed. by Paul S. Fiddes (Regent's Park College, 2019), pp. 150–172 (p. 153).

[5] Nigel G. Wright, *Free Church Free State: The Positive Baptist Vision* (Paternoster, 2005), p. 39.

Wright's point is that while historically Baptists have at times been considered unorthodox by others, an assessment of four hundred years of Baptist history suggests an agreement with certain key texts within the universal church. So, in stating categorically that 'Baptists are orthodox', Wright is not only making an assessment of Baptist belief, he is doing so against an assumed wider standard of normativity, as if there is an agreed plumbline (we might say 'canon' as this is its original meaning) of orthodoxy against which Baptists can measure themselves. But if so, who has set this canon of orthodoxy and what does it include?

At this point it is helpful to explore three short diversions: knowledge, Scripture, and tradition. The first issue takes us into the philosophical realm of knowledge and how we know anything. To claim that there is a definitive and normative Christian orthodoxy and to claim that it is possible for me to know definitively this orthodoxy are two different things; and different again from a third position that claims there is no definitive truth anyway. The first position is often described as a realist position, the second as a critical realist position, and the third as a constructionist position.[6] Although we might not express it in these terms, embedded in how we see the world will be a tendency to take one of these positions. In this article, I explicitly take a critical realist position that believes that there is objective truth but recognises that my grasp on this is only ever limited and partial.[7]

Second, together with Baptists over the centuries, I want to uphold the vital and unique importance of Scripture in any theological discussion; but simply stating that Scripture is normative leaves us with as many questions as answers. There has been debate about the way the *Declaration of Principle* sets out the relationship between the authority of Christ and the authority of Scripture — 'Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh is the absolute authority […] as revealed in the Holy Scriptures'

[6] See Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce, *Researching Ministry and Mission: A Companion* (SCM, 2013), pp. 29–30.

[7] The Baptist World Alliance document that offers a covenant on intra-Baptist relationships takes this same position ('Covenant on Intra-Baptist Relationships', Baptist World Alliance, 2013 <https://baptistworld.org/intra-baptist-covenant/> [accessed 23 September 20204]).

— and whether there are tensions with other evangelical confessions of faith that suggest Scripture is the source of authority.[8] My sense is that this debate is overplayed, and those who would argue theologically that it is more appropriate to describe Christ as having supreme authority (as I would) still argue for the unique place of Scripture, and those who would prefer to express the supreme authority of Scripture will also speak of the authority of Christ.

What is more significant are issues of biblical interpretation, for those who share a belief in the normativity of Scripture recognise that it is then interpreted by fallible human beings.[9] Debates on doctrine tend to be debates around the interpretation of Scripture, and this is certainly true for contemporary debates about same-sex relationships.[10] I recognise, therefore, that when I come to Scripture I bring a whole unique collection of interpretive positions and strategies formed over decades of Bible reading. Stephen Holmes goes as far as to argue that the 'Baptist vision is actually in principle opposed to any formal account of Biblical hermeneutics, if we mean by that a definition of right and wrong ways to read the Bible'.[11] He is clear that this does not mean that anything goes, but that God's ultimate sovereignty means we cannot equate certain hermeneutical methods with truth. We work at what we might think are 'better' hermeneutical practices (although these will continue to be contested) but recognise that God, in God's freedom, may choose to speak in unexpected ways.

Finally, we must consider the question of how tradition — or, as is sometimes described, the Church's 'catholicity' — as represented in texts like the historic creeds should shape normativity. To help

[8] See discussions in James Gordon, 'Spirituality and Scripture: The Rule of the Word', in *Under the Rule of Christ: Dimensions of Baptist Spirituality*, ed. by Paul S. Fiddes (Smyth and Helwys, 2008), pp. 103–144; Stephen R. Holmes, 'Baptists and the Bible', *Baptist Quarterly*, 43.7 (2010), pp. 410–424.

[9] See Nigel Wright, *The Radical Evangelical* (SPCK, 1996), pp. 44–46.

[10] See Anthony Clarke, 'Questioning our Commitments: Exploring Hermeneutical Practice in Discussions of Human Sexuality', *Journal of Baptist Theology in Context*, 8 (March 2023), pp. 82–102.

[11] Holmes, 'Baptists and the Bible', p. 421.

navigate this, Wright offers the distinction between dogma, doctrine, and opinion, suggesting that dogma is those fundamentals held by the whole church that are irreversible, so must be normative, whilst doctrines are significant views held by denominations, with opinions being more individually shaped.[12] On this basis, what is normative for Baptists would then include both dogma and some doctrine: the core beliefs of the universal church together with particular doctrines such as believer's baptism.

Wright offers the Nicene creed as the one example of dogma, arguing that the 'creeds reflect not human whims or sectional self-interest but the well-winnowed, tried and tested tradition of the whole church of Jesus Christ'.[13] But Wright is doing more than simply describing the past here, offering instead a significant, perhaps faith-based, judgement. The historical reality is that the forming of the creeds from Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon were deeply political and contested moments which did not resolve the disputes of the day. To claim, as Wright does, that they do not reflect human whims seems to be making claims for these texts beyond what is historically verifiable, suggesting a strong belief in divine agency through these processes. Again, I am not questioning the particular theology contained in these documents, nor ruling out divine involvement, but I want to recognise the complexity involved, as the events surrounding these councils were deeply human and flawed. Even the exact wording of the Nicene Creed is contested, with the version used in the Western churches adding the phrase 'and from the Son' in the clause about the Holy Spirit. While Wright's division between dogma, doctrine, and opinion may appear attractive, it systematises a reality that is much more complicated, for the boundaries between the categories are disputed and so unclear.

Baptists have tended to have a mixed relationship with 'tradition', with the concern that it does not undermine the centrality and normativity of Scripture. But more recently, a number of Baptist theologians have argued for a more positive engagement with tradition

[12] Wright, *Free Church*, p. 220.
[13] Wright, *Free Church*, p. 221.

and the wider catholic teaching of the church.[14] Holmes, for example, offers a clear and compelling account of our historical rootedness, making tradition inherently good and something that all Christians should consider carefully. But the place of tradition in discerning what is normative is complex. In writing confessions, seventeenth-century Particular Baptists were both placing themselves within the theological tradition of Calvinism, while also insisting on the re-found practice of believer's baptism against the wider tradition. Others today might hold on to their commitment to believer's baptism but question some of this Calvinist theology.

In search for normativity, then, I believe that such objective orthodoxy exists, but my own knowledge of this orthodoxy will be provisional and limited. This should not deter me from pursuing such truth but will shape the way that I seek to express it. I will pursue this orthodoxy based on Scripture, recognising that I will have developed my own hermeneutical approach to the Bible, listening to and learning from the catholic tradition while recognising that the tradition itself can only be flawed and itself provisional. Furthermore, it is necessary for communities of Christian faith, whether local churches or wider groupings, to offer shared confessions that enable these communities to understand themselves and communicate with each other. These will be equally provisional, because the knowledge of the community is limited and has a significant element of subjectivity.

A Foundation for Baptist Normativity

For the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB), the *Declaration of Principle* is embedded in its constitution and is a document with which all members and accredited ministers are required to agree. In more recent years, its use has become commonplace in ordination services, a

[14] See, for example, Stephen R. Holmes, *Listening to the Past: The Place of Tradition in Theology* (Paternoster, 2002); John E. Colwell, 'Catholicity and Confessionalism: Responding to George Beasley Murray on Unity and Distinctiveness', *Baptist Quarterly*, 43.1 (January, 2009), pp. 4–23; Curtis Freeman, *Contesting Catholicity: Theology for Other Baptists* (Baylor University Press, 2014); Steven Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and Baptist Vision* (Wipf and Stock, 2006).

practice that further confirms its normativity.[15] The *Declaration of Principle*, in something like its present form, has been the key document since 1904.[16] We will return to the *Declaration of Principle* in due course, but if instead we were to try to explore what normativity for Baptists might look like from first principles, where might we begin?

Perhaps the key starting point for Baptists through their history has not been ecclesiology or even the Bible but an understanding of Christ and his relationship to us; that is, the early baptismal and credal formula taken from the New Testament that 'Jesus is Lord'.[17] This is seen most clearly in the political implications of the early dissenting tradition which insisted that with Christ as King there could be no other human king or authority that usurped his place. Thomas Helwys was adamant that the English king could not be judge of the human conscience.[18] More recently, the statement produced by the Baptist World Alliance to mark its centenary begins by declaring that those assembled in 2005 'renew our commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ'.[19] Holmes suggests that the 'primary doctrine of the church among Baptists is a stress on the Lordship of Christ […] [and] the Baptist distinctive is applying this resolutely to the local congregation'.[20] There are other phrases Baptists have drawn on from time to time which offer a restatement of this fundamental confession. 'The crown rights of the Redeemer', the origins of which lie with John Knox, has a distinctly political feel but has been appropriated in other contexts that resonate

[15] The first time that agreement with the *Declaration of Principle* is included in a liturgical service book is in Christopher J. Ellis and Myra Blyth, *Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples* (Canterbury Press, 2005), pp. 126–127.

[16] Changes were made in 1906, 1938, and 2009. For an introduction to and discussion of the *Declaration of Principle* see *Something to Declare: A Study of the Declaration of Principle*, ed. by Richard Kidd (Whitley, 1996).

[17] Paul seems to see this as the starting point for faith in Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:10–11.

[18] See Wright, *Free Church*, pp. 210–212.

[19] See 'Beliefs Statement', Baptist World Alliance, n.d. <https://baptistworld.org/beliefs/> [accessed 23 September 2024].

[20] Stephen R. Holmes, *Baptist Theology* (T&T Clark, 2012), p. 101.

deeply with Baptist history.[21] More recently the phrase 'under the rule of Christ' expresses the same point.[22]

We might notice a number of interweaving aspects to this idea that Baptists have emphasised. 'Jesus is Lord' is first and foremost a christological statement. It is Jesus who is declared to be Lord. The original context certainly adds an important political context to such a confession — it is not Caesar who is Lord — but first and foremost it expresses the Christian believer's understanding of something of the nature of Christ. It of course does not have the depth or nuance that it contained in later creeds, but it is a christological statement that connects Christ with God and expresses faith in him. To declare Jesus as Lord is a statement of allegiance, and an attempt to ensure God remains sovereign in all things.

Second, there is also a soteriological aspect, stressing that salvation is the work of Christ as Lord and not human achievement. Holmes summarises an historical Baptist understanding when he suggests that 'God deals directly with each particular human being, summoning him or her to respond in repentance and faith to the gospel call, and to take his or her place within the active community of the redeemed'.[23] Henry Wheeler Robinson connects this confession directly to believer's baptism, which he suggests is 'an acted parable' that testifies to the soteriological aspect of the confession Jesus is Lord 'more impressively than by any verbal recital of a creed' and as 'the historical basis of *every* Christian creed'.[24]

There is then an ecclesiological aspect, because it is this same commitment to the rule of Christ as Lord that is expressed more fully in the doctrine of the local church. While being an individual confession in baptism, it is also the gathered church that confesses Christ as Lord.

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[21] See Patricia M. Took, 'Crown Rights of the Redeemer', in *Challenge to Change: Dialogues with a Radical Baptist Theologian*, ed. by Pieter J. Lalleman (Spurgeon's College, 2009), pp. 191–204; Kidd, *Something to Declare*, p. 28; Brian Haymes, *A Question of Identity: Reflections on Baptist Principle and Practice* (Yorkshire Baptist Association, 1986), p. 22; Wright, *Free Church Free State*, p. 211; Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, p. 119.

[22] See *Under the Rule of Christ: Dimensions of Baptist Spirituality*, ed. by Paul S. Fiddes (Smyth and Helwys, 2008).

[23] Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, p. 95.

[24] Henry Wheeler Robinson, *The Life and Faith of the Baptists* (Carey Kingsgate, 1946), pp. 77, 80.

Not only is the local church under the rule of Christ in that it is made up of individuals who are committed to his lordship, but, as Holmes rightly points out, these same 'individualistic' tendencies in soteriology work out in ecclesiology.[25] The local, might one even say individual, church is the locus of the ongoing gracious work of God.

We might then add what might best be described as an ethical aspect, for the lordship of Christ is worked out in the discipleship of the individual and the local congregation, as each seeks to follow Christ in the world. Here we begin to see both an interplay and tension. The local congregation is *the* community of disciples in which the life of faith is outworked, demanding some shared discipleship while still upholding the belief in the liberty of conscience where each individual must take responsibility for their own response to Christ as Lord. Such a stress on religious liberty goes back to Thomas Helwys's *The Mystery of Iniquity,* which for all its polemic tone repeatedly insists on the direct rule of Christ over human conscience.[26] Liberty of conscience may be read in contemporary post-modern culture as simply another version of self-expression, but theologically nothing could be further from the truth. As Brian Haymes points out in his discussion of Helwys, 'it was not an appeal to human rights. It is because God is as God is in Jesus that he believed that we human beings have freedom of conscience in such matters.'[27] The freedom of the individual or the local church is only the freedom to follow Christ as Lord.

Being under the rule of Christ finally has a hermeneutical aspect. While the Bible has always had a particularly significant place in Baptist life, there has been no agreed hermeneutical approach to reading the text. Baptists have firmly rejected any magisterium that might have an authoritative role in prescribing Biblical interpretation because this would transgress on the lordship of Christ. So, while Holmes may be right that there is not any agreed hermeneutical practice, what has shaped the Baptist reading of Scripture is the conviction that Jesus is

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25 Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, ch. 5, especially p. 101.

26 Thomas Helwys, *A Short History of The Mystery of Iniquity*, ed. by Richard Groves (Mercer University Press, 1998), p. 37.

27 Brian Haymes, 'Thomas Helwys' *The Mystery of Iniquity*: Is it Still Relevant in the Twenty-First Century?', in *Exploring Baptist Origins*, ed. by Anthony R. Cross and Nicholas J. Wood (Regent's Park College, 2010), pp. 61–76 (p. 74).

Lord and that the rule of Christ comes through Scripture to the congregation and individual. Churches may then make further confessional statements which seek to offer a shared interpretation of Scripture, which will in essence be further explications of what it means to declare Jesus as Lord.

There is, then, a strong argument to make that the Baptist Union *Declaration of Principle* is a further reflection on the fundamental idea of being under the lordship of Christ, offering more texture and depth to this foundational confession. The *Declaration of Principle* can be seen to echo those five aspects highlighted above. It rightly has a christological aspect as it speaks of the nature of God in Christ. It has a soteriological aspect, referencing Christ as Saviour and stressing the need for repentance, faith, and baptism. It has a clear and well recognised ecclesiological aspect, expressed in the liberty of the local church. There is an ethical element, the call to discipleship and to engage in God's mission in the world. Finally, there is a hermeneutical aspect, not only stressing the significance of Scripture that reveals Christ but pointing to the way Scripture might be interpreted, by the community, with the aid of the Spirit, with a christological centre.

Living with Jesus as Lord

Building on this, let me offer three interweaving assertions of the way this confession of Jesus as Lord shapes Baptist life, assertions that stand together rather than independently, and where certainly the first two statements should be seen as equally important rather than in order of priority.

(1) The first assertion is that 'Jesus is Lord' is a personal confession of faith which must shape my life. This is a declaration of the sovereignty of God in Christ and an active commitment to discipleship, learning, and growth. But I am only able to confess Jesus is Lord because of the witness and presence of the church; thus, there is from the very beginning an interweaving of the individual and the community. Baptism is an expression of this interweaving: baptised by the church into the church on personal confession of faith in Jesus as Lord. This is not a binary choice — as if the priority of the individual or

community has to be decided — but, as Derek Hatch suggests, 'there is an intrinsic dynamism that allows the individual and the social to coinhere so that where one is found, so is the other'.[28]

A proper stress on the individual can, of course, become an excessive individualism. The most robust expression of the place of the individual in Baptist life probably comes from E. Y. Mullins, the former president of the Baptist World Alliance, who introduced into the American context the language of soul-competency.[29] For Mullins, this was clearly and carefully delineated as a competency under the rule of Christ rather than a human ability, but still places most stress on the individual in contrast to the community. While still influential, there have also been significant critiques. Back in 1926, Wheeler Robinson has Mullins in his sight when he suggests that Baptists have erred on being too individualistic at the expense of the community.[30] More recently, a number of authors have wanted to rebalance Baptist thinking by offering more stress on the catholicity of the church.[31] Jeff Jacobson is surely right when he suggests that 'unbridled liberty can undermine catholicity'.[32] Alongside this critique of an excessive individualism is the concern that such individual faith has also been expressed in overly cognitive and rational terms, so that the individual believer who confesses faith in baptism should do so through an intellectual articulation of Christian faith. The hospitality of the church to those with, for example, learning difficulties has also challenged this over-rationalistic approach.

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[28] Derek Hatch, *Thinking with the Church: Toward a Renewal of Baptist Theology* (Cascade, 2018), p. 127. A paper to BUGB Council in November 2009 from the Faith and Unity Executive, *Knowing What We Believe* — so an example of representative theology — describes this as a tension between the individual and corporate. Available at 'Who We Are', Baptists Together https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/366067/Knowing_What_We.aspx. [accessed 23 September 2024].

[29] E. Y. Mullins, *The Axions of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith* (American Baptist Publications Society, 1908).

[30] Wheeler Robinson, *The Life and Faith of the Baptists*, p. 143.

[31] Hatch, *Thinking with the Church,* offers a sustained exploration and critique of Mullins.

[32] Jeff Jacobson, 'An Exploration of the First Clause of the Declaration of Principle', in *Attending to the Margins: Essays in Honour of Stephen Finamore*, ed. by Helen Paynter and Peter Hatton (Regent's Park College, 2022), p. 268.

But if the faith of a church is articulated as an individual confession that 'Jesus is Lord', then it leads to *some kind* of commitment to freedom of conscience. The catholicity of the church is vital, and excessive individualism is to be challenged with a covenant commitment to walk together in covenant. This, as Jacobson suggests, will involve a certain curtailing of individual freedom for the sake of unity.[33] I stand with those who insist that we must develop and celebrate a greater catholicity and learn from tradition, what C. K. Chesterton famously called 'the democracy of the dead'.[34] But suppose that I have a dispute with the local church of which I am a member? When does submission to the collective view move from an appropriate curtailing of individual freedom to the community standing in the place of Christ as Lord?

Suppose a female member of a church in reading Scripture both collectively and individually senses a call from God to ministry but is in a local church context that has a strong commitment to leadership as male, even articulating this on the basis of a trinitarian doctrine based on 1 Corinthians 11.[35] Does this woman accept the position of the local church, stay and challenge it, or lovingly leave? While this local church is doing what it should do in developing practical theology, it is also a particular use, and perhaps abuse, of power. For me, this goes significantly beyond the curtailing of individual freedom for the sake of unity, and the logic expressed by Holmes and Patricia Took that freedom of conscience to follow Jesus as Lord should in the very end prevail, seems compelling.[36] While my commitment is to the local church and a catholic understanding of faith, my final allegiance is to Jesus as Lord, and if my reading of Scripture with others and my confession of 'Jesus is Lord' leads me to certain theological conclusions, then ultimately, with care and love, I have a duty to follow where I believe Jesus is leading with a clear conscience, even where this opposes the local church. This is not the freedom to do as I please as an

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[33] Jacobson, 'An Exploration', p. 268.
[34] C. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy: The Romance of Faith* (Doubleday, 1990), p. 48, cited by Hatch, *Thinking with the Church*, p. 98.
[35] This is a real scenario in an English context. In other parts of Europe, the ordained ministry of women is not a possibility, adding further complexity.
[36] Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, pp. 119–120; Took, 'Crown Rights of the Redeemer', pp. 194–196.

individual, but a freedom, through Scripture and the Spirit, to understand and respond to the demands of Jesus as Lord.

(2) The second assertion, which we have already begun to discuss, is that 'Jesus is Lord' is equally the confession of the local church. Baptists have traditionally understood the local church to be an instance of the universal church and under the direct rule of Christ, not mediated by other ecclesiastical structures.[37] The local church, then, has the responsibility to discern the mind of Christ together, intentionally and collectively. The local church does this first with an intentional attention to the tradition of the church. Wright stresses that the competence of the local church is not an omnicompetence, and for its fullness of life the local church needs to engage in cooperative fellowship,[38] what has traditionally been described as 'walking together' in covenant relationship.[39] More than that, there is a broader tradition, namely the catholicity of the church, whether that be expressed in terms of an historic creed or more general developments of doctrine, that warrants our attention. It would be arrogant of the local church to think that all those who have sought to read Scripture in previous centuries had nothing to say to how Scripture is best read now.

This remains something of a tension here in the work of Wright — perhaps a tension that is inevitable — for he suggests both that no other church or group of churches has power to impose on the local church *and* that there are also some things which are too far reaching to be left to the local church and require the 'consensus of the faithful'; so some ecumenical decisions seem binding on the local church.[40] This is reminiscent of Wright's discussion of dogma and doctrine. Philip Fellows offers a very clear account of Wright's overall thinking on this issue and concludes, in line with Wright, that 'the history of Christian exegesis and doctrinal formulation on this point is vitally relevant and demands to be listened to with respect and a presumption of obedience

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37 Wright, *Free Church*, p. 52.
38 Wright, *Free Church*, pp. 183–184.
39 See Larry J. Kreitzer and Deborah Rooke, 'Walking in Covenant: The Scriptural Basis for an Early Baptist Principle', in *For the Sake of the Church: Essays in Honour of Paul S. Fiddes*, ed. by Anthony Clarke (Regent's Park College, 2014), pp. 15–43.
40 Wright, *Free Church*, pp. 186–187, 192.

when a consensus can be discerned'.[41] Fellows suggests developing Wright's ideas with a clearer pneumatology, but this still does not resolve the tension. There are challenges here both in agreeing what is 'the consensus of the faithful', which will inevitably mean codification in a text, and then how these particular texts are subsequently interpreted.

The Baptist way of understanding 'Jesus as Lord' means that it is imperative for the local church to recognise the presence of Christ in others — catholicity — and to take these views with the utmost seriousness. But ultimately, for Baptists, the tension in Wright's argument has to be resolved in favour of the local church. It is the local church that listens carefully to the catholic tradition but has the ultimate responsibility to discern the mind of Christ as witnessed to in Scripture — to live with Jesus as Lord — because there is no other ecclesial body with authority to do so. Jacobson suggests it was a 'desire for freedom, amongst other reasons, which made Baptists reluctant to demand acceptance of creeds and confessions of faith'.[42] But this does not say enough, suggesting the motivation was simply a desire for freedom. It is not a desire for freedom itself but the conviction that this is a consequence of the confession 'Jesus is Lord' ruling directly in the local church. The only ecclesiological alternative would seem to be some kind of central magisterium that imposes theology and practice on the community or the individual. Inherent, then, in this ecclesiology is the possibility that a local church in studying Scripture guided by the Spirit may come to a conclusion which others consider at odds with the 'consensus of the faithful'. It does this responsibly and carefully but under the lordship of Christ. When early Baptists stated that baptism was only for believers, this was a radical step that was at odds with the 'consensus of the faithful' at the time but was born out of commitment that this was necessary to follow Christ as Lord.

The local church discerns the mind of Christ, secondly, with what might be described as a 'generous orthodoxy',[43] or a 'modesty allied

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[41] Philip Fellows, 'The Authority of Tradition in the Work of Nigel G. Wright', *Journal of Baptist Theology in Context*, 10 (2023), pp. 26–47 (p. 47).

[42] Jacobson, 'An Exploration', p. 268.

[43] This phrase is often attributed first to Hans Frei and as being popularised by Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Zondervan, 2006). It has been picked up in a number of recent publications such as *The Bond of Peace: Exploring Generous Orthodoxy*, ed. by Graham Tomlin and

to firm conviction'.[44] This seems better language than tolerance. Tolerance still has too strong a sense of a commitment to a particular stance that borders on arrogance — I might tolerate others even though I 'know' they are wrong — and comes from a too realist epistemology. Generosity, on the other hand, is an attitude of heart that is based on humility and includes some recognition of the inevitable provisionality of my own position. This is why taking a critical realist position matters, as it allows me both to state clearly what I see but at the same time to recognise that my view is only ever partial. It is absolutely right and proper that the local church express theological commitments — this is part of confessing Jesus as Lord — and that it does so on a range of issues; this is not to suggest that the church shy away from such theological discussions and commitments, but to plead that it does so with generosity.[45]

The local church discerns the mind of Christ, thirdly, by recognising the liberty of conscience of the individual. Following from Mullins's language, there has been an ongoing discussion about 'soul competency' and 'congregational competency'.[46] But this again can never be a binary choice; rather it remains a constant source of creative tension, as it is the same individuals who have responsibility to live under the lordship of Christ who discern the mind of Christ together. John Colwell, for example, may point out that the *Declaration of Principle* stresses the liberty of the local church not the 'individual Christian in solipsistic isolation',[47] but ultimately the basis for the corporate walking together in Baptist life has been the freedom of conscience of the individual, living under the lordship of Christ, guided by Scripture and the Spirit. The local church cannot impose on its members theological convictions or practices. These can be corporately agreed but never

Nathan Eddy (SPCK, 2021); *Generous Orthodoxies: Essays on the History and Future of Ecumenical Theology*, ed. by Paul Silas Peterson (Pickwick, 2020).

[44] Nigel Wright, 'The Baptist Way of Being the Church', in *A Perspective on Baptist Identity*, ed. by David Slater (Mainstream, 1987), p. 44.

[45] Two small book express this generosity. Brian Haymes, *A Question of Identity,* and *A Perspective on Baptist Identity* ed. by David Slater take different positions, with the latter expressly responding to and at times critiquing Haymes.

[46] See John Hammett, 'From Church Competence to Soul Competence: The Devolution of Baptist Ecclesiology', *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*, 3.1 (Spring 2005), pp. 145–163.

[47] Colwell, 'Catholicity and Confessionalism', p. 16.

imposed, because the individuals must also confess 'Jesus is Lord'. Sometimes this may result in a changing of minds and new learning together; sometimes this may result in disagreement that is held as the community walks together in Christ. Sometimes, and with extreme sadness, the discernment of the individual may be at odds with the discernment of the community so that even within a generous orthodoxy some may feel the need to walk in a different way.

The current debate around same-sex relationships is such an example. There will be those local churches who, discerning the mind of Christ, will take a position that advocates strongly for a traditional understanding of marriage and as a result sees a more restricted place in the community for those in committed same-sex relationships. They may express this with a generous orthodoxy, which offers the warmest welcome they can, but still develop a practice that excludes those in same-sex relationships from membership of the church. Some who take a different view may feel able to walk together within this corporate discernment by the church; others may feel as a point of conscience that their confession of Jesus as Lord means they must walk a different way. The same, of course, is true of the strongly affirming church who commit themselves to the full inclusion of those in same-sex relationships while also extending the same generous orthodoxy to those who disagree with this position. Again, some may find that they can walk together and disagree, others may find that they too must walk a different way.

We must not be too quick when there is some parting of the ways to label churches as intolerant and individuals as schismatic. We should deeply regret the manifold splits in the church that have occurred and confess that this is rooted in our own human fallenness; and a further aspect of that fallenness will be the speed and clamour with which we defend our view as 'right' and another as 'wrong'. But this is also an unavoidable outworking of our confession that 'Jesus is Lord'. The only alternative would be this central magisterium that imposes theology and practice on the community or the individual. When a community compels an individual to act against their conscience (that is, their understanding of what it means to follow Jesus as Lord based on Scripture under the guidance of the Spirit) the result is a kind of

blasphemy, because it is no longer Christ who is Lord as others have usurped his place. This may well be done because of what the community understands to be right theology, based on its reading of Scripture under the guidance of the Spirit, but it is the *compelling* of others who have come to different conclusions from Scripture that is a kind of blasphemy. Alternatively, when an individual genuinely believes one thing about following Jesus as Lord but does something different, there is hypocrisy. Both blasphemy and hypocrisy have to be avoided. We should repent of our brokenness as a church and work hard so that the prayer of Jesus for unity might be more fulfilled; we should be continually self-reflective about our own motives and attitudes and the times we have sought to 'lord it over' others; but we must also encourage all to take their rightful responsibility under the lordship of Christ to whom we submit as individuals and churches.

(3) 'Jesus is Lord' is then also the confession of a Baptist Union, as the gathering together of local churches. Generally, Baptists have only recognised local churches as 'ecclesial bodies' and so resist talking about the 'Baptist Church'. But there is still the challenge and responsibility of those local churches who gather together in Associations and Unions (or other language that may be used to refer to the formal structure that gathers local churches together) to live under the lordship of Christ, discerning the mind of Christ for the shared life of the churches. As such, a Union should, then, make theological statements about its shared life (as well as soteriological, ecclesial, ethical, and hermeneutical statements) because it has already done so in declaring Jesus as Lord, and so further theological statements are an explication of this confession. But, like a local church, a Union does so with care and caution, paying attention to the tradition and expressing these with a generous orthodoxy, recognising that to confess Jesus is Lord *requires* liberty for individuals and local churches in order that they too might live under the rule of Christ.

There must, therefore, be the same insistence, as is the case in a local church, that a Union cannot impose a collective view on an individual church (and ultimately on an individual) who must be responsible and free to act in conscience under the lordship of Christ; local churches and individuals who may disagree can decide in

conscience whether to walk together or not.[48] There is a right balance between freedom (of the local church) and faithfulness (to the catholic tradition) but ultimately in Baptist ecclesiology it can only be the local church that can finally, listening to all others, determine faithfulness. Separation is again to be deeply regretted, but the possibility of separation through discerning the mind of Christ differently remains a consequence of *this* understanding of the lordship of Christ. A number of particular issues then follow. If a Baptist Union should make confessional statements which explain further what it means for this group of churches to have a shared confession of Jesus as Lord, what should be the boundaries of these statements, how should those boundaries be applied and to whom? For example, whilst the Ministries Team in the BUGB fully endorses the ministry of women and men, this has not been a 'boundary issue' in the Union, and there can be churches that for theological reasons do not do so. The Union does not impose on local churches a view of ministry because there is liberty for the local church to discern the mind of Christ, even though this is deeply painful for many of the women involved.[49]

Returning to the *Declaration of Principle*

In the light of this, we might then return to the *Declaration of Principle* as the one current normative document in the BUGB and comment on four issues that have been highlighted in recent discussions: the document's ambiguity, its theological nature, its sufficiency, and its purpose.

Jeff Jacobson has pointed to its inherent *ambiguity,* derived both from its contextual nature and possible hermeneutical interpretations; should we approach it seeking the authorial intent of the original document, with all the complexities that this involves for an historic multi-authored text, or see it as a 'living document'?[50] It is, of course,

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[48] See Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, p. 96: 'At most the local congregation might be excluded from the denomination.'

[49] The results of Project Violet are crucial in this respect and require the most serious attention. 'Project Violet', Baptists Together, n.d. <https://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/363245/Project_Violet.aspx.> [accessed 23 September 2024].

[50] Jacobson, 'An Exploration', p. 254.

not a straight forward binary position, as any interpretation requires both some consideration of how well we know the original intent, or perhaps intents, as well as appropriate boundaries for a living text still speaking with some faithfulness to the past. Although Jacobson helpfully points out how some aspects could be clarified, there is also a sense that some ambiguity is inevitable. This is simply the nature of language, certainly from a critical realist position. We should recognise ambiguity and the challenges it brings, and where possible seek clarity. I certainly do not suggest we use ambiguity as a cover for disagreement or to avoid the hard work of talking together, but nor should we fear ambiguity, for it will always be with us. Whatever the original intention of the authors, a text cannot avoid becoming a 'living document' to some degree. Later generations may not understand the document in the same way and will interpret it in the light of their own understanding. Some may find it easier to live with ambiguity than others, but removing all ambiguity will be impossible in a theological text.

But if the Baptist Union has a normative document which cannot avoid some kind of ambiguity, then is there any normative interpretation of such a document for the wider Baptist Union? An interesting case is the resolution passed at the 1972 Baptist Assembly held in London in the light of the controversy caused by Michael Taylor's address the year before, which was critiqued by many others because of the way it was perceived to reject the full divinity of Christ. A resolution put to the 1972 Assembly, which was overwhelmingly supported, offered what amounted to a theological explanation of the *Declaration of Principle*, that it meant the 'full deity and real humanity' of Christ, drawing on language that echoes that of the Council of Chalcedon.[51] The more difficult question is what is the status of this resolution, for like all other resolutions of an Assembly, beyond the *Declaration of Principle*, it would only seem to have a 'representative' status not a 'normative' one, as it is not the basis for membership.

That does not mean that we should not revise the *Declaration of Principle* to make it as clear as we can, and the language of the 1972

[51] For the text and a wider discussion see Nigel Wright, 'Sustaining Evangelical Identity: Faithfulness and Freedom in Denominational Life', in *Truth that Never Dies: The Dr G. R. Beasley-Murray Memorial Lectures, 2002–2012*, ed. by Nigel G. Wright (James Clarke, 2015), p. 209.

resolution, for example, could be included in a new normative text. But any text, through ambiguity and a variety of interpretation, has its limits. Or, more positively, a text may create space in which a variety of people can stand, recognising that texts are not the only, or even central, carriers of doctrine. As Mike Higton suggests, 'Doctrine lives in the thoughts, words and actions of the whole church, and then also, and secondarily, in formal statements and authoritative pronouncements.'[52]

It has been recently robustly pointed out by various authors that the *Declaration of Principle* is a *theological* document;[53] it can be no other as a reflection on the lordship of Christ! It may not be a creed in the traditional sense of what that means, but it is certainly and necessarily confessional. There have also been calls over the years for the *Declaration of Principle* to be reworked or replaced.[54] In principle, these calls are entirely proper, and any suggestion that British Baptists are non-credal and do not need a creed is significantly overstated; we may be non-credal, but we have certainly been confessional. Nor is the *Declaration of Principle* sacrosanct, as it is a contingent document that has been changed over time, and there is an argument for intentionally treating the *Declaration of Principle* as such and subject to review from time to time.

The issue is not whether there should be a theologically articulated basis for the Union — we have one already in the *Declaration of Principle*. But the recent debate about same-sex relationships has raised questions again about whether the *Declaration of Principle* is still *sufficient* for the needs of the Union and whether it says enough.[55] There are various aspects of doctrine that are not touched on at all and others, even the deity of Christ and the Trinity, that are touched on only briefly.

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[52] Mike Higton, *The Life of Christian Doctrine* (Bloomsbury, 2022), p. 12.

[53] Andrew Goodliff, 'English Baptists Confessing the Faith in the Twentieth Century: A Response to Christopher Crocker', *Baptist Quarterly* (2024), doi:10.1080/0005576X.2024.2331340.

[54] See Brian Haymes, *A Question of Identity*, pp. 28–30; George Beasley-Murray, 'Confessing Baptist Identity', in *A Perspective on Baptist Identity* ed. by David Slater (Mainstream, 1987), pp. 75–86; and Paul Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Paternoster, 2003), pp. 45–47.

[55] See, for example, Stephen Finamore, 'The Declaration of Principle and Biblical Interpretation with Notes on Same Sex Marriage', Evangelical Baptists, 26 June 2022 <http://www.evangelicalbaptist.uk/2022/06/26/the-declaration-of-principle-and-biblical-interpretation-with-notes-on-same-sex-marriage/> [accessed 23 September 2024].

The Union of churches could choose to develop an amended version of the *Declaration of Principle* which includes theological material on a broader range of matters, which again would be entirely proper as a normative document of the Union. But there is, of course, no simple objective list of 'issues' that such a document ought to include. The *Declaration of Principle* is necessarily subjective or contingent, in that it has picked some issues as those which Baptists sought to gather around (Jesus as Lord, baptism of believers, evangelisation, etc.) while omitting others (particular or general views on election).[56] We should be willing to have discussion around the content of a normative theological document sufficient for the contemporary context, but recognising that those discussions will be contested and subjective and that the text will have some ambiguity.

Finally, we might reflect on considerations about the *purpose* of the *Declaration of Principle*, that is, its ethical aspect. Returning to the 'Four Voices' method of theology discussed above, once different voices are identified, then there is space for a conversation between them including the recognition of where there might be dissonance between the voices. In this context, the issue is where there might be some dissonance between the *normative* voice, here expressed in the *Declaration of Principle*, and the *espoused* or *operant* voices of a local church.

For example, a local church has formed a significant relationship with a local retirement complex and some of its residents have become regular attenders at the church. Over a period of months, a number of them have been baptised, but due to their age and some physical constraints, they were all baptised as believers by effusion not immersion. This creates a tension between the recent operant practice of the local church and the normative *Declaration of Principle*, which states that 'Christian baptism is the immersion into water in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit […]'. I cannot imagine the validity of these baptisms being questioned (unless one of them wanted to become a Baptist minister), even though the normative document seems

[56] In that sense the Nicene Creed is also subjective and contingent in that it chooses to include some things and not others, shaped by its historical context.

clear. We could argue that baptism in our churches is normally carried out by immersion — it is the norm — but allows pastoral exceptions.

But we should pay close attention to the deliberate use of language here: baptism by immersion might be the 'norm', that allows for different pastoral practice from time to time, as well as the 'normative' (that is, the agreed) interpretation of Scripture and theological position. This example raises interesting and complex questions about how the whole *Declaration of Principle* is used, how some aspects of dissonance might be held, and whether some aspects of it are interpreted as more essential. If a local church were to decide that it would only baptise by sprinkling as a theological position, then this might be a more significant dissonance.[57] If a church adopted a hyper-Calvinist basis of faith that questioned whether it was the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness, is that acceptable? If a local church questioned the understanding of the divinity of Christ expressed by the Nicene Creed could it remain in the Union?

A similar issue arises when a local church adopts a statement of faith, such as that from the Evangelical Alliance, to express its theological position. Does this then commit all members to agree with all points in it (is it prescriptive?), or does it express the generally held position of the gathered community? It is interesting that when, in 2006, the European Baptist Federation introduced the beliefs statement that had been adopted by the Baptist World Alliance in 2005, it did so with real care, recognising that all its member unions have their own doctrinal statements. But this is a 'statement of Baptist Identity which can helpfully summarise the core beliefs and values which are common among European and Middle Eastern Baptists'.[58] It explicitly does not say that these elements are agreed by all members; it is descriptive of shared beliefs and not prescriptive.

This takes us back to the kind of document we imagine the *Declaration of Principle* to be. Can it be understood as a declarative statement that expresses the shared understanding of the Union of

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[57] Historically, the very first Baptists baptised by effusion. See David Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Baylor, 2018), pp. 46–47.

[58] 'About', European Baptist Federation, n.d. <https://www.ebf.org/about> [accessed 23 September 2024].

Churches, Associations, and Colleges, or is it necessarily a prescriptive document that imposes boundaries? The 1972 Assembly resolution was passed by well over ninety percent, which gives some clear indication of a common faith. But it is interesting that the same Assembly also rejected an amendment calling for the discipline of those who were thought to have denied the divinity of Christ.[59] There was not the desire for it to be strongly prescriptive. This would match Fiddes' suggestion that confessions, or perhaps in this case a statement with confessional content, 'should be regarded as the *context* for covenant-making but never be the *required* basis for "walking together"'.[60]

The process whereby such a significant normative document is amended will be difficult in any time and context, and the current version will inevitably be shaped by some degree of historical contingency. But if a normative document is to be shaped by Baptist practice which has understood the confession 'Jesus is Lord' to imply freedom of conscience for the individual and liberty for the local church under the lordship of Christ, then it must be developed on the basis of a generous orthodoxy. The *purpose* of any normative document cannot be to impose beliefs on others, as this betrays our convictions about freedom of conscience and belief, but rather it must be to express a common faith.

Conclusion

I have argued in this article that to declare that 'Jesus is Lord' is and should be the foundational normative statement for Baptists. It is because we believe Jesus is Lord that we read Scripture, or, as American Baptist James McClendon puts it, 'the Bible is Scripture for us because Jesus Christ makes it so'.[61] But equally, the Jesus we believe in is not anyone's Jesus: 'He is the Jesus revealed in the pages of Scripture.'[62] It is because we believe Jesus is Lord that we respond with repentance and faith, and it is because of the way they have understood this confession

[59] Wright, 'Sustaining Evangelical Identity', p. 216.
[60] Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, p. 47. See also Goodliff, 'English Baptists Confessing the Faith in the Twentieth Century', pp. 1–13.
[61] James McClendon, *Doctrine: Systematic Theology, Vol. 2* (Abingdon, 1994), p. 471.
[62] Kidd, *Something to Declare*, p. 29.

that Baptists have insisted that a direct consequence is the freedom of conscience of the individual and the liberty of the local church to follow Jesus as Lord; in other words, to deny freedom of conscience and the liberty of the local church is to usurp the lordship of Christ.

I have then suggested that understood in this way, the confession 'Jesus is Lord' has a number of implications. It is right and necessary for the individual, the local church, and a union of churches to make further theological statements that fill out this statement; the *Declaration of Principle* of the BUGB is one such document. Such statements, from individuals, local churches, and unions of churches, will have a confessional nature, whether or not they are deemed to be creeds, having been formulated on the basis of Scripture and after careful listening to the wider tradition of the church. But because our knowledge of the truth is partial, these statements will be offered with a generous orthodoxy that recognises the provisionality inherent in our own understanding.

In all this, there will be a complex interplay between the individual and the community. There is a vital role for the church community in handing down the tradition and passing on faith, so an understanding of catholicity is necessary. But within the community, the individual has responsibility to follow Jesus as Lord, walking alongside others. This means that we should expect a mutual shaping between the individuals and the local church, and a humble openness to the discernment of the gathered community. But, sadly, there may be moments when an individual, taking responsibility to stand under the lordship of Christ, decides they cannot walk together on the basis of the agreed theological position of the local church; and, equally sadly, times a local church may feel it cannot walk with other churches in a union. My hope would be that there is a generosity of spirit that enables us to walk together, but fully recognise that for some, their conscience may dictate that to live under the rule of Christ is to walk a different path. Our response can only be a deep sadness and sense of repentance that the body of Christ is still broken and a renewal of our commitment to reach out to each other in Christ.

Theological Education and Mission in Estonia: Dialogue in Theory and Practice

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Abstract
Estonian baptistic communities face a missiological problem. They lack the ability for a meaningful dialogue with the rapidly changing society. As a result, churches tend to distance themselves from the wider community and create Christian echo-chambers in the midst of a 'hostile' world, becoming alienated from their culture and society. This results in a missional disability as far as touching the lives of people and serving the society goes in a highly secularised and hyper-modernised Estonia. This article presents an attempt by the Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary to face this missional challenge by creating a master's programme 'Theology and Society', using dialogical and problem-based learning methods in the educational process, to prepare future Christian leaders.

Keywords
Dialogue; theological education; mission; problem-based learning; Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary

Introduction

Estonian baptistic communities lack the ability for a meaningful dialogue with the rapidly changing society. 'Today, the importance of the congregation has been marginalised,' said one of the Estonian municipal leaders, in answer to the question of how meaningful the local church is within their community.[1] The churches tend to distance themselves from the wider community and create exclusive Christian 'bubbles' and echo-chambers in the midst of the world that they tend to

[1] Urmas Metsamaa, *Eesti EKB Koguduste Liidu väikekoguduste koostöö koguduste liidu ja kogukonnaga läbi tegevusvaldkondade prisma* (Kõrgem Usuteaduslik Seminar, 2015), p. 44.

see as 'hostile' and dangerous.[2] This alienates them even more from their culture and society.[3] The end result is a missional disability as far as loving, serving, and touching the lives of people and society is concerned.[4] The question is how to overcome this problem and develop leaders and churches who embody a Jesus-like touchable presence[5] and understandable communication in the contemporary society of Estonia.

While struggling with this question as a theological school, the Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary (hereafter Seminary) started researching and searching for what might be the way forward. How can theological education help to develop churches and church leaders who aim to embody the reality and presence of the kingdom of God?

Out of a deep dissatisfaction regarding the missional disability of the churches, grew the idea of developing a master's programme called 'Theology and Society'.[6] This step was based on understanding that 'theological education is mission and is included in the mission mandate to promote the Kingdom of God'.[7] A dialogical approach in theological education becomes dialogue lived in everyday church life, including missions, thus helping to solve the problem described. This article explores what this dialogical approach means and how it helps to overcome the missional limitations the Estonian free churches face. The process will be explained from three interconnected perspectives — educational, philosophical, and theological — which have all influenced decisions in the preparation and delivery of the master's programme. These perspectives are reflected in the educational practices of the

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2 Metsamaa, *Eesti EKB*, p. 39.

3 Laura Jaanhold, *Suhtumine religiooni Eestis – kuidas tunnevad end Eestis kristlike konfessioonide esindajad* (Tartu Ülikool, 2022).

4 Metsamaa, *Eesti EKB*, p. 37.

5 The idea of 'a touchable church' in Estonian society is more developed in the following article: Meego Remmel, 'Toward Integrity and Integration of the Church(es) Relating to the State in the Secularized Cultural Context of Estonian Society', *Religions*, 14.3 (2023), pp. 398–416 (p. 398), doi:10.3390/rel14030398.

6 See for the whole programme, 'MA in Theology and Society', Kõrgem Usuteaduslik Seminar, n.d. <https://kus.kogudused.ee/en/ma> [accessed 9 January 2024].

7 Peter Penner, 'Guidelines for the Mission of Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union', in *Theological Education as Mission*, ed. by P. Penner (Neufeld-Verlag, 2005), pp. 343–371 (pp. 364–365).

Seminary. Students' feedback demonstrates that they have benefitted from the dialogical method of learning and are convinced of being better prepared to face the problems met in their missional activities.

Three Perspectives of Dialogue

Dialogue is an important way of communicating between secular society and evangelical churches (namely, mission) and thus needs to be learned as part of theological education. The following sections argue from three perspectives as to what dialogue means and why it is a key element in theological education and enhancing churches' missional relevance. These perspectives may also initiate dialogue between the article and its readers.

Educational Perspective

Education in general and theological education in particular is formed by, and in turn forms, philosophical and psychological understandings.[8] When the general and scientific understanding of life changes, the practice of education should change as well. For example, new findings in psychology, especially Self-Determination Theory,[9] have added new challenges to how we think of and execute the educational process. One might say that the old way of educating has come to an epistemological crisis. This is described by Alasdair MacIntyre as follows: 'I have suggested that the epistemological process consists in the construction and reconstruction of more adequate narratives and forms of narrative and that epistemological crises are occasions for such reconstruction.'[10]

At the heart of this epistemological change is the understanding that the learner has to be an active participant in the educational process

[8] For example, Perry Shaw writes that it is quite difficult to compare different programmes 'because the philosophical roots differ'. See Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education* (Langham Global Library, 2014), p. 7.

[9] Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, 'Self-Determination and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-Being', *American Psychologist*, 55.1 (2000), pp. 68–78.

[10] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and the Philosophy of Science', in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, ed. by Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 138–157 (p. 142).

and construct their understanding by themselves.[11] The following concentrates on some of the issues that need to be reconsidered according to this change of focus from teacher to learner, or from proclamation to dialogue if missiological language is preferred. Several authors combine education and missions, just as this article does.[12]

Lecturing has been the most common method in education in general and theological education in particular. While recognising the many positive reasons for using this method, especially during the times when knowledge was not easily accessible, the method also poses a problem. Classical lecturing as a method implies understanding that there is someone who knows and others who do not know and therefore need to learn. Lecturing is mostly monological.

In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Brazilian educator Paolo Freire criticises 'narrative' forms of education: 'Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education.'[13] Freire connects this way of teaching with the ideology of oppression and calls it necrophilic, saying that 'it is nourished by love of death, not life', as it 'transforms students into receiving objects'.[14] In his other book, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Freire describes two types of consciousness — critical and magical. He is convinced that it is only dialogue that truly communicates and helps people to move from naive to critical, reality-based consciousness.[15]

When the 'narrative' (in this context, monological and lecture-centred) form is used in theological education, this may become the thinking pattern of future church leaders, pastors, and evangelists: they

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11 Howard Gardner, *Five Minds for the Future* (Harvard Business School Press, 2006); John Biggs and Catherine Tang, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (Society for Research into Higher Education and the Open University Press, 2007).

12 See Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Eerdmans, 1999); Darren Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education and Missional Spirituality', *Journal of Adult Theological Education*, 9.1 (April 2012), pp. 9–27.

13 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Continuum, 1970), p. 75.

14 Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 73.

15 Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (Continuum, 2010), pp. 38–40.

readily imply that they are the ones who have the truth, and others have to learn it from them. The only task of learners is to listen and internalise. This understanding, if present, is not only practically ineffective for psychological reasons,[16] but also carries a deeply problematic view of other humans, who happen to be learners. This will be discussed in more depth below.

However, the problem starts earlier than application of actual teaching methods — in many cases the curriculum development is done only by the teaching faculty. Linda Cannell challenges several areas which need to be changed in theological education. She points out the limits of a discipline-based approach to curriculum and suggests a need for an interdisciplinary approach; she also argues for taking educational understanding seriously in theological education.[17]

In the case of the Seminary in Estonia, the only stakeholder group legally required to confirm the new curriculum is the board of elders of the owner, in this case the Union of Free Evangelical and Baptist Churches of Estonia.[18] Most probably, the same is true in many other contexts. Curriculum is planned and executed by those 'who know' for those 'who need to know', thus implying a monological way of thinking. At the same time, contemporary curriculum theory offers the whole spectrum of aspects that need to be taken into consideration when creating or re-designing the curriculum: future competencies, needs of the employers and field of work, expectations and needs of learners, and the profile of the higher education institution.[19] When linking to missional practice, a crucial element of meaningful dialogue is that the needs and questions of the other person or group of people are taken into consideration by listening, asking questions, and offering

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16 As Peter Brown, Henry Roediger III, and Mark McDaniel comment, 'Learning is deeper and more durable when it is effortful […] Learning that's easy is like writing in sand, here today and gone tomorrow' (Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel, *Make it Stick* (Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 3). If connections are not built, long-term learning does not happen.

17 Linda Cannell, 'Opportunities for 21st Century Theological Education', in *Theological Education as Mission*, ed. by Peter F. Penner, pp. 153–170.

18 'Statutes of the Seminary', Kõrgem Usuteaduslik Seminar, 2019 <https://kus.kogudused.ee/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/KUS_Pohikiri.pdf> [accessed 7 March 2024] (Part VI, § 43, p. 7).

19 Siret Rutiku, Aune Valk, Einike Pilli, and Kätlin Vanari, *Õppekava arendamise juhendmaterjal* (Archimedes, 2009), pp. 22–24.

possible solutions. If students were to have an experience of being listened to and acknowledged, they might have different approaches in mission too.

The third educational topic grows out of the understanding of the learning effectiveness and takes form in the ways of assessment. Often classical university-level education measures performance, not learning. Nicholas Soderstrom and Robert Bjork claim that learning, which refers to durable and flexible skills and knowledge in a long-term time frame, needs to be distinguished 'from performance, which refers to the temporary fluctuations in behavior or knowledge that can be observed and measured during or immediately after the acquisition process'.[20] While learning is measured by long-term retention or transfer and performance during the acquisition, one would agree that in the longer run, learning is far more important than performance, as it makes the results durable and flexible.

This requires students to access knowledge and skills in 'various contexts in which they are relevant, not simply in contexts that match those experienced during instruction'.[21] This correspondingly requires a different approach to assessment. Performance-centeredness is even more unsuitable, knowing that 'conditions that produce the most errors during acquisition are often the very conditions that produce the most learning'.[22] Assessing the immediate and best possible results of learning tends to cut off the best possibilities of learning. People learn by making mistakes and evaluating the process.

Peter Brown, Henry Roediger, and Mark McDaniel claim, based on research findings, that rereading the textbooks is often 'labour in vain', because it is time consuming, does not result in durable memory, and often involves a kind of unwitting self-deception, as growing familiarity with the text comes to feel like mastery of the content. The truth is that more exposure to information does not automatically lead to learning.[23] It becomes paradoxical that 'the most effective learning

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[20] Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, 'Learning versus Performance: An Integrative Review', *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10.2 (2015), pp. 176–199 (p. 176).
[21] Soderstrom and Bjork, 'Learning versus Performance', p. 176.
[22] Soderstrom and Bjork, 'Learning versus Performance', p. 176.
[23] Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel, *Make it Stick*, p. 10.

strategies are not intuitive'.[24] However, there are better ways to be involved in a learning process.

Richard Deci and Edward Ryan describe the preconditions for motivation in their theory of self-determination (SDT), an approach to human motivation and personality. This theory identifies three innate psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy.[25] People with authentic motivation 'have more interest, confidence and excitement, manifesting in enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity',[26] compared to merely externally controlled people. This in turn results in more effective and long-term learning experiences.

Thus, it is important to support the autonomous nature of the learner. Christopher Niemiec, Edward Ryan, and Richard Deci[27] explain that autonomy involves people's full and deep commitment to continually reevaluating their behaviours to ensure that they are autonomous.[28] One might think that autonomy is the antithesis of relatedness, but according to SDT, the opposite is the case — there is research that indicates positive correlation between these two aspects.[29] When the need for autonomy is fulfilled, people feel competent and related at the same time.

Creating an educational environment which supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness is important for several reasons. Firstly, it makes learning much more effective — intrinsically motivated people get better results.[30] Secondly, it enables learners to acquire knowledge and skills in contextualised and long-term form. Finally, it teaches the attitude and way of thinking where the other person is valuable with all his or her thinking, experiences, and autonomy. This creates an

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24 Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel, *Make it Stick*, p. 9.

25 Ryan and Deci, 'Self-Determination and the Facilitation', p. 68.

26 Ryan and Deci, 'Self-Determination and the Facilitation', p. 69.

27 Christopher P. Niemiec, Richard M. Ryan, and Edward L. Deci, 'Self-Determination Theory and the Relation of Autonomy to Self-Regulatory Process and Personality Development', in *Handbook of Personality and Self-Regulation*, ed. by Rick E. Hoyle (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 169–191.

28 Niemiec, Ryan, and Deci, 'Self-Determination Theory', p. 172.

29 Ryan and Deci, 'Self-Determination and the Facilitation', p. 74.

30 Ryan and Deci, 'Self-Determination and the Facilitation', p. 70. These authors describe three conditions attached to intrinsic motivation: optimal challenges, effectance-promoting feedback, and freedom from demeaning evaluations.

atmosphere of respect, interest, and motivation to listen and to learn. This approach has the potential to spread from the context of theological education to the whole church life, including mission.

Let us consider one more aspect. Paolo Freire[31] sees respect for the autonomy of the learner as an ethical question. He writes, 'Education never was, is not and never can be neutral or indifferent in regard to the reproduction of the dominant ideology or the interrogation of it.'[32] In *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Freire criticised Brazilian education, saying that it 'has not been to exchange ideas, but to dictate them; not to debate or discuss themes, but to give lectures; not to work with the student, but to work on him, imposing an order to which she has had to accommodate.'[33]

Even though Freire writes from a very different context than contemporary European baptistic theological education and church tradition, the point is still valid: education, to be ethical, has to be dialogical and respectful for both sides of the process. Interestingly, his interest in educating illiterate Brazilians parallels well with the need to address 'illiteracy' regarding Christianity in our times, at least in secular Estonia. Freire's approach, which can be applied in the Estonian context, is clearly dialogical: 'Only dialogue truly communicates.'[34]

In summary, in the discussion about the educational aspect of changing the way of doing theological education and thus changing the way of being missional, three areas of possible problems and two reasons why dialogue is important have been considered. The possible problems are connected to the changed epistemology, underlying anthropology, and the effectiveness of learning. The two reasons for dialogue are methodological and ethical. Now it is time to explore a philosophical perspective, after which we try to envision a theological perspective.

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31 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).
32 Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, p. 91.
33 Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 33.
34 Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 40.

Philosophical Perspective

From the philosophical perspective, three questions should be considered: why?, what?, and how? First, why does the world seem 'worldly' to free church Christians to begin with? Second, what does a personal encounter require? And third, how should dialogical beings relate to each other? In looking for the answers, three authors guided the Seminary team on their way to better dialogue. The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer provided some helpful insights to reflect upon regarding the world in its 'worldliness'. It seemed applicable also in the context of Estonian churches relating to the contemporary secular society. The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber has described the nature of personal encounters and what is required for them. It provided some guidelines for finding an answer to the question concerning possible requirements for real personal encounters between Estonian churches and secular society. In addition, the Russian philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin has developed a specific concept of dialogue, called dialogism, explaining how human beings as dialogical beings relate to each other. These ideas were also helpful in both the Estonian educational and missiological contexts.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer bequeathed to the contemporary world at least two significant legacies: firstly, his book on the cost of discipleship,[35] and secondly, his prison letters, full of reflections on how to live out an appropriate discipleship and Christology in a 'godless world coming of age'.[36] In both writings, Bonhoeffer underlined the way of Jesus. It is not to communicate with the world in a top-down manner but rather in a dialogue of equals:

> The attack by Christian apologetic on the adulthood of the world I consider to be in the first place pointless, in the second place ignoble, and in the third place unchristian. Pointless, because it seems to me like an attempt to put a grown-up man back into adolescence, i.e. to make him dependent on things on which he is, in fact, no longer dependent, and thrusting him into problems that are, in fact, no longer problems to him. Ignoble, because it amounts to an attempt to exploit man's weakness for purposes that are alien to him and

[35] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (Touchtone, 1995; first published in German in 1937).

[36] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, ed. by Eberhard Bethge (Macmillan, 1971), pp. 325–329.

> to which he has not freely assented. Unchristian, because it confuses Christ with one particular stage in man's religiousness, i.e. with a human law.[37]

Bonhoeffer's concept of the 'world coming of age' is a metaphorical image in his theological reflections during his imprisonment by the Nazi regime which ultimately sentenced him to death just a month before the fall of Hitler. At the same time, Bonhoeffer was pointing to possible future developments and referring to a perspective on the contemporary state of the world, particularly in relation to the role of the church and its engagement with a secular society.[38] Bonhoeffer stated, 'The world that has come of age is more godless, and perhaps for that very reason nearer to God, than the world before its coming of age.'[39]

In his reflections, the 'world coming of age' suggests a maturation or reaching a level of maturity in the world's development. Bonhoeffer argues that the time and type of hierarchical relationship between the church and the world has expired. Instead of the church speaking from a position of authority and superiority to a less enlightened world, Bonhoeffer envisions a more equal and dialogical relationship. In this context, the church is called to engage with the world as equals, recognising the autonomy and maturity of the world. The church is no longer the authoritative voice speaking down to the world but participates in a mutual conversation with the world, acknowledging its complexities and challenges.

Bonhoeffer's idea of the 'world coming of age' emphasises the need for the church to adapt its approach to a changing world, fostering a more egalitarian and inclusive dialogue that considers the world's experiences, questions, and concerns on equal terms with theological perspectives. It signifies a shift from a paternalistic view of the church

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[37] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, p. 328.

[38] 'Even though there has been surrender on all secular problems, there still remain the so-called "ultimate questions" — death, guilt — to which only "God" can give an answer, and because of which we need God and the Church and the pastor. So we live, in some degree, on these so-called ultimate questions of humanity. But what if one day they no longer exist as such, if they too can be answered "without God"?' (Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, p. 325.) See also, Stanley Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Brazos Press, 2004), pp. 43–48; Jeffrey C. Pugh, *Religionless Christianity: Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Troubled Time*s (T&T Clark, 2008), pp. 45–161.

[39] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers*, p. 362.

towards a more cooperative and participatory relationship with the world. Since the followers of Jesus need to be in touch and dialogue with the world, it should be applicable also in the contemporary secular world.[40]

Bonhoeffer was not able to develop his treatise in its fullest sense. He does not give us an answer to the question of how could a genuine dialogue and personal encounter with the 'world coming of age' really happen? Now, Martin Buber offers some insights. Buber remains known globally for his work on dialogical philosophy. Despite his critics from different angles (like Emmanuel Levinas,[41] Hannah Arendt,[42] Martin Heidegger,[43] and Gershom Scholem[44]), Buber's 'I and Thou'[45] still stands as an outstanding classic, emphasising the importance of genuine, reciprocal dialogue in human relationships and spirituality. Hune Margulies observes, 'Buber's distinction between an I and a You is not a *dualistic* dichotomy, for the *between* of *I and Thou* is the *non-dual* realm of relationship. Buber said, "When two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges between them." In other words, God emerges from within the relationship.'[46]

While every genuine relationship has potential to lead to God, Buber's central idea is the distinction between two types of relationships: the 'I–Thou' (or 'I–You') relationship and the 'I–It'

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40 See, for example, Pierre-André Duchemin, *Bonhoeffer's Concept of the Weakness of God and Religionless Christianity in a World Come of Age*, (master's thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 2009), pp. 71–75.

41 Levinas emphasised that dialogue did not go far enough in recognising the ethical demands that the Other places upon us. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Duquesne University Press, 1969); Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being* (Nijhoff, 1974).

42 Arendt argues that focusing solely on interpersonal relationships could lead to a neglect of the broader political and social issues that require collective action. Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings* (Schocken Books, 2007), pp. 31–33.

43 Heidegger found Buber's understanding of dialogue still retained elements of subject-object dualism which he sought to overcome in his own philosophy of Being. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (Harper & Row, 1971), p. 41.

44 Scholem criticised Buber's interpretation of Hasidism. Gershom Scholem, 'Martin Buber's Interpretation of Hasidism', in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, by Gershom Scholem (Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 228–250.

45 Martin Buber, *I And Thou,* with prologue, notes, and translation by Walter Kaufmann (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970).

46 Hune Margulies, 'Martin Buber and Social Justice', *Religions*, 14 (24 October 2023), pp. 1342–1356 (p. 1342), doi:10.3390/rel14111342.

relationship. The 'I–Thou' relationship is characterised by a direct, immediate encounter between two beings, where each fully acknowledges and engages with the other as a unique and sacred Thou. This type of relationship involves a deeper connection, presence, and openness. Buber suggested that in every authentic 'I–Thou' encounter, there is a transcendent dimension that connects individuals to a higher reality, which he refers to as the Eternal Thou or the divine. In these moments of genuine encounter, individuals can experience a sense of the sacred and a connection to something beyond the immediate physical or material reality.

For Buber, the essence of the 'I–Thou' relationship is its potential to lead individuals to a deeper understanding of God. In the authentic encounter with another person, one can catch a glimpse of the divine. The relationship becomes a pathway to the sacred, and through these encounters, individuals may come to recognise the presence of God in the world, even in the 'godless world', the 'world coming of age'. So, Buber's theology is deeply relational and interpersonal. He emphasises that the encounter with God is not through some abstract concepts or distant observation but through direct, personal relationships. Each 'I–Thou' encounter with another human being becomes a sacred meeting point with the divine. He suggests that God is not distant or abstract but is encountered in the immediacy of personal relationships and in the present moment. The sacred is not confined to religious rituals or specific places; rather, it permeates the fabric of everyday human interactions.

Now, it seems clear that the church cannot relate to the world as 'It'. The world, even 'the world coming of age' is 'Thou', and relating to the world, even to the 'world coming of age' as 'Thou' may give to 'the godless world' a sense of divine presence, a sense of present and eternal fullness of meaning, a sense of good news, if you wish. Jesus was not presenting but representing the good news. He related his very presence to the people in dialogue: 'I who speak to you am He.'[47]

[47] John 4:26 (RSV).

The phenomenon and power of dialogue as such has been reflected by many philosophers, like Jürgen Habermas,[48] Hans-Georg Gadamer,[49] and Kenneth Burke,[50] or the previously mentioned educationalist Paolo Freire[51] and ethicist Emmanuel Levinas.[52] The scope of this article does not allow for an in-depth discussion of these authors. Nevertheless, Mikhail Bakhtin deserves a closer look. This Russian scholar, working on his literary theory, ethics, and philosophy of language a century ago, developed a concept of dialogism.[53] He posits that all language is inherently dialogic, a conversation involving multiple voices.[54] Language does not represent a monolithic, static system but rather a dynamic, living entity shaped by diverse social, cultural, and historical contexts. Meaning is shaped by the interaction between

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48 Jürgen Habermas developed the theory of communicative action, which highlights the role of rational discourse and dialogue in democratic societies. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Beacon Press, 1984).

49 Hans-Georg Gadamer explains the 'hermeneutics of dialogue', focusing on the interpretation of texts and understanding in the context of dialogical encounters between readers and texts. Gadamer uses the German term *Gespräch* which can be translated as either 'dialogue' or 'conversation'. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. edn. (Crossroad, 1989); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, trans. and ed. by P. Christopher Smith (Yale University Press, 1980).

50 Kenneth Burke interprets the nature of language and rhetoric as 'dramatism' which 'invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that, being developed from the analysis of drama, treats language and thought primarily as modes of action' (Kenneth Burke, *Grammar of Motives* (University of California Press, 1945), p. 22). He emphasises the dialogical aspects of communication, where individuals engage in persuasive exchanges or identification, meaning the process by which the communicator associates his/her own self with a certain group, such as a target audience. See Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (University of California Press, 1961); Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (University of California Press, 1969).

51 Paulo Freire focuses on dialogical education, where teachers and learners engage in mutual dialogue and reflection to promote critical thinking and social transformation. See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

52 Emmanuel Levinas developed his ethics of the 'face-to-face' encounter, emphasising the ethical importance of the Other in dialogical relationships. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other* (Duquesne University Press, 1987). A subject approached by the Other engages in an act that opens the possibility of dialogue. The unfolding of dialogue expands the social relationship, and that social life preserves a residuum of the initial 'ethical' encounter with the face. Intersubjective dialogue entails conversation, teaching, and at a more general level, literary or philosophical-theological discourse. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Kluwer Academic, 1991), pp. 51–57, 251–252, 295.

53 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Valitud töid,* ed. by Peeter Torop (Eesti Raamat, 1987), pp. 44–184, 212–284.

54 Mikhail Bakhtin, Michael Holquist, and Caryl Emerson, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (University of Texas Press, 1981).

different voices and perspectives, both oral and written, in a specific spatiotemporal setting. Dialogism has implications for understanding all forms of communication and human interaction. Bakhtin believed that every individual has a dialogical self, formed through internal dialogues with various social and cultural voices. The self is never static but continuously evolving; it is not an isolated entity but is intricately connected to others through dialogue, fostering mutual understanding and social interaction.

Dialogism is inherently subversive and can challenge monologic and authoritarian discourses, promoting a more democratic and open exchange of ideas. As Bakhtin's dialogism emphasises the interplay of voices, the diversity of perspectives, and the continuous evolution of meaning in our linguistic and cultural expressions, it is applicable to further reflection in other fields, be it semiotics[55] or contemporary theological education concerning the current missiological issues described in this article.

Based on Bonhoeffer, Buber, Bakhtin, and others dealing with dialogue, one may derive the following conclusions concerning the three questions mentioned in the beginning of this subsection: why?, what?, and how? The reason why the world seems 'worldly' for numerous Christians possibly lies in the reality of the world's 'coming of age' and the expectation for Christians to talk with society, not just to society. Second, a personal encounter requires existential openness to the other's otherness. And third, as dialogical beings, humans are to relate to each other in a dynamic interplay of different voices. If this account is adequate, different questions arise from the theological aspect, too. The following seeks to envision a theological perspective.

Theological Perspective

The followers of Jesus are invited to reflect theologically and missiologically on what it means to the people of God and to mission that the triune God himself has chosen to communicate in a dialogical

[55] Estonian semiotician Juri Lotman has extended Bakhtin's dialogical ideas to the field of semiotics, exploring how cultural and semiotic systems interact in a dialogical manner. See Juri Lotman, *Kultuurisemiootika* (Olion, 1990); Juri Lotman, *Semiosfäärist* (Vagabund, 1999); Juri Lotman, *Kultuur ja plahvatus* (Varrak, 2001).

manner with our world and with us in the world, even in the 'world coming of age'. Jesus is a living Logos 'among us'[56] as well as his Spirit 'coming alongside' as a divine dialogue partner, the *Parakletos*, in our world.[57] Some baptistic scholars have argued theologically that the relational God is modelling to us how we should relate to him, to each other, and to the world around us. The British scholar Paul S. Fiddes develops the ancient understanding of the *perichōrēsis* as a 'divine dance'. The Estonian church historian Toivo Pilli has pointed out the way Estonian baptistic theology and practice has created a 'conceptual space' for dialoguing with the free church tradition. And the American 'small "b" baptist' James William McClendon has argued that a church cannot have baptistic convictions if they are not lived out from inside, as a community of faith witnessing to the world.

Paul Fiddes has described God through the ancient understanding of *perichōrēsis*[58] in which the all-creative triune divine Being cannot be a Neoplatonic 'Unmoving Mover', but is a personal 'Participation' in 'an event of relationships'. Fiddes states,

> Identifying the divine persons as relations brings together a way of understanding the nature of *being* (ontology) with a way of *knowing* (epistemology). The being of God is understood as event and relationship, but only through an epistemology of participation; each only makes sense in the context of the other. We cannot observe, even in our mind's eye, being which is relationship; it can only be known through the mode of participation.[59]

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[56] John 1:14.

[57] John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1 and elsewhere.

[58] Fiddes developed the figure used by C. S. Lewis in his *Mere Christianity*. Lewis writes, 'In Christianity God is not a static thing — not even a person — but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irrelevant, a kind of dance […] The whole dance, or drama, or pattern of this three-Personal life is to be played out in each one of us: or (putting it the other way round) each one of us has got to enter that pattern, take his place in that dance.' See Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Collins, 1983), pp. 148–150.

[59] Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), p. 38. See also: Paul S. Fiddes, '"For the Dance All Things Were Made": The Great Dance in C. S. Lewis's Perelandra', in *C. S. Lewis's Perelandra: Reshaping the Image of the Cosmos*, ed. by Judith Wolfe and Brendan Wolfe (The Kent State University Press, 2013), pp. 33–49; Paul S. Fiddes, 'Relational Trinity: Radical Perspective', in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. by Jason S. Sexton (Zondervan, 2014), pp. 159–185.

Now, should the church of Christ, the communal embodiment of his people, act differently in the world of communication? If not dialogical, what else could be the method of communicating God in the midst of and to the 'godless world'? Pope Francis has expressed a similar conclusion: 'Evangelizing culture and inculturation shows that evangelization and culture are closely connected. You cannot preach an abstract, distilled Gospel. No, the Gospel must be inculturated and it is also an expression of culture.'[60]

A baptistic ecclesiology has been described by three main characteristics.[61] The first characteristic is a non-hierarchical ecclesiology with democratic practices. Second, is the emphasis on the personal responsibility of every Christian for his or her relationship with God and living the Christian life as a disciple of Jesus. At the same time, the community of faith has an important role in discipleship. And third, the collective interpretation of biblical teachings. Stephen R. Holmes emphasises that it is the communal interpretation of the Bible by which a baptistic understanding of life under the lordship of Jesus is formed in a discussion and shared (re)search.[62]

In the Estonian context, the questions concerning baptistic identity negotiating its way in communication with theological convictions and with wider society have been primarily addressed by Toivo Pilli. He expresses the identity of local free churches as dynamic tensions between Word and Spirit, salvation and sanctification, tradition and context, individual faith and communal responsibility, verbal proclamation and societal service, and the autonomy of churches and

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[60] Matthew Santucci, 'Pope Francis: To evangelize, "faith must be inculturated"', *Catholic News Agency,* 25 October 2023 <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/255802/pope-francis-to-evangelize-faith-must-be-inculturated> [accessed 6 February 2024].

[61] See Peder A. Eidberg, *The People Called Baptis*t (The Baptist Seminary of Norway, 1999), pp. 153–154; Nigel G. Wright, *Free Church, Free State* (Paternoster Press, 2005), p. 49; Paul S. Fiddes, 'Theology and a Baptist Way of Community', in *Doing Theology in a Baptist Way*, ed. by Paul S. Fiddes (Whitley Publications, 2000), pp. 19–38 (p. 19); Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Paternoster Press, 2003), pp. 21–47. Cf. Curtis Freeman, 'Framing Baptist Identity', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 22.1 (2022), pp. 1–21.

[62] Stephen R. Holmes, 'Baptist Identity, Once More', *Journal of Baptist Theology in Context*, 3 (2021), pp. 4–28.

cooperation.[63] The self-understanding of free churches is not a phenomenon with clear and fixed characteristics, but rather a conceptual space where personal relationship with God as well as missional presence in society is constant movement, is in dialogical tension.

However, we might ask, What makes baptistic people and their mission in this world different from others who are trying to deal with the 'world coming of age'? McClendon, in his 'baptist vision',[64] is seeing and showing that the church in her authenticity is to be a communicative community — not monologic, but dialogic in nature:

> My claim is that for Christians the connecting link between body ethics and social ethics, between the moral self and the morals of society, is to be found in the body of Christ that is the gathered church. The place where conscience comes to light in a baptist ethic is not in solitary or Kierkegaardian introspection, nor is it in the social concerns of individual private citizens who happen to be Christian as well (not even in their widely held and in that sense "common" concerns). Rather the link is found in congregational reflection, discernment, discipline, and action, whose model is nearer to the Wesleyan class meeting or the Anabaptist Gemeinde than to the denominational social action lobby agency or the mass membership churches of today's suburban society. It is such gathering sharing (so goes my thesis)

[63] Toivo Pilli, *Usu värvid ja varjundid: Eesti vabakirikute ajaloost ja identiteedist* (Allika, 2007), pp. 81–85; Toivo Pilli, 'Baptist Identities in Eastern Europe', in *Baptist Identities: International Studies from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, ed. by Ian Randall, Toivo Pilli, and Anthony Cross (Paternoster Press, 2006), pp. 92–108 (p. 92).

[64] In an interview with Ched Myers, McClendon explains his idea of baptists with a small 'b' as follows: 'This refers not just to those who label themselves as Baptist, but Christians of any sort (including Episcopalians) who see the radicals of the 16th century — the so-called Anabaptists —- as their spiritual forebears, even if not direct progenitors.' Ched Myers, 'Embodying the "Great Story": An interview with James W. McClendon', *The Witness*, 14 (2000) <https://inquiries2015.files.wordpress.com/2000/12/00-1-f-interview-with-jim-mcclendon-the-witness-p.pdf> [accessed 14 January 2024]. In his *Ethics* volume of the *Systematic Theology* series, McClendon describes the 'baptist vision' as an attempt not only to generate a theology but also to shape a shared life in Christ Jesus: 'Scripture in this vision effects a link between the church of the apostles and our own. So the vision can be expressed as a hermeneutical principle: *shared awareness of the present Christian community as the primitive community and the eschatological community*. In a motto, the church now is the primitive church and the church on judgment day.' James William McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Vol. 1*, 2nd edn (Abingdon Press, 2002), p. 30, emphasis original.

> that issues in directives for the pilgrimage of each and issues in a shared witness to the outside world.[65]

As McClendon concludes, the very essence of (at least a baptistic) church is to be a witnessing body, a communicative community 'to the outside world'.[66] As far as the inner life of a baptistic church is concerned, it is to be a learning community, a discipling body of *mathetes* following Jesus. Stanley Hauerwas confirms, 'McClendon candidly acknowledges that he must claim his theology to be an exemplification of the practice called teaching, which is integral to the church's very being.'[67] But the McClendonian teaching is not a top-down type, but a communal type — the type following Jesus and his learning community of *mathetes*. McClendon argues that

> certain aspects of the general structure of language may provide us with a way to understand the structure of convictions generally, and the intellectual tools with which we analyze language are or correspond to those with which we discover the shape of particular human character and particular human community.[68]

In a sense a church cannot have baptistic convictions if they are not lived out from inside as a dialogically communicative community of faith.[69]

The Estonian Context

After arguing for the dialogical nature of mission from educational, philosophical, and theological perspectives, it is time to turn back to the Estonian context. Estonian society is highly secularised and pluralised as well as increasingly hyper-modernised and agnostic. In this culture,

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[65] James William McClendon, 'The Practice of Community Formation', in *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre,* ed. by N. C. Murphy (Trinity Press, 1997), pp. 85–110 (pp. 87–88).

[66] McClendon, 'The Practice of Community Formation', pp. 87–88.

[67] Stanley Hauerwas, 'Reading James McClendon Takes Practice: Lessons in the Craft of Theology', in *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth-Century Theology and Philosophy,* ed. by Stanley Hauerwas (SCM Press, 2001), pp. 171–187 (p. 172).

[68] James William McClendon, *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology,* 2nd edn (Trinity Press, 1990), p. 195.

[69] See for example, Mart Oksa, *Uskumise, kuulumise ja käitumise vaheline dünaamika Eesti Evangeeliumi Kristlaste ja Baptistide koguduste Liidus* (Kõrgem Usuteaduslik Seminar, 2016), p. 82.

no church or mission can be meaningful to the wider public without having a dialogue and interaction together.[70] In recent years, most of the newly planted and growing baptistic churches in Estonia are the ones using and developing a more dialogical approach while leaving a monological, pulpit-centred type of church life, if not fully behind, then as secondary.[71] The newer and growing churches are focusing on the capability of smaller, missionally active and flexible learning communities of faith and dialogue, or small, group-based cluster structures of congregations. They continue to serve their fellow citizens while building relationships and to integrate both their members and new people into their relational and dialogical networks in physical gatherings as well as in digital communication platforms.[72]

These dynamics seem to be relevant and significant also for shaping theological and missiological perspectives for future developments, both in the existing baptistic congregations in the landscape of Estonian free churches as well as in the process of planting new baptistic churches in Estonia. Kaarel Väljamäe, a Seminary graduate and pastor at Tallinn Allika Baptist Church, concluded his research in offering insights into future church perspectives with the following words: 'In general, it can be inferred that a missional community is an effective way of establishing a congregation in Tallinn in the 21st century.'[73]

At the same time, there are only a few growing churches showing clear signs of openness and dialogical practices both within

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[70] Compare, for instance, Eerik Jõks and Kuhu Lähed, *Maarjamaa? Quo Vadis, Terra Mariana?* (Eesti Kirikute Nõukogu, 2016); Gilles Lipovetsky, *Hypermodern Times* (Polity Press, 2005).

[71] See, for example, Mart Pöör, *Kogudus kui liikumine* (Kõrgem Usuteaduslik Seminar, 2018); Herkis Roosimaa, *Mida on traditsioonilistel kogudustel õppida 3D koguduselt* (Kõrgem Usuteaduslik Seminar, 2020); Jakob Remmel and Meego Remmel, 'Koroonakriisi eelse ja järgse (vaba)kogudusliku elu arengukohtadest Eestis', *Usuteaduslik Ajakiri*, 1 (2021), pp. 78–124.

[72] In contemporary social sciences, Manuel Castells has engaged more with the social, cultural, and political origins of the emerging social movements, examining their inventive methods of self-organisation and evaluating the specific impact of technology in the network society on their dynamics, exploring the factors contributing to their widespread societal backing, and investigating their potential to drive a transformation in society through influencing people's minds. See Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*, 2nd edn (Polity Press, 2015).

[73] Kaarel Väljamäe, *Juhi areng koguduse loomise protsessis Viimsi ning Kalamaja kogukondade näitel* (Kõrgem Usuteaduslik Seminar, 2016).

congregational life as well as in their relationships with and witness to the wider society in Estonia.[74] Ago Lilleorg, an army chaplain from a Pentecostal background, concludes his qualitative study concerning the growing evangelical churches in Estonia as follows: 'It may be said that for these churches, mission is manifested in active societal presence, the development of good relations and cooperation.'[75] Churches that are typically experiencing plateauing may face a totally different reality both among the members and on the leadership level. The leaders who are uncomfortable dialoguing with the other may lead their churches in similar ways, ending up feeling lonely. 'Even in an apparently vibrant congregation, the pastor can feel like a lone fighter.'[76] It is with the aim to change the overall situation for the Estonian baptistic churches that has motivated the Seminary to envision and carry out its newly opened master's programme 'Theology and Society'. This programme offers the Seminary in general an environment for creating a learning community and the opportunity for practising dialogue in the process of studying.[77] The following describes how the curriculum was constructed so that both learners and teachers were involved in the process of dialogue. And in genuine conversation, the roles of teacher and learner are interchangeable.

A Problem-based Master's Programme as Dialogism

Dialogism, as Mikhail Bakhtin conceptualised it, refers to the dynamic interplay of multiple voices, perspectives, and meanings within a discourse. It is an interactive process involving an ongoing exchange of

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[74] See more in Ago Lilleorg, Kaido Soom, and Tõnu Lehtsaar, 'Characteristics of Growing Churches in Estonia: A Qualitative Study', *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, 41.5 (June 2021), pp. 1–26; Elina Kivinukk, *Traditsiooniliste koguduste kasvu positiivselt mõjutavad tegurid Eesti EKB Koguduste Liidu näitel* (Kõrgem Usuteaduslik Seminar, 2018); Väljamäe, *Juhi areng koguduse loomise protsessis Viimsi ning Kalamaja kogukondade näitel; Roosimaa, Mida on traditsioonilistel kogudustel õppida 3D koguduselt*; Pöör, *Kogudus kui liikumine*.

[75] Lilleorg, Soom, and Lehtsaar, 'Characteristics of Growing Churches in Estonia', pp. 20, 22.

[76] Lev Bannikov, *Koguduse juhtimine ja juhtivorganite koostoimimine Eesti Evangeeliumi Kristlaste ja Baptistide Koguduste Liidu kogudustes* (Kõrgem Usuteaduslik Seminar, 2021), p. 59.

[77] For more about the programme itself, see 'Master's Programme in Theology and Society', Kõrgem Usuteaduslik Seminar, n.d. <https://kus.kogudused.ee/en/ma> [accessed 6 February 2024].

viewpoints and perspectives.[78] The Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary has applied openness to conversation to the process of curriculum development, the curriculum structure, and mentoring. These could be seen as three ways of dialogising.

Before having a closer look at these three ways, we first pay attention to a teaching and learning method, problem-based learning (PLB), that gives voice to learners and their context. The Seminary has made a deliberate attempt to use PBL both in the classroom as well as in the process of curriculum development. Terry Barret and Sarah Moore have defined PBL as 'a pedagogical approach that has the capacity to create vibrant and active learning environments in higher education'.[79] PBL is one form of the flipped classroom,[80] where real life problems, defined or chosen by teachers, become the tools of learning.[81]

The classical model of PBL is called the 'seven jump' model, indicating seven phases of the methodology.[82] These seven steps are divided into three phases: together in the classroom – independent study – together in the classroom.[83] These are divided correspondingly as follows: the first phase includes reading the problem (1), defining the kernel of the problem (2), brainstorming (3), discussion and syntheses (4), and formulating learning goals (5); the second phase, or step 6, is independent study, and the last phase is academic debate (7).[84]

One of the 'jumps', brainstorming the problem, is characterised by a strategy where all (creative) mistakes are allowed, and nobody is allowed to criticise. Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel write, 'Trying to

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78 Bahtin, *Valituid töid*, pp. 44–184, 212–284.

79 Terry Barrett and Sarah Moore, *New Approaches to Problem-Based Learning* (Routledge, 2011).

80 The concept of the 'flipped classroom' has been used more extensively during the last 15 years. See Fezile Ozdamli and GulsumAsiksoy, 'Flipped Classroom Approach', *World Journal of Educational Technology*, *Current Issues*, 8.2 (2016), pp. 98–105. Radical change in the responsibility of learners is explained in Einike Pilli and Taavi Vaikjärv, 'Ümberpööratud klassiruumi meetod kui õppija vastutuse kujundaja', *KVÜÕA toimetised*, 20 (2015), pp. 165–175. All the basic qualities of the flipped classroom are also true about PBL.

81 Einike Pilli, *Probleemipõhine õpe kõrgkoolis* (Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2014) <https://sisu.ut.ee/pbl/avalehtl>.

82 Gino Camp, Angelique Kaar, Henk Molen, and Henk Schmidt, *PBL: Step by Step: A Guide for Students and Tutors* (Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2014).

83 E. Pilli, *Probleemipõhine õpe kõrgkoolis*, chp. 5.

84 Barrett, *New Approaches to Problem-Based Learning*, p. 77.

solve a problem before being taught the solution leads to better learning, even when errors are made in the attempt.' They continue, 'When you're adept at extracting the underlying principles or "rules" that differentiate types of problems, you're more successful at picking the right solutions in unfamiliar situations.'[85] O'Connor adds,

> Learning is a matter of attention — of choice, and most important to the dynamic of learning is the *what* — the target; rather than the *how* — the path. The frontal lobes of the brain focus attention on what is to be learned while the subconscious mind, in part located in a deeper brain structure called the midbrain, delivers the drive to achieve it. […] PBL is a good example of a social learning environment that capitalizes on using the drive to solve a problem to create a learning target in our brains. This is the golden key to accelerated learning, for without a target the brain is not involved in deep learning.[86]

Thus, PBL follows the best patterns of our brain and enhances long-term learning.

Another helpful characteristic of PBL is that it uses problems which are interdisciplinary (life always is) and ideally are derived from the learners' context and thus motivate them.[87] A group setting teaches learners to cooperate and listen to each other;[88] individual study in between the two group discussions requires each student to do their own reading and then bring the answers, conclusions, or even some new questions into the group again. There are several combinations and variations of PBL. For example, Aalborg University in Denmark combines it with case study.[89] Their emphasis on problem solving is in assessment — students have to solve problems to prove their learning. Thus, problems are helpful at all stages — whether in the beginning or at the end of the educational journey.

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[85] Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel, *Make it Stick*, p. 4.

[86] William T. O'Connor, 'What Can Brain Science Teach Us About Cybernetics?', *The 11th IEEE International Conference on Cybernetics* (Limerick, Ireland, August 2012) (CIS, 2012), pp. 36–40 (pp. 38–39).

[87] E. Pilli, *Probleemipõhine õpe kõrgkoolis*, chp. 8.

[88] The brainstorming part is not always easy for learners because they have not been used to listening to others without arguing against what is being said. However, the format of brainstorming teaches that in this phase all ideas are equally valid.

[89] Kerdo Koppel, *Probleemipõhine õpe Taltech logistika magistriõppes* (Tallinna Tehnikaülikool, 2021), p. 14.

PBL as a method can be found on the curriculum level as well. Anette Kolmos[90] identifies three strategies for applying PBL to the curriculum:

1. Complementing the curriculum. This is the simplest strategy, where the use of PBL is limited to one subject.
2. Integrating different competencies into one bigger problem-project, which unites different subjects. To solve the problem, students have to use knowledge from all subjects taught during the current semester.
3. The strategy of restructuring includes looking differently at the whole curriculum and the role of the university itself. In this approach, students select the project problem first, and subjects are planned according to it. This strategy is not yet widely used.

Terry Barrett is convinced that PBL promotes deep learning and dialogic knowing. Barret continues, 'From this perspective dialogue is much more than a technique, it is a position or stance that sees knowledge as not something possessed by the teacher and static but something that is made and remade dynamically by students in tutorials through dialogue.'[91] Paolo Freire confirms a similar approach: 'Dialogue unites subjects together in the cognition of the object that mediates them.'[92]

Curriculum Development

Having introduced the method of PBL, it is time to turn to a description of using it in the format of theological education. The following sets out how dialogism was used in curriculum planning, in the curriculum structure, and in mentoring. At the end, the article briefly outlines the feedback from the Seminary's master's students.

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[90] Anette Kolmos, 'Curriculum Strategies: From Course Based PBL to Systemic PBL Approach', in *PBL in Engineering Education: International Perspectives in Curriculum Change,* ed. by A. Guerra, R. Ulseth, and A. Kolmos (Sense Publishers, 2017), pp. 1–12.
[91] Terry Barrett, *A New Model of Problem-Based Learning: Inspiring Concepts, Practice Strategies and Case Studies from Higher Education* (AISHE, 2017), p. 83.
[92] Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 49.

In the Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary, the process of curriculum development of the MA programme 'Theology and Society' was the first step towards an experience of meaningful dialogue in an educational context. The idea of opening a master's programme as a second level of university studies had appeared repeatedly in the school's development plans,[93] yet the time had not been right for several reasons, including Estonian legislation. However, in the autumn of 2022, the Seminary had the support of legal regulations,[94] and the question was more whether the school was ready to go for this. In the following pages, the article uses 'we' to denote not only the authors of the article but the whole Seminary team, including student representatives and other participants who worked together in the process.

The first dialogical element was that we consulted one young person from our team who had an analytical mind to ask what he thought of the idea. 'You do not have enough faculty to open the programme,' was his honest opinion. And he was right. We decided that if we were able to recruit four more faculty members with doctorates, we would start the programme. And then it happened — there was one highly qualified theologian returning to Estonia from abroad; two other colleagues with the necessary qualifications expressed their willingness to contribute to our school; and finally, a well-known professor became a Christian, joined a Christian community, and was motivated to contribute to the planned master's education in the Seminary.

Then we turned to the school advisory board. We discussed the aims and focus of the possible programme. One idea that emerged from these discussions was that we needed to learn to have better dialogue with society.[95] We looked at different MA-level programmes from other schools. One idea was clear from the beginning — we wanted to do it

[93] The aim of starting a master's programme already appeared in the 2002–2007 Development Plan for the Seminary, p. 3. However, it took more than 20 years to fulfil the plan.

[94] Legal permission is given in 'Law of Higher Education', §21, point 3: 'Applied University may have a master's programme in the same area of study.' The law became official on 1 September 2019.

[95] The Advisory Board noted, 'We live in the society, where people have different MA degrees. We need to keep the ability to have dialogue between these people and church leaders.' Minutes of the Seminary Advisory Board, 13 October 2022.

in a creative way, using PBL as an organising principle, and as a helpful environment for exchanging, formulating, and evaluating ideas.

The next step was to ask for feedback from several experienced specialists in theology and higher education. At the same time, we consulted with potential and existing students. Not all the feedback was overlapping, and we had to decide what to take and what to leave. But there was a strong confirmation that the relationship between church and society was important. In a far-reaching perspective it was a question about the missional relevance and meaning of the Seminary education and the ministry of Estonian free churches. It was keeping this perspective in view that helped us to make decisions.

After working out the details of the curriculum, the document was taken to the Board of Elders of the Union of Free Evangelical and Baptist Churches of Estonia (UFEBCE), as representatives of the owner and as those who have to confirm all programmes of the Seminary that are longer than one year. We offered the Board four different names for the curriculum, all previously discussed in the Seminary team.[96] There was an uneasy feeling that others were deciding what we must implement later. However, this open discussion was a crucial part of the process. It was also important that many members of the Board of Elders had been part of the previous formal and informal conversations and preparatory meetings. At the end of the meeting, the curriculum was given the title 'Theology and Society'. This name indicated the dialogical nature of the studies and corresponded well with the aim of the programme. The first students were enrolled in the autumn of 2022. The government accreditation agency visited the Seminary in the spring of 2023, giving the plan a green light, and the MA programme 'Theology and Society' was officially opened in autumn 2023.

Structure of the Curriculum

When developing the curriculum, we decided to build four broad 'studios', which integrated in themselves different areas and subjects. 'Studio' is like a module, a group of subjects which fit under one topic.

[96] The four titles were 'Theology and Society', 'Church and Context', 'Applied Theology', and 'Bible, Church, and Context'. Minutes of Union Elders' Board meeting, 7 December 2021.

Studios have leaders from the faculty. The names of the studios were dialogical themselves, including 'Bible and Society', 'Theology and Identity', 'Communication and Leadership', and 'Creativity and Execution'. In addition, there were two more module-type parts: electives and a master's dissertation. When compared to Kolmos's three strategies for a PBL curriculum, the Seminary's model is a combination of the second and third strategy — it both integrates different topics and competencies into bigger entities (studios) and the whole curriculum is built around the problems, which are defined by students in the second year, and which lead to the master's work.[97] The structure of the curriculum unites and integrates various subjects and invites students to become dialogue partners and creators of their own studies.

Taking into account the Estonian situation, we decided to also open the programme for students who did not have a bachelor's degree in theology. This made the planning more difficult: the pre-knowledge of students was not the same. Therefore, during the first year, we gave them problems to brainstorm and solve in order to cover the first three modules. Certainly, a fruitful discussion requires both input and preparation. But as said before, the focus was on the learning that took place in a dialogical environment, and students as well as teachers were responsible for creating this environment by bringing reading results, analysis, and experiences into the learning community. The descriptions of the problems that gave guidance to the learning process were prepared by the faculty. The problematic cases were formulated in a way that allowed learning within the borders of the 'dialogue partners' indicated in the name of the studio. For example, in the studio 'Bible and Society', the group analysed the theme of the Russian–Ukrainian war, the biblical understanding of church and state relations, the reaction of the Russian Orthodox Church to the war, and other aspects within the topical definition of the studio. Students had the brainstorming part and posing of learning questions during the first semester, and then returned to the same studios with answers, further discussion, and possible solutions to what they had learned while dealing with the problem.

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[97] Compare Kolmos, 'Curriculum Strategies', pp. 1–12.

The second year of the master's programme was organised differently: the 'subject' of 'hot topics of theology' was introduced, where students had to find by themselves the burning problems in the crossroads of theology and society. Then, they had to choose one, describe its 'root problem', and discuss it with others, listening to their opinions. Additionally, reading had to be done and possible solutions offered. Ideally, this module was a preparatory step for students into writing their master's dissertations, giving them a wider discussion background that they then needed to refine and narrow for their final written work.

Another 'subject' or 'module' was 'Contextual Research on the Thesis Theme', where the students were required to interact with the context of their area of research interest. This could be done in the format of observation, action research, interviews, or research in archives — in dialogue with the context of their interest area. This exercise also helped the students to move towards their final research work in being a tool for collecting material that focused on their specific academic interest area. Additionally, the dialogue between 'hot topics' and 'internship' was allowed and advised.

Mentoring as Dialogue

The third area where the Seminary as a learning community used dialogue was in mentoring. There is a dual system of mentoring: all students are expected to have a personal mentor, chosen by themselves, and in addition mentoring groups are formed — separate for men and women. While personal mentors mainly deal with personal growth and issues related to studies, group mentoring is designed to enhance dialogue between participants and faculty. The format of the group mentoring allows students to share their struggles and joys with each other, listen, support their fellow learners, and pray for each other. It also offers a good platform for the school leadership to ask for feedback. For example, at the end of the first academic year, the master's students complained that the study load was too heavy for them. As a result, the length of studies was extended from two years to three.

Feedback from the Students

In the middle of the second year of the programme, we asked our students (11 in number)[98] how the theological dialogues of their studies had developed them. The answers included the following responses: 'I have been encouraged that I am not the only one who struggles with these problems.' 'My thinking has become broader, more analytical and I see more connections. Sometimes I would like even more time, because my course mates have such interesting thoughts and there is so much to learn from everyone.' 'I have got practical advice for my spiritual role from these dialogues.' 'Very much, because the questions have been well posed. Others' thoughts have challenged my thinking patterns.' 'These dialogues have helped me to understand others' opinions and form these by myself. During the discussions we learn new perspectives, that we never thought of.' 'My religious thinking has broadened, and understanding has grown. The followers of Christ are more heterogeneous and there are more of them than I thought before.' 'I certainly see more broadly now and analyse topics of church and society.' 'I have understood and created connections in the context of situations and events more than reading the Bible alone.'

When asked what they consider to be the strengths of the master's programme, students mentioned keywords such as learner-centeredness, dynamic, flexible, practical by nature, good balance between practical and theological subjects, challenging, logical in structure, actual topics in the society, and an up-to-date approach. They also said that the programme motivates them to really learn, not just pass the subject. 'The studios help to think of the master's research from the beginning. In addition, these help to develop practical thinking and discussion skills.' One student added, 'The strength of the curriculum is problem-centeredness which means that an environment is created to find answers together to the complicated questions.'

There are several ways the Seminary's master's programme is dialogical. It was created dialogically, methods of problem-based learning approach were used which encouraged dialogues, the

[98] A questionnaire was sent to students in an anonymous online environment at the beginning of February 2024; 11 students out of 17 replied.

curriculum was designed to include the integrating studios, and mentoring was implemented to build a dialogue between the students, faculty, and the school leadership. Also, the feedback concerning the curriculum and the whole process of study has been reflected upon dialogically. In brief, the overall design and methodical approach of the Seminary's master's programme follows a (dia)logic of educational, philosophical, and theological understanding, and practises empowering the students, staff, and the institution all together to be better prepared for relating to 'the world coming of age'. Communicating the good news in this type of world requires mature relationships, not dictating some top-down universal truths monologically. The key is dialoguing with the interplay of different voices, fostering mutual understanding and social interaction for solving the problem(s) that people, whether Christians or not, face in our world together.

Conclusions

The Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary has initiated and developed a master's level curriculum 'Theology and Society', with an aim of helping to solve the overall problems facing the baptistic churches in this highly secular Baltic country. The missional problems the churches are struggling with are numerous but mostly related to the lack of communication with wider culture. The situation can be described as follows: the inability for a meaningful dialogue with the rapidly changing society; churches tending to distance themselves from the wider community and instead creating Christian 'bubbles' and echo-chambers in the midst of a 'hostile' world; alienation from the culture; missional disability as far as loving, serving, and touching the lives of people and the life of society is concerned. This article has discussed why and how dialogue is a crucial part of the solution to this problem.

The dialogical approach was helpful for the programme's planning and development, as the Seminary team began to see the task as a problem-based learning laboratory. Being dialogical better prepared the students and staff to ask the question of how to overcome missional hindrances and support the emergence of leaders and churches who embody a Jesus-like touchable presence and accessible communication

in contemporary Estonian society. Educational, philosophical, and theological (dia)logic pointed the whole process toward an approach which could be called dialogistic.

Developing such a programme, curriculum, learning community, methodological process of studies and research, along with feedback and reflection by students, expanded the participants' understanding and assisted in realising the relevance of the chosen approach. As a result of their learning experience, the Estonian baptistic students in facing missiological questions are more enabled and empowered to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the rapidly changing secular society. According to their own evaluation, they are more 'dialogue-able' persons due to their participation in the process and through using dialogue and problem-based learning methods. Hopefully, the churches they will serve and lead may also become missionally more mature and relevant, relating to and communicating in dialogue with the 'world coming of age'. Some of the perspectives and practices may start a dialogue with theological educators from other contexts and thus have a wider impact than in just one country. Dialogue — in missions and in education — is a universal human need.

Scottish Baptists and Overseas Mission in the Late Twentieth Century

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Abstract
Scottish Baptists conducted a survey of support for overseas mission by their affiliated churches in the 1920s. A second more detailed one was conducted in 1994 with which the earlier data could be compared or contrasted. This study looks at the 1994 survey, examining the levels of support for different mission bodies and looking in more detail at the work of a handful of societies that received the greatest support. It also includes a short section describing the kind of work in which mission personnel employed by these agencies were engaged. It found that support for overseas missionary service was as strong in 1994 as it had been in the 1920s. The majority of missionaries were still employed in familiar roles in evangelism and church-planting or engaged in medical or educational services, but there was now a greater emphasis on alleviating suffering and injustice and in development work.

Keywords
Scottish Baptists; overseas mission; Scottish Baptists overseas mission 1994 BUS survey

Introduction

In 1994, the World Mission and International Affairs Committee of the Baptist Union of Scotland (BUS) conducted a survey of the level of support for overseas mission amongst its 170 affiliated congregations and nine other Baptist causes that had some engagement with the BUS.[1] There were eighty-one replies, representing 45% of the churches contacted (approximately 40% of Union-member churches), who gave details of their mission partners and their engagement with Christian

[1] It can be assumed that information listed in this article comes from the survey return forms held in the Baptist Union of Scotland History Archive in Glasgow unless otherwise indicated in the footnotes. See also David Hunt, *Reflections on Our Past: A Statistical Look at Baptists in Scotland 1892–1997* (Hamilton Baptist Church, 1997).

work in other countries, though ninety-eight congregations gave no response. It was the most detailed survey of overseas mission work conducted in the history of the Baptist Union of Scotland since its formation in 1869. The summary report given in the July/August 1995 issue of the *Scottish Baptist Magazine* indicated that some of the churches that did not reply were amongst the larger ones in the Union and were active in overseas mission, so it is reasonable to assume that the figures from the whole constituency might have been close to double those reported on below.[2] It is also likely that as well as there being more support for the familiar societies, there would also have been additional smaller bodies receiving funding from one or more of the churches.

The previous, more informal national survey was conducted by George Yuille in the early 1920s, prior to a report on this subject in his 1926 edited volume *History of the Baptists in Scotland*.[3] A more detailed study of Scottish Baptist engagement in overseas mission in the early twentieth century was carried out by the present author.[4] A further two publications on Scottish Baptist involvement in the work of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) were the only other attempts to cover this under-researched area of Scottish Baptist denominational life.[5] The present overview study of this 1994 survey is an attempt to highlight the level of engagement made by this network of churches in the last decade of the twentieth century. It will cover, first, the most popular causes

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[2] 'Missions Survey', *Scottish Baptist Magazine*, July/August 1995, p. 14. Stirling Baptist Church, as an example of a church who did not submit a survey return, was supporting in various ways eighteen missionaries working with eight different mission agencies in the early 1990s. See 'Missionaries supported by Stirling Baptist Church between 1970 and 1995', in *Standing on the Rock: A History of Stirling Baptist Church, 1805–2005*, by Brian R. Talbot (Stirling Baptist Church, 2005), p. 162.

[3] George Yuille, 'Scottish Baptists in the Mission Field', in *History of the Baptists in Scotland*, ed. by George Yuille (Baptist Union of Scotland Publications Committee, 1926), X1 – Appendices II pp. 290–295.

[4] Brian R. Talbot, 'Spreading the Good News from Scotland: Scottish Baptists and Overseas Mission in the First Three Decades of the Twentieth Century', in *Pathways and Patterns in History: Essays to Honour David Bebbington*, ed. by I. M. Randall, Peter Morden, and Anthony R. Cross (Baptist Historical Society and Spurgeon's College, 2015), pp. 145–171.

[5] Marjorie McVicar, *A Great Adventure: Scotland and the BMS* (Baptist Union of Scotland and Baptist Missionary Society, 1992); and Brian R. Talbot, '"Rousing the Attention of Christians": Scottish Baptists and the Baptist Missionary Society Prior to the Twentieth Century', in *Baptists and the World: Renewing the Vision*, ed. by John H. Y. Briggs and Anthony R. Cross (Regent's Park College, 2011), pp. 51–69.

supported, then those supported by a smaller number of congregations, together with a brief analysis of the type of work undertaken by approximately 490 supported individuals serving in these overseas mission endeavours.

The Most Prominent Causes Supported by Scottish Baptist Churches

Baptist Missionary Society (BMS)

BMS was the most strongly supported society, as expected, with eighty-one churches, 72% of the responding churches, reporting their active support for its work, with additional congregations reporting that individuals in their ranks supported it. Of this number, sixty-six had made a financial donation in 1994 at the time of the survey submission. In addition to general support, there was a commitment to the personal support of twenty named individual missionaries, of which sixteen had received additional financial gifts from Scottish Baptist churches. BMS is primarily a body supported by United Kingdom Baptist churches and of the workers recruited to this organisation from the UK, the vast majority were from Baptist congregations. Therefore, it is expected that Scottish Baptists would be committed to the work of this mission agency.

BMS work in Brazil and Nepal featured most prominently in their responses to this survey. The primary explanation for this is quite simple. They were the main locations of service for well-known Scottish Baptists who were members of congregations in fellowship with the Baptist Union of Scotland.

What was happening in these two countries in the late twentieth century? Brazil's population had grown rapidly, alongside significant economic advances in some of its states. The Baptist State Conventions were seeking more BMS missionaries than could be supplied in the late 1970s to assist national Christians in pastoral work and evangelistic ministries, in both growing cities like Sao Paulo and in more remote locations like the Amazonas Convention. Brazil was the second largest

BMS field of service by 1991.[6] Nepal, in contrast to Brazil, was a relatively new location in which to place its mission workers. It was only from the 1970s onwards that BMS became a major contributor of missionaries to the United Mission to Nepal (UMN). By 1990, Nepal had become the third largest BMS field in terms of personnel, with twenty-three individuals engaged in a great variety of capacities, ranging from dentistry to rural development in the form of a hydro-electric project.[7] It is probable that there were more opportunities to serve through BMS in these two places at that time.

The data presented in the 1994 and 1995 *Scottish Baptist Yearbook*s reveals that in the former year, eighteen individuals were employed by this Baptist mission agency and twenty-one in the latter year. Twelve out of nineteen in 1994 and fourteen out of twenty-one in 1995 served in either Nepal or Brazil. The missionaries serving in Brazil were, first of all, Christopher and Marion Collict who were linked with Dunoon Baptist Church. Marion had previously been a member of Paisley Free Church of Scotland. They served in pastoral ministry in Dois Vizinhos in the south-west state of Parana from 1984, continuing work begun by BMS missionaries John and Valerie Furmage. This well-established Brazilian church became a base for further evangelistic labours. In 1990, for example, under the Collicts' leadership the church partnered with Operation Mobilisation for a fruitful school and home visitation programme that resulted in twelve people committing their lives to Jesus Christ.[8] They later served with the Baptist State Convention, Chris working in the Young People's department and Marion in the Women's department.[9] Susan Cousins, a nurse, from the Port Glasgow congregation, came with her husband Peter to work in Brazil in 1976.[10] They served initially in church-planting in the state of Mato Grosso, prior to working in the Baptist Seminary at Cuiaba in the state of Mato

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[6] Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792–1992* (T. & T. Clark, 1992), pp. 493–497.
[7] Stanley, *Baptist Missionary Society*, pp. 434–438.
[8] McVicar, *A Great Adventure*, p. 52.
[9] 'Call to Prayer, Week 22, Brazil: Rio Grande Do Sul and Santa Catarina', *Missionary Herald*, April 1994, p. 17. This was the main BMS periodical at that time.
[10] Susan Cousins, 'The New Pioneers', *Missionary Herald*, February 1997, p. 27.

Grosso do Sul, where Peter was the dean and Susan the librarian.[11] However, when the 1994 survey was conducted, only Susan was still listed as serving with BMS in Brazil. Vincent and Sadie MacDougall had been members of the Vale of Leven Baptist Church. They served in pastoral ministry in the state of Rondonia from 1986, firstly based in Vilhena and then in Cacoal. This work included oversight of a growing network of churches and leading in evangelism in those districts. Their last term of service doing similar work took place from 1992 onwards in Joinvile in the southern state of Santa Catarina.[12] David and Catherine Meikle were sent out by Kirkintilloch Baptist Church in January 1992. They were mainly based in Baptist churches in the favelas of the city of Sao Paulo. Catherine, a nurse, had a medical ministry in the community while David served as a pastor and evangelist. He also taught in a Baptist seminary in the city, training students for pastoral ministry.[13]

In 1994, a similar number of Scottish Baptist missionaries were engaged in service in Nepal, mainly through the United Mission to Nepal (UMN), a faith-based non-governmental agency through which a number of Christian missions seconded personnel to serve in that country.[14] Joy Ransom, Iain and Karen Gordon, and David and Catherine McLellan were all sent from the Bridge of Don Baptist Church in Aberdeen. Joy Ransom went to Nepal in 1988 to work as a teacher in a school for missionaries' children in Okhaldunga.[15] The Gordons spent eight years in Nepal on various projects with UMN that included five years (1995–2000) when Iain worked as a consultant for a civil engineering firm in Kathmandu.[16] David and Catherine McLellan

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11 Sam Gibson, 'Prayer Focus: Peter and Susan Cousins Brazil', *Missionary Herald*, August 1992, p. 19; McVicar, *Great Adventure*, p. 58.

12 McVicar, *Great Adventure*, pp. 51–52.

13 McVicar, *Great Adventure*, p. 53; Sam Gibson, 'Prayer Focus: David and Catherine Meikle, Brazil' *Missionary Herald,* May 1996, p. 30.

14 UMN, *Fifty Years in God's Hand, 1954–2004: Blessings of the Past, Visions for the Future,* UMN, 2003 <https://www.umn.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/UMN50th-Anniversary-book-English.pdf> [accessed 19 October 2024].

15 McVicar, *Great Adventure*, p. 19; 'Call to Prayer: Nepal: UMN — Education', *Missionary Herald*, September 1994, p. 22.

16 McVicar, *Great Adventure*, p. 74. Two articles on or by the Gordons are Karen Gordon, 'The Gift of Encouragement', *Missionary Herald*, July 2000, p. 14; 'BMS News — Iain Gordon Recovered', *Missionary Herald*, January 2000, p. 32.

served from 1994 to 1999 in Nepal. David was appointed as an information systems consultant for UNM, after holding a similar position with BP, the oil and gas company in Aberdeen. They returned to the UK in 1999 when David was appointed Manager for Mission Partnerships at the BMS office in Didcot.[17] The other couple seconded by BMS for work in Nepal was through another non-governmental agency, the International Nepal Fellowship (INF). They were Colin and Denise Clark from Dedridge Baptist Church in Livingston, who served in Pokhara where the INF ran a number of educational and medical projects.[18]

The other named Scottish Baptist missionaries in BMS ranks included David and Ann MacFarlane from Falkirk Baptist Church, who served in pastoral and evangelistic ministry in various churches in Italy, beginning in 1993 in Perugia and later in Altamura.[19] Drs Christopher and Mairi Burnett from Madeira Street Baptist Church, Edinburgh went to work first as medical missionaries in Yakusu, Zaire, from 1985 to 1991, and then were seconded to engage in relief work in Albania, in partnership with the European Baptist Federation.[20] Dr Helen Johnson from Inverness Baptist Church, who had trained for medical mission in Zaire and served with BMS from 1990,[21] was seconded to the European Baptist Mission to engage in similar work in Sierre Leone in 1994 as a result of the political and social unrest in Zaire.[22] Stephen and Pam Seymour from Dumfries Baptist Church went with BMS to work in Ntondo, Zaire in 1985, before settling in Zimbabwe the following year.[23] Stephen was a specialist in permaculture training and drought mitigation programmes. He and Pam were focused on assisting nationals severely

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17 'Baptist House News — Welcome to David McLellan', *Missionary Herald*, July-August 1999, p. 32.

18 'Prayer Focus Asia: Colin and Denise Clark Nepal', *Missionary Herald*, November–December 1998, p. 28.

19 *The Scottish Baptist Yearbook* (Baptist Union of Scotland 1995), p. 83; 'Call to Prayer — Belgium and Italy', *Missionary Herald*, September 1994, p. 22.

20 McVicar, *Great Adventure*, p. 19; Chris Burnett, 'Behind the Last Curtain', *Missionary Herald*, June 1992, pp. 6–8.

21 McVicar, *Great Adventure*, p. 75.

22 'Call to Prayer — Africa Secondments', *Missionary Herald*, September 1994, p. 22.

23 Steve Seymour, 'Finding the Right Response', describing his work on a food distribution programme in Zaire, *Missionary Herald*, August 1992, p.11; *The Scottish Baptist Yearbook for 1995* (Baptist Union of Scotland, 1995), pp. 82–83.

affected by the shortage of rain in Zimbabwe.[24] Derek Clarke, the former National Youth Worker for the Baptist Union of Scotland and a member of Kirkintilloch Baptist Church, was appointed in 1992 as the Scottish representative for BMS in place of Ron Armstrong.[25] In addition to these longer-term appointments, Karen Clark from Kinmylies Baptist Church in Inverness went with BMS as a short-term Action Team member to Brazil in 1994.

A work long associated with Baptist churches in the United Kingdom was Operation Agri. The Baptist Men's Movement had launched this initiative in 1961[26] with the object of providing tools, seeds, and livestock to support the work of BMS agricultural missionaries in Angola, India, Bangladesh, and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).[27] From 1971 to the time of this survey of Scottish Baptist churches in 1994, the funds raised through the annual BMS Harvest appeal were for the work of Operation Agri.[28] It is likely that the majority of churches that were supporting BMS financially would have done so in part through its harvest appeal. In addition, two Baptist congregations, Townhead in Kirkintilloch and Bo'ness, supported unnamed individuals working for Operation Agri overseas. In summary, it is no surprise that Scottish Baptist churches primarily committed themselves to supporting the work of BMS in these years. Nor was it unexpected that a significant proportion of members sensing a call to overseas service were employed to work under its auspices.

Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade (WEC)[29]

The second most strongly supported missionary society was the Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade (WEC) which was supported by

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24 'Prayer Focus: Africa and Nepal: Steve and Pam Seymour Zimbabwe', *Missionary Herald*, February 1996, p. 32; Steve Seymour, 'Country in Focus – Zimbabwe', *Missionary Herald,* May 1996, pp. 21–23.

25 'In View', *Missionary Herald*, August 1992, p. 161. *Scottish Baptist Yearbook for 1994*, p. 176.

26 Kenneth W. Bennett, *God at Work with Men: 80 Years of the Baptist Men's Movement* (The Baptist Men's Movement, 1997), p. 34.

27 Bangladesh was then called East Pakistan. DRC was called The Belgian Congo and then Zaire (1971–1997), prior to being renamed the DRC in 1997.

28 Bennett, *God at Work with Men,* p. 34. For more information on its work, see 'About', Operation Agri, n.d. <https://operationagri.org.uk/about/> [accessed 21 May 2024].

29 I am very grateful to Douglas Craig for providing helpful information on these WEC missionaries in May 2024.

30% of the congregations.[30] Fifty-one churches indicated that they supported WEC, of which thirty-eight had made a financial donation that year. There were twenty-seven that indicated their support for individual WEC personnel, of which sixteen had sent additional personal financial support for named individuals serving with that mission society. Forty-one named missionaries from WEC were listed in the congregational returns. Lebanon Bible College (later called Northumbria Bible College) in Berwick-upon-Tweed was a well-known college for training women and men for overseas service and was where a number of WEC personnel would have received their initial training for work overseas prior to its closure in 1998. As a result of proximity to the college, Berwick Baptist Church had links to an unusually high number of missionaries compared to other churches of a similar size.

These missionaries included Barbara Ashworth, who worked with women in Togo and in Cote d'Ivoire; Mark and Joyce Budenberg, who were involved in Bible College teaching in Zaire and supported as a couple by Ayr Baptist Church where Joyce was a member;[31] and Christine and Bill Aitkin, who were supported by Crown Terrace Baptist Church in Aberdeen. The Aitkins were leaders of the WEC Conference Centre at Kilcreggan in the United Kingdom. Adelaide Place Baptist Church in Glasgow, their home church, supported Douglas and Jeanette Craig, who had worked for eleven years as WEC missionaries in the Democratic Republic of Congo, then for thirteen years as staff members teaching at Cornerstone, WEC's cross-cultural training centre, in the Netherlands, where they were based at the time of the BUS survey in 1994. Sam Cairns was supported by the Crown Terrace Baptist Church for literature work and handling correspondence in Ireland. Wayne and Miriam Cowpland were supported in Bible College by Rattray Baptist Church, Dundee, Miriam's home church, prior to their service with WEC. Neil Davidson was supported by Inverbrothock Baptist Church in Arbroath. He worked in radio broadcast ministry with WEC in Leeds. Pauline Devenish was supported by her home church, Ayr Baptist Church, for her church-planting work in Thailand. Iain and Jane

[30] 'Missions Survey', *Scottish Baptist Magazine*, July/August 1995, p. 14

[31] Information about the Budenbergs was obtained from 'Staff', Eastwest College <https://eastwest.ac.nz/staff/> on 6 May 2024. As of October 2024, the staff page on this link has changed.

Fairweather were based in the UK, but also travelled overseas to carry out their audio-visual and literature work for WEC. Iain was a former member of the Cumbernauld Baptist Church. He met Jane at the Lebanon Bible College in Berwick-upon-Tweed in the 1970s, prior to serving with WEC. In the 1990s, they were based at WEC premises in Buckinghamshire, England.[32] Alex Frazer, who worked in both a leadership and administration capacity for WEC in Scotland, was supported by his home church, George Square Baptist Church in Greenock. Anne Greaves, linked with South Beach Baptist Church, Ardrossan, was called to work at WEC's school for missionary children in Senegal. Crown Terrace Baptist Church supported Moira Leslie, engaged in church-planting in Chad. Leslie Baptist Church supported Andrew and Nina Maclaren in their work at the WEC headquarters in Germany, where Andrew worked in finance and Nina in running the centre. Leslie was Andrew's home church. Derek and Heidi Malcolm were supported by Heidi's home church, Hamilton Baptist Church, for their church-planting work in Turkey. Bo'ness and Cornton Baptist churches likewise supported the church-planting work of Stewart and Jean Moulds in Java, one of many islands in Indonesia. The Moulds had been sent out from Murray Place Baptist Church in Stirling.[33] Inverbrothock Baptist Church supported their church members Zacher Potter and her husband for their work in Senegal. Margaret Ramsay, who worked in both administration and teaching in Thailand, was supported by the George Square Baptist Church in Greenock and her home church, Cowdenbeath Baptist Church. Margaret Reid, who was engaged in church-planting in Albania, was supported by her home church, Bearsden Baptist Church in Glasgow. John and Mavis Rodger from the Vale of Leven Baptist Church were based at the Kilcreggan Centre. They visited missionaries to give practical support to them in various fields of service for WEC, including Senegal, Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, and the Netherlands. Neil Rowe, who served as the British Director of WEC until his retirement in 1994, was supported by Crown Terrace Baptist Church, Aberdeen. Sam Russell from Kirkintilloch Baptist Church went

[32] Isobel Jarvie, 'Iain and Jane Fairweather', in *Cumbernauld Baptist Church 1962–2002*, by Isobel Jarvie (Cumbernauld Baptist Church, 2002), p. 49.
[33] Talbot, 'Missionaries Supported by Stirling Baptist Church between 1970 and 1995', p. 162.

to work for this mission agency in their literature work in Northern Ireland. Barbara Scott, who was engaged in church-planting ministry in Senegal, was supported by her home church, Gerard Street Baptist Church, and by International Baptist Church, both in Aberdeen. Roy and Daphne Spraggett were supported by Kirkintilloch Baptist Church. They had been serving with WEC in Vietnam in the 1970s, before becoming Scottish Representatives of WEC in the 1980s. In the 1990s, at the time of the survey, they were co-ordinating WEC's work in closed countries of Central Asia. Robbie and Margaret Toop from Hamilton Baptist Church worked in administration for WEC in Scotland in the early 1990s. Wilf and Patricia Urquhart from Inverness Baptist Church were missionaries with WEC in Burkina Faso, before becoming Scottish representatives of WEC. They were engaged in administration and prayer ministry. They were also supported by International Baptist Church in Aberdeen. Inverbrothock Baptist Church supported Iain and Linda Williamson for their service at the WEC Missionary Children's School in Senegal. This church also sent out Jill McKinnon at this time to work with WEC in Chad.

For a fairly small network of churches, the above record of support for this interdenominational mission was truly substantial. There is no particular reason that stands out as the cause of this growth in support. However, it is probable that the effective promotion of the work by home representatives who built good relationships with local churches, together with a steady supply of church members serving with this agency, was central to this increase.

Tearfund

This Christian aid and development agency originally founded by the Evangelical Alliance in May 1968, has grown dramatically since that date. It now works in around fifty countries and, as of May 2024, employs over one thousand people.[34] Thirty-nine Scottish Baptist churches reported their support for Tearfund in 1994, of which thirty-eight had made a financial donation that year. Some of these congregations, in addition to general support for Tearfund, provided

[34] More details on its work are available from 'About Us', Tearfund, n.d. <https://www.tearfund.org/about-us/our-vision-and-values/our-story> [accessed 21 May 2024].

personal support in finance and prayer for individuals working for Tearfund. These congregations were located in Bathgate, Bo'ness, Dumfries, Galashiels, Cathcart and Rutherglen in Glasgow, George Square and Orangefield in Greenock, Helensburgh, Kirkintilloch, New Prestwick, and Oban. Tearfund was able to have a high profile amongst Scottish Baptist churches in part because of its association with the Evangelical Alliance, a cause well-supported in its UK work by many of these congregations. It also had influential Evangelical church leaders like John Stott and Clive Calver promoting its work at conferences and conventions. The leadership at Tearfund was also skilled in developing a voluntary network of advocates for its work in local congregations.[35] In 1994 it was the third best-supported mission in Scottish Baptist ranks.

Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF)

OMF is a missionary society that initially focused on pioneering evangelistic labours in China, until the expulsion of all the international Christian missionaries in 1949 after the Communist Revolution. Until 1964, OMF had been known as the China Inland Mission.[36] Many workers employed by OMF subsequently worked in neighbouring Asian countries. It had been the second most-frequently named cause supported by Scottish Baptist churches in the 1920s survey.[37] The most likely explanation for this lower level of support is that so many new Christian overseas mission agencies had been created in the second half of the twentieth century and they were, in effect, competing with existing societies for the limited financial support available from a declining number of churches in most denominations in the UK. However, OMF was still a prominent, well-supported body with twenty-five congregations reporting their active interest in its work in 1994, of which twenty-three had sent a recent financial donation. A number of the churches had close ties to individuals serving overseas with OMF. The congregations that highlighted this point were as follows: Gerard Street, Aberdeen; Berwick upon Tweed; Dumfries; Rattray Street,

35 Timothy Chester, *Awakening to a World of Need* (IVP, 1993), with a foreword by John Stott, tells the story of the growth of its work between 1968 and 1993.

36 The details of its history and work can be found at 'About Us', OMF International. n.d. <https://omf.org/about-us/our-story/> [accessed 5 October 2024].

37 Talbot, 'Spreading the Good News from Scotland', pp. 162–164. I am very thankful to Rose Dowsett for providing information on OMF personnel and their work.

Dundee; Abbeyhill and Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh; Cathcart, Glasgow; George Square, Greenock; Hawick; Kirkintilloch; Leslie; Pitlochry; and Selkirk Baptist Church. In this survey of local church commitment for overseas missionary work, support for OMF was still strong seventy years after the previous denominational survey, with only three other causes attracting a higher level of support in the closing decade of the twentieth century. However, with a growing number of overseas mission agencies providing a more diverse range of opportunities for service, it was inevitable that there would be a reduction in support for many existing agencies from the limited number of churches that were providing the finance and personnel for this work.

Wycliffe Bible Translators

Wycliffe was formed in 1953 by representatives of other missions who saw a need for a greater focus on Bible translation in world mission. Its workers cooperate with communities around the world to provide copies of individual books or whole Bibles in each local language, as well as in developing specialist software to assist more effectively in future Bible translation projects.[38] This mission agency was supported financially by twenty-one Scottish Baptist churches in 1994, with ten congregations giving additional personal financial support to individuals working for Wycliffe. They were International in Aberdeen, Abbeyhill, Charlotte Chapel and Leith in Edinburgh, Dumfries, Dunoon, Helensburgh, Kirkintilloch, Newton Mearns, and St Andrews Baptist Church. The work of Bible translation and providing access for all people to the Scriptures was important to Scottish Baptists. This was reflected in the significant support given to Wycliffe in 1994.

Operation Mobilisation (OM)

OM began with mission trips to spread gospel literature in Mexico in 1957, but by 1962 attention was particularly focused on Europe, taking teams of young people to evangelise on short-term mission trips. By 1963, there were more than 2000 young people involved in this work on

[38] 'About', Wycliffe Bible Translators,(n.d. <https://wycliffe.org.uk/about> [accessed 19 October 2024]. See Kirk J. Franklin and Susan Van Wynen, *A Missional Leadership History: The journey from Wycliffe Bible Translators to the Wycliffe Global Alliance* (Regnum Books, 2022).

that continent and OM also started to work in India and the Middle East that same year. In 1970, it branched out into ministry at sea with the launch of the MV Logos, its first ship, delivering relief and medical aid as well as Christian literature at ports on different continents.[39] There were sixteen churches that reported their support of this cause. These included International in Aberdeen, Clydebank, Rattray Street (later called Central) in Dundee, Hamilton, Kirkintilloch, Charlotte Chapel and Wester Hailes in Edinburgh, and Queen's Park in Glasgow. An example of prominent OM workers associated with a Scottish Baptist church is that of Julyan and Lenna Lidstone from Queen's Park Baptist Church, Glasgow. They had been supported in their work with OM over many years. They had served for four years in India from 1973 to 1977, before fifteen years in church-planting work in Turkey. Julyan was then appointed as OM team leader for Western and Central Asia, the post he held at the time of the BUS mission survey in 1994.[40] This was a vibrant growing mission led by the inspirational figure of George Verwer. It was no surprise that there was a significant number of Scottish Baptist congregations partnering with OM.

UFM (The Unevangelised Fields Mission)

UFM was also well-supported by Scottish Baptist churches. Its vision is to support churches in identifying and training people for cross-cultural mission, with a focus on sending missionaries to some of the most unreached parts of the world with the Christian gospel.[41] It began in 1931 with thirty-six missionaries serving in the Belgian Congo and Brazil who united to form this overseas mission agency. Over the course of the twentieth century, it had three main branches, the largest in North America, with the others in Australia and the United Kingdom. Work under its auspices has steadily grown over the last ninety years.[42] In 1994,

[39] More details can be obtained from Ian Randall, *Spiritual Revolution: The Story of OM* (Authentic Media, 2008).

[40] Julyan Lidstone is introduced on the OM website. 'Meet Our Global Board Members', OM, n.d. <https://www.om.org/eng/about/global-leadership/julyan-lidstone> [accessed 17 May 2024].

[41] UMF is now named Crossworld, and their story can be found at <https://crossworld.org> [accessed 24 October 2024].

[42] Homer E. Dowdy, *Speak My Words unto Them: A History of the Unevangelized Fields Mission (UFM International)* (UFM, 1997).

there were sixteen congregations affiliated to the Baptist Union of Scotland that gave financial support for its work. These included Adelaide Place and Newton Mearns congregations in Glasgow, together with Helensburgh, Ardbeg, Rothesay, and Wishaw Baptist churches.

YWAM (Youth with a Mission)[43]

Youth with a Mission was also well supported in 1994 by Scottish Baptist congregations. YWAM started in 1960 with a vision for getting younger Christians engaged in overseas mission. The work has grown and flourished with projects in more than 180 countries. It prioritises Christian work in the areas of evangelism, training, and mercy ministries. The diverse forms of ministry under its auspices include ship-based medical care, performing arts teams, Bible training programmes, business coaching, sports, and anti-trafficking work.[44] Sixteen Scottish Baptist congregations reported supporting YWAM in the year the survey was conducted. Twelve of these churches indicated that they were directly supporting individuals working for this missionary society. They were as follows: Ayr; Gerard Street in Aberdeen; Bathgate; Abbeyhill, Charlotte Chapel, and Leith congregations in Edinburgh; Falkirk; Queen's Park in Glasgow; Helensburgh; Inverkeithing; Oban; and Pitlochry Baptist Church. In the 1990s, Scottish Baptists were fortunate to have a good number of young adults in their congregations, following significant growth in their ranks through a successful outreach programme called 'Scotreach' during the 1980s. Those that came to faith in those years had done so often in a context of flourishing congregations committed to evangelistic work at home and overseas.[45] It is likely that a good proportion of the people offering for overseas service in the early 1990s either came to faith or were active workers in these mission-minded congregations.

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[43] Information on the wider work of YWAM is given at <https://ywam.org/> [accessed 21 May 2024].

[44] 'About Us', Youth With A Mission, n.d. <https://ywam.org/about-us> [accessed 8 October 2024].

[45] See Brian R. Talbot, *Building on a Common Foundation: The Baptist Union of Scotland 1869–2019* (Pickwick, 2022), pp. 245–252.

The three most prominently supported missionary societies in the 1920s survey,[46] BMS, OMF, and WEC were still well supported by Scottish Baptist congregations seventy years later. However, five other causes — Tearfund, Wycliffe, UFM, OM, and YWAM — were now also attracting a significant level of support in terms of financial giving and in the numbers of serving missionary personnel. The world of overseas missions had changed significantly over this time, with the options for summer mission trips or shorter terms of service for a smaller number of years increasing, and with lengthy periods of service over decades in one field far less common at the end of the twentieth century. In addition to the traditional patterns of overseas ministry in evangelistic and church-planting ministries, as well as those in some form of medical or educational work, there was now a greater acceptance of and support for agricultural and development work in causes like Operation Agri and for the provision of disaster relief aid through bodies such as Tearfund.

Overseas Mission Societies Supported by a Smaller Number of Congregations

This section presents an overview of the range of organisations receiving support from Scottish Baptist churches, but from a more limited number of congregations. The organisations supported are listed below in alphabetical order, then further details of the nature of the support is briefly set out.

The Africa Inland Mission was supported by thirteen congregations in 1994, of which twelve had made financial donations to its work. Five of the churches had donated more generally to the society and eight had given funding for particular workers.

Arab World Ministries was supported by eleven congregations in the 1994 survey, of which six had made a financial donation that year in support of individuals serving under the auspices of this mission.

[46] Talbot, 'Spreading the Good News from Scotland', p. 165.

A Rocha Trust, the Christian environmental trust, was supported by Dumfries Baptist Church in the form of a contribution to the funding of two people working for this cause.

ACRIS was an agency in the 1990s that was involved in community health projects in Mozambique. BMS partnered with them in some projects and seconded some mission workers for a time to serve under their auspices when they had to be withdrawn from Zaire in 1992 due to military conflict in that country. Sue Roberts, who was supported by Calderwood Baptist Church in East Kilbride, was one of the BMS workers who was asked to go to Mozambique.[47]

Action Partners received funding from Kirkintilloch Baptist Church in support of four individuals who worked with this organisation.

The Bible Lands Society received funding in 1994 from three congregations: George Square and Orangefield Baptist churches in Greenock and Helensburgh Baptist Church.

Christian Mission to the Communist World received support from two congregations: Orangefield Baptist Church in Greenock and Dumfries Baptist Church.

Christian Witness to Israel was also supported by two congregations: Oban and Dumfries Baptist churches.

Four Baptist churches supported the work of *ECM (European Christian Mission)* in 1994. This society was formed by Ganz Raud in1904 in Estonia. It is currently working in over twenty European countries with over 300 workers.[48] The congregations that reported support for ECM were Galashiels, Orangefield in Greenock, together with Abbeyhill and Charlotte Chapel Baptist churches in Edinburgh.

[47] 'Driven By the Wind: BMS Annual Report', *Missionary Herald*, 30 April 1993, p. 19.
[48] 'Our History', ecm, n.d. <https://www.ecmi.org/en/our-history> [accessed 10 May 2024].

The Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society (EMMS) was supported by three churches in its work overseas: Ayr, Denny, and Helensburgh Baptist churches.

The Dunfermline *Eurosave* charity was set up by Watson Moyes, minister of Viewfield Baptist Church in Dunfermline, during the war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Initially, the focus was on providing funds for Karlovac Baptist Church and its work with refugees on the frontlines between Serbian and Croat forces. A national appeal for this cause was promoted in the Baptist Union in 1995. Over the next ten years to 2005, many Scottish Baptist congregations collected money or goods for this cause.[49] However, in 1994 in the first year of Scottish Baptist support for the work of Croatian Baptists, only Helensburgh Baptist Church reported sending a financial gift to them.

FEBA (the Far Eastern Broadcasting Association) received some founding from ten Scottish Baptist congregations in 1994, with three giving particular support to named individuals working for FEBA. They were Charlotte Chapel in Edinburgh, Dumfries Baptist Church, and Kirkintilloch Baptist Church.

France Mission was a British evangelistic agency set up in the 1970s to partner with a similar French organisation, Perspectives, to assist French Evangelicals plant new churches in that country. It has been a remarkable success, seeing the growth in church membership from 150 000 to 650 000 people in 2500 congregations.[50] In 1994, two Scottish Baptist congregations were assisting in this work: Rattray Street Baptist Church in Dundee, and Pitlochry Baptist Church.

HCJB World Radio, 'The Voice of the Andes' was one of the two earliest Christian short-wave radio stations set up in 1931. The Vatican Radio was launched in February 1931, whereas HCJB radio was launched on Christmas Day that year in Quito, Ecuador, broadcasting in Spanish and English. The work of HCJB expanded later into

[49] For more details, see Talbot, *Building on a Common Foundation*, pp. 300–302.

[50] 'Who We Are', France Mission, n.d. <https://www.francemission.org/who-we-are#story> [accessed 14 May 2024].

television and into Russian language broadcasting in partnership with the Slavic Gospel Association. In 1994, it had two workers who were supported by Cornton Baptist Church in Stirling and Charlotte Chapel in Edinburgh respectively for their work in Ecuador and in the USA.[51]

IFES (International Federation of Evangelical Students) was formed in 1947 to support Christian students to engage in evangelism amongst their peers. Its work has spread to over 180 countries since its foundation. In 1994, two Scottish Baptist congregations, Kirkintilloch Baptist Church and Charlotte Chapel in Edinburgh, supported workers serving with this mission agency.[52]

The interdenominational and international medical mission *International Mission to Nepal (IMN)*[53] had been working in India since the 1930s, working with Nepali people in the Indian town of Nautanwa on the border of Nepal. It gained permission to operate in Nepal in 1952, setting up a clinic and then the first hospital in the west of Nepal, subsequently expanding its work to other parts of the country. In addition to projects where BMS personnel worked with INF, Leslie and Wishaw Baptist churches independently supported families serving in Nepal with this medical mission.

Interserve, a Christian society engaged in holistic mission in Asia and the Arab world,[54] received funding from four Scottish Baptist congregations in 1994. Gerard Street Baptist Church in Aberdeen, Helensburgh Baptist Church, Kirkintilloch Baptist Church, and Morningside Baptist Church in Edinburgh.

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51 Kenneth D. MacHarg, 'HCJB 1931–1991: A Celebration of Beginnings', November 1991 <https://www.ontheshortwaves.com/HCJB/Articles/HCJB_1931-1991-A_Celebration_of_Beginnings-1991.pdf> [accessed 14 May 2024].

52 'Our Work', IFES, n.d. <https://ifesworld.org/en/our-work/> [accessed 14 May 2024]. For more information on the work of IFES, see Douglas Johnson, *A Brief History of the International Fellowship Of Evangelical Students* (IFES, 1964).

53 More details on the work of this mission can be found in the history of the INF by Thomas Hale, *Light Dawns in Nepal* (International Nepal Fellowship, 2012).

54 For information on this organisation and its history, see the Interserve website <https://www.interserve.org.uk/> [accessed 14 May 2024].

One of the features of the late twentieth century was the number of mergers or realignments of mission strategies undertaken by a number of Christian mission agencies. *Latin Link* was formed by the 1991 merger of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union (RBMU) with the Evangelical Union of South America (EUSA).[55] The congregations stating their support for this mission in the survey were Ayr, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Bo'ness, Cumbernauld, Wester Hailes in Edinburgh, Kirkintilloch, Knightswood in Glasgow, and Cornton in Stirling. An example of an individual working in this field was Elma Armstrong from Cumbernauld Baptist Church. She had gone out to Peru with EUSA in November 1973 after completing her training for work overseas at the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow. She married a Peruvian pastor, Hector Flores, a decision that under EUSA regulations required her to resign from the mission around the end of 1976. The Cumbernauld congregation committed to supporting her, increasing the level of its giving in 1992 when a monthly communion offering was taken in aid of her work. She paid a return visit to the Cumbernauld Church for a time of home leave in 1997.[56]

The Leprosy Mission, founded in 1874, has been one of the oldest overseas mission agencies supported by Scottish Baptist churches. However, in the 1994 survey, there were only fifteen congregations that reported active commitment to promoting its work. Supporting congregations named in the survey were Clydebank, Dumfries, Leith in Edinburgh, Cathcart in Glasgow, Orangefield and George Square in Greenock, together with Kirkintilloch, Ladywell, Livingston, and the Vale of Leven Baptist churches.

The Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF)[57] was founded in London in 1945 and grew to become the world's largest humanitarian air operator, providing transportation to more than 1400 aid, development, and mission organisations around the globe. Seven Scottish Baptist churches gave financial assistance to MAF in 1994.

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[55] 'History', Latin Link, n.d. <https://latinlink.org.uk/about-us/history/> [accessed 14 May 2024].
[56] Jarvie, 'Elma Flores (nee Armstrong)' in *Cumbernauld Baptist Church 1962–2002*, by Jarvie, pp. 48–49.
[57] 'Our History', MAF, n.d. <https://mafint.org/about/our-history> [accessed 14 May 2024].

They were International in Aberdeen, Ayr, Dumfries, Orangefield and George Square in Greenock, together with Kirkintilloch, and Pitlochry Baptist churches.

The Oasis Trust,[58] an organisation that engaged in education and humanitarian aid work in the United Kingdom, as well as overseas, received support from five congregations: Gerrard Street in Aberdeen; Calderwood and Westwood in East Kilbride; Abbeyhill in Edinburgh; and Helensburgh Baptist Church.

The Oriental Missionary Society (OMS) was supported by four named congregations: Berwick, Clydebank, Galashiels, and Selkirk Baptist churches.

Open Doors was supported financially by three Baptist churches in Dumfries, Hawick, and Pitlochry. Although financial support was given for particular individuals in overseas countries, there were no details given of their identity and location. It is probable that the reason for this decision was due to the countries in question being places where the Christian church faced discrimination or active persecution by the state.

Qua Iboe Fellowship was supported in its work in Nigeria by three Baptist churches. They included Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh — which assisted Dr Nick Needham who was teaching under its auspices at the Samuel Bill Theological College in Akwa Ibom in south-east Nigeria — together with George Square Baptist Church in Greenock, and Dalkeith Baptist Church in Edinburgh. Its work in more recent years has expanded into Burkino Faso, Chad, and Kenya.[59]

The Red Sea Mission Team (RSMT) engaged in healthcare and education work, primarily in Muslim-majority countries around the Red Sea, but later in West and North East Africa and in Pakistan.

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[58] 'Oasis Global', Oasis, n.d. <https://www.oasisuk.org/oasis-global/> [accessed 14 May 2024] gives details of its overseas work.

[59] The name of this body was changed to 'Mission Africa' in 2002. 'About', Mission Africa, n.d. <https://www.missionafrica.org.uk/about> [accessed 21 May 2024].

Kirkintilloch and George Square Baptist churches supported missionaries serving with the RSMT agency.[60]

There were seven congregations who gave financial support to *SIM* (the original name was the *Sudan Interior Mission*) in 1994. They were Crown Terrace and Gerrard Street congregations in Aberdeen, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh, Kirkintilloch, and Renfrew Baptist churches.[61]

In addition to the eight mission societies mentioned in section one as receiving the most support, there were twenty-seven others supported by at least two but not more than fifteen congregations. It is clear that interest in a growing range of overseas mission opportunities had developed over the seven decades from the 1920 report, and that this increasing range of mission opportunities was also providing stronger links with the growing indigenous Christian churches around the world.

The Type of Work in Which They Were Engaged Overseas

The survey recorded categories of employment that were used to describe the missionaries sent out and supported financially by Scottish Baptist churches in 1994. This number included some that were fully supported through societies such as BMS and by other individuals, and couples or families who were partially funded through these congregations. The survey data, unfortunately, is not clear in reporting whether the name and employment category represent an individual or a couple or a family serving in that capacity. Therefore, it is only possible to offer general observations on the nature of the employment in which they were engaged. It is also important to acknowledge that many

[60] Further information on the history of this mission is given in Glenn Tainio, 'Missionary Spotlight — Pioneer Work among the Afars', *Evangelical Times*, 1 February 2008 <https://www.evangelical-times.org/missionary-spotlight-pioneer-work-among-the-afars/> [accessed 21 May 2024]. This mission has changed its name to ReachAcross to reflect its wider geographical focus. Information on its current work was obtained from the web page 'Reach Across', ECFA, n.d. <https://www.ecfa.org/MemberProfile.aspx?ID=31961> [accessed 21 May 2024].

[61] Details of the work of SIM can be obtained from their website <https://sim.co.uk/> [accessed 21 May 2024].

individuals were multi-tasking in their spheres of service. So, for example, a significant proportion of medical missionaries were also responsible for the administrative duties associated with their work in a clinic or hospital. There were those employed as church-planters, evangelists, or Bible teachers who also engaged in pastoral work in a local church or more widely during their time of service. In broad terms, the largest numbers of these missionaries were employed in evangelism, church planting, and Bible teaching, closely followed by those serving in medical mission. In this late twentieth century survey, unlike the survey of the 1920s, there were a significant number engaged in aid and other relief work. In addition to those employed more broadly in mission administration, there were much smaller numbers employed in agricultural or other development work, in radio or literature ministries, or in those focusing on students, especially those in higher education. Another new focus was on child sponsorship or other work amongst vulnerable children. There was one pilot employed by MAF. Other categories that were new included support for A Rocha in its environmental work in Portugal. In summary, the majority of these missionaries were employed in similar work to those in the 1920s survey, though with a closer working relationship with partners in the national churches in their respective countries.

Conclusions

What is the big picture that emerges compared with the study seventy years earlier in this family of churches? BMS was still the most strongly supported society, as expected, with 72% of the responding churches reporting their active support for its work, with additional congregations reporting that individuals in their ranks supported it. The second most strongly supported missionary society was the Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade (WEC) that was financially supported by 30% of the congregations. There was also continuing strong support for OMF. What was particularly noticeable was the commitment to a number of newer missions that had begun their work after the previous survey had been taken; namely Tearfund, OM, Wycliffe, UFM, and YWAM. There were twenty-seven other mission societies supported by between two and fifteen Scottish Baptist congregations. It was also very

noticeable that there were a growing number of causes supported by only one local church.

Scottish Baptists continued to see themselves as part of the global Christian church and, where appropriate, were happy to serve with or support mission initiatives led by individuals from other denominations, for example in Nepal. This pattern was very similar to that found in the 1920s survey. The range of roles undertaken by these missionaries was also fairly similar in many respects to the time of the previous survey, and there was still significant support for projects in Africa and Asia as in previous decades, although other parts of the world, most notably the Americas and Continental Europe, were the recipients of a growing proportion of this work.

At that time in the 1990s, Scottish Baptists had a prominent focus on BMS work in two countries, Brazil and Nepal. There were a number of Scottish Baptist church members serving or who had served in Brazil in particular, which probably gave a higher visibility to that mission field. In Nepal, work was done in partnership with other Christian missions through the United Mission to Nepal and the International Nepal Fellowship. However, in total, mission workers linked to Scottish Baptist churches were serving in at least seventy different countries, which is a remarkable number considering the size of the Scottish Baptist constituency.[62] This survey revealed clearly that there was no doubt concerning the continuing Scottish Baptist commitment to overseas mission at the end of the twentieth century.

[62] 'Missions Survey', *Scottish Baptist Magazine*, July/August 1995, p. 14; and 'Overseas Mission' section of chapter ten in Talbot, *Building on a Common Foundation*, pp. 308–309.

'70 x 7'?: Lessons on Forgiveness from an Historical Reading of Matthew 18

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Abstract
'Forgive 70 times 7' and the 'Three Step Rule' principle of reconciliation is praised as hands-on 'biblical' advice, but for many victims it increases the abuse as they are forced to recall their gruesome experience and evaluate their own fault in what happened. Often quick solutions for complicated issues are forced on the victim by the church's divine power of 'tying and untying' (Matt 18:18). Many victims leave their churches and sometimes God. In his recent book, *Introducing Christian Ethics: Core Convictions for Christians Today* (Front Edge, 2022), David Gushee points to the inadequacy of this 'biblical' doctrine of forgiveness, and suggests broader ethical research into the subject. However, I believe that a re-reading of the texts from the historical critical method, may bring such necessary broadening. This article, then, reads Matthew chapters 18–19 as an extension of Mark 9–10, scrutinising in the process contemporary applications of these texts.

Key words
Matthew 18; forgiveness; cultures of secrecy; power in the church

Introduction

Boards of Christian organisations often have the 'Forgive 70 times 7' principle and the 'Three Step Rule' of reconciliation in their manuals of conduct. It is hands-on 'biblical' advice. Churches rarely admit that this actually increases the abuse of victims by making them recall their distressing experience and evaluate their own fault in what happened, while they are also forced to accept quick solutions for complicated

issues, which creates cultures of secrecy and trauma.[1] Further mention of the church's divine power of 'tying and untying' (Matt 18:18), or 'binding and loosing', adds spiritual abuse to the ordeal. No wonder many leave their churches and sometimes God, because they have suffered too much pain.[2] In his recent book, David Gushee points to the inadequacy of this 'biblical' doctrine of forgiveness,[3] and suggests broader ethical research into the subject. However, I believe that a re-reading of the texts featuring the historical critical method, may bring about the necessary broadening. The goal of this article is, therefore, to re-read Jesus's instructions on forgiveness as remembered in the Gospel according to Matthew chapters 18–19, particularly because of their popularity in comparison to Mark's version. At the same time, the article also scrutinises contemporary applications of these texts.

This article reads Matthew 18:12–35 in comparison with Mark 9–10, presupposing Mark's priority,[4] first by applying form criticism and then redaction criticism to draw conclusions. In so doing, we find that the theme of forgiveness is Matthew's supplement to Mark's narrative about Jesus teaching his disciples greatness in the kingdom of God, which is achieved only by ministry to the 'little ones'. The main question is why Matthew thinks the supplement about reconciliation and

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[1] To feature just a few, see the final report on Ravi Zacharias in *Report of Independent Investigation into Sexual Misconduct of Ravi Zacharias*, by Linsey M. Barron and William P. Eisenstein of Miller and Martin PLLC, 9 February 2021 <https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/zacharias-report.pdf> [accessed 27 March, 2024] or 'The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill' *Christianity Today*, podcast series, 2021 <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ ct/podcasts/rise-and-fall-of-mars-hill/> [accessed 20 March, 2024]. Marc Driscoll subsequently 'rebranded' his 'ministry' after leaving Mars Hill in 2014. See Chris Moody, 'Mark Driscoll's Safe Space', *Religion Unplugged*, 2 October 2023 <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2023/6/20/ mark-driscolls-safe-space-in-arizona-2zxze> [accessed 20 March, 2024].

[2] Between the two censuses in Croatia, 8% of Catholics completely dissociated themselves from the church. This coincides with the scandals of sexual sin against children. To leave Catholicism in Croatia means a major identity overhaul, as religious identity is linked to nationality. A. Ž. For Hina, 'Katolika u Hrvatskoj ima sve manje, a raste broj ateista: Kako stoje druge religije?' *Dnevnik.hr,* 22 September 2022 <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/katolika-u-hrvatskoj-ima-sve-manje-a-raste-broj-ateista-kako-stoje-ostale-religije---743522.html> [accessed 27 March 2024].

[3] David P. Gushee, *Introducing Christian Ethics: Core Convictions for Christians Today* (Front Edge, 2022), pp. 143–154.

[4] For a strong case for Markan priority against newer attempts to deny it, see Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 2nd edn (Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 40–56.

forgiveness is needed here. We will conclude that in 18:13–18, Matthew offers Jesus's teaching on forgiveness as a solution to Mark's implied question on how peace can be maintained in the church after a violation of the 'little ones', by which the 'saltiness' of the church has been jeopardised (Mark 9:50). The pericopes inserted by Matthew form a thematic whole and need to be seen in relation to each other.

From a practical theological perspective, this article deals with power abuse in the church, a problem that has recently been raised by numerous cases hitting even the global secular press. In the article I refer to the victims as the 'little ones'. This may mean the powerless party in a particular conflict, not necessarily a completely disadvantaged person. However, it is a fact that the more abuse of a certain kind is ignored, the more the victims become marginalised, that is, deprived of a place to speak up and have their needs met.

In a similar way, I use 'bully', 'perpetrator', 'narcissist', or even 'predator' interchangeably.[5] As has recently been noted by the psychologist and Evangelical theologian James Wilder, all people have narcissist tendencies and are inclined to impose their will on others to a smaller or larger extent.[6] In theology this may be called original sin, and

[5] An internet search into relevant material leads to the conclusion that a narcissist tendency (not to mention personality disorder) creates violent, manipulative (passive aggressive and gaslighting) behaviours. See Dru Ahlborg and Tom Ahlborg, 'Gaslighting and Bullying', The Bullying Recovery Resource Center, n.d. <https://bullyingrecoveryresourcecenter.org/our-board/> [accessed 25 June 2024]. This article defines both gaslighting and bullying as a problem of power abuse. When I refer to narcissists, I usually think about tendencies and not about the personality disorder. However, as is evident from literature, both use the same methods to subdue others. Wilder points out that churches are better suited for building narcissism than loving enemies. E. James Wilder, *The Pandora Problem: Facing Narcissism in Leaders and Ourselves* (Deeper Walk International, 2018) pp. 20–21; e-book <https://www.everand.com/read/398170232/The-Pandora-Problem-Facing-Narcissism-in-Leaders-Ourselves> 2024, p. 41. The pathological narcissist's self-esteem depends on outside affirmation, as they are full of self-doubt in themselves. Cf. Elinor Greenberg, *Borderline, Narcissistic, And Schizoid Adaptations: The Pursuit of Love, Admiration, and Safety* (Greenbrook Press, 2016), p. 244. No wonder that research conducted in 2013 by Glenn Ball and Darrell Puls shows that at least one in three pastors has Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Darrell Puls and Glenn Ball, *Let Us Prey: The Plague of Narcissist Pastors and What We Can Do About It* (Wipf and Stock, 2017), cited by Jeff Mattas, 'The Iceberg of Narcissism in Pastoral Leadership', Indiana Ministries, 20 March 2021 <*https://indianaministries.org/imnews/the-iceberg-of-narcissism-in-pastoral-leadership/*> [accessed 1 July 2024].

[6] Wilder, *The Pandora Problem*, pp. 20–21.

its prescribed treatment is spiritual, while often the implications of it in the now stay unresolved. Wilder interestingly notes that a community is needed to challenge narcissist tendencies in their beginnings before a permanent narcissistic response is entrenched in a person as a disorder, and/or a social culture is created in which narcissists cannot recognise the harm they do because the roles have been exchanged and victims who speak up are considered the problem. Interestingly, professionally diagnosed narcissists are usually dropped as patients by therapists. The profession considers them incurable.[7]

I also use 'violence' and 'abuse' not only for physical and sexual abuse, but along the line of the United Nation's definition for anything that harms people:

> Violence is […] 'the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, *psychological harm*, *maldevelopment* or *deprivation*'.[8] (emphasis mine)

I may disagree with 'the intentional' use of power — as it seems to me that the unintentional abuse of power is indicative of privilege blindness to deprivation or neglect. The World Health Organisation *Report on Violence and Health* from 2002 shows graphically the extent and the depths of violence,[9] illustrating how physical or sexual abuse, the consequences of which are readily recognisable, is exceeded by other, invisible acts of violence such as psychological violence and deprivation which are difficult to prove, especially in cultures which accept certain types of violence as 'normal'. Therefore, more recently, emphasis has been placed on definitions of the psychological means by which violence

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[7] Wilder, *The Pandora Problem*, p. 20. See also Greenberg, *Borderline, Narcissistic, And Schizoid Adaptations*, p. 243, where she explains why most therapists feel overwhelmed with narcissist disorder patients.

[8] Alison Rutherford, Anthony B. Zwi, Natalie J. Grove, and Alexander Butchart, 'Violence: A Glossary', *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 61.8 (2007), pp. 676–680 (p. 677), doi:10.1136/jech.2005.043711. Cf. Etienne G. Krug, Linda L. Dahlberg, James A. Mercy, Anthony B. Zwi, and Rafael Lozano, *World Report on Violence and Health* (World Health Organization, 2002) p. 7.

[9] The striking figure illustrating a 'Typology of Violence' can be found in Krug et al., *World Report on Violence and Health*, or accessed online at <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9241545615> [accessed 2 October 2024].

is committed. The relationship between a bully (perpetrator) and manipulation, and more specifically gaslighting, is evident and can be described as follows:

> As bullying is an exploitation of a power imbalance with the intent to harm, gaslighting is a method the aggressor can choose to bully someone else. These tactics are sometimes difficult to identify, especially in relation to a bully and his or her target. Highly successful bullies are crafty at manipulating and can be masters of gaslighting.[10]

Retaining Saltiness as the Goal

Reading the Markan framework on Christian leadership is mandatory for theologians interested in the Matthean reconciliation and forgiveness passages as it presupposes power imbalances, typical of all aspects of violence and abuse, not just physical. Matthew's material fits well with Mark's general theme about minding the little ones as a mark of greatness in God's kingdom.[11] Table 1 compares the sequence and use of the pericopes in Mark and Matthew to show where Matthew intervenes.

Reading Matthew alongside Mark suggests that the inserted material forms a thematic whole concerning reconciliation and forgiveness in the church. The transition to the first subject of reconciliation in Matthew feels like an 'awkward fit',[12] at least until one recognises the importance of 'ekklesia' as a *corpus permixtum*, a 'place where good and evil exist side by side until judgment',[13] as Luz suggests. In other words, the Matthean church belongs at the same time to the ideal of the kingdom of God and to the earthly realm, where a breach of divine standards is common. Matthew recognises how this dual character causes problems for his church. His additions feature aspects

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[10] Ahlborg and Ahlborg, 'Bullying and Gaslighting'.

[11] I follow the main thrust of the text and compare pericopes, but there is a lot of detail that should be added from a more thorough comparison of all Matthean interventions, as notably evident from the commentary by Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20: A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew,* vol. 2 (Augsburg, 1989), pp. 431–551 to which the reader is kindly referred. Available also online through *Internet Archive*.

[12] For example. Luz, *Matthew*, p. 451, says that it 'fits awkwardly into the text'.

[13] Luz, *Matthew*, p. 451.

Table 1: A Synoptic Reading of Matthew 18–19 (Mark 8–10)

Matt 18:1–5. Who is the greatest in the KoG? Caring for a child is a mark of greatness.	Mark 9:33, 37. Who is the greatest in the KoG? Caring for a child (little ones) is a mark of greatness.
	Mark 9:38–40. For example, those who do not 'walk with us' but belong to us.
Matt 18:6–14. Offending the little ones.	Mark 9:41–50. Offending the little ones. • Salt logion • 9:50 — HOW TO HAVE PEACE WITH EACH OTHER Seems to trigger Matthew's elaboration on how to treat an offender.
Matt 18:15–19, 12. Forgiveness and the Kingdom of Heaven. • 15–20: How to find reconciliation in the church when someone sins against you. • Logion about tying and untying (binding and loosing). • Logion about two or three praying. • 21–35: How many times one ought to forgive in a day. • The Parable of the Merciless Debtor. Seems to warn against abuse of power of 'binding and loosing'.	
Matt 19:1–12. On divorce.	Mark 10: 1–12. On divorce.
Matt 19:13–15. The little children (again).	Mark 10:13–16. The little children (again).
Matt 19:16–30. The rich young man.	Mark 10:17–31. The rich young man.
Matt 20:1–16. The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard.	
Matt 20:17–19. Jesus announces his death for the third time.	Mark 10:32–34. Jesus announces his death for the third time.
Matt 20:20–28. Zebedee's sons want to be the greatest.	Mark 10:35–44. Zebedee's sons want to be the greatest.
Conclusion: Matt 20:29–34. Two blind men in Jericho.	Conclusion: Mark 10:46–51. The blind man in Jericho.

of how the church should handle sin when it happens in their midst, namely (power) abuse or 'offences' by the 'great' against 'the little ones'.

Most commentators also recognise that the text itself is 'victim led',[14] that is, written from the perspective of the one wronged. This is surprising, given that present day application misreads this detail, and 'shared guilt' assumes the centre stage, with the church called in to add objective assessments of who should be held more to blame. This is not what Matthew had in mind.

Matthew works with Mark's primary concern of servant leadership, as shown in the Messiah's suffering and death for the people whom the disciples might exclude (like little children).[15] Mark discussed the ideal, and skipped the daily pragmatics of *how* to maintain peace and 'saltiness'; but Matthew's concern is precisely with the pragmatics of Christian living in the now. 'How?' has high priority and needs to be supplemented by additional Jesus-material from the rich sources Matthew had at hand. Matthew's insertions are best read as Jesus's own answers to Mark's question, 'If salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it?', elaborating on the command to the disciples to 'have salt in

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[14] The perspective being from the 'little ones' is recognised by commentators such as Frank Stagg, 'Matthew', *The Broadman Bible Commentary, Volume 8, General Articles: Matthew / Mark*, ed. by J. Allen Clifton (Broadman, 1969), pp. 61–253. Stagg comments, 'Jesus placed major responsibility for reconciliation upon the one sinned against' (p. 183). Also, Robert T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (IVP, 1985), pp. 172–173, but he considers that 'against you' in 18:15 is 'probably not an original part of the text' and hence suggests that Matthew's text is not about wronging someone, but about committing 'spiritual' sin. This shows the two problems in the contemporary reading of the text. One is the lack of consideration of Matthew's insertions, and the other is the 'spiritualisation' of sin as moral failing, failing to recognise the social implications of sin 'against a brother or sister' explicitly stated later.

[15] Joel Marcus, *Mark 9–16* (Yale University Press, 2009), writes on p. 589, 'Throughout the section, the Markan disciples show themselves to be blind — terribly imperceptive and in need of the illumination of Jesus' teaching. They ask inane questions (9.10–11; 10.10), make stupid remarks (9:5–6), grasp for personal power (9.33–34; 10.35–40), mistake the merciful nature of Jesus' mission (9.38), and otherwise show themselves deficient in appreciating the unique way in which God's dominion is manifesting itself through Jesus (8.31–33; 9.32; 10.13–14, 24, 26, 32).' Regardless of seeing Mark as a liturgical mystery (*Mark 1–8*, p. 69), Marcus still recognises the *Sitz im Leben* for the gospel of the 'overwhelmed' Markan Christians 'by their present situation of "tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of creation"' (*Mark* 1–8, p. 79).

yourselves, and be at peace with one another' (Mark 9:50).[16] Matthew's supplement becomes Jesus's pragmatic answer to how peace is maintained after the treachery of abuse and to how the church can continue to function as 'salt'.[17]

A Closer Look at Matthew's Insertions

Going into the details of Matthew's amendments of Mark goes beyond the confines of this article, but even Matthew's major points can set us on the right track. Matthew moves the 'salt logion' from the context in Mark 9–10, pulling it forward to the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:13). For Matthew this is Jesus's 'manifesto, a promising theory'.[18] And yet Matthew seems to comment precisely on Mark 9:50, which he has displaced but then replaced with the catena of reconciliation and forgiveness pericopes: if the disciples cannot maintain 'saltiness'[19] by having 'peace' among themselves, it will be impossible for the world to 'taste' the kingdom of God, or to recognise the church as a place where God is present in the world. Matthew's reconciliation and forgiveness story pragmatically broadens Mark's ethical one-liner.

The threat to the community is real and frustrating. After all, even the best — such as the 'Sons of Thunder' (Mark 3:17, cf. 10:35–37) — have their spiritual black-outs, imposing themselves over others and creating discord. Our translations render σκανδαλίζω (Matt 18:6)

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[16] It is difficult to determine whether Mark 9:50 is a logion, i.e. Jesus's own word, or Mark's editorial instruction to his own church (Marcus, *Mark 9–16,* p. 694). Either way, it is the climax of the passage (so Marcus, *Mark 9–16,* p. 699).

[17] Marcus, *Mark 9–16,* pp. 692–693 has a thorough review of what 'salt' could mean in this text, concluding that it probably means Christian wisdom which rejects selfish ambition (p. 699).

[18] France, *Matthew,* p. 106.

[19] Marcus, *Mark 1–8,* p. 698, claims that the difference in the Greek between ἑαυτοῖς in 'have salt in yourselves' and ἀλλήλοις in 'be at peace among yourselves' is important, as ἐν ἑαυτοῖς must mean having the wisdom to discern the right Christian attitude in the individual to create peace in the community 'among themselves'. Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* at *Bible Hub* <https://biblehub.com/greek/1438.htm>, leaning on Augustus Matthiae, *A Copious Greek Grammar* (Murray, 1832), p. 818 § 489 III, suggests however that ἐν ἑαυτοῖς and ἐν ἀλλήλοις 'is used frequently in the plural for the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλων, ἀλλήλοις, ἀλλήλους'. It is therefore possible to take the 'having salt' (the taste of the kingdom of heaven) and 'having peace among each other' as parallel. In this case, salt is read as the 'taste' which this world is lacking but that Christians have, just as they are also light in the darkness (Matt 5:13–16). By pulling 'salt' into the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew makes this more than just wisdom to discern and live rightly; he makes it a decisive feature of the church.

against a 'little one' as 'causing offence' and 'leading into sin'. Craig Blomberg rightly notes that σκανδαλίζω 'speaks of something that is destructive of human life or the life of the entire people of God'. When the 'little ones' lose their faith in the church, they are also likely to doubt God, putting their (eternal) lives in danger.[20] Matthew believes, it seems, that this can only be undone by forgiveness.

Forgiving '70 times 7' in Matthew must not be taken out of the context of the other pericopes on exerting power in a worldly way (Mark's context), and must be seen in the context of the other Matthean pericopes in Matthew 18:15–35. 'Stumbling blocks' are created by the powerful who hurt those entrusted to them. Offence does not happen among equals. 'Everyone is equally sinful' is a plausible orthodox line in strict theology, but it concerns the human relationship with God. In human conflicts, there is no shared guilt. There is always a perpetrator and a victim. The guilty party is the one who has overstepped their authority and abused their power to hurt someone with less power.

Recognising the forms of the ancient church's oral tradition, we can identify two major stories in Matthew's insertion. First there is the three step reconciliation pericope (Matt 18:15–17), aided by two *logia*: that of the right to bind and loose (Matt 18:18) and that of the 'two or three assembled because of Christ' (Matt 18:19–20). On the other hand, there is Peter's interjection about forgiveness 70 times 7 (18:21–22) as illustrated by the parable of the 'unmerciful servant' (18:23–35). While the two parts (of reconciliation and forgiveness) go together, they first need to be viewed separately.

[20] Craig Blomberg, *Matthew* (Broadman, 1992), p. 274; for more detail also Luz, *Matthew*, pp. 432–433.

Reconciliation: A Victim-lead Process

Matthew insists that the duty to confront a perpetrator belongs to the victims (Matt 18:15).[21] We have seen that sinning against someone is always a matter of power imbalance and power abuse in a relationship. It happens either due to a failure to appreciate the human dignity of the victim, in a self-absorbed, unconscious crusade to pursue one's own promotion/will/plan, where casualties, like the 'little ones', are easily overlooked. Or, on the other hand, it happens as part of an intentional, unjust campaign against someone for the perpetrator's own gain. Gain can be defined broadly as material, social, emotional, and even spiritual privilege.

Abusers often abuse quietly, behind the scenes, by intricate schemes of manipulation, always counting on the culture of secrecy in their church, which makes violence hard to recognise. The more the experienced perpetrators are engaged in abuse, the less they expect their actions to escalate into the public sphere and earn them judgement. They have learned to count on their victims' silence. The world and churches that buy into the worldly norms of leadership groom people into considering 'minor' abuse as normal.[22] 'Minor' is defined by society's level of tolerance of abuse.[23] Tolerance of violence, and even lack of knowledge of what violence is, makes even the perpetrators sometimes blind to the offence they cause. The victims feel violated but are reminded that 'nothing happened' and that their inner compass is misleading them. They grow confused and conflicted.

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[21] I use the language of victim and abuser to give a contemporary face to the 'outdated' and spiritualised concept of sin as an offence against God (alone), which in the minds of Christians and non-Christians alike has been emptied of all physical implications, and hence also of importance for life. But sin belongs to the earth and shows itself by its murdering intent. This is why I see it appropriate to speak here of the abused/victim and of the perpetrator/abuser. When a brother 'sins' against you, he attacks your life!

[22] The biblical text does not specify abuse, yet Jesus's anger at the disciples who were preventing mothers and little children from coming to him should qualify this behaviour as abuse (cf. Mark 10:14). The Bible has a great deal to say about 'minor', 'private' issues and their outcomes. The outstanding example is where the abuse of a partner by a Levite develops into several wars with tens of thousands of dead (see Judges 19–21).

[23] Some of this is evident from traditional concepts such as 'boys will be boys' — which means that abuse is tolerated as normal (in particular) male behaviour.

For all these reasons, Matthew is right: only the victim can name the violent act and confront the bully. The victim's experience of pain is real, and sometimes the only sign of abuse, and should be treated as such by the church. Churches add structural abuse to a victim's pain through traditional cultures of secrecy and lack of knowledge concerning the nature of abuse, but especially when they side with perpetrators rather than with the victims. When the victim's feelings have been declared inadequate because they are subjective — that is, the victim's experience of hurt is declared insufficient — the absence of 'objective' evidence will lead to a decision that no violence happened. Often the victims are then even forced to apologise to the perpetrator for their 'overreaction' and for reporting the abuse to the church (board). Indirectly, victims are declared to be liars.

Forgiveness as Growing from the Reconciliation Process

Matthew's victim-lead three-step reconciliation process is jeopardised at the outset in contexts where the victims' subjective experience is denied, and worse, where people have learned not to challenge abusers in church because this will only make things worse. This is tragic, not only for the victims, but also because it threatens the health of the whole church. When victims, the 'little ones', are judged like this, the church has already sided with the powerful. Righteousness and peace have been transformed into rationalisation and secrecy. Suppressed hurt nevertheless continues to burn and hurt the victims, and, as Blomberg notes, this can bring a spiritual death.[24] In addition, unchallenged abuse encourages the abuser to continue with more vigour, rationalising and even spiritualising away their sin. Churches that support perpetrators may still pay lip service to their openness to complaints, but everyone knows that silence is golden. Pain cannot be judged objectively from the outside.

Resolving the Issue Privately

Note how Jesus's first instance in Matthew 18:15 is a private confrontation and how it presupposes an equity of power and status.

[24] Blomberg, *Matthew*, p. 27.

The one-on-one confrontation presupposes a healthy and sincere Christian culture, where hurt and evil were probably unintended. All of us make short-sighted decisions which hurt others. Even if evil was committed on purpose, a change of mind may be expected from a heart-to-heart conversation between Christians. The pain we inflict on others stirs empathy when we recognise it. Reconciliation is immediate. The victim, who has been degraded in the conflict, reclaims her power by challenging the perpetrator because she knows her community supports victims and she presupposes good intentions.

But in unsafe places, where the victims feel a confrontation with the bully is dangerous or senseless and nobody will hear them, the community has already been groomed by the 'elephant in the room',[25] as Wilder has recently put it. That is, the community already caters to the bully and not to the victim. Victims, of course, are far easier to handle and silence than bullies, especially if the bullies are narcissists. But the sort of peace that grows from silencing the victims is not real. It is bound to bound to shatter eventually, bringing mayhem to the church.

Calling in Others

Where the church allows platforms for victims to speak, the chances are that most conflicts and hurts will be resolved and amends made at a personal level. There will be no need to involve others. Yet, when a personal confrontation brings no reconciliation, that is, when the perpetrator is unwilling to admit to hurting their victim, it is the victim's (and not the perpetrator's!) right and task to call in a mediator or two to help them in the confrontation (Matt 18:16). This is what Matthew hears Jesus say. Again, the chances are that a witness will tip the scales and the bully will recognise their deed, repent, compensate for it, and be forgiven. Note that witnesses in Jesus's instruction add weight to the victim's scale and not to the perpetrator's. They are not there to judge 'objectively' as to how guilt is shared, but to stand in for the victim. The

[25] 'Yet if, like Pandora, we keep the cover on these same topics, we leave hope trapped in silence […] We say there is an "elephant in the room" or we are "opening a can of worms." Everyone sees the problem, but great dread comes upon all who consider mentioning it. We have learned from experience that these topics are explosive and best left untouched.' (Wilder *The Pandora Problem*, p. 13.)

slight power imbalance in favour of the victim should help the perpetrator to see the other side better and learn empathy. But — realistically — Jesus and Matthew also know that sometimes a third option will be needed for the unrepentant perpetrator. This is where Matthew expects the whole church to step in and support the victim.

Forgiveness as the Task of the Whole Church

There is a difference between Matthew's church and ours today. Matthew's is still a house church of dedicated believers, and not hundreds or thousands only mildly, if at all, interested in the everyday affairs of the community. Matthew's church is not an institution or hierarchy of the post-Constantine type, which divides 'the church' (hierarchy) from the 'laity' altogether.[26] For Matthew, *ekklesia* is the coming together of practising, dedicated believers who have made a public, personal decision to follow Jesus. Both the victim and the perpetrator belong to that same community. This church is a communal place of training in holiness for the kingdom of God. Blomberg suggests that by bringing a cause to the church, Matthew means that 'a grievance is made more public',[27] that the injustice against a 'little one' becomes a community issue. The community cannot back off as if this were a private matter that concerns only the two people directly involved. In this way, things change dramatically. God's *ekklesia* must speak up against the injustice done to the victim, as injustice damages the tapestry of the church's Christ-culture. When churches tolerate injustice, they add hurt to victims, but they also add power to incorrigible bullies. Only the church can teach the incorrigible bully 'saltiness' and 'peace' as it

[26] Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,* 21 November 1964 <https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html> [accessed 20 March 2024] (chapters III–IV). This document makes a distinction, following the apostolic succession, between the church (described in chapter 3) and 'Laity' (chapter 4) to the extent of concealing what laity means to the 'Church'. So, e.g., Humphrey Chinedu Anamaye in 'Contemporary Theological Reflection on the Laity', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 83.4 (2007), pp. 445–470, doi: 10.2143/ETL.83.4.2025349. Anamaye comments, 'Today, after the great hopes that followed the Council, we are still laden with numerous difficulties […]. Some have attributed this problem to the deep divergences on the interpretation of the Council, its teaching and overall significance […]. Others ascribe the problem to the ambiguity of the orientation inherent in the documents of the Council themselves' (p. 445).

[27] Blomberg, *Matthew,* p. 278, although he also thinks that this is done for the purpose of resolving the 'co-dependent' perspective of the one grieved.

insists on their shared Christ-culture. Wilder is right in claiming that the community is key in healing narcissism in all stages. That is why in Matthew's report, both judgement and forgiveness are transferred from the victim to the community (Matt 18:17–20) and Jesus addresses the issues of the perpetrator and not of the victim. After all personal resources have failed to get the bully to repent, the church steps in to sanction the bully. This lifts the burden of the conflict from the victim. The bully has been identified, called out, and sanctioned. Even if the bully never repents, justice is achieved for the victim as their pain has been acknowledged. We can say that by handing the issue over to the church, the victim has forgiven the perpetrator. From that moment on, the victim is no longer involved in the sanctioning process as an individual but only as a member of the community of Christ.

Excommunicating or Forgiving?

Some contemporary readers may be surprised at this victim-centred process where two or three witnesses are enough to make a case against a perpetrator in the church.[28] But two or three are enough because, as Matthew insists, Jesus is there (Matt 18:20). The presence of Jesus among his disciples is decisive to the process of reconciliation. Ulrich Luz urges that the three-step challenge to power abuse must be read together with the two logia that follow, although they seem only loosely connected.[29] The first about 'binding and loosing' is easier to interpret. In 'binding and loosing', the church needs God's presence for their decisions, especially if they are also valid 'in heaven' (Matt 18:18). While in Eastern Europe 'in heaven' is usually interpreted as the church's power to excommunicate someone for eternity, Luz names four possible interpretations for the excommunication.[30] 1) The 'grace model' understands ἔλεγξον (8:15) not as 'reproach' but as 'reason with' or 'convince by reasoning'. This model may sound as if it caters to the perpetrator's interests first, yet the goal is still to persuade the perpetrator of their own guilt. 2) The 'borderline case model', which

[28] See similarly also 1 Tim 5:19.
[29] Luz, *Matthew,* p. 448.
[30] Luz, *Matthew,* pp. 451–452.

would consider excommunication of the perpetrator in 18:18 but only in exceptional cases. However, even that kind of claim terminates the church's 'law of life' and stands in opposition to the later requirement for total forgiveness. 3) For the 'covenant theology model', which treats Matthew 18:20 and Jesus's presence in the church as decisive, the text is read in the context of the New Covenant, which offers forgiveness of all sins but also makes offences against that Covenant extremely serious. By not repenting, the perpetrator demonstrates that in fact they do not belong among Jesus's disciples. 4) The 'inconsistency model', which leaves the inconsistencies as a mystery.

Sometimes we must live with inconsistencies, but not in Matthew 18. Here, the evangelist makes an overarching case[31] by pulling together the words of Jesus that, for him, adequately explain reconciliation. The process includes addressing the hurt, reconciling, and in the end forgiving the perpetrators, after making them recognise the hurt they have caused and bringing them to repentance. In this case, ἐλέγχω may be understood as 'confront' and 'convince', but also as 'convict'.[32] Conviction is not synonymous with shaming. For Jesus and Matthew, the goal is to win over 'your brother or sister' and teach them the mandate to be salt and light in the world together. Luz notes that in both Old and New Testaments, the witnesses' role is in 'warn[ing] the offender about his deed'.[33] After all, if the offender continues in their sin, the bully's eternal fate is at stake. This is why, when the case is brought before the church, it is the perpetrator who is processed and not the victim. The victim's case has been concluded at the second step. But the perpetrator's lack of insight into how they hurt people, which may cause them soon to sin against others, makes them a problem for the church. To keep the peace and maintain saltiness the church must distance an unrepentant bully from the community. Now, how drastic should this distance be?

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31 Luz, *Matthew,* p. 451.

32 Luz, *Matthew,* p. 451.

33 Luz, *Matthew,* p. 452. Deuteronomy 19:15 (quoted in Matt 18:16) means strengthening (the victim's) 'word of admonition'.

As 'Gentiles and Tax Collectors'

There is a wide discussion among commentators on the meaning of the 'Gentile and tax collector' (Matt 18:17) as an instruction for treating the unrepentant perpetrator. But Jesus did not reject Gentiles and tax collectors. He ate with them. Luz, among others, draws attention to Matthew's audience as Jewish (Christian), where Jewish tradition may have still been followed and Gentiles and tax collectors simply did not belong. In this case, 'binding and loosing' would mean excommunication. Luz leaves open whether this means eternal or temporal excommunication. But there is also the option to understand those who have been 'untied' or 'loosed' as those who are in need of evangelisation — just like Gentiles and tax collectors. In this case, the debate about eternal excommunication is obsolete.

Declaring someone as 'not belonging' is a decision taken by the whole church. Matthew never mentions church officials or elders' boards, although Matthew's church may have had such leaders.[34] This is interesting compared to Matthew 16:19, where it seems this right belongs only to Peter, the Rock (and hence to the hierarchy today). But 18:18 clarifies that the reference to binding and loosing means the church built 'on him' and not Peter himself.[35]

As Matthew 18:18 does not stand alone[36] but is part of Matthew's logia supplementing the pericope on reconciliation and forgiveness, a plausible understanding of the saying must be sought

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[34] Luz, *Matthew,* p. 452. But he also finds it 'amazing' that Protestants (e.g. Calvin, Bucer, Bullinger, etc.) assume 'the elders' where it says the church (p. 456).

[35] It is no surprise that a Catholic reading will understand that '[a]ll of this applies in a particular way to Christ's apostles' (Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew,* Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scriptures Series (Baker Academic, 2010), p. 210), understanding that the rest of the apostles are in a way represented in Peter whom God alone made 'the rock' of his church, and so are their successors (p. 209). Yet the 'two or three gathered in my name' added by Matthew in 18:20 clearly challenge this hierarchical claim. France, *Matthew*, p. 276, notes, 'The Jesus who could speak the words of 28.20 and of whom the name Emmanuel could be used (1.23) here assures his disciples that that great universal truth applies also at the personal level. And that gives a whole new dimension to an apparently insignificant gathering of two or three concerned disciples.' While 16:19 may be stretched one way or another, the implication in 18:20 is clearly church members, and not a particular office.

[36] Luz points out that the 'mercy model' (1) would need to be abandoned if Matt 18:18 stood isolated (*Matthew,* p. 455).

from the context. The context is a prayerful process — Matthew 18:19 continues to claim that where two or three prayerfully agree on something ('in my name'[37]), it will be done for them 'by the heavenly Father'. No individual crusades will be granted, whether to the persistent and manipulative perpetrator, or to the victim who may seek revenge rather than reconciliation.[38] This provides another reason why only a prayerful community can 'tie or untie' perpetrators within their community. The church's decision regarding the perpetrator (in the form of forgiveness or temporary declaration of not belonging) affirms the victim's hurt and brings healing. But it also continues to deal with the unrepentant perpetrator, preventing possible individual vendettas. Luz concludes,

> The church's judgment that the 'snares' and corrupters are subject to the 'woes' of Jesus, the world-judge, can never be an ace with final validity. It can only be an expression of love for the little ones who have been led astray.[39]

In this way the unrepentant perpetrator too has become a 'little one' in need of pastoral care and forgiveness. This coincides nicely with the professional conclusion that the main problem in the narcissist disorder is a strong sense of lack of self-worth.

Forgiveness Contradicts Permanent Excommunication

Arising from the context, another argument that excommunication cannot be permanent is Peter's interjection. It may be understood as an objection to what seems a permanent excommunication. Literally, Peter's line is tied to the previous discussion: 'If my brother sins against me…' (Matt 18:21) repeats almost verbatim the beginning of the discussion on reconciliation in Matthew 18:15, 'If your brother or sister sins against you…',[40] and can be understood as a question: 'Did you not

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[37] Luz, *Matthew*, p. 458, notes that εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα is best translated in line with the Jewish 'for the sake of', 'because of me'. The context of the saying is rabbinic, i.e. Jesus is amending the tradition that God's Shekinah is among those two or three who sit together with the words of the Law between them (France, *Matthew,* p. 276) to 'I am among them'.

[38] Volf has warned that sooner or later — especially when their case has not been handled properly — victims become perpetrators. Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Abingdon Press, 1996), pp. 80–82.

[39] Luz, *Matthew*, pp. 462–463.

[40] Matt 18:21: ἁμαρτήσει *εἰς ἐμὲ ὁ ἀδελφός μου*, in comparison with 18:15 ἁμαρτήσῃ εἰς σὲ ὁἀδελφός σου.

tell us that we must *always* forgive?'[41] As such, it would suggest that neither Jesus nor Matthew considered a permanent, eternal excommunication of anyone by the church, especially not for eternity.[42] When God reconciled the world to himself in Jesus, it was based on his self-giving love. The church is to do likewise. Peter's 'seven times' alludes to perfect forgiveness. Jesus's answer is more than affirmative. It confirms and furthers the divine standard to which any Christ-community should aspire. The kingdom of God is a community of hope, where the incorrigible find correction and consequently also mercy and change. William Herzog draws attention to the 'subversive speech' of the parable of the 'Unforgiving Servant', which Matthew added to Peter's interjection (Matt 18:23–35). Herzog entitled it as 'What if the Messiah Came and Nothing Changed?'[43] This captures the

[41] Luz, *Matthew*, p. 465 notes that 'Peter's suggestion is by no means trivial. Seven is the traditional number of perfection. That Peter suggests forgiving seven times does not mean he wants to grant his brother only a limited forgiveness. Instead, the sense of Peter's question is: "Is perfect forgiveness expected of me?"' Luz fails to notice that by this time, Peter knew well what Jesus expected from him. This is why the idea of excommunicating someone raises questions. How can I excommunicate someone, if I am called to forgive always? This is also the point for misunderstandings in a *corpus permixtum*. In the imperfect state, a church needs tools against people who may abuse its mercy by causing pain. To 'untie' is not a punishment but a point at which, after the process of reconciliation exposes the incorrigible offender, the community creates an opportunity for the offender's repentance by setting a boundary. If the offender continues to think that they have done nothing wrong, they must be viewed as someone who does not belong.

[42] If one examines the history of the reception and interpretation of Matt 18:18, as Luz does, the issue of excommunication as an eternal, social, and even political act of exclusion is possible only where the church and politics have been married. This was called a 'major excommunication', while 'minor' excommunication meant a temporary exclusion from communion dependent on the sacrament of confession. This means that in both cases, Matt 18:18 was understood as the privilege and duty of clergy alone. With the radical reformation's emphasis on individual decision for faith, and a strict division between church and politics, the emphasis moved to where Matthew clearly wanted it — to all Christians in a local community. In these circumstances, Peter's question points to the inevitable fact that excommunication can only be a temporary disciplinary measure for someone who has clearly not learned the rule of the Christ community. For an extensive presentation of both historical issues concerning the historical basis for this logion, as well as a detailed recounting of interpretation history, see Luz, *Matthew*, pp. 448–460.

[43] William Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994) pp. 131–149.

essence of the problem of excommunication in Matthew 18.[44] If the church continued to function on legalism, executing permanent judgement and excommunicating offenders, it would not be the community of Jesus's mercy, and Jesus's sacrifice would also have been in vain! John Crossan's conclusion that the servant's 'sheer stupidity' in displaying a lack of understanding about forgiveness 'in such a way, at such a time', clarifies Peter's interjection even more. It is precisely because everything changed with Jesus that the church can always hope that change is possible, even for incorrigible perpetrators.

Conclusion

Matthew's editorial insertions about challenging perpetrators but also forgiving them present a solution to the anticipated breach of community by the sin of the powerful in the *corpus permixtum*. While the victim is called, entitled, and empowered to confront the evil-doer privately, and even to bring in witnesses to help the bully recognise their evil, only the church as a whole can properly deal with an unrepentant sinner by exercising Christian discipline, including temporary excommunication that treats them as in need of evangelism, as someone who has not yet understood the ways of God's kingdom. This is a healing process where the perpetrator learns to see, understand, and affirm that have indeed done injustice to the victim. If the perpetrator cannot learn this lesson, they are probably absorbed in a sort of narcissist condition, and the whole community must step in to guard the victims and discipline the perpetrator.[45] This process assists the victim in forgiveness, which should be understood as letting go of pursuing their urge for revenge by handing it over to the community.

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[44] Some commentators have objected to the 'king's' final harsh judgement, as J. D. Crossan notes: 'It is one thing to advise forgiveness of others on the model of God's forgiveness of us. […] It is not the same thing to […] state that God will not forgive us our unforgiveness' (John D. Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (Polebridge Press, 1992) p. 104). He also thinks that the parable has but one conclusion: 'The emphasis is not on the master's mercy but on servant's lack of mercy and on his sheer stupidity in displaying his lack in such a way at such a time' (p. 105).

[45] James Wilder insists on the same thing based on his experience in psychotherapy, as shown in *The Pandora Problem,* pp. 24–36.

This reading of Matthew 18:15–35 negates the common contemporary approach in churches, which often shames the victims and denies them a place to confront the evil-doer on the basis of their personal experience of hurt. When the process of reconciliation in the church mimics business procedures, the powerless are blamed, and the powerful are protected. Manipulative tools are used to confuse the victims. These have recently been broadly discussed in psychology and psychotherapy.[46] Perhaps this history of gaslighting in the church is why most Christians think that Matthew 18 is about a juridical process where the church must judge between equal sinners. Optimistic, democratic ears are surprised to hear that Jesus always sides with the victim's story, including in Matthew 18. There is no objectivity in victimisation.[47]

Matthew's three-step reconciliation naturally rules out the fast fixes that are commonly imposed on the victim, such as to forgive always and immediately. Matthew's process of reconciliation includes time for the victims to step up, when they are ready, to present their case before the whole church. The less safe a space feels, the more time a victim will need. Victims must grow into their ability to speak. They need people who will 'hear them to speech',[48] that is, who will create spaces where the victims' small voices can be heard. One could say that forgiveness starts with speaking up against hurt, and is completed by

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[46] A great deal of research has been conducted concerning gaslighting so that we now speak of a 'sociology of gaslighting'. See Paige L. Sweet, 'The Sociology of Gaslighting', *American Sociological Review*, 84.5 (2019), pp. 851–875, doi: 10.1177/0003122419874843; also, *Manipulation: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Christian Coons and Michael Weber (OUP, 2014), who comment, 'manipulation is at the heart of some of our deepest social problems' (p. 2).

[47] This is a much-discussed topic in psychology. To deny victims to see, feel, and express their hurt, to call them oversensitive, to tell them that the bully's intentions were not to hurt them and hence they have no right feel victimised, have been classified as 'gaslighting'. Gaslighting rewrites the victim's history. It makes them doubt their senses, renders them insecure and quiet and easy to rule over, all of which, Sweet states, means it is primarily a 'sociological […] phenomenon' (Sweet 'The Sociology of Gaslighting', p. 852).

[48] The term 'hearing someone to speech' was coined by Nelle Morton in *The Journey is Home* (Beacon Press, 1985). See also Rachel Muers, *Keeping God's Silence: Towards a Theological Ethics of Communication* (Blackwell, 2004). The ability to speak and to be heard is an expression of power (p. 50). Expressions like 'being a voice for someone' or even 'amplifying someone's voice' already testify to a silenced and patronised person who has been denied a platform to express their own pain.

getting validation from the community, regardless of the perpetrators' willingness to confess. The perpetrator is left to the church.

Equally, regardless of always siding with the victim, Matthew's rule is not a shaming scheme aimed at ousting the bully. When Matthew's insertions are kept together, we see that the process of reconciliation entails forgiveness, and vice versa. Perfect forgiveness (Matt 18:21–25) removes shaming and ousting, while affirming and acknowledging the full spectrum of the victim's pain. The goal is never to 'untie' people, but to tie them in, so that the Christ-culture of the community is furthered and everyone can grow 'into Christ'.[49]

Perfect, 70 times 7 forgiveness has strings attached. Luke's simplified version of Matthew's insertions (Luke 17:3–4) says just that the bully will be forgiven if or when they repent. Forgiveness without repentance has no value for the perpetrator, as the perpetrator will continue in their evil until it is too late for them. When the church gives victims a platform to challenge the perpetrator, it sets in motion a process of community growth towards 'not scandalising a little one' and also 'winning a brother or a sister'. Matthew 18:22 is therefore not about the victims' obligation to 'forgive and forget' or to share in the perpetrator's guilt. It is about 'little ones' who need affirmation and bullies who need to be brought to repentance and then reinstated into the Christian community so that the church can become a place of peace, a taste of heaven in a dying world.

[49] Wilder, *The Pandora Problem,* chapters 1–2.

Gavriil Ivanovich Mazaev (1858–1937): A Shaper of Siberian Baptist Life

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Abstract
The article describes the life and works of G. I. Mazaev (1858–1937), the founder and first chairman of the Siberian Baptist Union. The attractive image of a 'Protestant saint', a passionate preacher who converted thousands of people to God, is presented to readers today thanks to the surviving archival documents and numerous testimonies of contemporaries. Deprived of his fortune, freedom, and then life itself under Soviet rule, Mazaev kept his faith to the end.

Keywords
Molokans; Mazaev family; Siberian Baptist Union; A. V. Kolchak government; Soviet power; repressions

Context: The Molokan Background

Gavriil Ivanovich Mazaev[1] was born in 1858 in the village of Novovasilievka, Berdyansk uyezd, Taurida (Russian Empire) into a prosperous Molokan family. Several generations of his ancestors were successfully engaged in sheep breeding. The 'Mazaevskaya' breed of fine-fleece sheep, which they bred, became widespread in the south of Russia at the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. During that period, the members of one Mazaev family had up to 200 000 sheep.[2]

There are several versions of the origin of the word 'Molokane'. According to one, the word goes back to the name of the Molochnaya River in Taurida. It was in this vicinity in the 1820s that, along with other

[1] For a more detailed biography, see K. Prokhorov, *Kakoy bogach spasetsya. Zhizneopisanie Gavriila Ivanovicha Mazaeva (1858–1937)* [What Rich Man Will Be Saved: Life Story of Gavriil Ivanovich Mazaev (1858–1937)] (Samenkorn, 2023).
[2] *Istoriya narodov Severnogo Kavkaza, konets XVIII v. – 1917 g.* [History of the Peoples of the North Caucasus, late 18th century – 1917], ed. by A. Narochnitsky (Nauka, 1988), p. 391.

religious freethinkers from Tambov province, the ancestors of the Mazaevs were deported because they had fallen away from Orthodoxy. A more probable explanation for the word, however, is connected with the literal and allegorical interpretation of the word 'milk' (*moloko* in Russian). The first followers of the new religious movement were accused of breaking fasts, during which these 'heretics' dared to drink milk. This was the first instance of the use of the pejorative word *Molokany*, probably with the intention of hurting these simple people. However, the nickname was not rejected and it took root as the people filled it with a more *spiritual* content. Molokan elders often repeated the words of Holy Scripture (1 Pet 2:2), 'Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.'[3] Therefore, the double origin of this name, from the word 'milk' in the literal and figurative senses should be recognised as correct. The Molokans themselves more often called themselves *Spiritual Christians*.

Molokan culture in the nineteenth century was astonishing compared to the general Russian background. Novovasilievka had its own literate people who read and interpreted the Bible; many inhabitants of this large village hurried to meetings in several local prayer houses after their usual peasant labour. Drunkenness, smoking, and ribaldry were practically absent here. Stealing was unthinkable. Quarrels or scandals were extremely rare. Mutual help was common in the village; neighbours treated each other respectfully and addressed each other by name and patronymic, especially people of the older generation.[4] I. I. Mazaev described his childhood in Novovasilievka as follows: 'We had no drunks, no thieves, no smoking tobacco […] everywhere the Molokans were believed.'[5]

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the religious beliefs of the Spiritual Christians, due to their close contact with the rapidly growing and multiplying communities of Stundists and Baptists in Ukraine and the Caucasus, were seriously tested. Gavriil Ivanovich

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[3] See, for example, I. Yuvachev, 'Zakavkazskie sektanty' [Transcaucasian Sectarians], *Istoricheskiy Vestnik* (St. Petersburg), 95 (1904), p. 178.

[4] G. Kanibolotskiy, 'Istoriya poselka Novovasilievki Priazovskogo raiona Zaporozhskoy oblasti' [History of the Village of Novovasilievka, Priazov District, Zaporozhye Region] (manuscript, 1997), vol. 1, p. 186.

[5] *Dnevnik Ivana Ivanovicha Mazaeva* [Diary of Ivan Ivanovich Mazaev] (Kharkov, 1910), p. 10.

Mazaev and his older brother Dey Ivanovich left Molokanism in 1884. It was not an easy choice. Molokan communities in Orthodox Russia, which had experienced persecution, lived united and usually ostracised those who betrayed the faith of their fathers. It is known that for a long time Ivan Gavrilovich Mazaev threatened to leave his son Dey Ivanovich without an inheritance. A similar fate could have awaited Gavriil Ivanovich.[6]

Under such circumstances, it seems surprising that the Mazaev brothers maintained a benevolent attitude towards Molokanism to the end of their lives.[7] Moreover, the Spiritual Christians themselves did not fully reject them. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, the Baptist Mazaevs published articles in Molokan journals. These publications were remarkably tolerant, allowing in their writing even the most sensitive dogmatic positions to be challenged.[8] Above all, these challenges concerned baptism and the Lord's Supper, which the Molokans usually interpreted 'spiritually' (allegorically), while the Baptists insisted on their literal understanding and fulfilment.

In 1886, Dey Ivanovich, a very influential and gifted man, was elected to the presidency of the Union of Russian Baptists. During this period, Gavriil Ivanovich, who had been invited to serve as treasurer of the same Union, was in the shadow of his famous brother. Nevertheless, Gavriil Ivanovich began his zealous preaching activities. For this reason, the local authorities in the Don region once demanded that he give them a written statement promising not to tell others about his religious beliefs. This was because he was not an official priest and his preaching

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6 'Vospominaniya Gavriila Ivanovicha Mazaeva' [Memoirs of Gavriil Ivanovich Mazaev], ed. by N. P. Khrapov (manuscript, archive of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (ARUECB)), pp. 24–27.

7 See, for example, the article by D. I. Mazaev, which was a kind of 'hymn of love' to Molokanism: D. I. Mazaev, 'Molokanstvo' [Molokanism], *Molokanin* (Tiflis), 4 (1910), pp. 12–19. Academician L. N. Mitrokhin noted that 'the Baptists of Mazaev's model largely retained continuity with Molokan "eldership"'. See L. Mitrokhin, *Baptists: History and Modernity* (RHGI, 1997), p. 378.

8 See, for instance, the articles by G. I. Mazaev: 'Proshu otvetit' [Please Answer], *Dukhovnyi Khristianin* (St. Petersburg), 7 (1909), pp. 27–28; 'Vopros Baptistov' [Questions from Baptists], *Dukhovnyi Khristianin*, 11 (1909), pp. 11–12, and 'Nuzhna li byla smert' Khrista dlya spaseniya mira?' [Was Christ's Death Necessary for the Salvation of the World?], pp. 58–59 of the same issue; 'Beseda dukhovnogo khristianina s baptistami' [A Conversation Between a Spiritual Christian and Baptists], *Dukhovnyi Khristianin*, 1 (1910), pp. 8–11.

was not Orthodox. Gavriil Ivanovich's reply was striking: 'I will give you an undertaking (a written document) that I will not steal and get drunk […] but I cannot give the undertaking that I will not preach the Gospel.'[9]

Life and Ministry in Siberia

In 1904, Mazaev unexpectedly moved to the Akmola region, and there, in the Siberian expanses, the full extent of his personality and Christian gifts were revealed. Soon afterward, he moved his family to join him there. Little is known about the reasons that prompted Gavriil Ivanovich to make such a decisive change of life, although some sources mention his illness and the need for a change of climate[10] as well as his entrepreneurial interest in the then-new Siberian market.[11] Be that as it may, these concomitant factors made it possible to fulfil what became truly central to his life following his calling to missionary ministry, namely to spread evangelical Christianity in Siberia and Central Asia.

From the time of the early Church, believing people had asked the question, 'What rich man will be saved?'[12] The stern warnings in the gospel[13] seemed to leave little chance for such a one to live a full spiritual life. Nevertheless, Mazaev's life was a rare example not only of how a wealthy man (or 'rich man'[14]) could become truly sacrificial — to help those in need, to donate for the cause of God — but also of how in a

9 'Vospominaniya Gavriila Ivanovicha Mazaeva', p. 35.

10 'Vospominaniya Gavriila Ivanovicha Mazaeva', p. 239; *Bratskiy vestnik* [Fraternal Bulletin] (Moscow), no. 5 (1988), p. 94.

11 *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti* [Omsk diocesan bulletins] (Omsk), no. 10 (1904), p. 30; no. 19 (1910), p. 31.

12 See, for instance: Clement of Alexandria, 'Beseda o tom, kakoy bogach spasetsya' [A Discourse on the Rich Man Who Will Be Saved], in *Sbornik propovednicheskikh obraztsov* [Collection of Preaching Samples], compiled by P. Dudarev (St. Petersburg: I. Tuzov, 1912), pp. 7–18.

13 'Woe unto you that are rich!' (Luke 6:24); 'the camel and the eye of a needle' (Matt 19:24), etc.

14 Sources of the early twentieth century repeatedly refer to G. I. Mazaev as a millionaire. By 1912 he owned land plots of about 10 000 hectares, houses, mills, and so forth. Mazaev's elite cattle were among the winners at the First West Siberian Agricultural Exhibition in Omsk in 1911. See *Pamyatnaya knizhka i adres-kalendar' Akmolinskoy oblasti na 1912 god* [Memorable Book and Address-Calendar of Akmola Region for 1912] (Omsk, 1912), p. 203; *Vestnik Pervoy Zapadno-Sibirskoy vystavki* [Bulletin of the First West Siberian Exhibition] (Omsk), nos. 12 and 15 (1911).

Christian way, without malice, he could lose his estate and become a martyr for the faith.

As early as 1903, Gavriil Ivanovich received permission from the Economic Board of the Siberian Cossack Troops for a long-term lease of land plots near Petropavlovsk. He then transported several thousand sheep and hundreds of cattle there by railway from the Don region.[15] In documents before 1909, Mazaev is listed as a resident of Krasnoyarsk volost of Ishim uyezd, Tobolsk province, where he founded a farmstead and was engaged in agriculture and sheep breeding.[16]

From the preserved official notes relating to the cattle farms of Ishim uyezd of that period we learn the following details:

> The farmstead of Gavriil Ivanovich Mazaev [is located] 15 kilometres from the volost village of Krasnoyarskaya and 50 k[ilometres] from the town of Petropavlovsk in the Akmola region. Land – 9600 hectares. It was bought in 1903 for 22 r[ubles] per hectare. Including: under the forest – 5000 hec[tares] and arable [land] – 600 hec[tares]. In 1912, 200 hec[tares] were sown, wheat yield – about 3.3 tons per hectare. The rest of the land is under pasture [for cattle] and hayfields.[17]

In May 1906, in an atmosphere of religious freedom unprecedented in Russia during the first revolution, the representative All-Russian Congress of the Russian Baptist Union in Rostov-on-Don, which gathered 107 delegates from 21 provinces, decided to establish its Siberian branch, with the centre in Omsk.[18] This decision was explained by the rapid growth in those years of the number of evangelical immigrants beyond the Urals. Mazaev took an active part in the

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[15] Gosudarstvenny istoricheskiy arkhiv Omskoy oblasti [State Historical Archive of the Omsk region] (GIAOO), F. 67, op. 2, d. 2268, l. 2–5; *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosty*, no. 10 (1904), p. 30.

[16] Tsentral'ny gosudarstvenny arkhiv Respubliki Kazakhstan [Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan] (TsGA RK), F. 369, op. 1, d. 3929, l. 22; *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosty*, no. 10 (1904), p. 33.

[17] Gosudarstvennoe byudzhetnoe uchrezhdenie Tyumenskoy oblasti 'Gosudarstvenny arkhiv v g. Tobol'ske' [State Budgetary Institution of the Tyumen Oblast 'State Archive in Tobolsk'], F. I-580, op. 1, d. 363, l. 223.

[18] *Protokol zasedaniy godovogo sobraniya predstaviteley obshchin russkikh evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov* [Minutes of Sessions of the Annual Meeting of Representatives of the Communities of Russian Evangelical Christian Baptists] (Rostov on Don: Tip. F. Pavlov, 1906), p. 4. See also *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosty*, no. 17 (1906), p. 32.

founding of the Siberian Department. In the minutes of the Omsk congress of Baptist congregations in July 1907, the Siberian Department was mentioned as a given: it had its own chairman (G. I. Mazaev), four board members (A. L. Evstratenko, A. H. Voropaev, A. A. Romanteev, I. V. Senichkin), and several evangelists.[19]

Among the decisions made at the Omsk congress in 1907, the most important were the following: to establish the Siberian branch of the Missionary Society of the Russian Baptist Union, which aimed to reach vast Russian territories beyond the Urals with evangelistic preaching, and to build a large ('union') prayer house in Omsk. In fact, when the congress made these decisions, work was already underway in all these areas. The most gifted preachers were asked to engage in paid mission work with the obligation to travel for at least sixty days a year ('two-month missionaries'), at least four months ('half-year missionaries'), and seven months ('annual missionaries').[20] The construction of the prayer house on the bank of the Om' River began as early as the summer of 1905 but was especially active from the spring of 1907. The material costs of these projects were mostly borne by Mazaev.[21] His example encouraged other believers to give generously.

It seems astonishing, but nevertheless a fact, that the main work on the construction of the prayer house in Omsk, with a capacity of 1500 people, took only a little more than six months, and on 14 October 1907 it was inaugurated. The general enthusiasm of the Omsk Baptists on this occasion and the speed with which the work was carried out did not affect the quality: the house was solid and substantial, and it still serves as the main building of the Omsk Central Baptist Church. At the solemn service of consecration of the house of prayer, in front of many hundreds of listeners, G. I. Mazaev said, 'From now on, we have a firm foot on the banks of the Irtysh and, like Yermak, we will begin the

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19 'Protokol s'ezda Sibirskogo otdela russkikh baptistov, iyul' 1907, Omsk' [Minutes of the Congress of the Siberian Division of Russian Baptists, July 1907, Omsk] *Baptist* (Rostov on Don), no. 4 (1907), p. 12.

20 *Proekt Ustava Missionerskogo obshchestva russkikh evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov* [Draft Charter of the Missionary Society of Russian Evangelical Baptist Christians] (Rostov on Don: Tip. F. Pavlov, 1906), pp. 8–9.

21 *TsGA RK*, F. 369, op. 1, d. 3929, ll. 22–23.

secondary conquest of Siberia — of course, in religious terms.'[22] These words were not without a prophetic spirit: up to the end of the 1920s, the Siberian Department (later also called the Siberian Union of Russian Baptists) grew and strengthened, spreading its influence to many towns and villages from the Ural Mountains to the Far East, reaching tens of thousands of people.[23] The January 1914 issue of the magazine *Gost'* published an article by G. I. Mazaev in which he addressed his Baptist readers with the significant words, 'We, your Siberian brethren, greet our brothers everywhere and anywhere […] on behalf of the many who live between Chelyabinsk […] and Vladivostok, on both sides of the Great Siberian Railway line.'[24]

Gavriil Ivanovich had an undoubted organisational talent and was able to rally around him a whole host of evangelists who 'awakened Siberia' and established hundreds of congregations in a short time. In different years, such well-known ministers in the Russian Baptist Union as A. L. Evstratenko, I. A. Romanteev, K. G. Gorbachev, A. M. Volgin, V. T. Popov, R. A. Fetler, A. S. Ananyin, F. G. Patkovsky, P. E. Evsyukov, F. E. Zabelin, T. V. Stelmakhov, G. S. Ostapets, N. E. Yakimenko, I. K. Kudel, and many others worked under Mazaev's leadership. They travelled from village to village by railway, steamships, horses, and on foot to preach, perform baptisms (often in winter in ice-holes), and participate in religious disputes ('debates about faith') both with Orthodox missionaries and — later — with atheists. The Russian magazine *Baptist*, usually reserved in its expression of feelings, described the spiritual labour of these people as follows: in order to better understand the reports coming from Siberia about the success of the mission, they had to be 'clothed in flesh and blood, watered with rain, dusted with dust in summer and Siberian blizzards in winter, covered

[22] *TsGA RK*, F. 64, op. 1, d. 3725, ll. 150-151 ob.; *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosty*, no. 3 (1908), pp. 22–23.

[23] For more on the statistics of the Siberian Baptist Union, see K. Prokhorov, *V sibirskikh palestinakh. Istoria Omskoy tserkvi evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov (1890-e–1941)* [In the Siberian Palestines: History of the Evangelical Christians-Baptist Church in Omsk (1890s–1941)] (Samenkorn, 2019), pp. 435, 602–603.

[24] G. Mazaev, 'Zakon i blagodat' [The Law and Grace], *Gost'* [Guest] (St. Petersburg), 1 (1914), pp. 3–4.

with spring mud and an autumn season of bad roads, shaken over country roads and in the "Maxim Gorky" carriages of our railways'.[25]

In 1908–1909, Mazaev and his family, having handed over the farm to his manager, settled in Petropavlovsk, where he bought a house on Voznesensky Prospekt. His house, though comfortable, was rather modest for a millionaire, both on the outside and the inside. People who visited Mazaev's house mentioned only a harmonium in terms of relatively expensive items.[26] Although the house was deemed to be two-storeyed, its lower floor, brick and solid, was underground, and only the wooden first floor was in plain sight.[27]

At the same time, Gavriil Ivanovich built an impressively sized steam mill in Petropavlovsk. It had three storeys and advanced foreign machinery and equipment for its time.[28] For his enterprise, Mazaev chose a place at the very end of Voznesensky Prospekt, behind the City Garden, not far from the Petropavlovsk railway station. He had a simple economic calculation, which fully justified itself. In the early twentieth century, a large number of migrants from the European part of Russia settled in the Akmola region, including in the Petropavlovsk district. These people were mainly engaged in farming; grain crops were constantly expanding, so the demand for grinding flour was great, and the mills brought good profits. At the same time, Gavriil Ivanovich built another house adjacent to the mill. It was a spacious wooden building, part of which was used for household purposes on weekdays. For a number of years, worship meetings of the Petropavlovsk community of Baptists were held there on Sundays in a hall separate from the living space.[29]

At the next convention of Siberian Baptist Christians in Omsk in 1909, V. G. Pavlov, F. P. Balikhin, and A. L. Evstratenko ordained G. I. Mazaev. Following that ordination, Mazaev was often called the

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[25] 'Yavny otvet ot Gospoda' [A Clear Answer from the Lord] *Baptist*, 7–8 (1926), p. 13.
[26] Oral Report by Petropavlovsk local historian V. N. Yavorskaya, a descendant of G. I. Mazaev (Petropavlovsk, 2020), State Archive of North Kazakhstan region, F. 55, op. 1, d. 350.
[27] Yavorskaya, Oral Report.
[28] Yavorskaya, Oral Report.
[29] 'Vospominaniya Gavriila Ivanovicha Mazaeva', p. 231. The Petropavlovsk Baptist church was founded by G. I. Mazaev in 1908.

'Bishop of Siberia', although he was actually only elevated to the rank of presbyter.[30] In 1909, the governor of Akmola region officially approved Gavriil Ivanovich as the spiritual leader of the Omsk Baptist community.[31] During this period, the priorities in Mazaev's life shifted even more from economic affairs to spiritual matters. He spent much time on missionary and pastoral trips. Balanced and respectful to his opponents, Mazaev nevertheless firmly defended the principles of freedom of conscience — so natural and indisputable today but perceived somewhat differently in the Russian Empire and the USSR. When dealing with spiritual and disciplinary issues in congregations, Gavriil Ivanovich usually gave everyone who wished to speak a chance to do so, and only then spoke his mind. Although he was not an opponent of free discussion, contemporaries respectfully noted that 'after his words, there was usually no more reasoning'.[32]

Some Orthodox clergymen, while officially regarding Mazaev as a 'sectarian' and 'heretic', treated him with respect in their personal interactions and left quite favourable recollections of him. For instance, one Orthodox missionary spoke of Gavriil Ivanovich's good temper and mild Christian humour. In the spring of 1914, being in Petropavlovsk, this missionary visited Mazaev's house, where they had an almost friendly conversation. At that time, one of Gavriil Ivanovich's young workers (probably from the mill) was there, glumly waiting for his turn to speak to the master of the house. When the missionary, among other things, asked whether Mazaev shared the opinion of some of his brethren that all Baptists would be saved, Gavriil Ivanovich suddenly replied, 'No, not all Baptists will be saved,' and pointed with a smile to the worker who was waiting for him, 'Well, take this one. I hired him but he duped me!'[33]

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[30] V. Pavlov, 'S'ezd v Omske' [Congress in Omsk], *Baptist*, 4 (1910), p. 32. In March 1916, answering the questions of the Omsk police chief, Mazaev said, 'I have never called myself "Bishop of Irkutsk, Yenisei, Tomsk, Tobolsk and Turgai region", it is someone's fiction.' Rossiyskiy gosudarstvenny istoricheskiy arkhiv [Russian State Historical Archive] (RGIA), F. 821, op. 10, d. 595, l. 136.

[31] TsGA RK, F. 369, op. 1, d. 2845, ll. 17–17 ob.

[32] S. Fadyukhin, *Vospominaniya o perezhitom* [Memories about the Years Lived] (St. Petersburg: Bibliya dlya vsekh, 1993), p. 68.

[33] *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosty*, no. 18 (1915), p. 16.

Striving to live according to the gospel, Gavriil Ivanovich always sought to align with the words of Scripture: 'Give to him that asketh of thee' (Matt 5:42); and the apostle's command to do good with wisdom and knowledge (2 Pet 1:5). It is not always clear by appearance whether a person really is in great need. Mazaev was often approached by people who tried to deceive him. Therefore, according to some stories (perhaps semi-legendary), when he lived in Petropavlovsk, Gavriil Ivanovich usually carried his purse in one pocket of his coat and some money for donations and alms distribution in the other one. Small and large notes were mixed in the second pocket, and when Mazaev was asked for help, he — with a quiet prayer and without looking — would take out a note 'from God'. They say he did it in this way so that he would not make a mistake concerning who needed more and who needed less. More than once, Mazaev, seeing a bitterly weeping person on the street or in the marketplace, approached the person and asked what had happened. Sometimes someone had been cheated or robbed, losing the last of their money. Here, the tears were real and the grief obvious. After hearing a simple story, Mazaev would discreetly give the poor person his helping hand with the words, 'Jesus told me to give this to you.' With these words, even people who were far from God often found a living faith.[34]

Among the testimonies of contemporaries about Gavriil Ivanovich, let us again draw attention to the reports of Orthodox clergymen:

> Baptism in the Omsk diocese owes much of its growth, strong organisation, and the institution of numerous preachers to Mazaev […] He donates annually to the work of preaching […] thousands of roubles, and distributes bibles, gospels, and catechisms free of charge.[35]

> Mazaev releases funds for the maintenance of preachers, conducts trials, performs the duties of a presbyter — baptising, marrying. […] On his initiative congresses and solemn prayer meetings are appointed. […] They decide on family matters, excommunications, admission to the congregation, election of new presbyters and preachers, and the granting of money and loans. The same congresses elect […] deputies to the All-Russian Baptist

[34] Oral Report by presbyters V. N. Khotko and N. T. Murchich (Petropavlovsk, 2001).
[35] *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosty*, no. 19 (1910), p. 32.

> conventions, which is held annually. […] Baptist preachers, paid by the congregations and Mazaev, are no less than thirty.[36]

In such reports, there was sometimes an underlying thought that we too should preach and donate to the work of God with the same zeal! However, to Orthodox authors, Mazaev was, of course, still a 'dangerous man', even if he was a 'good Samaritan'.

The War and the Bolsheviks' Rise to Power

In 1914, Mazaev strongly desired to move away from economic affairs altogether, 'to sell off everything' and devote the rest of his life exclusively to preaching the gospel. 'I became very much weighed down by my position, literally to the point of illness,' Gavriil Ivanovich wrote at the time, continuing, 'The years are passing away, and the work entrusted to us by the Lord remains untouched.'[37] Who knows how Gavriil Ivanovich's future life would have turned out if this, his sincere wish, had been fulfilled at that time.

With the outbreak of the First World War, religious freedom in the Russian Empire was largely restricted. Russian Baptists were perceived by many as foreign people, almost 'enemies', through the efforts of anti-sectarian propaganda. In September 1915, the St Petersburg newspaper *Zemshchina* published an article entitled 'Wilhelm's Workers in Siberia', which drew public attention to the fact that Omsk was the centre of the Siberian Baptist Union, whose 'spiritual leader' Mr. Mazaev was expanding the scope of his dubious religious activities even in wartime.[38] The publication in *Zemshchina* served as a pretext for an investigation into the actions of Mazaev and some other ministers living in Western Siberia. As a result, the prayer house in Omsk was closed in April 1916 and then actually turned into a barracks for a military unit (this was the first seizure of the prayer house that Mazaev had helped finance). Such radical actions were accompanied by patriotic statements and were motivated by military needs. This state of affairs

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[36] *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosty*, no. 9 (1910), pp. 14–15.

[37] G. Mazaev, 'Vesti iz Sibiri' [News from Siberia], *Gost'*, 7 (1914), p. 183.

[38] 'Vil'gel'movy rabotniki v Sibiri' [Wilhelm's Workers in Siberia], *Zemshchina* (St. Petersburg), 11 September 1915.

continued for more than a year, and it was only after the February Revolution of 1917, when non-Orthodox religious communities in Russia regained their freedom, that the local authorities in Omsk stopped the criminal prosecution of Mazaev and returned the prayer house he had built to the local Baptists.[39]

Taking advantage of the favourable time, in the spring of 1917, Gavriil Ivanovich also initiated the founding of the Christian orphanage in Omsk, which by the autumn of the same year was built on the left bank of the Irtysh River. The Siberian Department of the Union of Russian Baptists ran the orphanage until 1920. During the First World War, the number of children who lost their parents increased significantly, and the need for the orphanage was great. The building, built with donations from believers, housed up to thirty-five children and five to seven attendants at a time. It is known that during the Civil War the orphanage received children from all parts of Siberia, and in 1920 it was transformed into a Soviet orphanage.[40]

During the reign of A. V. Kolchak, in February 1919, despite the official proclamation of freedom of religion in the 'Great Siberia', the Mazaev prayer house in Omsk was again taken away for the needs of the military. After requisitioning, it became the headquarters and barracks of the 3rd Steppe Siberian regular unit (regiment).[41] The Omsk believers then wrote complaints to Admiral Kolchak, involving even fellow believers in the United States in their litigation.[42] The assistance of the Western allies was vital for Kolchak, and apparently, this circumstance contributed to the fact that the prayer house, with official apologies, was returned to its rightful owners as early as June 1919.[43]

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[39] Divine services in the Omsk prayer house resumed on 16 July 1917. See 'V Omske' [In Omsk], *Gost'*, 7 (1917), p. 111.

[40] *Gosudarstvenny muzey istorii religii* [State Museum of the History of Religion] (GMIR), F. 2, op. 16, d. 90, l. 6.

[41] 'Iz Omskoy gorodskoy obshchiny' [From the Omsk City Community], *Droog* [Friend] (Philadelphia), 8 (1919), p. 63; *Spravochnik i spisok abonentov telefonnoy seti g. Omska b Atamanskogo khutora* [Directory and List of Subscribers of the Telephone Network of Omsk and Ataman Hamlet] (Omsk: F. G. Brekhov, 1919), p. 17.

[42] 'Pis'mo propovednika Fetlera admiralu Kolchaku' [Letter from Preacher Fetler to Admiral Kolchak], *Droog*, 10 (1919), p. 77.

[43] 'Omskaya gorodskaya obshchina' [Omsk City Community], *Blagovestnik* [Evangelist] (Omsk), 4 (1919), p. 45.

Under a different arrangement, in conditions of acute shortage of premises in the White Omsk, such a large building could well have gone to another regiment formed in the city or to one of the government institutions. The Christian press of the day reported on the occasion:

> **Omsk City Community**. We have the joy to report that after a long wait, our prayer house was cleared of standing troops on 30 June this year. It took several days to clean the house, and on Sunday, 6 July, the first prayer meetings were held. Please pray for us that the Lord will bless all the labours in the field of God in Omsk.[44]

Thus, the second requisition of the Mazaev prayer house in Omsk lasted a little over four months. Gavriil Ivanovich, with tears of joy, heartily greeted the believers in Omsk.

On the whole, until November 1919 with the fall of the Kolchak regime, Omsk Baptists did not experience significant restrictions in their religious life. Having received formal permission, they held congresses, preached, performed baptisms, travelled freely throughout Siberia, and published spiritual books, pamphlets, and their own magazine. In 1919, for example, the following were published: the Omsk hymn book *Voice of Faith* (564 pages, 5000 copies), the children's songbook *Hosanna* (100 hymns), *Memories* by G. I. Mazaev (with literary treatment by A. M. Volgin and A. S. Ananyin), the first five issues of the magazine *Evangelist* (edited by R. A. Fetler) and a number of Christian brochures, which were published by the Omsk publishing house Sower.[45]

The preface to Mazaev's memoirs contained the following words, very characteristic of him: 'I give the book *My Conversion and Memoirs* to the full ownership of the Baptist Orphanage in Novo-Omsk. The possible income from the publication should also go to the shelter treasury for the children. Gavriil Mazaev. Orphanage, 18 November 1919.'[46]

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[44] *Blagovestnik* [Evangelist] (Omsk), no. 4 (1919), p. 45. See also, 'Letters from Siberia', *Drooq*, no. 10 (1919), p. 77.

[45] GIAOO, F. 2603, op. 1, d. 65, l. 9.

[46] *Obrashchenie na istinny put' i vospominaniya baptista G. I. M.* [Conversion to the True Path and Memoirs of Baptist G. I. M] (Omsk: Publication of the Board of the Siberian Department of the Baptist Union, 1919), p. 1.

The end of 1919 saw the beginning of the most difficult period in Mazaev's life. The fact that Gavriil Ivanovich neither followed Kolchak eastwards nor left Russia obviously testifies to his inner readiness for the coming suffering and poverty. Like the biblical Job, Gavriil Ivanovich was deprived of all his property in a short period of time, while many of his relatives and friends died of illness or were subjected to repression by the Soviet authorities. However, Mazaev himself continued to travel, preaching the gospel from village to village from Omsk to Pavlodar and Slavgorod, was welcomed by the believers, instructed them in the faith, and built new communities in a great spiritual awakening in Siberia.[47] Thus Gavriil Ivanovich *freed himself* from the estate that was weighing him down (which he wrote about as early as 1914[48]). Without cursing the Soviet authorities, without grieving for his lost wealth, he finally gave himself fully to the main work of his life.

Of course, Mazaev remained too visible a figure for the authorities, and in 1926 he and his eldest son Timofey were arrested and placed in the prison in Petropavlovsk (Northern Kazakhstan).[49] Gavriil Ivanovich was then accused of counter-revolutionary activities. The Soviet magazine *Bezbozhnik u stanka* wrote in 1927, 'The leader of the Siberian Baptists, Mazaev, who owned large estates, called a Czech punitive squad during Kolchak's invasion and massacred the peasants because they, according to a decree of the Soviet authorities, were using his meadows and forests. Three peasants were flogged to death.'[50]

Gavriil Ivanovich, who had helped the poor all his life and shared his wealth with many people, had to listen to these unfair accusations. The following circumstances particularly prove that the criminal case against him was fabricated. If this grave offence took place in the second half of 1918, why was it only in 1926 that Mazaev was

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47 'Vospominaniya Gavriila Ivanovicha Mazaeva', p. 240.

48 'Vesti iz Sibiri' [News from Siberia], *Gost'*, no. 7 (1914), pp. 182–183.

49 *Dnevnik G. I. Mazaeva* [Diary of G. I. Mazaev (1926–1928)], *GMIR*, Coll. 1, op. 8, d. 77, ll. 1, 27.

50 'Baptist G. I. Mazaev s muzhikami raspravlyaetsya' [Baptist G. I. Mazaev is Punishing the Men], *Bezbozhnik u stanka* [Atheist at the Machine] (Moscow), 5 (1927), p. 18. On the numerous propaganda 'flogging trials' by kulaks of their labourers in the late 1920s, see, for example, *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i evangel'skie tserkvi Sibiri v 1920–1941 gg. Dokumenty i materialy* [The Soviet State and Evangelical Churches of Siberia in 1920–1941: Documents and Materials], compiled by A. I. Savin (Novosibirsk: Posokh, 2004), pp. 50–51.

charged? Sentenced to five years in prison and released for health reasons in 1928,[51] could he really have received such a lenient punishment from the Soviet authorities for the deaths of three poor peasants? By comparison, dozens of Baptists living in the areas between Petropavlovsk and Omsk had been shot for much lesser offences as early as 1920–1921.[52]

The reaction of local Baptist congregations to the accusation against Gavriil Ivanovich is also revealing. In 1917, his brother Dey Ivanovich, who had killed a robber in self-defence, was, despite his authority and high position in the leadership of the Baptist Union, suspended from ministry and even excommunicated for a period of time.[53] In the case of Gavriil Ivanovich, however, we see the exact opposite. Even the strictest congregations in Siberia, up to the day of his arrest and after his release, accepted him as a *man of God*, asked him for spiritual advice, and invited him to preach the Gospel among other things. In 1927, when Gavriil Ivanovich was already in prison, a general decision was made at the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Baptist community in Omsk that, as a sign of special respect for the prisoner, after his release from prison a small house should be built for him near the gates of the church he had once built on the bank of the Om' River.[54] Although Mazaev did not accept this gift, he was deeply touched by this manifestation of love and care on the part of his brothers and sisters.[55]

The chief of the prison in Petropavlovsk, where Mazaev was serving his sentence, was surprised at how many people visited the unusual prisoner and how many letters they wrote to him. At some point, this communist chief became so respectful and trusting of Gavriil Ivanovich that, for example, on Ivanovich's word of honour, he let him

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[51] G. I. Mazaev served his sentence in Petropavlovsk from November 1926 to March 1928.

[52] Information from the archives of the Department of the Federal Security Service in Omsk Oblast. Baptists were then accused of secretly or explicitly supporting the kulak uprisings against the Soviet policy in villages. See Prokhorov, *V sibirskikh palestinakh*, pp. 458–459, 479–487.

[53] D. Mazaev, 'Nepriyatnoe ob'yasnenie' [Unpleasant Explanation], *Baptist*, 4 (1917), p. 64; D. Mazaev, 'Nepriyatnoe ob'yasnenie', *Slovo istiny* [Word of Truth] (Moscow), nos. 15–16 (1917), p. 229. See also, L. Kovalenko, *Oblako svideteley Khristovykh* [Cloud of Witnesses of Christ] (Kiev: Tsentr Khristianskogo sotrudnichestva, 1997), p. 90.

[54] *GMIR*, Coll. 1, op. 8, d. 77, l. 74 ob.

[55] *GMIR*, Coll. 1, op. 8, d. 77, l. 74 ob.

out without an escort to go to the bazaar to buy paper. Going out into the city, the now aged prisoner met his relatives and friends, encouraged them — and, of course, in the process encouraged himself — willingly shared a meal with them, talked, prayed, and then bought the necessary amount of paper, which his friends evidently helped him carry. At the agreed-upon hour he returned to the prison. He made postal envelopes and bags for the local pharmacy with this paper.[56]

In May 1927, Gavriil Ivanovich wrote to N. V. Odintsov, chairman of the Federal Baptist Union in Moscow, 'Thank God, I am well and healthy in body and soul. I am working, making envelopes, and have proved to be an exemplary craftsman […] Our brothers visit me, bringing me good news, which cheers me up. The other day brother Semchenko reported about the conversion of six Kazakhs to the Lord.'[57]

After his release from prison in 1928, Mazaev did not stay free for long. According to the archive reference concerning the materials of the criminal case of 1932–1933, Gavriil Ivanovich, who was arrested in Alma-Ata, was accused of leading a counter-revolutionary organisation of Baptists over a vast territory. It was stated, 'He travelled systematically to the Baptist communities of Kazakhstan, Siberia and Kirghizia […] He created cells of the [counter-revolutionary] organisation and established communication with them.'[58] However, even in this case, we see that the punishment eventually imposed on Gavriil Ivanovich, which was five years in prison, immediately replaced by exile to the West Siberian region, was relatively mild given the gravity of the charges against him. This indirectly indicates that the judges themselves did not believe Mazaev's actions were counter-revolutionary. Behind the words 'created cells of a [counter-revolutionary] organisation', there was undoubtedly the usual preaching and pastoral work.

In 1935, the Mazaev prayer house in Omsk was taken away from the believers for the third time. The premises remained under the

[56] *GMIR*, Coll. 1, op. 8, d. 77, l. 74 ob., pp. 26, 52.
[57] *GMIR*, Coll. 1, op. 8, d. 77-3, l. 3.
[58] Archival reference on the case materials of G. I. Mazaev, DKNB RK for East Kazakhstan region (14 March 2012).

jurisdiction of one of the police departments of Omsk until 1989.[59] There is little information about Mazaev's last arrest and his death. It was reported that Gavriil Ivanovich died in the Kustanay prison isolation ward at the end of 1937.[60] However, in 2012, our enquiry to the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan about the death of G. I. Mazaev (indicating that, according to unconfirmed data, he died in the Kustanay prison isolation ward in 1937) received an official reply from their Kustanay archival division that they have no information about G. I. Mazaev.[61] Nevertheless, Mazaev's death at the end of 1937 somewhere in the depths of the Gulag seems the most probable, as no one else saw him thereafter among the living. . .

[59] In 1989–1990, the house was returned to Omsk Baptists. After the restoration of the building, its second grand opening and consecration took place on 12 January 1992.

[60] 'Vospominaniya Gavriila Ivanovicha Mazaeva', afterword, 1. 129; N. Khrapov, *Schast'e poteryannoy zhizni* [The Happiness of a Lost Life], 3 vols. (Moscow: Protestant, 1991), 3, p. 74.

[61] Response from the Archives of the Department of the Committee on Legal Statistics and Special Records of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Kostanay region, 20 September 2012; Archives of the Central Baptist Church of Omsk.

Ukrainian Baptist Communities in an Orthodox Context: A Study of Church Relations Between 1917–2024

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Abstract
This article focuses on relations between Ukrainian Baptist and Orthodox churches from 1917 to the present day. It shows the shift from the position (specific to the time of the Russian Empire) when the two movements rejected each other, and from hatred and harshness towards Baptists on the part of Orthodoxy, to more positive dynamics, particularly in the context of the Soviet Union when, under communism, the Orthodox Church lost its position and became one among others persecuted by the State. More positive changes continued in the period after the Soviet Union (USSR) collapsed and as Ukraine became an independent country. At the same time, the article argues that despite some good dynamics in relations, negative experiences for followers of both traditions still exist, which show the need for improvement in relations with each other. Baptists and Orthodox followers may still view each other as straying far from the truth and as in need of salvation.

Key words
Ukraine; Baptists; Orthodoxy; inter-church relations

Introduction

This article concentrates on the history of relations between Ukrainian Baptists and followers of Orthodoxy since 1917. The historical analysis pays attention to the similarities and differences in approaches that are seen in the periods chosen as the focus for this article in comparison to what is found in those Ukrainian territories in the time of the Russian Empire. One can hear horrible stories from that time of Empire when Baptists sometimes passed through 'medieval torture', and read of believers 'being forced to cut off prickly burdock with their bare hands'

or being 'flogged with rods'.[1] This is just a small part of the torture that was practised.

Over the course of time, we might expect changes in different periods regarding relations between Baptist and Orthodox communities, but this has not been analysed as much as the situation in the time of the Russian Empire. This article is divided into three periods. The first speaks about the time from the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 until 1944. The end date of 1944 is the moment when the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists was formed. Before 1944, the Baptist movement was represented by two independent groups of believers, one of which was called Baptists and the other the Evangelical Christians. The second period covers the years 1944–1991. The final period speaks about independent Ukraine from 1991 to the present.

The observation of these chosen periods shows us different and more positive dynamics in relations between the two traditions that became the reality from 1917 onwards in comparison to the situation during the Russian Empire. In paying attention to sources in Ukrainian as well as in other languages that deal with analysing contexts, we find evidence in the first two periods of positive contacts between traditions in the USSR area under a communist regime that turned Orthodoxy into another of the religious groups under the pressure of the State. The situation in independent Ukraine also shows the presence of these positive dynamics. Nevertheless, the story of relations has certainly not been ideal since 1917, and tensions still exist.

1917–1944

When we consider Ukrainian believers of the Baptist faith and their relations with Orthodoxy since 1917, we can observe a case from 1923

[1] S. Sannikov, *Istoria baptisma* [The History of the Baptist Movement] (Bogomyslie, 1996), p. 355. Other good sources to read concerning that time period are Constantine Prokhorov's 'Orthodox and Baptists in Russia: The Early Period', in *Baptists and the Orthodox Church: On the Way to Understanding*, ed. by Ian M. Randall (International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005), pp. 98–112; and Volodymyr Domashovetz, *Ukrajins'kyj jevangel's'ko-baptysts'kyj ruh v jogo 150-litnij juvilej, 1852–2002* [The Ukrainian Evangelical Baptist Movement on Its 150th Jubilee, 1852–2002] (Khrystyianske zhyttia, 2002), p. 29.

from Dovgiv village, Volyn (the western area of Ukraine, which at that time was a part of Poland). Here, an Orthodox priest organised a protest against followers of the Baptist movement[2] who tried to perform a baptism near his church. First, it started with the sermon the Orthodox priest delivered against so-called sectarians, sparking people's anger in relation to them, and finished with people trying to mutilate such believers. It was only because some were found who opposed such deeds and who managed to stop others, that the situation did not end as badly as it could have done.[3]

Another incident of tensions between followers of the two traditions, again from Volyn, happened in 1934. The followers of the Baptist tradition tried to bury a member of their community but were faced with opposition from the Orthodox priest, who saw the local cemetery as belonging to the Orthodox Church. Only after a conversation with the local government was permission granted, despite the hostility of the Orthodox priest towards such a decision.[4]

We also have data concerning tensions in relations with the Orthodox Church in the Ukrainian territory (Bukovina,) that belonged to Romania from 1918 to 1939. Even though the Orthodox Church became one among other religious groups under communist pressure in the USSR, the Romanian Orthodox Church continued to be the state church. One of its patriarchs even held the position of Prime Minister. The Orthodox Church did not appreciate the presence of Protestants on its territory and the Baptist movement had to endure many and various difficulties, especially from 1938 when having worship meetings was prohibited.[5]

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[2] It should be remembered that the Baptist movement was represented in Ukraine by the Baptist Union and the Evangelical Christians Union at that time. They formed the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists in 1944 and the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians Baptists (AUCECB) in 1946.

[3] L. A. Gaponjuk, M. O. Pyrozhko, and V. G. Chajka, *Jevangek's'kyj ruh na Volyni v dokumentah i doljah ludej* [The Evangelical Movement in Volyn in the Documents and Destinies of People] (Ukrajins'ka Misija Blagovistja, 2009), p. 144.

[4] Gaponjuk, Pyrozhko, and Chajka, *Jevangek's'kyj ruh na Volyni v dokumentah i doljah ludej*, p. 148.

[5] Ju. Reschetnikov and S. Sannikov, *Oglad istorii evangelsko-baptistskogo bratstva v Ukraini* [Survey of the History of the Evangelical-Baptist Brotherhood in Ukraine] (Bogomyslie, 2000), p. 165.

In addition, there is a negative story from the Volyn area in 1943 during the German occupation. We hear about the Orthodox clergyman who, together with a number of men carrying guns, took a group of the followers of the Baptist movement into the Orthodox Church, where they abused them.[6]

As we face this negative approach to the Baptist movement on the part of Orthodoxy, it is reasonable to see its roots in the previous politics the Orthodox Church formed in the Russian Empire, where the first Ukrainian Baptists appeared. We remember that since 988 CE, Ukrainian lands, which then became a part of the Russian Empire, gave priority to the Orthodox Church.[7] Other faiths were seen as strange and heretical without rights to exist in the Orthodox land. In the Orthodox view, this was a normal church approach to deal with the heresy they felt Baptists presented.[8] As for the element of strangeness, it is related to the view that the Baptist movement was an instrument of Germany to destroy the Russian government.[9] It can also be noted that Orthodoxy played a quite active role in putting pressure on the Baptist movement; it was indeed more active than the State itself.[10]

In spite of the negative stories observed in the period since 1917, an interesting event happened in the USSR in which some Ukrainian territories became a part in 1922.[11] In the beginning of the 1920s, the Renovationism movement appeared in the Russian Orthodox Church which tried to bring some reforms to Orthodoxy: for example, to become open to laypersons' activity in the church; to make an emphasis on preaching in liturgy; or to deal with paganism and superstition found

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6 Gaponjuk, Pyrozhko, and Chajka, *Jevangek's'kyj ruh na Volyni v dokumentah i doljah ludej*, p. 187.

7 To read about the acceptance of Orthodoxy by the people of Kiev Rus, see Sergij Golovaschzenko, *Istorija hrystyjanstva* [History of Christianity] (Lybid, 1999), pp. 214–219. Also, Konstantin Prohorov, *Russkiy baptizm i pravoslavie* [Russian Baptism and Orthodoxy] (BBI, 2017), pp. 9–11.

8 S. I. Golovaschzenko, *Istorija evangel'sko-baptistskogo dvizhenija v Ukraine. Materialy i dokumenty* [History of the Evangelical-Baptist Movement in Ukraine: Materials and Documents] (Bogomyslie, 1998), pp. 164, 178.

9 Domashovetz, *Ukrajins'kyj jevangel's'ko-baptysts'kyj ruh v jogo 150-litnij juvilej, 1852–2002*, p. 28.

10 L. Zhabko-Potapovych, *Hristove svitlo v Ukrajini. Istorija ukrajinskogo evangelsko-baptystskogo ruhu* [Christ's Light in Ukraine: History of the Ukrainian Evangelical-Baptist Movement] (Vseukrajinske Evangelsko-Baptystske Bratstvo, 1991), p. 153–155.

11 Reschetnikov and Sannikov, *Oglad istorii evangelsko-baptistskogo bratstva v Ukraini*, p. 134.

in the churches.[12] I. S. Prokhanov, one of the leaders of the Baptist movement and head of the Evangelical Christians Union that united Ukrainian communities, saw a possibility of setting relations between his Union and this new movement in Orthodoxy. It is reasonable to assume that members of the Union, including those from Ukraine, were open to Prokhanov's ideas about developing relations with Orthodoxy.

In September 1922, on behalf of the Union, Prokhanov prepared the document *Evangelical Call* as his proposal to the authorities of Renovationism.[13] The call included the steps that could be taken by Renovationism to purify the Orthodox Church. He suggested that the Orthodox Church had to correct such mistakes as teaching about icons, traditions, saints, relics, child baptism, and so forth. For example, in terms of the issue of mediators, there is only one, and, based on 1 Timothy 2:5, this is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The most important issue for Prokhanov was to see the church made of 'living stones, of souls who consciously came to faith […] and live righteously and piously'.[14] Obviously, the intention was for Orthodox churches to be transformed into Evangelical Christian communities. In Andrey Puzynin's words, the followers of the Renovationist movement had 'only one simple option, namely, to become identical' to followers of those non-Orthodox churches.[15]

During the development of relations between Orthodox and Evangelical Christians in the 1920s (which was in the period of time

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12 D. A. Golovushkin, 'Russkoe pravoslavnoe obnovlenchestvo v 1922–1923 gg.: reformaciya ili cerkovnaya revolyuciya?' [Renovationism in Russian Orthodoxy in 1922–1923: Reformation or Religious Revolution?], *Izvestiya Irkutskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta* [News of the Irkutsk State University], 8, Seriya Politologiya. Religiovedenie (2014), pp. 232–240 (p. 236) <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/russkoe-pravoslavnoe-obnovlenchestvo-v-1922-1923-gg-reformatsiya-ili-tserkovnaya-revolyutsiya/viewer> [accessed 8 June 2024].

13 Vladimir Popov, '"Evangelskij klich" I. S. Prokhanova kak proekt i popytka realizatsii idej Reformatsii v dvizhenii pravoslavnyh obnovlentsev nachala 20-h gg. XX veka' [I. S. Prokhanov's 'Evangelical Call' as a Project and an Attempt to Realise the Idea of Reformation in the Renovationism Orthodox Movement at the Beginning of the 1920s of the XX Century], *Bogoslovskie razmyshlenija* [Theological Reflections], 17 (2016), pp. 79–90 (p. 81). Electronic version available at <http://reflections.eeit-edu.info/article/view/79351/pdf_28>.

14 I. S. Prohanov, *Novaya ili evangelskaya zhizn: Sbornik* [New or Evangelical Life: Collection] (Hristianskij centr 'Logos', 2009), pp. 88–93.

15 Andrey Puzynin, *The Tradition of the Gospel Christians: A Study of Their Identity and Theology during the Russian, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Periods* (Pickwick, 2011), p. 160.

Prokhanov saw as the realisation of a prophecy he had previously received from God[16]), there was a place made for worship meetings in the church of Evangelical Christians in Moscow organised for different believers including Orthodox, and for an invitation to Prokhanov to preach in Orthodox Churches.[17] Prokhanov developed friendly relations, in particular with Metropolitan Antonij. Writing about those relations, he mentions Antonij's delight in his collection of songs, 'Gusli', and the metropolitan's testimony before others at one meeting where he described Evangelical Christian communities as following Christ's teachings better than others.[18]

However, as Vladimir Popov notes, it should be said that it was not the case that all Orthodox followers from that movement then stopped seeing other Christian religious groups as sectarians. There were still those who thought that the Orthodox position should be careful in setting cooperation with such a group.[19] According to Prokhanov's memories about his participation in one of the Orthodox congresses where he got the chance to preach and pray, while there were those who enjoyed it, there was also a voice of indignation, a voice Prokhanov describes thus: 'What do I see! The representatives of sectarians have the right to speak at this congress of the Orthodox Church! What would our holy fathers think if they were alive!'[20]

If we consider the presence of the negative reaction from Orthodoxy in relation to Prokhanov's *Call*, we also hear Popov saying that such a reaction could not be any different. Prokhanov saw the whole Tradition in Orthodoxy as the problem, erroneously overlooking the fact that this Tradition included the Bible that was definitely so precious for Evangelical Christians. Prokhanov's understanding of Orthodoxy was not so deep in comparison to the one developed by another famous minister, Vladimir Martsinkovsky.[21] Martsinkovsky

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16 I. S. Prokhanov, *V kotle Roccii: Avtobiografiya* [In the Caldron of Russia: Autobiography] (World Fellowship of Slavic Evangelical Christians, 1992), p. 84.
17 Popov, "'Evangelskij klich'", pp. 84–85.
18 Prokhanov, *V kotle Roccii: Avtobiografiya*, pp. 207–208.
19 Popov, "'Evangelskij klich'", p. 86.
20 Prokhanov, *V kotle Roccii: Avtobiografiya*, p. 210.
21 Popov, "'Evangelskij klich'", p. 86.

related to the Baptist movement[22] without holding membership in a Baptist community. He was a 'non-denominational Christian', or a believer who did not limit himself to a particular denomination.[23] Martsinkovsky, who welcomed the Evangelical Christian Union's activities with Orthodoxy, saw many valuable elements in the Orthodox Church. As two examples, we can mention his appreciation of some Orthodox theological insights and of their music. Martsinkovsky thought people could benefit from Protestantism as well as from Orthodoxy. It could be a new form of Russian Christianity. In terms of Protestantism, he considered such important elements as its emphasis on 'conscious personal faith'.[24] This element was also substantial for Orthodoxy, where, as Martsinkovsky noted, it was still possible to find 'alive people who passionately strived for the transformation of the church'.[25] As Martsinkovsky, born in Ukraine, contributed to the intellectual development of the Ukrainian Baptist movement through his scholarship,[26] we must leave space for his influence on at least a more restrained Ukrainian Baptist position related to Orthodox followers.

We can also note in the context of the mentioned negative reaction from the followers of Renovationism in relation to contacts with the Evangelical Christians Union, that some disapproval also came from other parts of the Baptist movement, particularly from the leadership of the Baptist Union. They worried about possible

[22] See his testimony about relations with the Baptist movement without being a member of any specific community in Vladimir Martsinkovskij, *Zapiski verujuscego* [A Believer's Notes] (Posoh, 2006), pp. 249, 275.

[23] Konstantin Harchenko, 'Uchitel slovesnosti Vladimir Martsinkovskij (1884–1971)' [A Teacher of Literature Vladimir Martsinkovskij (1884–1971)], *Bogomyslie* [Thinking about God], 19 (2016), pp. 166–196 (p. 184). Electronic version available at <http://almanah.bogomysliye.com/article/view/121665/116679>.

[24] Martsinkovskij, *Zapiski verujuscego*, pp. 246–249.

[25] Martsinkovskij, *Zapiski verujuscego*, p. 274.

[26] Lina Borodynska, 'Ukrajinski schtryhy do portreta Volodymyra Martsinkovskogo' [Ukrainian Brushstrokes to Vladimir Martsinkovskij's Portrait], *Bogomyslie* [Thinking about God], 19 (2016), pp. 146–165 (pp. 147, 154–157, 161). Electronic version available at <http://almanah.bogomysliye.com/article/view/108968/183676>.

syncretism. In addition, Renovationism showed an interest in cooperation[27] with the communist government, which also in the longer term put pressure on the followers of this Orthodox movement.[28] At the same time, when we speak about pressure on or persecution of the whole of Orthodoxy in the USSR, it can also be noted that according to Ukrainian Baptist theologian Sergei Sannikov, the situation can be seen as both ironic and logical. Before the communist era, the Orthodox Church, seeing danger in so-called sectarians, concentrated on fighting them with State instruments and did not pay enough attention to the spirituality of the people of 'Holy Rus'. In the end, the church was struck severely by these unconverted people[29] and not by those sectarians it was afraid of.[30] It was precisely those who were unconverted who laid the foundation in the USSR for church-state relations in 1917, when a decree was passed on their separation that destroyed the privileged position of Orthodoxy.[31]

In summary, we can say that there was the presence of tension as well as some marks of positive relations with Orthodoxy. We saw that some Orthodox followers viewed Baptists as a dangerous element and tried to make it more difficult for their movement to function. However, the picture of relations from that time is not without positive situations. We have the example of one of the leaders of the Baptist movement who developed friendly relations with some Orthodox followers from the Renovationist movement, even if the expectation was that Orthodoxy had to be changed or corrected.

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[27] Ukrainian history is complicated and complex concerning how different church groups acted during the communist regime. Both Orthodox Christians and Baptists at times betrayed their faith and chose an atheistic worldview. Thus, we cannot speak only of a single church tradition choosing the wrong side in this time period. Gaponjuk, Pyrozhko, and Chajka, *Jevangek's'kyj ruh na Volyni v dokumentah i doljah ludej*, pp. 261–263.

[28] Popov, "'Evangelskij klich'", pp. 87–88.

[29] We hear that the Orthodox Church was the primary goal of persecution from the State in the 1920s. See S. V. Sannikov, *Populjarna istorija hrystyjanstva. Dvadtsjat stolit u dorozi* [The Popular History of Christianity: Twenty Centuries on the Road] (Sammit-Kniha, 2012), p. 381.

[30] Sannikov, *Populjarna istorija hrystyjanstva*, p. 376.

[31] Tatjana Nikolskaja, *Russkij protestantizm i gosudarstvennaja vlast v 1905–1991 godah* [Russian Protestantism and the State in the Years 1905–1991] (Izdatelstvo Evropejskogo Universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2009), pp. 60–61.

1944–1991

When we observe the situation from 1944 onwards, we continue to be faced with negative cases. In 1945, there is again a report from the Volyn region, which was then a part of the construction of the USSR. This report is from a responsible person authorised by the State to examine religious groups. In December 1945, he noted the dislike of Orthodox clergy for followers of the Baptist movement. Orthodox clergy noted that sectarians, on the one hand, created problems for the Orthodox Church, while, on the other, they undermined the strength of the State, in particular through their pacifist approach to war. As for the responsible person, who was clearly on the side of the Orthodox Church, he saw the need for the involvement of Orthodox missionaries to improve the situation with sectarians.[32]

We have a report from the same year from one such Orthodox missionary that deserves attention and concerns the situation in Volyn, the location for which he was responsible. L. A. Gaponjuk, M. O. Pyrozhko, and V. G. Chajka, in analysing the report, draw our attention to negative claims made by the missionary in relation to Baptist believers. The Baptists are presented as 'unwelcome elements' of society, as bothering Orthodoxy, or as connected with 'dark forces'.[33]

Seeing Baptists as a threat was a continuing attitude among the followers of the Orthodox tradition across the USSR territories of which Ukraine was a part. Tatjana Nikolskaja draws attention to Orthodox complaints (cases from 1951 until 1957) to State authorities (in Russian lands) about Baptists evangelising people among whom their believers were represented. Also, Baptists were faced with the label 'heretics'.[34]

Despite the negative examples, we also find positive data on relations between the two traditions in the USSR. There is the testimony of a person who converted to the Orthodox Church from the Baptist church (in the Russian territories), who states that there were no

[32] Gaponjuk, Pyrozhko, and Chajka, *Jevangek's'kyj ruh na Volyni v dokumentah i doljah ludej*, p. 194.
[33] Gaponjuk, Pyrozhko, and Chajka, *Jevangek's'kyj ruh na Volyni v dokumentah i doljah ludej*, pp. 195–196.
[34] Nikolskaja, *Russkij protestantizm i gosudarstvennaja vlast v 1905–1991 godah*, p. 158.

conflicts between followers of Baptist and Orthodox churches during the anti-religious campaign under Nikita Khrushchev's leadership (1958–1964). We hear from this convert that as a child during that time, having lost their father, the family received support from some old women from the Orthodox church in addition to help from people who belonged to the Baptist church. Then, speaking of the time after this anti-religious campaign up to 1990, they mention the cooperation with some Orthodox followers in obtaining the Bible and about an absence of 'significant tensions', noting in addition that cooperation was possible because both groups were persecuted.[35]

The episode above is in tune with other assessments of Orthodoxy under communism in those years. For example, Richard Wurmbrand, a Lutheran pastor who ministered in the USSR and wrote of those years in the story of his life, described Orthodox underground churches as 'in reality evangelical, fundamental and very close to God', churches in which there were martyrs for their faith.[36]

These marks of good relations with Orthodoxy might be viewed as the natural result of changes in the ideology of the State. The Communist regime was atheistic and cold towards all religious groups, including the Orthodox Church. The church could no longer expect the State to act on its side. This change might have pushed the transformation of the Orthodox mindset in relation to Protestant groups, though to only a certain extent. Sannikov, describing the situation of relations between Baptists and Orthodox believers in the late Soviet period, notes that on the one hand there was a time of absence of conflicts between them. On the other hand, there was still the presence of old negative perceptions from the Orthodox side in relation to Protestants as sectarians and their communities as without God's grace.[37]

In continuing to analyse the issue of relations between these two traditions, it is also worth drawing attention to two momentous events

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[35] Igor Pochekovskij, 'Ja byl protestantom v chetvertom pokolenii' [I Was a Fourth Generation Protestant], *Pravoslavie* [Orthodoxy], 14 December 2015 <https://pravoslavie.ru/88730.html> [accessed 8 June 2024].

[36] Richard Wurbrand, *Tortured for Christ* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2005), p. 139.

[37] Sergej Sannikov, personal email to the author, 18 November 2022.

that happened in the 1960s. The Orthodox Church and The Baptist Union (AUCECB) decided to join the World Council of Churches (WCC) and participate in that ecumenical movement.

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) joined the WCC in 1961, although it had condemned ecumenism in 1948.[38] This move to join happened as the ROC started to feel that others were becoming open to 'convergence' with Orthodoxy, although this is not to overlook the fact of the State's influence on the ROC's position in becoming a member of the WCC.[39] In the time before joining, there was a different Orthodox feeling in which the WCC was seen as an institution closed to their influence.[40] In general, the desire was to see others becoming close in their views to the Orthodox Church, taking, for example, the status of an autonomous unit.[41] Concerning other Christians, the ROC saw them in the category of heretics and their communities as not having the status of being a real church.[42]

The AUCECB joined the WCC in 1962.[43] The leadership of the Baptist Union spoke about the good opportunity to minister together with others in serving people's needs globally or to 'serve as bridge-builders between enemies'. The idea was to build fellowship rather than to merge into a single institutional church, though that fellowship created together the single voice of Christianity.[44] It should be noted that participation of the Baptist Union of the USSR was similarly not

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38 Oleg Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu hrystyjanstvi* [Phenomenon of Ecumenism in Contemporary Christianity] (Natsionalnyj Pedagogichnyj Universytet Imeni M. P. Dragomanova, 2009), p. 56.

39 Maksim Kozlov, *Pravoslavie i inoslavie* [Orthodoxy and Those Expressing Faith Differently] (Nikeja, 2009), pp. 3–153 (pp. 91, 94). See also Viktor Livtsov, 'Uchastie RPTS v ekumenicheskom dvizhenii i ego vliyanie na duchovnuju zhizn SSSR (60-80-e gg. XX v.)' [Participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement and Its Influence on the Spiritual Life of the USSR (1960–1980s of the XX Century)], *Vlast* [Authority], 9 (2008), pp. 119–121 (pp. 120–121) <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/uchastie-rpts-v-ekumenicheskom-dvizhenii-i-ego-vliyanie-na-duhovnuyu-zhizn-sssr-d60-80-e-gg-xx-v/viewer> [accessed 8 June 2024].

40 Kozlov, *Pravoslavie i inoslavie*, pp. 80–81.

41 Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu hrystyjanstvi*, p. 59.

42 Kozlov, *Pravoslavie i inoslavie*, pp. 68–69.

43 Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism* (Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 64.

44 Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II* (Herald Press, 1981), p. 368.

without influence from the State as had been the case with the ROC. This is how the USSR tried to improve relations with the West, in particular by using religious platforms.[45] It could even be said that there was a place for the State having its agent (in service to the Committee for State Security) in the International Department of the Baptist Union, who tried to direct the Union from the inside to pursue the interests of the State.[46]

Walter Sawatsky, analysing the participation of the ROC and the AUCECB in the WCC, observes that there was a place for some kind of cooperation between them in attempts to create a better image of their country at the international level. Sawatsky applied the expression 'junior partner' to the AUCECB that together with the ROC tried to hide the facts of state persecution in relation to believers.[47] Alexander de Chalandeau, reflecting on USSR Baptist and Orthodox cooperation in the WCC, comments,

> I have learned that in the session in Geneva and elsewhere at the World Council of Churches, the Evangelical Christian-Baptist delegation from the Soviet Union, before any vote is made, is always guided by the Russian Orthodox delegation which is led by the Metropolitan Nikodim and, together with the other Soviet delegations, they form a voting bloc.[48]

We can note that the State's interest in international relations followed the death of Joseph Stalin and grew again later in the era of détente, which means 'relaxation' in French and referred to a cooling of tensions in relations between the USSR and the United States. Thus, the State played its role in making the Orthodox Church and the Baptist Union participators in the international ecumenical movement, with the perhaps unintended consequence of this also leading to Soviet inter-denominational activities. Among these inter-denominational activities in the USSR, were the local ecumenical meetings with representatives from the two traditions that took place in Moscow and Leningrad in

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45 Alexander de Chalandeau, *The Christians in the U.S.S.R.* (Harper, 1978), p. 167.

46 Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II*, p. 365.

47 Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II*, pp. 368–369. On the ROC working for the State's purposes, see Philip Walters, 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Foreign Christianity: The Legacy of the Past', in *Proselytism and Orthodoxy in Russia: The New War for Souls*, ed. by John Witte, Jr and Michael Bourdeaux (Orbis Books, 1999), pp. 31–50 (p. 43).

48 De Chalandeau, *The Christians in the U.S.S.R.*, p. 170.

1976, which both sides appreciated. We hear from Baptists about their acceptance of ecumenism as God's work to unite Christians, which, however, should not be understood as a way to make others look like your own tradition.[49] Also, in the Baptist Union in the 1970s and 1980s, there was an openness to giving room in their official journal *Bratskiy vestnik* (Brotherly Herald) to Orthodox thinkers, finding their ideas good for edification.[50] Thus, while the State strived for its goals through pushing churches to participate in the international ecumenical movement, it laid the foundation for inter-denominational relations as such, seeing something positive in them.

However, there was also another effect from the State shaping the involvement of the Orthodox Church and Baptist Union in the ecumenical movement with the desire to reach a political goal of forming a positive image of the Soviet Union before others. Baptists living in the USSR expected rather different results at home. They wanted to hear the WCC speak about the real situation in their country concerning persecution, but it did not happen. As a result, it brought disappointment over participation in such an ecumenical institution. At the same time, it should be said that the negative view of ecumenical relations was not just due to the USSR government's involvement in the process of development of relations with others. Some USSR Baptists, in particular Ukrainians, fearful of ecumenism and also being under the influence of fundamentalists from abroad, looked at the WCC as 'the Babylonian whore which is to lead the church astray in the end of times'.[51] We can surmise that Ukrainian Baptists were more sensitive to the possibility of the erosion of truth in the context of the pluralism that can be the reality of an ecumenical movement.

Thus, we see that the data on this period is filled with positive as well as negative stories. We heard testimony from the Baptist camp about good relations with Orthodox followers under communism. However, we also saw the presence of real tensions (as in the cases from Volyn). In addition, we saw that the old Orthodox view was still present, which saw Baptists as those in need of God's gift of grace acting in their

[49] De Chalandeau, *The Christians in the U.S.S.R.*, pp. 167, 169.
[50] Prohorov, *Russkiy baptizm i pravoslavie*, pp. 79, 94–95.
[51] Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II*, p. 369.

communities. Yet, it seems the great enemy that the churches of both traditions concentrated on was communism. We can note too, the Ukrainian Baptists' intense wariness towards relations tied to ecumenism, in which they probably saw the danger of loss of their identity.

1991–2024

The next situation we turn to is the period in Ukrainian history after 1991. The Baptist movement in modern Ukraine is represented primarily by three unions. The first is the All-Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUUC ECB, which separated from AUC ECB in 1990).[52] This body is one of the largest Baptist Unions in Europe[53] and is the largest among all Protestant unions in Ukraine.[54]

The second union is the International Union of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (IUC ECB). It emerged in the USSR and was known previously as the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CCECB). When the USSR collapsed, this Union decided not to form national bodies but to continue to be unified and present in different countries.[55] The third is the Brotherhood of Independent Churches and Missions Evangelical Christian Baptists of Ukraine (BICM ECBU, which was the Brotherhood of Independent Churches and Missions in Soviet times).[56] In addition to these three unions, there are other independent Baptist churches in Ukraine. They

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52 A. Kolodnyj and P. Jarotskyj, *Reformatsija v Ukrajini: Poshyrennja rannogo protestantyzmu i stanovlennja baptizmu*, [Reformation in Ukraine: Expansion or Early Protestantism and Formation of Baptism] (Samit-Knyga, 2017), pp. 400–401.

53 Baptist Union of Great Britain, 'Ukraine Baptists: Responding to the War "with Compassion and Open Hearts"', *Baptist Times*, 16 March 2022 <https://www.baptisttimes.co.uk/Articles/631671/Ukraine_Baptists_responding.aspx> [accessed 18 September 2024].

54 VSTs YeHB, 'Pro Soiuz YeHB' [About Union of ECB], Baptyst, n.d. <https://www.baptyst.com/pro-soyuz/> [accessed 8 June 2024].

55 Kolodnyj and Jarotskyj, *Reformatsija v Ukrajini: Poshyrennja rannogo protestantyzmu i stanovlennja baptizmu*, p. 402.

56 Kolodnyji and Jarotskyj, *Reformatsija v Ukrajini: Poshyrennja rannogo protestantyzmu i stanovlennja baptizmu*, pp. 402–403.

were created with assistance from different mission organisations and foreign missionaries.[57]

Orthodoxy in Ukraine similarly finds expression in more than a single church form. Two churches form the largest groupings. One, which for a long time was considered the biggest, is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC; Moscow Patriarchate).[58] This church is historically tied with the ROC or, as Kateryna Pano describes, is in reality 'in the sphere of influence of the Moscow Patriarchate'.[59] However, in 2022, as a result of the war between Russia and Ukraine, the UOC decided to soften connections with the ROC, attentive to the fact that it supports Russian aggression.[60] A 2022 poll indicates that the UOC may have begun to experience a loss of supporters. Many followers of Orthodoxy decided to choose another of the largest Orthodox Churches, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) instead of the UOC.[61] This tendency started to grow after the UOC fell under law Number 8371 (20 August 2024) against 'religious organisations' connected with Russia. The UOC's connections with the ROC are seen

[57] Kolodnyji and Jarotskyj, *Reformatsija v Ukrajini: Poshyrennja rannogo protestantyzmu i stanovlennja baptizmu*, p. 403.

[58] Derzhavna sluzba Ukrajiny z pytan etnopolityky ta svobody sovisti, 'Statystyka tserkov i relihiinykh orhanizatsii v Ukraini stanom na 1 sichnia 2021 roku' [Statistics of Churches and Religious Organisations in Ukraine as of January 1, 2021], *RISU*, 1 July 2021 <https://risu.ua/statistika-cerkov-i-religijnih-organizacij-v-ukrayini-stanom-na-1-sichnya-2021-roku_n118842> [accessed 8 June 2024].

[59] Kateryna Pano, *Motyvy ta naslidky vtruchannia vlady u mizhkonfesiine protystoiannia v Ukraini* [Motives and Consequences of Government Intervention in Interfaith Conflict in Ukraine] (Kiev: n. pub., 2004), p. 6.

[60] Roman Romanuk, 'UPTs viddilytsja vid RPTs administratyvno, ale zberezhe duhovne spilkuvannja — dzherela' [The UOC (Moscow Patriarchate) Will Separate from the ROC Administratively, but Will Retain Spiritual Communication — Sources], *Ukrajinska Pravda* [Ukrainian Truth], 27 May 2022 <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/05/27/7349010/> [accessed 8 June 2024].

[61] Jaroslav Pryschepa, 'Lyshe 4% ukrayintsiv zarahovujut sebe do virjan Moskovskogo Patriarhatu' [Only 4% of Ukrainians Consider Themselves Believers of the Moscow Patriarchate], *Suspilne* [Public], 5 July 2022 <https://suspilne.media/268305-lise-4-ukrainciv-zarahovuut-sebe-do-viran-moskovskogo-patriarhatu/> [accessed 8 June 2024].

as creating a threat for Ukraine.[62] As for the OCU, it received a tomos[63] of autocephaly, or official status of independence, signed by Patriarch Bartholomew in 2019.[64] In addition to these two main Orthodox churches there are also others.[65]

Regarding church relations after 1991, Oleg Kiselov states that at the beginning of the 1990s, all churches were competitors who, after the fall of communism, tried to gain more benefits strictly for themselves from the current favourable situation. Churches were certainly not interested in such a phenomenon as ecumenism, especially remembering the State's control in Soviet times over the churches' participation in the ecumenical movement which helped the State to achieve its own goals.[66]

Miroslav Volf, analysing the situation in Eastern Europe after the USSR collapsed, speaks about the Orthodox desire to return to the place they had before communist rule. They wanted to return to being the state church and felt offended when they saw foreign missionaries from other churches evangelising people in their countries. In the Orthodox view, these missionaries did not pay attention to the fact that people had already encountered Christianity through their local church tradition. If missionaries wanted to evangelise, they needed to go to non-

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62 'Rada uchvalyla zakon pro zaboronu UPTS (MP) v Ukrajini – deputaty' [Parliament Passed the Law on Banning the UOC (MP) in Ukraine: Parliamentarians' Overview], Radiosvoboda, 20 August 2024 <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-moskovskyy-patriarkhat-zaborona/33085530.html> [accessed 21 August 2024].

63 This word is of Greek origin and its meaning is 'a section'. Used in Orthodoxy it refers to 'a scroll or a small book, but one with a very specific purpose — it codifies a decision by a holy synod, or council of Orthodox bishops'. Bermet Talant, 'Ukraine's word of 2018: Tomos', *Kyiv Post*, 21 December 2018 <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/10821> [accessed 7 October 2024].

64 PTsU, 'Istorija' [History], pomisna, n.d. <https://www.pomisna.info/uk/tserkva/istoriya/> [accessed 8 June 2024]. As a further note on autocephaly, this word in Greek consists of two components: αὐτός (self) and κεφαλή (head). In Orthodoxy it speaks about independence of a particular church from others. Arkadii Zhukovsky, 'Autocephaly', *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, 2005 <https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com> [accessed 27 October 2024]. See also on autocephaly Andrew Sorokowski, 'Autocephaly in a Nutshell', *RISU*, 3 May 2018 <https://risu.ua/en/autocephaly-in-a-nutshell_n90612> [accessed 27 October 2024].

65 Derzhavna sluzhba Ukrainy z pytan etnopolityky ta svobody sovisti, 'Statystyka tserkov i relihiinykh orhanizatsii v Ukraini stanom na 1 sichnia 2021 roku'.

66 Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu hrystyjanstvi*, pp. 94–95.

Christian countries.[67] It can be noted that when we hear Orthodox followers tie their tradition to a particular land, it can be in reference to the concept of canonical territory. The idea is that some territories within their nations belong to a particular church, and there is no need for evangelisation from other churches.[68] As Kateryna Pano shows, such an understanding is common for the UOC, which remembers that Ukrainian territories once belonged to the ROC and now logically should belong to them.[69] Any attempt to share the gospel from non-Orthodoxy in such a context is seen in the category of proselytism.[70] However, it should be noted that there are still Orthodox voices who think that it is wrong for the church to concentrate simply on the issue of territory belonging to a particular confession rather than on nurturing its people in the Christian faith.[71]

In examining Orthodox approaches to Protestants in Ukraine and to Baptists in particular, the most important event to pay attention to relates to 2000, when the ROC, as the church attempting to rebuild past connections with the State in the new millennium and in post-communist times,[72] passed a document on relations with others. This document, as Oleg Kiselov notes, is likely to also serve as a guide for the UOC that continues to have close connections with the ROC.[73]

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67 Miroslav Volf, 'Fishing in the Neighbor's Pond: Mission and Proselytism in Eastern Europe', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 20.1 (1996), pp. 26–31 (pp. 26–27), doi:10.1177/239693939602000107.

68 Lesja Kovalenko, 'Ponyattya "kanonichna terytoriya" u cerkovnomu pravi' [The Concept 'Canonical Territory' in Church Law], in *Ukraina: Chyya kanonichna terytoriya?* [Ukraine: Whose Canonical Territory?] ed. by Myroslav Marynovych and others (Ukrainskyj Katolyckyj Universytet, 2006), pp. 2–5 (pp. 3–4).

69 Pano, *Motyvy ta naslidky vtruchannia vlady u mizhkonfesiine protystoiannia v Ukraini*, p. 6.

70 Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu hrystyjanstvi*, p. 59.

71 Andrij Jurash, 'Religieznavchi aspekty panyattya "kanonichna terytoriya"' [Religious Studies Aspects of the Concept 'Canonical Territory'], in *Ukraina: Chyya kanonichna terytoriya?* [Ukraine: Whose Canonical Territory?] Myroslav Marynovych and others (Ukrainskyj Katolyckyj Universytet, 2006), pp. 6–9 (p. 9).

72 S. V. Sannikov, *Fundament: Nachatki uchenija* [Foundation: The Elements of Teaching], 3rd edn (Odessa: n. pub., 2012), p. 390.

73 Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu hrystyjanstvi*, p. 97. For the influence of the document on the UOC, see Ivan Havano, 'Rozdumy nad "ekumenichnoiu" kontseptsiieiu Rosiiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy' [Thoughts on the 'Ecumenical' Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church], *Bohoslovia* [Theologies], 65 (2001), pp. 110–121 (p. 110).

There is an emphasis in this document, called *Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church toward Other Christian Confessions* (hereafter *Basic Principles*),[74] that the Orthodox Church is the only one true Church of Christ from which others are separated, in particular Protestant churches.[75] This is something that can be described through 'Orthodox Exclusiveness', according to Andrej Murzin (Baptist) and Ivan Havano (Greek-Catholic).[76] The Orthodox Church does not see any reason to speak about the equality of all churches. Others should join Orthodoxy through 'repentance, conversion and renewal', accepting right beliefs definitely in an Orthodox understanding.[77] Regarding right beliefs, in another document from the ROC published in 2005, we hear that others should accept the vision according to which the Orthodox Church 'maintains the teaching taught by Christ the Saviour to His disciples fully and without any error'.[78]

Despite the fact that they believe the ideal church is Orthodox, according to *Basic Principles,* other churches can still be seen as places where God's grace works, though not fully.[79] Thus, we have the fact of Orthodox recognition that grace is working (even if partially) in other churches on the one hand, while on the other there is the ongoing emphasis on the position of 'only saving Orthodoxy'. In such a situation, the logical step for the non-Orthodox churches, who have received

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74 RPTs, 'Osnovnye printsipy otnoshenija k inoslaviju Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi' [Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church toward the Other Christian Confessions], mospat, n.d. <https://mospat.ru/ua/documents/177-osnovnye-printsipy-otnosheniya-k-inoslaviyu-russkoy-pravoslavnoy-tserkvi/> [accessed 8 June 2024]. Available in English on the web pages of the Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church that can be accessed through Orthodox Europe at <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx>.

75 RPTs, 'Osnovnye printsipy otnoshenija k inoslaviju Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi', 1.1, 1.13.

76 Andrej Murzin, *Dialog s pravoslaviem: Govorite istinu s lubovju, nabjudaja za soboju* [Dialogue with Orthodoxy: Speak Truth with Love, Looking for Yourself] (Knigonosha, 2014), p. 22; Havano, 'Rozdumy nad "Ekumenichnoiu" kontseptsiieiu Rosiiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy', p. 112.

77 RPTs, 'Osnovnye printsipy otnoshenija k inoslaviju Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi', 2.7, 4.4.

78 Komissija Moskovskogo Patriarhata i Russkaja Zarubezhnaja Tserkva, 'Ob Otnoshenii Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi k Inoslavnym Veroispovedanijam i Mezhkonfessionalnym Organizatsijam' [About the Relation of the Orthodox Church to Different Confessions and Interfaith Organisations], in *Pravoslavie i inoslavie* [Orthodoxy and Those Expressing Faith Differently] (Nikeja, 2009), by Maksim Kozlov, pp. 154–158 (pp. 155–156). The document can also be seen in the original language at Sedmitza <https://www.sedmitza.ru/lib/text/429880/>.

79 RPTs, 'Osnovnye printsipy otnoshenija k inoslaviju Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi', 1.15.

some grace in advance, would be that they should join Orthodoxy where that grace will be realised fully.[80] The document notes the following important elements for recognising grace in others: 'The Word of God, faith in Christ as God and Saviour who came in the flesh […] and sincere piety.'[81]

Andrej Murzin, examining relations between Protestants and Orthodox followers in Ukraine, comments that according to the document *Basic Principles*, if Protestants for example recognise Christ as God and human, they should not be described as a sect but as 'praising God in a different way' ('inoslavie' in Russian).[82] However, not everything is so clear with this term. As Viktorija Lubashchenko notes, 'inoslavie' together with 'sectarians' and 'those who believe differently' ('inovirtsi' in Ukrainian), all express an Orthodox 'anti-sectarian' position against Protestants.[83] Also, we should not ignore such a negative word as 'heretics' which can linger behind the term 'inoslavie'.[84]

Orthodox voices like theologian Maksim Kozlov, responding to the interpretations of these words, tries to argue that the word 'heretic' (from the Greek *haíresis*) in particular should not be understood as 'an abusive concept; heretic is simply someone who is separated from the unity, the fullness of the Universal Church'.[85] The same is true with the word 'sect', which, according to Sergej Savchenko, is simply a technical term which does not have to immediately imply an offensive emphasis. Everything will depend on the closeness of a particular community to truth. Yet, the reality is that for an ordinary Orthodox follower, there is no difference when comparing Baptists with Jehovah's Witness

[80] Havano, 'Rozdumy nad "ekumenichnoiu" kontseptsiieiu Rosiiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy', p. 114.
[81] RPTs, 'Osnovnye printsipy otnoshenija k inoslaviju Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi', 1.16.
[82] Murzin, *Dialog s Pravoslaviem: Govorite istinu s lubovju, nabjudaja za soboju*, pp. 22–23.
[83] Viktorija Lubashchenko, 'Protestantskyj pogljad: za i proty' [Protestant View: Standing for and against], in *Sotsijalno zorientovani documenty Ukrajinskoji Greko-Katolytskoji Tserkvy* [Socially Oriented Documents of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church] ed. by Lesja Kovalenko (Vydavnytstvo Ukrajinskogo Katolytskogo Universytetu, 2008), pp. 635–645 (p. 645).
[84] Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu hrystyjanstvi*, p. 57.
[85] Kozlov, *Pravoslavie i inoslavie*, p. 41.

communities; both can be seen as sects with the negative connotations of this word.[86]

The ROC, as Ivan Havano shows, can be quite uncomfortable with the existence of others and with the ecumenical movement in particular. Havano analyses Orthodox sources published close to the date of *Basic Principles* and draws our attention to the fact that Protestants, in addition to Catholics, are seen more as enemies. They are associated with the West, which is seen as a threat to the Russian Federation. There is a call in the Orthodox Church to be careful with ecumenism which can water down the truth. We might note that even Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement is about proclaiming the truth to others.[87]

When we focus on another large Orthodox Church in Ukraine, the OCU, we see that the Church also tries to 'occupy a dominant position in Ukrainian Christianity', particularly among all Orthodox churches.[88] According to Lubashchenko, there are some signs of antipathy found in this church towards religious freedom as the possibility for a person to choose non-Orthodoxy, and this dislike can frighten Protestants.[89]

The views the OCU has in relation to others can be analysed through the lens of the document *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church* (hereafter *For the Life of the World*)[90] prepared by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2019. This is the approach recommended by Rostyslav Vorobii, an OCU priest who holds the

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[86] Sergej Savchenko, "'Eretiki", "sektanty", "idolopoklonniki". O predelah politkorrektnosti v mezhkonfessionalnyh otnoshenijah' ['Heretics', 'Sectarians', 'Idol Worshippers': On the Limits of Political Correctness in Interfaith Relations], *Religija v Ukrajini* [Religion in Ukraine], 30 November 2011 <https://www.religion.in.ua/main/analitica/page,1,1,13345-eretiki-sektanty-idolopoklonniki-o-predelax-politkorrektnosti-v-mezhkonfessionalnyx-otnosheniyax.html> [accessed 8 June 2024].

[87] Havano, 'Rozdumy nad "ekumenichnoiu" kontseptsiieiu Rosiiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy', pp. 111, 117–118.

[88] Pano, *Motyvy ta naslidky vtruchannia vlady u mizhkonfesiine protystoiannia v Ukraini*, p. 11.

[89] Lubashchenko, 'Protestantskyj pogljad: za i proty', p. 645.

[90] Ecumenical Patriarchate, 'For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church', goarch, n.d. <https://www.goarch.org/ru/social-ethos?> [accessed 8 June 2024].

position of secretary of the Synodal Commission on Inter-Christian Relations.[91]

The document, attending to ecumenical relations in Section VI, also identifies the Orthodox Church with the Church of Christ.[92] Radu Bordeianu describes the Orthodox Church as the one church that is church 'in the fullest sense'.[93] The Orthodox Church tries to show 'the beauty of Orthodoxy' to others and calls them 'to the fullness of the faith'[94] which definitely abides in Orthodoxy. Nevertheless, the Church is open to being enriched by others who are described in the category of brothers and sisters. There is willingness from the Ecumenical Patriarchate to ask for forgiveness from those in this category in case there is any guilt, seeking for unity as the final end.[95] It can be noted regarding the category usage of brothers and sisters that while the ROC document does not speak about brotherly/sisterly relations, the vocabulary 'brothers' in relation to Protestants is present among the followers of the UOC too, even though this church is under the influence of the ROC.[96]

In turning to relations between churches and their followers in particular locations, we have an episode that occurred in Volyn, where in one village, the UOC tried to prevent Baptists from performing a baptism in a local lake. One Orthodox priest specifically spoke about canonical territory in relation to the place for baptism. In addition, he expressed dissatisfaction with the law on freedom for all religious denominations.[97] S. Tretjak, speaking about the Baptist church in Lubny

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91 Rostyslav Vorobii, personal email to the author, 15 May 2024.

92 Ecumenical Patriarchate, 'For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church', §50.

93 Radu Bordeianu, 'Reciprocity and Particularity in Orthodox Ecumenical Relations', *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies*, 5.1 (2022), pp. 124–126 (p. 124) <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/875108/pdf> [accessed 27 September 2024].

94 Ecumenical Patriarchate, 'For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church', §51.

95 Ecumenical Patriarchate, 'For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church', §51–52.

96 Svjato-Troitskij Ioninskij Monastyr, *Otvety pravoslavnyh na voprosy protestantov* [Orthodox Answers to Protestants' Questions] (Svjato-Troitskij Ioninskij Monastyr, n.d.), p. 3.

97 Dmitro Dovbush, 'Konflikt dovkola ozera: Yak na Volyni pravoslavni baptistam hrestytysya zavazhaly [Conflict Around the Lake: How the Orthodox in Volyn tried to Prevent Baptism as

village (Poltava region), describes the Orthodox attitude to Baptists in this location as 'aggressive'. Such an attitude is also adopted by many people who see Orthodoxy to be their traditional religion.[98]

We should say that it is not only Orthodoxy that can behave badly in relation to Baptist churches; the reality is that Baptists can behave similarly towards Orthodoxy. Ukrainian Baptist theologian Mihajlo Cherenkov notes that Baptists in post-Soviet countries would, if they had the possibility to control the educational area in their countries, remove the right of Orthodoxy to teach religion in schools. Cherenkov makes the observation that Baptists are only ready to defend religious freedom if it relates to their movement.[99] Besides, Baptists can be among those Protestants Leonid Kishkovskij describes, based on his Eastern European experience, who 'often criticise hardly or even offensively' everything related to the Orthodox.[100] Protestant criticism can be expressed in the Ukrainian context with the following words: 'There are only dead traditions, ceremonial religion.'[101] As Sergej Savchenko notes regarding Protestants in post-Soviet countries, they can be offended to hear others connecting them to being a sect. Yet, they can do the same in relation to others, including Orthodoxy. Orthodox followers can be described as 'idol worshipers' or 'conjurers with relics and icons'.[102]

Delivered by Baptists], *RISU*, 5 July 2017 <https://risu.ua/konflikt-dovkola-ozera-yak-na-volini-pravoslavni-baptistam-hrestitisya-zavazhali_n85471> [accessed 8 June 2024].

98 S. Tretjak, 'Tserkva "Nadija" (m. Lubny)' [The Church of Hope (Lubny city], in *Vslid za Hristom: Narysy z istoriji evangelsko-baptistskyh tserkov v Ukrajini* [Following Christ: Essays on the History of Evangelical-Baptist Churches in Ukraine], book 1, ed. by Oleksand Bezpartochnyj (Kremenchuk: Hrystyjanska Zorja, 2007), pp. 223–225 (p. 225).

99 M. N. Cherenkov, 'Svoboda sovesti v istorii i praktike baptizma: Deklaracii i realnost' [Freedom of Conscience in the History and Practice of the Baptist Movement: Declarations and Reality], in *400-letie baptizma i princip svobody sovesti: Istoricheskij, bogoslovskij i sociokulturnyj kontext* [400-years of Baptist Movement and the Principle of Religious Conscience: Historical, Theological and Social-Cultural Context], ed. by S. Sannikov and others (Odessa: n. pub., 2010), pp. 99–106 (p. 102).

100 Leonid Kishkovskij, 'Vidpovid Miroslavu Volfu' [The Response to Miroslav Volf], in *Religijna svoboda i prava ljudyny* [Religious Freedom and Human Rights], ed. by Myroslav Marynovych and Lesja Kovalenko, vol. 3 (Monastyr Svyato-Ivanivska Lavra ta Vydavnychyj Viddil 'Svichado', 2004), pp. 411–414 (p. 411).

101 Murzin, *Dialog s pravoslaviem: Govorite istinu s lubovju, nabjudaja za soboju*, p. 8.

102 Savchenko, '"Eretiki", "sektanty", "idolopoklonniki". O predelah politkorrektnosti v mezhkonfessionalnyh otnoshenijah'.

Despite the existence of negative experiences in relations between traditions, it is certainly possible to speak about positive relations as well. For example, we can mention the call to enrichment between traditions that has been made by Ukrainian Baptist theologian Mihajlo Cherenkov in his book *Vidkrytyj protestantizm* [Open Protestantism].[103] At the same time, it is interesting to observe that the publisher of Cherenkov's book was one of the Orthodox educational institutions in Ukraine. Cherenkov is even mentioned among the lecturers of this university.[104] This can be seen as a mark of openness and the overcoming of 'haughtiness', which, according to Sannikov in his analysis of Orthodoxy in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, started to appear at the end of the twentieth century. Sannikov testifies with gladness to the 'return of the idea of personal faith and personal experience of communication with God for every Christian' in Orthodoxy, especially in view of the negative approach to non-Orthodoxy that can be seen in the ROC.[105]

Another positive experience to mention is the cooperation that takes place at such formations as the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations (UCCRO), which has been in existence since 1996. The UCCRO has many different interests, among which are the dialogue between different religious bodies and church and state relations.[106] It should be noted, however, that while the UCCRO can look like an ecumenical body, it is not such an entity. When the UCCRO was created, it was not that churches or religious organisations themselves looked for any kind of unity and decided to create such a platform in which to work. The initiative came purely from the State's interest in the development of relations with groups representing the religious segment of society.[107] Therefore, we should be careful not to connect the 'constant dialogue' spoken about by the head of the OCU

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[103] Mihajlo Cherenkov *Vidkrytyj protestantizm* [Open Protestantism] (Vidkrytyj Pravoslavnyj Universytet Sviatoi Sofii-Premudrosti; Duh i Litera, 2017). See specifically the section 'Protestantism and Historical Churches', pp. 79–88.

[104] Vidkrytyj Pravoslavnyj Universytet Sviatoi Sofii-Premudrosti, 'Lectory', oou, n.d. <https://oou.org.ua/lectors/> [accessed 7 September 2024].

[105] Sannikov, *Fundament: Nachatki uchenija*, pp. 425–427.

[106] UCCRO, 'Information about UCCRO', vrciro, n.d. <https://vrciro.org.ua/en/council/info> [accessed 8 June 2024].

[107] Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu hrystyjanstvi*, p. 105.

in the context of the UCCRO's work[108] with ecumenical dialogue. Baptists in particular try to stay away from ecumenical initiatives. This is what the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic scholar Myroslav Marynovych discusses, noting that 'some Protestant groups (Ukrainian Baptists, for example) even restrain themselves from taking part in ecumenical events trying to avoid involvement in the doctrinally foreign projects of other denominations'.[109] This echoes the attitude to ecumenism discussed in the second section of this article. If we speak about dialogue in the UCCRO, it is more in the sense of discussing practical issues. For example, in December 2006, the State was asked not to allow same-sex marriage to gain rights at the level of legislation. From the UCCRO's perspective, legislation should support only traditional families, though the Council also added that it was against discrimination in relation to those having a different vision of the family.[110]

In summary, we can note that this period shows the continuation of more positive dynamics in relations between Orthodox and Baptist followers. We did not find evidence of such harsh pressure from Orthodox churches towards Baptists in independent Ukraine as was common during the time of the Russian Empire. However, some tensions are obviously still present. Followers of both Baptist and Orthodox churches can accuse each other of being mistaken and of trying to convert others to their own tradition. Nevertheless, there are

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108 PTsU, 'Mytropolyt Epifanij zustrivsja z naukovtsjamy j spetsialistamy z pytan religiji v Dzhordzhtaunskomu universyteti u Vashyngtoni' [Metropolitan Epiphanius Met with Scholars and Specialists in Religion at Georgetown University in Washington], pomisna, 25 October 2019 <https://www.pomisna.info/uk/vsi-novyny/mytropolyt-epifanij-zustrivsya-z-naukovtsyamy-j-spetsialistamy-z-pytan-religiyi-v-dzhordzhtaunskomu-universyteti-u-vashyngtoni/> [accessed 8 June 2024].

109 Myroslav Marynovych, *An Ecumenist Analyzes the History and Prospects of Religion in Ukraine* (Ukrainian Catholic University Press, 2004), p. 43.

110 Vseukrajinska Rada Tserkov i religijnyh organizatsij, 'Vidkrytyj lyst Vseukrajinskoji Rady Tserkov i Religijnyh Organizatsij do Verhovnoji Rady Ukrajiny z pryvodu initsiatyv legalizatsiji tak zvanyh odnostatevyh shlubiv (reestratsiji odnostatevyh partnerstv)' [Open Letter of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations to the Supreme Council of Ukraine Concerning the Initiative on Legalisation for so Called Same-Sex Marriages (Legitimation of Same-Sex Partners)], in *Sotsijalno zorientovani documenty Ukrajinskoji Greko-Katolytskoji Tserkvy* [Socially Oriented Documents of Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church], ed. by Lesja Kovalenko (Vydavnytstvo Ukrajinskogo Katolytskogo Universytetu, 2008), pp. 503–505.

also the marks of cooperation, as, for example, in the case of the UCCRO or Mihajlo Cherenkov and the Open Orthodox University.

Conclusion

As we finish our quest to discover positive changes in relations between Baptist and Orthodox traditions since 1917 as a contrast to times in the Russian Empire, we can now summarise the evidence of such changes. The time of severe persecution on the part of the Orthodox Church towards Baptists in general certainly ceased with the end of the Russian Empire.

We saw how in the USSR the Orthodox Church lost its primacy within the State, passing with other religious groups through persecution. In this period, some Orthodox followers became open to Protestants. As a result, we heard about I. S. Prokhanov, a Baptist movement leader responsible for the Evangelical Christians Union, who developed positive relations with the Renovationism movement in Orthodoxy. Then, we have testimony from Baptists about cooperation particularly in obtaining the Bible in communist times.

Contemporary history continues to speak about positive relations as well. We find Baptist theologian Mihajlo Cherenkov's view that each tradition can enrich others. It is important to note his cooperation with an Orthodox educational institution. We also cannot ignore the usage by the Orthodox of the expression 'brothers' in relation to Protestants. In addition, Orthodox and Baptist Churches have also cooperated in the UCCRO, advocating Christian values.

Despite the presence of the positive experience of relations, the negatives have also remained. We found many cases of tensions in western Ukraine. Those that involve violence are especially unpleasant. Up to the present, each tradition has been ready to concentrate on its exclusivity and the mistakes of the other, and it should also be acknowledged that the Baptists themselves have distanced from ecumenism, which they consider could lead to a loss of true faith tied with their identity.

Attitudes Towards Sexuality and Substances Among Young Canadian Baptists and Their Leaders: Exploring Personal, Psychological, and Religious Factors

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Abstract
This study explores the effect of personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (psychological type and emotionality), and religious factors (intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation) on shaping attitudes towards sexuality and substances among young Canadian Baptists and their leaders. Data provided by 181 participants attending a summer youth mission and service programme demonstrated the centrality of intrinsic religiosity in shaping stricter attitudes within both moral domains. While young Baptists and their leaders shared similar positions and attitudes towards sexuality, young Baptists held stricter views than their leaders on substances.

Keywords
Moral values; intrinsic religious orientation; psychology of religion; psychological type; prayer; youth

Introduction

Within the empirical psychology of religion there has been a long-established interest in the connections between religion and moral values. The complexity of empirical findings within the field has led to two main conclusions: that religion may impact various moral domains differently, and that religion itself is a complex phenomenon in which various components of religion may impact the same moral domain differently. The present article takes both of these conclusions seriously and proposes to discuss each in turn, first discussing moral domains and then discussing religious orientations, before introducing consideration of how personal factors and psychological factors may also interact with the association between religion and moral values.

Moral Domains

In an earlier study, Andrew Village and Leslie J. Francis employed factor analysis in order to identify how moral domains were shaped among sixteen- to eighteen-year-old students.[1] A key finding from this study was that issues relating to sexuality and issues relating to substances loaded clearly on different factors. Other studies within the empirical psychology of religion have confirmed, however, that both domains are significantly related to a common measure of religious practice. For example, in a study of values among 33 982 thirteen- to fifteen-year-old adolescents, Francis explored the connections between religion and attitudes toward sexuality and attitudes toward substances, employing church attendance as a measure of religion.[2] In terms of sexual issues, while 10% of young people who never attended church rated sexual

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[1] Andrew Village and Leslie J. Francis, 'The Development of the Francis Moral Values Scales: A Study Among 16- to 18-year-old Students Taking Religious Studies at A level in the UK', *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 37.3 (2016), pp. 347–356, doi:10.1080/13617672.2016.1232568.

[2] Leslie J. Francis, *The Values Debate: A Voice from the Pupils* (Woburn Press, 2001).

intercourse outside of marriage as wrong, the proportion rose to 28% among weekly churchgoers; while 34% of young people who never attended church rated abortion as wrong, the proportion rose to 47% among weekly churchgoers. In terms of substances, while 16% of young people who never attended church rated getting drunk as wrong, the proportion rose to 28% of weekly churchgoers; while 39% of young people who never attended church rated smoking cigarettes as wrong, the proportion rose to 49% among weekly churchgoers.

Religious Orientation

The social scientific study of religion has routinely differentiated among three core components of religion: religious affiliation, either conceptualised in terms of faith traditions (say Christian or Muslim) or conceptualised in terms of denominations (say Catholic or Presbyterian); religious practice, generally conceptualised in terms of frequency of religious attendance; and religious belief, often conceptualised in broad terms (say belief in God, differentiating among atheists, agnostics, and theists). It was the puzzling data generated by employing these broad components of religion that stimulated Gordon Allport to question their utility and precision.[3] In particular, Allport confronted the puzzle that, while religious teaching generally promoted inclusion and acceptance, high levels of church attendance were found to be associated with exclusion and prejudice. Allport addressed this problem by proposing the notion of 'religious orientation' and differentiating between two opposing orientation styles, extrinsic religiosity and intrinsic religiosity. Allport and Michael Ross then proposed two scales designed to operationalise these two orientations: an eleven-item measure of extrinsic religiosity and a nine-item measure of intrinsic religiosity.[4]

[3] Gordon W. Allport, 'Religious Context of Prejudice', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 5.3 (1966), pp. 447–457, doi:10.2307/1384172.

[4] Gordon W. Allport and J. Michael Ross, 'Personal Religious Orientation and Prejudice', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 5.4 (1967), pp. 432–443, doi:10.1037/h0021212.

For Allport and Ross, extrinsic religiosity and intrinsic religiosity were not opposite ends of a single continuum, but two largely independent continua.[5] As a consequence, individuals could be located in one of four positions on their two continua: high intrinsic scores and low extrinsic scores (pure intrinsic religion); high extrinsic scores and low intrinsic scores (pure extrinsic religion); high intrinsic scores and high extrinsic scores (indiscriminately pro religion); and low extrinsic scores and low intrinsic scores (anti religion). Allport's model of religious orientation was modified and augmented by Daniel Batson and Larry Ventis who introduced a third orientation styled as quest religiosity, together with a six-item scale.[6] Subsequently, Batson and Patricia Schoenrade introduced a twelve-item measure of quest religiosity.[7]

Refining the three-orientation model further, Francis introduced the New Indices of Religious Orientation (NIRO).[8] Conceptually, the NIRO identified three components for each of the three orientations: intrinsic religiosity that comprised integration, public religion, and personal religion; extrinsic religiosity that comprised social support, personal support, and compartmentalisation; quest religiosity that comprised existentialism, self-criticism, and openness to change. Operationally the three scales proposed by the NIRO each comprised three items for each of the three components.

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5 Allport and Ross, 'Personal Religious Orientation and Prejudice'.

6 C. Daniel Batson and W. Larry Ventis, *The Religious Experience: A Social Psychological Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 1982).

7 C. Daniel Batson and Patricia A. Schoenrade, 'Measuring Religion as Quest: Reliability Concerns', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 30.4 (1991a), pp. 430–447, doi:10.2307/1387278; C. Daniel Batson and Patricia A. Schoenrade, 'Measuring Religion as Quest: Validity Concerns', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 30.4 (1991b), pp. 416–429, doi:10.2307/1387277.

8 Leslie J. Francis, 'Introducing the New Indices of Religious Orientation (NIRO): Conceptualisation and Measurement', *Mental Health, Religion & Culture,* 10.6 (2007), pp. 585–602, doi:10.1080/13674670601035510.

While the various scales developed to measure the three components of religious orientation theory (intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest) have made important contributions to the literature, two caveats need voicing. First, the quest orientation, as introduced by Batson and Ventis,[9] is grounded in a different conceptual framework from the two orientations originally proposed by Allport and Ross,[10] with the consequence that current research often continues to focus on the contrast between the intrinsic and extrinsic orientations. In terms of explaining the associations between religious orientations and moral domains, intrinsic and extrinsic remain core. Second, while the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the intrinsic and extrinsic orientations through multi-item scales is of good scientific value, for practical research purposes there are two good proxy measures: frequency of religious attendance captures the extrinsic orientation, and frequency of personal prayer captures the intrinsic orientation. The present study employs these proxy measures because of the time constraint placed on the survey.

Personal Factors

The association between religion and moral values may be contaminated by two core personal factors, namely sex and age. Sex differences in religiosity was deemed by Michael Argyle as being, at that time, the best-established finding within the empirical psychology of religion.[11] More recent reviews of the evidence by Francis[12] and by Francis and Gemma Penny[13] support that early claim, but with two caveats: the finding is mainly based on evidence from Christian and post-Christian societies;

[9] Batson and Ventis, *The Religious Experience*.
[10] Allport and Ross, 'Personal Religious Orientation and Prejudice'.
[11] Michael Argyle, *Religious Behaviour* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).
[12] Leslie J. Francis, 'The Psychology of Gender Differences in Religion: A Review of Empirical Research', *Religion,* 27.1 (1997), pp. 81–96, doi:10.1006/reli.1996.0066.
[13] Leslie J. Francis and Gemma Penny, 'Gender Difference in Religion', in *Religion, Personality, and Social Behaviour*, ed. by Vassilis Saroglou (Psychology Press, 2014), pp. 313–317.

while the evidence is secure, the theories advanced to account for the differences remain less secure. At the same time, there are clear sex differences in moral values as evidenced by Francis.[14] Age differences in religiosity are particularly evidenced during childhood and adolescence, with significant changes in religious thinking[15] and deterioration in attitude toward religion.[16] At the same time, there are clear age differences in moral values.[17]

Psychological Factors

The association between religion and moral values may also be contaminated by psychological factors. Although there has been a long interest within the psychology of religion concerning the association between personality and religion, only recently has consensus begun to emerge in the literatures. In a second major review of the field, Argyle and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi[18] concluded that the jury was still out on this issue, but by the time of their third review, Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle[19] concluded that the empirical data now suggested clear links between individual differences in religiosity and the three-dimensional model of personality proposed by Hans Eysenck and Sybil Eysenck.[20] More recently, a series of studies has documented consistent patterns between individual differences in religiosity and the Jungian model of psychological type[21] as operationalised by instruments like the Myers-

14 Francis, *The Values Debate*.
15 Ronald J. Goldman, *Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964).
16 William K. Kay and Leslie J. Francis, *Drift from the Churches: Attitude Toward Christianity During Childhood and Adolescence* (University of Wales Press, 1996).
17 Francis, *The Values Debate*.
18 Michael Argyle and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *The Social Psychology of Religion* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).
19 Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi and Michael Argyle, *The Psychology of Religious Behaviour, Belief and Experience* (Routledge, 1997).
20 Hans J. Eysenck and Sybil Bianca Giuletta Eysenck, *Manual of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Adult and Junior)* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1975).
21 Carl G. Jung, *Psychological Types: The Collected Works*, vol. 6 (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

Briggs Type Indicator[22] and the Francis Psychological Type Scales.[23] At the same time, individual differences in moral values may be impacted by personality.[24]

Research Objective

Against this background, the present study has three primary research aims. The first aim is to explore the factor structure of the participants' views on contemporary moral issues and to test whether it is possible to develop relevant scales on the basis of this factor structure. The second aim is to test the effect of personal variables (age and sex), psychological variables (as assessed by psychological type theory and emotionality), and religious variables (intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity) on individual differences in scores on these scales concerned with moral values. The third aim is to assess whether different domains of moral values within this population relate to personal variables, psychological variables, and religious variables in the same or in different ways.

Method

Procedure

All the young people attending the week-long Tidal Impact summer youth mission and service programme sponsored by the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, held in 2023, were invited to complete a detailed questionnaire following the completion of a worship service.

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[22] Isabel Briggs Myers, Mary H. McCaulley, *Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (Consulting Psychologists Press, 1985).

[23] Leslie J. Francis, *Faith and Psychology: Personality, Religion and the Individual* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005); Leslie J. Francis, Patrick Laycock, and Christine Brewster, 'Exploring the Factor Structure of the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS) among a Sample of Anglican Clergy in England', *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 20.9 (2017), pp. 930–941, doi:10.1080/13674676.2017.1375469.

[24] Leslie J. Francis, David W. Lankshear, Mandy Robbins, Andrew Village, and Tania ap Siôn, 'Defining and Measuring the Contribution of Anglican Secondary Schools to Students' Religious, Personal and Social Values', *Journal of Empirical Theology,* 27.1 (2014), pp. 57–84, doi:10.1163/15709256-12341294.

Following an explanation of the nature of the survey and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, the questionnaires were distributed to the young people. Participation was voluntary, but the overall level of interest in the topic meant that few young people failed to complete the exercise. A total of 181 questionnaires were returned that provided data fully completed for the analyses reported in the present study (that means with no missing data).

Measures

Sex was assessed by the following question. Are you: male (1), female (2), other (please specify) (3), prefer not to say (4).

Age was assessed by the following question. How old are you? 12 (1), 13 (2), 14 (3), 15 (4), 16 (5), 17 (6), 18 (7), 19 (8), 20–24 (9), 25–29 (10), 30–39 (11), and 40 and over (12).

Extrinsic religiosity was assessed by the following question. How often do you attend a worship service (other than youth group): nearly every week (5), at least once a month (4), sometimes (3), once or twice a year (2), never (1).

Intrinsic religiosity was assessed by the following question. How often do you pray by yourself: nearly every day (5), at least once a week (4), at least once a month (3), occasionally (2), never (1).

Psychological variables were assessed by the Adolescent form of the Francis Psychological Type and Emotional Temperament Scales.[25] This is a fifty-item instrument comprising five sets of ten forced-choice items related to each of the four components of psychological type theory: orientation (introversion and extraversion), perceiving process (sensing and intuition), judging process (thinking and feeling), and attitude toward the external world (judging and perceiving), and augmented by

[25] Leslie J. Francis, Bruce Fawcett, and Ursula McKenna, 'Exploring the Factor Structure of the Adolescent Form of the Francis Psychological Type and Emotional Temperament Scales (FPTETSA) among Canadian Baptist Youth: Full Form and Short Form', *Mental Health, Religion & Culture,* 1.1 (2023), pp. 1–13, doi:10.1080/13674676.2023.2256676.

emotionality (calm and volatile). In the foundation paper, Francis, Bruce Fawcett, and Ursula McKenna[26] reported the following alpha coefficients[27] for these scales: orientation, α = .78; perceiving process, α = .71; judging process, α = .73; attitude toward the external world, α = .74; emotionality, α = .75. In the present study, the following alpha coefficients were reported: orientation, α = .80; perceiving process, α = .59; judging process, α = .70; attitude toward the external world, α = .63; emotionality, α = .75.

Views on contemporary moral issues were assessed by a battery of twenty-three items assessed on a five-point scale: always right (1), usually right, sometimes wrong (2), don't know (3), usually wrong, sometimes right (4), always wrong (5). While covering a range of issues, multiple items concentrated on the use of substances and on sexuality.

Participants

Of the 181 participants who provided full data, 78 were male and 103 female; 21 were twelve years of age, 27 were thirteen years old, 19 were fourteen years old, 19 were fifteen years old, 15 were sixteen years old, 12 were seventeen years old, 6 were eighteen years old, 4 were nineteen years old, 24 were in their twenties, 14 in their thirties, and 20 were aged 40 and over; 75% attended church nearly every week, 7% at least once a month, 11% sometimes, 3% once or twice a year, and 4% never attended; 50% prayed nearly every day, 19% at least once a week, 4% at least once a month, 15% occasionally, and 6% never prayed.

Data analysis

The data were analysed by the SPSS package using the frequency, factor, reliability, correlation, and regression routines.

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[26] Francis, Fawcett, and McKenna, 'Exploring the Factor Structure Adolescent Form of the Francis Psychological Type and Emotional Temperament Scales (FPTETSA) among Canadian Baptist Youth'.

[27] Lee J. Cronbach, 'Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests', *Psychometrika,* 16.3 (1951), pp. 297–334, doi:10.1007/BF02310555.

Results

Table 1: Rotated Factor Solution

	factor 1	factor 2	factor 3
Drinking alcohol		.71	
Vaping		.74	
Using cannabis (marijuana) below the legal age		.59	
Using cannabis (marijuana) above the legal age	.43	.63	
Smoking cigarettes		.70	
Sexual intercourse prior to marriage	.89		
Oral sex prior to marriage	.85		
An unmarried couple living together	.77		
Abortion	.69		
Sexual relations between two individuals of the same sex	.79		
Viewing pornography	.66		
Sexting (sending nude images by texting)	.58		
Putting to death people convicted of violent crimes			.79
Placing violent prisoners in solitary confinement			.83

Note: loadings below .30 suppressed
N = 181
Cumulative variance explained, 60.4%

The first step in data analysis was designed to explore the factor structure of all diverse twenty-three items concerning views on contemporary moral issues. Using an iterative process, the two sets of items concerning substances and sexuality emerged as distinct factors, with a third factor attracting two items on the treatment of criminals. The final rotated three factor solution is presented in Table 1. Together from this set of fourteen items, the three-factor solution explained 60.4% of the variance. Although one item concerning using cannabis above the legal age cross-loaded on the sexuality factor, this item was retained to increase the number of items in the substances factor.

Table 2: Scale of Attitude Towards Substances

	r	Yes %
Drinking alcohol	.45	25
Vaping	.55	72
Using cannabis (marijuana) below the legal age	.47	80
Using cannabis (marijuana) above the legal age	.59	30
Smoking cigarettes	.56	60
alpha	.74	

Note: *r* = correlation between the item and the sum of the other four items
yes % = proportion answering as 'always wrong'
N = 181

Table 3: Scale of Attitude Towards Sexual Practice

	r	Yes %
Sexual intercourse prior to marriage	.83	56
Oral sex prior to marriage	.78	58
An unmarried couple living together	.71	24
Abortion	.67	29
Sexual relations between two individuals of the same sex	.67	54
Viewing pornography	.63	71
Sexting (sending nude images by texting)	.56	69
alpha	.89	

Note: *r* = correlation between the item and the sum of the other six items
yes % = proportion answering as 'always wrong'
N = 181

The second step in data analysis was designed to explore more fully the scaling properties of the two emerging scales concerning attitude towards substances and attitude towards sexuality. Tables 2 and 3 discuss each of these scales in turn in terms of the correlations between the individual items and the sum of the other items in the scale, the proportion of the participants endorsing the 'always wrong' response, and the alpha coefficient.[28] The five-item scale of attitude towards substances reported a satisfactory alpha coefficient of .74; each item correlated well with the sum of the other four items; the five items displayed a good range of discrimination, varying from 25% who rated

[28] Cronbach, 'Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests'.

drinking alcohol as always wrong to 80% who rated using cannabis (marijuana) below the legal age as always wrong. The seven-item scale of attitude toward sexuality reported a satisfactory alpha coefficient of .89; each item correlated well with the sum of the other six items; the seven items displayed a good range of discrimination, varying from 24% who rated an unmarried couple living together as always wrong to 71% who rated viewing pornography as always wrong.

Table 4: Bivariate Correlations

	Sexual	Substances
Psychological variables		
Thinking	-.17*	-.23**
Judging	.30***	.29***
Emotionality	.21**	.01
Extraversion	.01	.06
Sensing	.01	-.13
Personal variables		
Age	.22**	-.17*
Sex	.07	.16*
Religious variables		
Church attendance	.19**	.17*
Personal prayer	.51***	.31***

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$
Correlation between sexual and substances = .50

The third step in data analysis was designed to examine the bivariate correlations between the three groups of predictor variables (psychological, personal, and religious) and each of the two scales (sexuality and substances). In terms of the religious variables, the data presented in Table 4 demonstrated that both personal prayer and church attendance are statistically significant predictors of higher scores on both scales, and that of these two, personal prayer is the stronger predictor. In terms of personal variables, the correlations suggested that both sex and age function differently in relation to the two scales. Older participants recorded statistically significant higher scores on the scale of attitude toward sexuality and statistically significant lower scores on the scale of attitude to substances. While females recorded higher scores on the scale of attitude towards substances, there were no statistically significant sex differences on the scale of attitude towards sexuality. In terms of psychological factors, thinking types reported lower scores than feeling types on both scales, and judging types reported higher scores than perceiving types on both scales. Higher emotionality scores were associated with higher scores on the scale of attitude towards sexuality ($r = .21, p < .01$), but unrelated to scores on the scale of attitude towards substances ($r = .01$, ns).

In terms of the bivariate correlations, there was a statistically significant correlation between the scale of attitude towards sexuality and the scale of attitude towards substances ($r = .50$, $p < .001$). A correlation of this strength indicates that the two measures follow similar trajectories but are far from identical. The independence of the two measures is confirmed by differences in association with some of the predictor variables.

Table 5: Regression Models

	Sexual	Substances
Psychological variables		
Thinking	.03	-.14*
Judging	.15*	.14*
Emotionality	-.14	-.07
Extraversion	-.01	.05
Sensing	-.06	-.09
Personal variables		
Age	.03	-.29***
Sex	.05	.08
Religious variables		
Church attendance	.06	.10
Personal prayer	.40***	.26***
r^2	.29	.25

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The final step in data analysis was designed to employ multiple regression to assess the overall impact of the three sets of predictor variables (personal, psychological, and religious) on individual differences in attitudes towards sexuality and attitude towards substances. In this analysis, the predictor variables were entered in three steps in the order of psychological variables, personal variables, and religious variables. The first and clearest conclusion from these regression models is that the strongest predictor of individual

differences in both attitudinal domains is intrinsic religiosity. Participants committed to personal prayer adopt stricter moral absolutes in terms of sexuality and substances. When personal prayer is taken into account, no additional variance is explained by church attendance. The second conclusion is that young Baptists and their leaders adopt similar attitudes towards sexuality and that young Baptists adopt stricter attitudes than their leaders towards substances. Once these two variables have been taken into account, statistically significant sex differences do not emerge in either attitudinal domain, and only two of the five psychological variables now record statistical significance: judging predicts significantly higher scores in terms of attitude toward sexuality and attitude towards substances; thinking predicts significantly lower scores in terms of attitude toward substances.

Conclusion

Drawing on theory suggesting that religion may impact various moral domains differently, that intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity may relate to moral domains differently, that personal variables (age and sex) may interact with the association between religion and moral domains, and that psychological variables (personality) may contaminate the association between religion and moral domains, the present study set out to address three specific research aims. The first research aim was to explore the factor structure of the views on contemporary moral issues held by young Canadian Baptists. From the wide range of moral issues included in the survey, two clear factors emerged, one concerned with sexuality, and one concerned with substances. Each of these two factors displayed good scaling properties. The five-item scale of attitude towards substances reported an alpha coefficient of .74, with the items displaying a good range of discrimination varying from 25% to 80%. The seven-item scale of attitude towards substances reported an alpha coefficient of .89 with the items displaying a good range of discrimination varying from 24% to 71%. The satisfactory performance of these two scales allowed the other two research aims to be addressed.

The second research aim was to test the bivariate effect of personal variables (age and sex), psychological variables (as assessed by

psychological type theory and emotionality), and religious variables (intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity) on individual differences in scores on the scale of attitudes towards substances and the scale of attitudes toward sexuality. The statistically significant bivariate correlations confirmed that some personal variables, psychological variables, and religious variables, considered individually, were associated with individual differences in the two moral domains. This finding paved the way for transition from bivariate analyses to multivariate regression analyses to address the third research aim.

The third research aim was to assess whether the two different domains of moral values (substances and sexuality) within this population related to personal variables, psychological variables, and religious variables in the same or different ways. Three key conclusions emerged from the regression models. The first conclusion is that intrinsic religiosity (as measured by frequency of personal prayer) was the strongest predictor of stricter moral absolutes in terms of both sexuality and substances. When personal prayer was taken into account, extrinsic religiosity (as measured by frequency of church attendance) added no further predictive power. The second conclusion is that there were no statistically significant sex differences in either of the two moral domains. However, age was reflected differently in the two domains. On the one hand, age was not statistically significant in respect of attitudes towards sexuality. In other words, Baptist youth and their leaders shared similar views in this domain. On the other hand, age was statistically significant in respect of attitudes towards substances. In other words, Baptist youth held a more proscriptive position on substances than their leaders. Third, when personal variables and religious variables were taken into account, only two of the five psychological variables emerged as statistically significant.

The limitations with the present study include the restricted range of moral issues included in the inventory, the assessment of intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity by the proxy measures of prayer frequency and attendance frequency, and the number of participants. These are issues that may be addressed by future studies.

Christological Laxity, Nicodemism, and Baptist Identity: A Reply to Stephen R. Holmes

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Abstract
Stephen R. Holmes has argued that all early General Baptists were both unreflectively orthodox in their trinitarianism and insistent on orthodox Christology as a non-negotiable part of the Christian faith, promoting a relatively tranquil image of Baptist Christology prior to the 1690s debates surrounding Matthew Caffyn (1628–1714). Additionally, he has argued that General Baptist non-negotiables included orthodox Christology even in the 1690s, with latitude allowed merely in the language involved. He has also treated the case of Matthew Caffyn and any potential tolerance of his unorthodoxy as basically not representative of the Baptist tradition. In this article, I offer a response through an examination of Baptist treatment of unorthodox Christology from the movement's beginnings to 1730; subsequently, I offer a view of the unorthodox nature of Caffyn's Christology and an explanation of his behaviour (and that of his peers) during his theological interrogations. While Holmes paints Caffyn as a bold controversialist who would never hide his views, I offer an alternative account based on the then-current English trend of Nicodemism. The article concludes with a brief revisitation of Baptist identity in light of the preceding history.

Keywords
Matthew Caffyn; General Baptists; Christology; Nicodemism

Introduction

In 2019, this journal published an article of mine which earned the reply of Stephen R. Holmes.[1] I appreciate Holmes's thoughtful criticism and the historical dexterity displayed in his response, and I am likewise grateful for his interest in dialoguing on orthodoxy, tolerance, and the intersection of the two in an early Baptist context. My gratitude extends

[1] Kegan A. Chandler, 'Unorthodox Christology in General Baptist History: The Legacy of Matthew Caffyn', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 19.2 (2019), pp. 140–151; Stephen R. Holmes in his 'General Baptist "Primitivism", the Radical Reformation, and Matthew Caffyn: A Response to Kegan A. Chandler', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 21.1 (2021), pp. 123–139.

also to the editor of the journal for allowing us the space to engage. In summary, my 2019 article featured two arguments. The first was concerned with the emergence of unorthodox Christology in General Baptist history and whether or not it should be attributed to an infiltration of 'eighteenth-century rationalism' or rather to the execution of principles like *sola scriptura* which had long characterised the movement and the Reformation more generally. The second argument concerned Matthew Caffyn (1628–1714) and whether or not his unorthodox Christology, whatever its detail, and the historical tolerance of that Christology should be thought of as a legitimate part of the Baptist heritage. In 2021, Holmes levelled an array of claims in my direction about the misreading of facts and the painting of a misleading portrait of General Baptist history and its players. In a few cases, Holmes's criticisms were welcome and have encouraged sharper thinking on some issues, though some of his complaints amount to overstatements of my case. I cannot address all of Holmes's points in this limited space, and while I disagree with Holmes's response to my first argument about Reformation history, in this article I will focus on his response to my second argument about Caffyn and christological laxity in Baptist history, saving further discussion of 'primitivism', 'biblicism', and Radical Reformation history and creeds for another time. My sense is that Holmes has excluded too many vital details about General Baptist history, resulting in a degree of distortion. To resolve our tension, a more complete picture is needed of the progress of christological deviance and laxity among the General Baptists, the fascinating situation and behaviour of Matthew Caffyn in that context, and what it all might mean for current revisitations of the historical Baptist identity.

Christological Laxity and John Smyth

Responding to my historical portrait, Holmes asserts that 'most Anabaptists, and all early General Baptists, were unreflectively orthodox in their trinitarianism'.[2] Having space only to address the situation of the General Baptists, my response must begin with the Baptist founders

[2] Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 123.

John Smyth (c. 1554–c. 1612) and Thomas Helwys (c. 1575–c. 1616). Holmes insists these men did not have a major dispute over Christology,[3] and thus denies my argument that a line can be drawn from Smyth to the unorthodox Matthew Caffyn. It is, of course, not a matter of debate that Smyth at least 'flirted with Anabaptist Melchiorite ["heavenly flesh"] Christology',[4] the content of which Holmes has lately done fine work in reviewing.[5] Regardless of Smyth's final views on the matter, my general argument about the contrast between Smyth and Helwys and the overlap between Smyth and Caffyn — and my understanding of Smyth as at the very least an example of christological laxity in the Baptists' early days — remains viable. Meanwhile, Holmes's minimisation of the situation between Smyth and Helwys seems insufficient. Indeed, Holmes describes Smyth as '*merely* making space' for unorthodox Christology and making a '*minor* christological accommodation'.[6] Yet one need only consult Helwys's writings to the Waterlanders to observe how important the christological problem was between him and the group with which Smyth aimed to commune. To Helwys, the Waterlander's heavenly flesh Christology flatly 'destroy[s] the faith of Christ'. This christological opinion is a 'damnable heresy' which denies the Lord and was condemned by the Apostle Peter.[7] It is for specifically christological reasons that the Waterlanders have a vain faith and no saviour and will receive destruction for their sins.[8] Smyth, says Holmes, at least conceded that Waterlander Christology 'was an acceptable position, even if wrong'.[9] But for Helwys, even those among the Waterlanders who remained ambivalent on where Christ's flesh came from and maintained that 'it is not needful to salvation to know where Christ received his flesh', were leading simple souls 'to walk in the ways of death and condemnation'.[10] For Helwys, Smyth's too-lax

[3] Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', pp. 129–130.
[4] James R. Coggins, 'The Theological Positions of John Smyth', *Baptist Quarterly*, 30.6 (1984), pp. 247–264 (p. 255).
[5] Stephen R. Holmes, 'Evaluating a Neglected Tradition of (Ana)baptist Christology', *Scottish Journal of Theology* (2023), pp. 1–18.
[6] Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 130, emphasis mine.
[7] Joseph Early, Jr, *The Life and Writings of Thomas Helwys* (Mercer University Press, 2009), p. 96.
[8] Early, *Thomas Helwys*, pp. 97–99.
[9] Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 129.
[10] Early, *Thomas Helwys*, p. 102.

approach to Christology ultimately landed Smyth in the same wicked camp as the ambivalent Waterlanders.[11]

If, in the end, a line cannot be drawn between Smyth and Caffyn as unconventional Christologists themselves, a line may nevertheless be drawn between Smyth and Caffyn (and the General Baptists who accepted or protected Caffyn and others despite their disagreement) as christologically lax Baptists.[12] Holmes concedes that if I 'had both Smyth at the start and Caffyn at the end of the century as witnesses to an acceptance of heterodoxy […] something might be made of that. However […] even if [Chandler] is right about Caffyn, one data point cannot establish a trend.'[13] But Smyth is not the only early data point for either unorthodox Christology or christological laxity among the Baptists.

Other Early Baptist Views

The career of early Baptist leader Leonard Busher (fl. 1614), an associate of Smyth's and a figurehead among the Separatists alongside Smyth and Helwys who did not join the Waterlanders, is worth emphasising here.[14] Busher's Christology was evidently a blend of heavenly flesh and unitarian Christology, in which Jesus was not the one God but a pre-existent being with a heavenly body.[15] A letter to Busher from Baptist James Toppe (fl. 1647) describes his view as one in which 'Jesus Christe is not true god nor true man, butt that he is onely a mere creature' who

[11] Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 129.

[12] Caffyn 'was also happy to associate with those (such as Daniel Allen) who were clearly Arian' (Holmes, 'General Baptist 'Primitivism"', p. 133).

[13] Holmes, 'General Baptist 'Primitivism"', p. 130.

[14] Busher's prominence in the early days was recognised as early as 1611, when Matthew Saunders and Cuthbert Hotten wrote a letter to a church in Amsterdam describing him, alongside Smyth and Helwys, as representative of types of English Baptists. See William Thomas Whitley, 'Leonard Busher, Dutchman', *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 1.2 (1909), pp. 107–113.

[15] I use 'unitarian' to mean any theology in which the one God is one person, the Father, and not tri-personal. This applies to both 'Arian' (pre-existence) and 'Socinian' (non-pre-existence) views of Jesus.

had 'a heavenly humane body' while pre-existent in heaven.[16] This was a view also ascribed to Thomas Leamer in this same period, a merchant preacher who, like Busher, had Dutch Anabaptist connections.[17] It is also a view which resembled that of the later Matthew Caffyn — certainly a believer in the heavenly flesh doctrine and arguably a unitarian — a fact reinforcing my proposed through-line of unorthodox Christology in Baptist history.

Additionally, it seems significant that Busher also held that 'if one confesses Jesus as Messiah and bases order and ordinance upon knowledge of God's holy word, all other doctrinal points are adiaphorous, matters of indifference'.[18] In his well-known argument for religious liberty presented to King James, Busher insists that all of those who believe Jesus is the Messiah and that he came in the flesh are to be esteemed children of God — a minimum requirement for Christian legitimacy which Busher would continue to insist upon, even as he himself was neglected in his old age over doctrinal differences with certain Christians (who seem to have challenged his Christology but whom he nevertheless called 'brothers').[19]

Another early Baptist view on Christology worth introducing may be found in Elias Tookey (fl. 1624), a leader of a small group connected to Helwys's project in England,[20] who writes in May of 1624 to the Dutch churches that while they believe in the deity of Christ, ostensibly in something of a modalistic (heretical) sense, they will not be compelled 'to believe three different persons in the Deity, which manner

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16 William H. Brackney, *The Early English General Baptists and Their Theological Formation* (Centre for Baptist Studies in Oxford, 2019), p. 119; Walter Burgess, 'James Toppe and the Tiverton Anabaptists', *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, 3 (1913), pp. 193–211 (pp. 204–205).

17 Leamer's view has been described as an 'Arian chiliasm'. Keith L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Brill, 2022), p. 82.

18 Brackney, *Early English*, p. 120.

19 For his argument, see Leonard Busher, *Religions Peace: Or, A Plea for Liberty of Conscience* (London, 1614). I find Busher's later dispute with his friends at least partly christological on the basis of a few lines from Buscher's 1642 letter, in which he indicates that his fellows might 'allege that I do not believe' that Christ came in the flesh (with 1 John 5:1–2) though he nevertheless agreed with this and believed that 'all [God's] sons are brothers together, but our Brother Christ is the eldest' (Whitley, 'Leonard Busher, Dutchman', p. 111).

20 Tookey defected from the main group in London, led by John Murton at the time, partly over matters of Christology.

of speaking is not found in the Scriptures'.[21] A letter of January 1624 by Tookey and his London congregation[22] reveals their guiding principles while marketing themselves as orthodox in the hopes of finding fellowship:

> We do not think that the holy and peaceful doctrine of toleration is misused if some remain in our communion (if they are quiet), who know not yet what they should think of Christ's deity, namely if they only believe that their salvation is in Christ […] they are the people of God, though they have not yet appropriated to themselves this mystery by their reason. But if it were that some of them contradicted the general opinions of the congregation in this or other doctrines, or that they discovered an unquiet or ambitious spirit, we sure think that such should not be tolerated, but ought to be avoided for their unquietness, and because they wish to exercise authority over others.[23]

Tookey and company's policy is advertised in this statement as one of concord, in which tolerance is provided with the aim that conformity will emerge. Nevertheless, while these Baptists claimed that the members of their congregations believed in the divinity of Christ (in some sense), they do ultimately admit that there were some among them who simply 'have a somewhat different [christological] opinion than we maintain in general, though, we think that, after all, it comes to the same end'.[24] After explaining their technical differences, they write, 'and shall we condemn each other for these opinions? That be far from us.'[25] Furthermore, 'We do not compel one to believe of Christ what we do, but bear with each other.'[26] Bass understandably describes this as a group of Baptists 'tolerant of Christological aberration'.[27] As we will see, this prescription of Tookey and his congregation, wherein christological tolerance is provided so long as those less inclined to the pattern of the majority remain quiet and do not disturb the peace (or perhaps

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[21] Benjamin Evans, *The Early English Baptists*, 2 vols (London: J. Heaton & Son, 1862–1864), 2, p. 38. As has been observed, Tookey and his elders 'were not all sound on the matter of the Trinity' (Herbert John McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-century England* (Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 218; see also p. 39).

[22] The letter is signed, 'Elias Tookey, and the others'.

[23] Evans, *The Early English Baptists*, 2, p. 22.

[24] Evans, *Early English Baptists*, 2, p. 22. See Walter Herbert Burgess, *John Smith the Se-Baptist, Thomas Helwys and the First Baptist Church in England* (London: James Clarke, 1911), p. 33.

[25] Evans, *Early English Baptists*, 2, p. 22.

[26] Evans, *Early English Baptists*, 2, p. 36, statement quoted in the Dutch response.

[27] Clint C. Bass, *The Caffynite Controversy* (Centre for Baptist Studies in Oxford, 2020), p. 19.

additionally disturb the ability of the group to appear insistent on orthodoxy — an important image in this context), will be a recurring theme in General Baptist history.

The more orthodox John Murton (1585–c.1626), who took over from Helwys in London after Helwys died in prison (and who had his own christological falling out with Tookey around 1624, the details of which are lost), strongly championed the cause of liberty and joined Busher in advocating religious tolerance.[28] He insisted, as had Busher before him, that 'heretics' (however defined and on whoever's authority) should not be harshly persecuted but simply exiled from the community of faith according to the prescription of Titus 3:10.[29] The five General Baptist churches in England which Murton fostered and which entertained 'some differences among them, especially over christological questions […] laid a foundation for the General Baptist movement'.[30] Smyth, Helwys, Busher, Tookey, and Murton are regularly grouped in Baptist histories as the primary Baptist founders or the 'first Baptists'.[31] Surely the diversity of views on Christology and tolerance represented here is not insignificant. To argue in response that this or that figure or their group were but marginal or minority reports relative to the greater Baptist population would simply be to restate my basic thesis, that some degree of diversity had existed in Baptist history prior to Caffyn, including a current of laxity regarding orthodox Christology.

Clint C. Bass, whose 2020 analysis I take to be at least representative of current scholarship if not authoritative, and whose opinion I will frequently raise below as a barometer for my own, has likewise observed that 'Christological questions swirled from the very inception of the first General Baptist church'.[32] And specifically, *pace* Holmes, 'there were certainly strains of anti-trinitarianism among the

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[28] John Murton, *Objections… No Man Ought to be Persecuted for his Religion…* (London, 1615).
[29] Of course, Busher was himself unorthodox and had noted that in their time, 'good men' had wrongly been called 'disturbers of the World, Heretiques, Schismaticks, seditious Persons' (*Religions Peace*, unnumbered preface; see also p. 38).
[30] Mark Robert Bell, *Apocalypse How?: Baptist Movements During the English Revolution* (Mercer University Press, 2000), p. 40.
[31] Anthony R. Cross and Phillip E. Thompson, 'Sacramentalism Alive and Well', in *Baptist Sacramentalism* 3, ed. by Anthony R. Cross and Phillip E. Thompson (Pickwick, 2020), p. xxx.
[32] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 32.

early Baptists […] [meanwhile] Melchiorite [Hoffmannite or "heavenly flesh"] views, which took hold at the beginning of the Restoration, and subsequent Arian and Socinianism […] developed into a movement that found a large number of adherents among the General Baptists associated with the General Assembly in the eighteenth century'.[33] All of this is not to say that in its entirety or even in its lion's share the General Baptist movement was unorthodox in their views of God and Jesus — certainly this was not the case[34] — but with now other points of data (and more to be added below), a line can and must be drawn to represent what continues to resemble vibrant strands of christological deviation, controversy, and laxity, however influential or long-lived, coursing through Baptist history. As Bass concluded in his 2020 investigation, bolstering my 2019 linking of the Smythian controversy to that of Caffyn and later General Baptists, 'Christology was long an unresolved issue for the early General Baptists. It could be said that they were never without Christological controversy. It was a feature of church life even from the days of John Smyth, and Mennonite notions lingered in the background providing ample fuel for a Christological blow-up.'[35]

The Debate Over Christological Laxity from 1650–1730

Holmes, against my 2019 findings, concluded that 'General Baptist fundamentals in the 1690s demonstrably include "orthodox Christology" and "the doctrine of the Trinity", but offer, albeit controversially within the movement, some latitude in how this is expressed'.[36] In other words, Holmes argues that all General Baptists in both the early period and through the 1690s were completely orthodox in their Christology, though some tolerated merely different terms in the expression of orthodox beliefs. However, it is clear that before 1700, there were unorthodox Christologists existing among the General

[33] Clint C. Bass, *Thomas Grantham (1633–1692) and General Baptist Theology* (Centre for Baptist Studies in Oxford, 2019), p. 181.
[34] See Bass, *Thomas Grantham*, pp. 11–12, 181.
[35] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 135.
[36] Holmes, 'General Baptist 'Primitivism'', p. 136.

Baptists along with discussions about the possible Christian legitimacy of christological deviants.

Indeed, I suggest there were several discernible strands of General Baptists during this period, though the veiled nature of the situation will make it impossible to determine their shares of the population. Some were simply unorthodox in their Christology; others were hardliners who demanded christological compliance; still others were orthodox but laxer when it came to their neighbours' subscription. Among the orthodox, there were some who insisted on standard orthodox statements of trinitarian theology and Christology; on the other hand, some of the orthodox were suspicious of the non-biblical language which regularly travelled with such statements. Obviously the unorthodox would have balked at this language; some of the orthodox rejected it on purely biblicist grounds; others likely rejected it due to their laxity on the point of Christology — for fear of excluding their neighbours or generally causing what they felt was unnecessary division. To make matters more complicated, some felt the unorthodox were simply not Christians; others felt them Christians but concluded they should not be counted Baptists.

Lacking space to effectively demonstrate this diverse landscape in this period, I will raise only a few pertinent examples. Already in 1653, at the General Assembly in Stone Chapel, London, Joseph Wright was leading the charge against not only Matthew Caffyn but several others as members of a 'Hoffmannite party', and the assembly did not expel these men but did ask Caffyn to explain how he came to his views.[37] In 1655, the unitarian John Biddle, debating Christology before an audience of five hundred at Stone Chapel (namely the question of 'Whether Jesus Christ be the most High, or Almighty God?'), appears to have won over at least a few of the General Baptists before he was arrested by the authorities on the premise of blasphemy laws, which promised death for denying the trinity.[38] It is noteworthy that other General Baptists who did not agree with Biddle's theology supported

[37] Joseph Wright, *Speculum Haeriticis, or, A looking Glass for Heretics* (London: for the author, 1691), pp. 6–10.
[38] See Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (London: Bennet, 1692), pp. 200–201; cf. Bass, *Thomas Grantham*, pp. 180–181.

him for reasons of religious liberty.[39] These Baptists passionately and loudly petitioned the English government on his behalf, even affirming that Biddle was a true and merely mistaken Christian believer who would believe anything about Jesus that could be drawn out of the Scriptures. It is not that Biddle should be destroyed by Christ and not the government; rather, God would judge his error, they said, not as a damnable heresy but as a misguided expression of his sincere 'zeal and love' for God.[40] Certainly, we cannot gauge the prevalence of this view among General Baptists in the seventeenth century; nevertheless, I suggest that the issue of how best to deal with those with genuinely different Christologies (and not merely different ways of verbally expressing a universally agreed-upon orthodox view) was part of General Baptist discussions long before the eighteenth century. I suggest the confessional results of these discussions sometimes quietly reveal that at least some General Baptists were not only unwilling to usurp Christ's right to judge the heretic, but already less inclined to expel dissenters from their midst.

Indeed, soon after the Biddle incident, the topic of unorthodox Christology was openly contested again in the 1656 General Assembly. The result was a broad statement designed to satisfy both sides of the debate, and with a definition deliberately and 'entirely acceptable to the most committed Melchiorite'.[41] At this point, there was even suspicion that most of the leadership at Aylesbury sympathised with Caffyn to some degree, and finally, in 1660, the sympathetic General Assembly in London published a *Standard Confession* deliberately capacious of unorthodox, 'heavenly flesh' Christology, creating no boundaries against the Hoffmannites among them.[42] This confession also left out explicit or exclusively trinitarian doctrine, leaving glaringly unanswered the vital question of how the Father, Son, and Spirit are related, and allowing for

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[39] For a list of Baptist petitions (and others) on Biddle's behalf, see Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism: In Transylvania, England, and America* (Beacon Press, 1945), p. 206. See also *To the Officers and Soldiers of the Army* (London, 1657), p. 3.

[40] *A True State of the Case of Liberty of Conscience in the Common-wealth of England* (London, 1655), p. 7; Paul C. H. Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 64–66.

[41] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 36; see *Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptist Churches in England*, 2 vols, ed. by W. T. Whitley (Baptist Historical Society, 1909), 1, p. 6.

[42] See Bass, *Caffynite*, pp. 37–38.

baptism in either the name of all three or only in the name of Jesus. Is it possible that some General Baptists were consciously interpreting vague confessions like this in unorthodox ways? Is it also possible that this was a practice well-known to assembly members at this time? It is more than possible. In that same year, Joseph Wright published his *Animadversions upon Five Articles* (1660), explaining how the christological heretics in the midst of the General Baptists were creatively interpreting the confessions. In the following year, he published *Speculum Haereticis: Or, A Looking-Glass for Hereticks* (1661), confronting Caffyn directly and warning the congregations not to tolerate christological heresy. Here, he disowns the 1660 confession as an example of an 'Equivocal Confession' in which there is made 'room for an Arian, Socinian, Antitriniarian, Jew, Turk, or Infidel'.[43]

Certainly, there was more involved here than mere differences in preferred terms for expressing a unanimously agreed-upon set of orthodox doctrines. Yes, the controversies did include a debate over language, but that linguistic debate absolutely included the obfuscatory use of language by assembly leadership. This probably amounted to a well-known secret. In the late 1660s, other Baptists outside of the General Baptist fold accused the leadership of the General Assembly of 'harbouring Christological error' and being 'too generous' on the person of Christ.[44] John Griffith (c. 1622–1700) admitted in 1669 that there were indeed unitarians who had gained followers in General Baptist circles.[45] While outwardly denying the presence of non-trinitarians in the face of charges that the General Baptists were too lax in christological requirements, the orthodox theologian Thomas Grantham (1634–1692) likewise subtly acknowledged that there were in fact Baptists with unorthodox Christology among them.[46] Before 1673, it is clear that wider debates over Christology were already energetically brewing, and Thomas Monck (1570–1627) claimed to be engaging with unorthodox Christologists who boasted a wide array of supporters throughout

[43] Wright, *Speculum Haeriticis*, p. 31.
[44] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 38.
[45] John Griffith, *The Searchers for Schism Search'd* (London, 1669), p. 59; Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 38.
[46] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 39. This may be a reference to Caffyn; see Joseph Hooke, *Creed Making and Creed-Imposing Considered* (London: J. Darby and T. Browne, 1729), p. 33.

England who held the same views.[47] In 1677, a debate over Christology split a church at Staplehurst, Kent, and by the following year, 1698, a revision to the *Standard Confession* was proposed to manage the division of christological opinions — a revision with deliberately conciliatory language which still left things vague.[48]

The *Orthodox Creed* was eventually proposed by a faction led by Thomas Monck in order to unambiguously squash heretical Christology and to lead the General Baptists towards the orthodoxy of other Protestants in England (the first eight articles setting down definitively the orthodox Trinity and the deity of Christ). This strict statement, 'alone among Baptist confessions in including and setting forth the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds',[49] was widely rejected by the churches and refused by the General Assembly. To simply dismiss the repeated failures to instantiate such creeds among the General Baptists as mere rejections of non-biblical language would be to miss the significance of why this orthodox language was being pushed so hard and so often by the anti-heresy factions in the first place.

In the early 1680s, christological controversy continued to rage in congregations like those of Buckinghamshire, one of which excommunicated the unitarian John Weller, to whom Caffyn had written a letter sympathising with his 'precious truths'.[50] One assembly at Aylesbury ultimately declared that they would 'maintain amity and friendship with Mr. Caffin, though he might differ a little in some abstruse unrevealed speculations',[51] and in 1686, the Biddenden congregation swore to excommunicate anyone who pursued the uncharitable actions of the heresy hunter Joseph Wright. Though not necessarily explicit in their latitudarian approach during this period, I

47 Thomas Monck, *A Cure for the Cankering Error of the New Eutychians* (London: for the author, 1673), pp. 51–52.
48 See Bass, *Caffynite,* p. 42.
49 *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. by William Lumpkin and Bill Leonard (Judson Press, 2011), p. 296.
50 See Christopher Cooper, *The Vail Turn'd Aside: or, Heresy Unmask'd* (London: for the author, 1701), p. 55; Bass, *Thomas Grantham*, p. 201.
51 Adam Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists* (London; for the author, 1818), p. 467.

concur that there were General Baptist leaders who behind the scenes 'had been restrained toward Caffyn, despite his doctrinal errors'.[52]

Moving into the 1690s, we will do well to focus on the split that occurred within the General Assembly at this time, wherein Caffyn's adversaries and their churches, apparently always in the minority, grew tired of giving the General Assembly repeated chances to prove their dedication to orthodox Christology. They requested a vote as to whether or not they would be allowed to debate christological differences going forward, and lost. The wider group was simply not interested. Thus, the minority cut ties with the majority, forming the so-called General Association, and swore not to return until the General Assembly removed christological heresy from its midst. The larger General Assembly, while not broadly unorthodox, was the 'more doctrinally lenient body' and refused to allow further public debate over Caffyn's acceptability, and required all discussions, public or private, about '[the] Trinity and the Christ of God' to use only biblical words and 'no other terms'.[53]

When Caffyn's opponents in the General Assembly produced the damning record of the words uttered by Caffyn in 1692, in which he confessed that Christ had neither the substance of his Father nor his human mother, all except one of those presiding at the assembly declared it a doctrinal error. We do not know who this leader was who refused to condemn explicitly unorthodox statements, but Bass points out that the fact that we have no evidence that they disciplined this assembly leader means the General Association was 'right to wonder about the Assembly's doctrinal scrupulousness'.[54] The smaller General Association were, on the other hand, 'those championing strict Christological orthodoxy', but as Bass also points out, 'the General Association was not without its own Christological problems' and they found themselves engulfed in their own controversies, like that of the Deptford and Ashford churches, wherein they were forced to choose between tolerating members and excommunication. Many of those expelled by the Association or dissatisfied with its attachment to the

[52] See Bass, *Caffynite,* pp. 44–45.
[53] Bass, *Caffynite*, pp. 51–52; see *Minutes of the General Assembly*, ed. by Whitley, 1, p. 51.
[54] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 53.

orthodox theology of their leadership migrated over to the more latitudinarian General Assembly.

What is evident is that the General Assembly in the 1690s actively debated whether or not 'General Baptist fundamentals' included orthodox Christology. This was not merely a debate over what Holmes calls 'latitude in how [orthodox doctrine] is expressed',[55] it included to some degree a debate over doctrine itself, and which christological doctrines were required for Baptist identity and fellowship.[56] A 1699 meeting asked two vital questions: 'Whether it be absolutely necessary to Christian communion, to believe that Christ is essentially God of the same Essence with the Father,' and 'Whether it be absolutely necessary to Christian communion to believe that Christ is of the Substance of Mary his Mother.'[57] In this debate, Caffyn and the well-known unitarian Daniel Allen (fl. 1699) joined forces, with Allen answering in the negative the question about God and Jesus, and Caffyn answering in the negative the question about Jesus and Mary. Allen describes the factions at odds among the brethren as 'the Orthodox' (also 'the Athanasian Perswasion') and 'the Heretick' (also 'the Unitarians').[58] This teaming up between Allen and Caffyn, says Bass, is a strong indicator that Caffyn himself held subordinationist (unitarian) views.[59]

Allen's appeal to toleration in 1699 ultimately saw fruit in the critical 1700 assembly at Whitsuntide whose leaders convened with Caffyn and drew up a declaration 'which evaded rather than determined the points in dispute'; thus, 'the assembly recorded its satisfaction with Caffyn's defence'.[60] An absolutely vital note from Bass must be read here about this deliberately vague declaration. While, on the face of it, a 'trinitarian' statement of faith,

> [a] more narrowly orthodox group raised questions about the meaning, but there was no reply. They then produced their own articles of faith which were not entertained. The Assembly's indefinite statements were read and approved by the body as a whole, but with a qualification. The Assembly

[55] Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 136.
[56] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 136.
[57] See Cooper, *The Vail*, pp. 134–136.
[58] See Daniel Allen, *The Moderate Trinitarian* (London, 1699), p. 16.
[59] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 103.
[60] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 56.

> recognised that certain individuals might understand the words to mean something other than the doctrinal position of the majority. In such a case, differing conceptions were to be tolerated so long as individuals did not teach, print, or discuss their views in a way that led to the disturbance of the Assembly's churches. The Assembly did not make its Christological position obvious, but it did make its emphasis on toleration quite clear.[61]

Once again, we encounter the old prescription of tolerance for the quiet and an open sanctioning of creedal equivocation. Unsurprisingly, Caffyn's opponents, as well as the strict General Association, condemned the 1700 declaration as a mere paper full of ambiguous language which only 'looked' orthodox,[62] repeating the long-standing complaint about 'equivocal confessions' made by the likes of Wright since at least 1660. Ultimately, the 1700 meeting amounted to what the unitarian historian Alexander Gordon once famously described as 'the first deliberate and formal endorsement of latitudinarian opinions in the article of the Trinity by the collective authority of any tolerated section of English dissent'.[63] In this same year of 1700, General Baptist writers like Nathaniel Gale (fl. 1700) argued that orthodox propositions about the co-essential and con-substantial nature of Christ could not be legitimately imposed on General Baptists since such doctrines were not found in the Bible.[64] This stance became important for the General Baptist's future, as 'antitrinitarianism, of one type or another, took possession of their congregations in the south of England'.[65] Clearly, none of this would have happened in 1700 had there not already been a shift among important General Baptist figures and associations on the issue of christological orthodoxy and its overlap with General Baptist confession and identity in the preceding decade. Holmes has argued that, ultimately, the only thing of orthodoxy which the General Baptists may have discussed sacrificing prior to 1700 were the traditional, technical words of conciliar Christology, and that a true orthodox Christology remained always an insisted-upon General Baptist non-

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[61] Bass, *Caffynite*, pp. 56–57.
[62] Cooper, *The Vail*, p. 121.
[63] Alexander Gordon, 'Caffyn, Matthew', in *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885–1900,* vol. 8, ed. by Leslie Stephen (London: Elder Smith & Cok, 1886), pp. 208–210 (p. 209).
[64] Nathaniel Gale, *Brief Remarks upon Dr. Russell's Brief Account of Mr. Caffin's several Opinions of the Person of the Messiah* (London, 1700), p. 12.
[65] Gordon, 'Caffyn', p. 209.

negotiable. But in the 1690s at the very latest, we can observe that in some cases it was merely the outward presentation of General Baptist non-negotiables which 'demonstrably includes orthodox Christology'. Indeed, the General Assembly was, despite whatever was on the books, clearly torn in two during the 1690s, and not merely over the person of Matthew Caffyn — '[a]t the very heart of this divide was a debate over the person of Christ'.[66]

In the first decade of the eighteenth century, many church associations experienced not only a move towards a unitarianism of some form or another,[67] but an anti-confessional shift.[68] Many felt that Scripture was to be preferred over the creeds, and that statements of faith in general must be coherent to be believed; meanwhile, the traditional orthodox creeds 'were crammed with mysteries that stretched beyond comprehension. The confession of mysteries is a farce, they cried. It would be better to simply confess faith in the Scriptures and leave all else alone!'[69] These biblicist arguments were supported by practical analysis of the virtual uselessness of creeds as a test of fellowship. Indeed, it was evident that the definitions of the words used in the trinitarian creeds, like nature, substance, or Person, were not agreed upon by even the most deliberately trinitarian Baptists — a problem endemic to trinitarianism throughout English Christendom.[70] Once General Baptists realised that no one could possibly know how others were interpreting creedal language, the practical value of formal confessions diminished, and an insistence on subscription to the Bible alone easily took its place. Thus, at Salters' Hall in London in 1719, only *one* General Baptist representative signed an affirmation of the Trinity and the deity of Christ drafted by the defeated minority at Salters',

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[66] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 1; see also p. 109: 'The controversy that captivated the General Baptists was, at is inception, a division over how to understand the person of Christ.'

[67] Already by the year 1718, 'not only all the Kent-Sussex churches, but all the London General Baptist churches except one, held a somewhat low view of the personality of Christ' (W. T. Whitley, 'Salters' Hall 1719 and the Baptists', *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 5.3 (1917), pp. 172–189 (p. 172)). The many churches which followed in this Christology, whatever its 'distinctive' flavour, continued to be called by their opponents 'Caffinites' (Whitley 1917, p. 173).

[68] See Bass, *Caffynite*, pp. 120–123.

[69] Bass, *Caffynite*, pp. 120–121.

[70] See my introduction, 'Emlyn's Humble Inquiry: English Unitarianism and the Rise of Tolerance in the West', in Thomas Emlyn, *An Humble Inquiry into the Scripture Account of Jesus Christ,* updated edn. (Theophilus Press, 2021), pp. 8–9.

compared to the fourteen General Baptists who refused to sign (for whatever reasons).[71] This marks what Leon McBeth rightly called a 'clear victory for the Arian and Socinian factions, who had defined the deity of Christ as a "human addition" to the gospel'.[72] During the 1720s, strict confessional expectations about the nature of God and Jesus all but evaporated in the public consciousness to the end that by the 1730s, as the two General Assemblies reunited, it was made clear by their exchange of even the mild *Standard Confession* for the Scriptures alone that 'members of the Assembly were at liberty to hold whatever they wished about the doctrine of the Trinity and person of Christ'.[73] While the Church of England had enabled anti-trinitarianism through the slipshod application and enforcement of its doctrines, unorthodox Christology and theology thrived among the General Baptists 'through the dismissal of official dogma altogether'.[74] And yet there persisted identifiably 'Baptist' marks among the General Baptists of the eighteenth century; they continued in their emphasis of the laying on of hands, believer's baptism, the use of hymns, intra-Baptist marriage, and the 'general' offer of salvation to humankind. A strict adherence to conciliar Christology as a non-negotiable condition of Christian legitimacy was, at least by this stage, not among these marks. Again, this was not an overnight development.

On Caffyn's Christology

There is regrettably not space for a full treatment of Caffyn's Christology or Holmes's engagement with it. Here I will only point out that in his 2023 article, Holmes concluded that Caffyn, like the Anabaptist leader Menno, held a 'heavenly flesh' Christology in which Jesus assumed flesh in heaven and then passed into the womb of Mary — validating, surely, my basic image of a current of unorthodox Christology patterned in the Anabaptists and then moving from the

[71] H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Broadman Press, 1987), p. 156.
[72] McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, p. 156.
[73] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 124.
[74] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 131.

early days of the Baptists toward Caffyn and beyond.[75] However, Holmes has also leaned toward Caffyn being a sincere but confused orthodox Christian who merely stumbled over terms and formulae or who was merely too creative in his expressions.[76] Whatever Caffyn was, Holmes insists it is '[not] fair to call Caffyn "unitarian"'[77] and proposes Caffyn was actually 'far from being "unitarian", [and] was actively involved in repudiating that doctrine'.[78] Holmes also says that he remains unconvinced by Clint Bass's recent reconstruction of Caffyn as a unitarian (Arian) subordinationist with a 'heavenly flesh' Christology; however, Holmes also curiously says in both of his articles (2021, 2023) that Bass's is the best reconstruction currently available and that he essentially agrees with it.[79] It is in truth difficult to nail down what Caffyn really believed, facts which, in my view, Caffyn appears to have deliberately masked. The matter is made more difficult as both his theological position and his method of expressing (or concealing) his theology appears to have changed over time. While we have few quotations from Caffyn on the issue of Christology, a basic sketch remains possible, drawn by considering not only the reports of his antagonists but also his friends.[80] While we might reasonably wonder if the charges of heresy from his enemies like Wright, Monck, and Cooper were in fact slanderous, why should we doubt the reports of his allies who presumably would want to avoid getting him in trouble, especially if it were not all true?

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75 Holmes, 'Evaluating', p. 12.

76 See Holmes, 'Evaluating', p. 12.

77 Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 133.

78 Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 134.

79 Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 133, n. 15; Holmes, 'Evaluating', p. 11, n. 46; see Bass, *Caffynite*, pp. 89–108.

80 One friendly source relates that Caffyn personally rejected Athanasian and Chalcedonian Christology (see Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, vol. 4 (London 1740), p. 337, 341); another reveals that while Caffyn believed in pre-existence, he 'is not able to conceive how it is possible for Christ to be Essentially one with the Father and Holy Ghost, and yet be personally diversified without individuation' (see Nathaniel Gale, *An Examen of the Pretences and Character of Mr. William Russell* (London, 1700), pp. 4–5); 'Besides says Mr. Caffin', writes another friendly source, 'as [it] is nowhere written [in the Scriptures], so I cannot comprehend, nay, apprehend how Three distinct Persons can be Essentially One; nor how Christ the Son of God, which is a Relative term, and supposeth Subordination, can be coequal, coessential, and coeternal with the Father' (Gale, *Brief Remarks*, pp. 4–5).

Caffyn at the Interrogations

My position is that Caffyn likely managed to escape condemnation at the assemblies through a combination of evasion, equivocation, genuine agreement in some areas with his inquisitors, and the sympathy of his Baptist audience — some of whom likely knew very well of his unorthodox proclivities but allowed his complicated muddying of the facts due to some combination of their commitment to religious tolerance in general, their love of an undeniably Christian man (another form of tolerance), or their own potentially unorthodox views. I generally join Curtis Freeman here, who found in Caffyn 'a master of theological obfuscation' and 'a skilled rhetorician who cleverly eluded his accusers […] and […] escaped conviction by managing […] to avoid plain language about what he did not believe'.[81] I suggest additionally that Caffyn's defence will in the end amount to a dissemble that was plausibly recognised by both his adversaries and his tolerant (or even sympathetic) inquirers. Also important for my view is notice of a change in both Caffyn's theology and his political approach to expressing himself. It is clear to me that around 1653, Caffyn had taken up an unorthodox Christology and until the early 1670s was ostensibly more open to discussing his real views. To the shock of a General Meeting at Aylesbury, however, Caffyn backed down at Wright's inquisition and suddenly asked for lenience, saying that he was only confused about Christ's origin. Wright described this as 'most surprising' and 'the first time that we heard' something like this from Caffyn.[82] It is possible that this marks his turn to (Arian) unitarianism, since espousing such a thing was illegal and even more controversial than his heavenly flesh doctrine. From this point forward, as Bass observes, Caffyn 'proved to be much more elusive, stressing the obscurity of traditional formulations and rarely stating positively his own position'.[83] I believe Joseph Wright's assessment of Caffyn and his allies' behaviour is for the most part correct. Wright, who spent many years carefully collecting and studying

[81] Curtis W. Freeman, *Contesting Catholicity: Theology for Other Baptists* (Baylor University Press, 2014), p. 157.
[82] Wright, *Speculum Haereticis*, p. 12.
[83] Bass, *Caffynite,* p. 39.

every word of his opponents in preparation for their many high-stakes debates, was convinced that they were 'Nicodemites' — persons who 'consciously feigned approval of articles which they did not genuinely believe. Whereas the plain sense of the articles were evident, the Caffynites assuaged themselves with obscurant manipulation of language.'[84]

It is important to locate this behaviour in the wider context of English controversy over trinitarianism. The *locus classicus* for Nicodemism is of course Sir Isaac Newton, who concealed his unitarian views by essentially feigning subscription to orthodoxy, which allowed him to maintain his position at Cambridge.[85] Nicodemites employed biblical texts and examples to justify their deception, such as the case of Naaman who bowed in the temple of Rimmon, or David who pretended to be mad before the Philistines, or Jehu who pretended to worship Baal — God would permit this sort of survivalist activity and forgive the non-trinitarians who were forced to abide with persecuting trinitarians. Such practices seem rampant in Anglican controversies. Of course, 'Nicodemist' subscriptions to christological statements have been paid since ancient times.[86]

Other kinds of christological deviants, including kinds of unitarian subordinationists, could likewise agree with the condemnation of a view that entirely separates the *logos* from the Father (similar to a condemnation which Holmes suggests Caffyn was a party to).[87] And English subordinationists could promote 'the doctrine of the Trinity' and market themselves as 'true Scriptural Trinitarians', all the while

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[84] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 46. I would add that the 'plain sense' was not always evident in the confessions.

[85] Stephen D. Snobelen, 'Isaac Newton, Heretic: The Strategies of a Nicodemite', *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 32.4 (1999), pp. 381–419.

[86] See, for example, the reported behaviour of some Arian bishops at Nicaea. Nicetas Choniates, *Treasury of Orthodoxy*, 5, 7–9; Eusebius, *Letter of Eusebius to the People of his Diocese*, 1.4; see also Photios's epitome of Philostorgius's *Church History*, 2, 7–7b; Charles Butler, *The Moveable Feasts, Fasts, and other Annual Observances of the Catholic Church* (Dublin: J. Duffy, 1839; originally published 1774), p. 364.

[87] Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 135, n. 24. See, for example, the subordinationist theologian Tertullian in Dale Tuggy, 'Tertullian the Unitarian', *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 8.3 (2016), pp. 170–199.

meaning something entirely unorthodox by it.[88] One Norton Jarman, a General Baptist at Ashford, Kent, once signed a public affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity and it was only later revealed that he did not hold to it the way his congregation did.[89] Thomas Emlyn (1663–1741), who would famously be imprisoned and deprived of his wealth for his unitarian writings, originally began his defence against charges from an association of Dublin ministers by arguing that he and his accusers actually agreed in substance but merely differed in language.[90] Holmes argues that Caffyn would never have done this, that Caffyn's character was that of a public controversialist and for this reason he would have been bold and open when officially asked about his doctrines. But English unitarians, even brave controversialists, sometimes did take an evasive, ecumenical, or even deceptive posture when accused of christological heresy.

It is probably true that Caffyn was better at hiding his views than Thomas Emlyn, but I suggest Caffyn's success was at least partly owed to his more tolerant audience. My point here is that it would not be difficult for someone like Caffyn to have privately conformed his views to *prima facie* orthodox language, nor would it be surprising in his context. Holmes's present rejection of this scenario relies explicitly on an assumption about Caffyn's 'character', and a psychological analysis which concludes that Caffyn would never have dissembled while faced with the repeated pressure of ecclesiastical interrogations.[91] But it must always be kept in mind that these inquiries were complex and daunting processes, carrying immense consequences for those ending up on the wrong side, and we cannot forget that over these proceedings loomed also the threat of the English government, whose track record for dealing harshly and even violently with non-trinitarians was well known and continued until roughly the mid-eighteenth century, as the case of the unitarian Thomas Emlyn proves. Indeed, the Toleration Act of 1689

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[88] See, for example, Samuel Clarke, *The Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity* (London, 1712), and Thomas Emlyn, who self-described as 'a true Scriptural Trinitarian' in his 'Remarks on Mr. Charles Leslie's…', in Thomas Emlyn, *The Works of Mr. Thomas Emlyn*, vol. 2 (London, 1746), p. 3.

[89] *Minutes of the General Assembly*, ed. by Whitley, 1, pp. 64–65.

[90] Thomas Emlyn, *The Case of Mr. E in relation to the Difference Between Him and Some Dissenting Ministers of the City of Dublin* (London, 1702; Dublin, 1703).

[91] '[D]issembling […] was simply not in his character' (Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 137).

provided religious freedom to dissenters but not to non-trinitarians. The fact that Caffyn was himself imprisoned several times for unauthorised preaching made the possibility of imprisonment for unorthodox Christology all too real.

It is also worth mentioning that these social, financial, and legal pressures were likewise faced corporately by the movement at large and by the local congregations and ministers involved, and if not for other ethical or theological commitments, it would certainly have been much easier or safer to simply refuse to tolerate christological deviance of any sort. In this light, it is possible that we may detect a double-dissembling in the assembly meetings, in the sense that at least some among the General Baptist leadership may have known that Caffyn did not subscribe in substance to the required confessions but allowed for the appearance of a genuine acquittal;[92] and possibly also in the sense that a few of them insisted on orthodox-shaped confessions because they too needed to keep up appearances for the heresy hunters and the English government. Again, while dissenters did not need to subscribe to some established rules, denial of trinitarianism remained illegal. We should not forget that General Baptist leaders had witnessed firsthand the fate of the vocally unitarian John Biddle, who was hauled off in the middle of a debate on Christology at one of their churches under the premise of blasphemy laws (strictures which carried the death penalty for denying the Trinity). If anyone's conscience ever stung at their duplicity under pressure, they could easily remind themselves of both the Nicodemist methods and latitudinarian fashions increasingly in vogue in England.

The above stance may ultimately render null Holmes's emphasis on the fact that Caffyn was a member of the assembly which repudiated a Socinian in 1692. I do not disagree that Caffyn was opposed to Socinianism along with that assembly, being a believer in Christ's pre-existence. But we do not know specifically what Caffyn thought of the condemnation of Richard Newton. We can deduce that Newton was held to be in violation of the old prescription of quiet dissension, since his teaching was openly 'contrary to the Articles of ffaith [sic]' and

[92] I see that even those General Baptists who were orthodox and who disagreed with people like Caffyn ultimately resemble the latitudinarians among the Anglicans; see Bass, *Caffynite*, pp. 127–128.

'troubling of the peace and welfare of our Brethren'.[93] In the end, however, we do not have enough details about Newton's case to make very much of it or to allow the fact of Caffyn's presence at the assembly to obscure the reality of his own heterodoxy on other points besides Socinianism. There was, of course, Caffyn's own skin to worry about. Of interest here is a striking report about this assembly meeting which bears mentioning. Despite the pronouncements made against Newton's (Socinian) unitarian view, Joseph Taylor, a preacher from one of the London congregations, along with several other assembly attendees, claimed that they heard with their own ears Caffyn espousing the unitarian heresy at this very meeting where Newton was being judged. They wrote down his words for the record: '[T]he Son of God, or the Word of God, was not of the Uncreated Nature and Substance of the Father, neither of the Created Substance of his Mother.'[94] This claim would be brought up as a challenge to Caffyn's dissembling at subsequent meetings. Interestingly, this is precisely the same charge brought against the earlier Baptist leader Leonard Busher.

Holmes mentions Alex Carver's proposal that Caffyn had a loyal block of support and Bass's idea that Caffyn's trials 'were, by accident or (more probably) design, stacked to make it easy for him to acquit himself'.[95] I fully endorse these additional considerations, which are compatible with and complimentary to my own position. Indeed, that Caffyn's acceptance by the General Baptists has also something to do with the generosity of the assemblies toward a respectable man is not out of the question. As Holmes put it, 'This would point us towards accounts of Baptist identity in which a history of faithful service, of successful evangelism, and perhaps particularly of suffering for the faith, was relevant to determining someone's commitment or otherwise to that faith, even if some of what they had said was troubling — an account of Baptist identity where orthopraxy matters alongside

[93] *Minutes of the General Assembly*, ed. by Whitley, 1, p. 37.

[94] See *A Vindication of the Ancient General Assembly, from the False Imputations of the Russelites* (London, 1704), p. 12; Alex Carver, 'Matthew Caffyn Revisited: Cooperation, Christology, and Controversy in the Life of an Influential Seventeenth-Century Baptist', *Baptist Quarterly* 47.2 (2016), pp. 44–64 (p. 64).

[95] Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 137.

orthodoxy.'[96] By 'troubling' Christological sayings I take it Holmes means 'unorthodox' sayings, and by an identity where 'orthopraxy matters alongside orthodoxy' I take it he means an identity where 'unorthodox Christology may be tolerated on account of one's obvious Christianity'. If that is right, then Holmes simply restates my basic thesis in different terms. As suggested above, it is also plausible that the repeated generosity of the assembly members had something to do with a level of sympathy with Caffyn's opinions among the people, and not merely tolerance for that with which they strongly disagreed. Indeed, we must not forget that Caffyn was not the only unorthodox Christologist involved in the controversy that had already stirred prior to the interrogations of the 1690s. As Bass concludes, it seems that while Caffyn 'refused to articulate clearly his own position, he provided cover for others who held views even more radical than those that he had adopted'.[97]

Conclusion: A Baptist Identity Revisited

By 1846, J. R. Beard could still locate twenty-four 'Unitarian Baptist' churches in England, Scotland, and Wales.[98] Did the name 'Baptist' deserve to be painted alongside 'Unitarian' above their doorways, or is this a contradiction in terms? Holmes concluded his 2021 article by insisting that an account of Baptist identity which includes an 'uneasiness with enforced formulae' must also recognise 'the continuing commitment to a broad doctrinal orthodoxy'.[99] I can at the very least agree that there were, as I have mentioned, both lenient and strict currents within the denomination during its history. That the laxer elements so widely recognised by historians deserve to be more often included in discussions of 'the Baptist tradition' constitutes the basic position of my 2019 article.

Holmes, in an essay on 'Baptist Identity' published in 2021, proposed that 'to be Baptist is to believe in the active, direct, Lordship

96 Holmes, 'General Baptist 'Primitivism'", p. 138.
97 Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 108.
98 *Unitarianism Exhibited in Its Actual Condition*, ed. by J. R. Beard (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1846), pp. 330–337.
99 Holmes, 'General Baptist "Primitivism"', p. 139.

of Jesus over every person and over every local congregation'. After a reasonable disambiguation of this proposition, in which nothing was said about subscription to the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity or the deity of Christ, he concluded that 'as Baptists, we must give priority to reality: our confession of freedom of conscience must imply the right to self-denominate, and so, fundamentally, anyone who claims the title "Baptist" is one, and anyone who refuses it is not'.[100] Does this latitude apply for even those who do not subscribe to orthodox Christology? A contention of mine has been that there was a time in General Baptist history in which my optimism about the possibility of a 'unitarian Baptist' was shared. Clearly, in the eighteenth century at the latest, we have the example of the Barbican church in London, which held special standing and influence in the movement due to the formal education of its leadership, and which 'did not steer clear of anti-Trinitarianism' and even invited the famed unitarian Thomas Emlyn to speak at their church.[101] Among the leadership were those who 'had no shortage of Arian friends and […] regard[ed] the Trinity as nonessential to Christianity'.[102] Indeed, there are more than a few examples of General Baptists, like those associated with Kent and Sussex, who were ultimately 'tolerant of unorthodox views of Christ' and were 'reluctant to take seriously any charge of Christological deviation among the General Baptists'.[103] Clearly preserved here is a record of what Raymond Brown recognised as a trend of 'theological freedom' among the General Baptists, a trend worth keeping more in mind, at the very least for history's sake.[104] Whether it is now agreed that within this history we will also find a model for contemporary and future Baptist churches will not change this history.

Concluding this limited reply, I will note once more my sincere appreciation of Holmes's historical criticism and the opportunity to dialogue on such fascinating issues. I believe my own view and the way

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[100] Stephen R. Holmes, 'Baptist Identity, Once More', *Journal of Baptist Theology in Context*, 3 (2021), pp. 5–27.
[101] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 76.
[102] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 76.
[103] Bass, *Caffynite*, p. 77.
[104] Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (Baptist Historical Society, 1986), p. 7.

I express it has been sharpened by brushing with his insight. Many thanks are owed again to the journal for allowing the space for this conversation.

In Gratitude for a Lack of Neglect: A Second Response to Kegan Chandler

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Abstract
Stephen Holmes, responding to Kegan Chandler, first points out that continuing academic conversation is beneficial, even if authors do not agree in every aspect of interpretation and conclusion. Holmes agrees that European anti-trinitarianism before 1700 was not rationalist, but biblicist. Matthew Caffyn (1628–1714) fits into this pattern, even if it is debatable to what extent he can be described as 'anti-trinitarian'. However, the author enters into further discussion on a number of topics concerning what it means to be (General) Baptist — in other words, what is the nature of a tradition — and he clarifies some interpretative claims in the light of understandings of Christian orthodoxy. A section in this article is devoted to Caffyn's theological views, especially his Christology. Holmes hopes that his reflections at least clarify where he and Chandler disagree, and why. Holmes concludes, 'The fact that there are scholars who care enough about Caffyn and the General Baptists to dispute interpretations, and journals that consider such disputes worth publishing, is a joy.'

Keywords
Matthew Caffyn; General Baptists; tradition; orthodoxy; Christology; anti-trinitarianism

Sir … the learned world said nothing to my paradoxes; nothing at all, Sir. Every man of them was employed in praising his friends and himself, or condemning his enemies; and unfortunately, as I had neither, I suffered the cruellest mortification, neglect.
— Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (chapter xx)

Introduction

Every scholar will understand George Primrose's plaintive complaint to his father Charles in the epigraph above: we ask not primarily to be agreed with (although it is pleasing when it happens), but to be noticed. I am therefore very grateful to Dr Chandler for continuing this

conversation. I am particularly thankful to him for focusing it on the specific case of Caffyn. His first article, and hence my response to it, ranged rather more widely, but historical debate is most likely to make progress if it is specific.

There is much that Chandler and I agree on. I noted in my first article that his central claim, that Caffyn should not be understood as a precursor of eighteenth-century rationalism, was one I support wholeheartedly. When writing previously on the history of trinitarian doctrine, I have argued the point that most European anti-trinitarianism before (say) 1700 is biblicist, not rationalist, and, whilst in that context I did not mention Caffyn, I am happy to accept that his story fits this pattern, albeit with a footnote querying the extent to which he is properly described as 'anti-trinitarian'.

As far as I can discern, we disagree in two areas. The first concerns what it is to be (General) Baptist, or what I have called elsewhere the nature of a 'tradition'; the second is on certain key interpretative claims. I will treat these in turn, separating out the interpretation of Caffyn's doctrine into a section on its own, as it is so central to the point. Before dealing with these however, let me state clearly the point I am arguing, and what it does not entail.

My key claim against Chandler is this: *there is no seventeenth-century example of the General Baptist tradition/denomination knowingly tolerating the continued membership or leadership of someone whose Christology they regarded as unorthodox*. I am not arguing, that is, that there were not some within the tradition who came to views that were recognised as unorthodox, and argued for them — there clearly were, but in every case they were excommunicated (Elias Tookey would be an obvious early example; John Weller an obvious later one). Nor am I arguing that there were not Baptists who were never within the denomination/tradition (I define this in section 2 below) who held to unorthodox doctrines (Leonard Busher would be a potential example, although it is possible he was involved with Helwys's church in Amsterdam at the very start). Nor, further, am I arguing that there was never a General Baptist who held to an unorthodox Christology secretly. Finally, I am not even trying to argue that the various christological opinions known amongst the

General Baptists in the seventeenth century were all 'orthodox', just that their co-religionists believed them to be so.[1]

On this basis, it may be that our primary disagreement is already over: Dr Chandler's second article[2] paints Caffyn as a Nicodemite; if this is true, and if Caffyn had carried off this self-presentation successfully, then the various events of the 1690s do not involve any part of the General Baptist tradition *knowingly tolerating* his errors, and we have no quarrel. That said, let me respond in more detail in the areas I have indicated.

What It Was To Be a General Baptist: On the Nature of Traditions

The claim I have made above depends on identifying some unified General Baptist tradition. I have argued before that we can see a loose movement becoming a denomination between 1652 and 1660.[3] In the same essay, however, I invoked Alasdair MacIntyre's developed account of the nature of a 'tradition' to suggest that it is appropriate to speak of the General Baptist movement or tradition starting with Smyth and Helwys, because they began the movement that became a denomination half a century after their time.[4] On MacIntyre's telling, a 'tradition' is a diachronic community defined by a continuity in conversation. The conversation may, indeed almost certainly will, lead to revision and sometimes reversal of earlier positions, but the tradition remains unbroken because there is an unbroken chain of discursive reasoning through which such reversals happen. Breaches in a tradition occur when there is a sustained refusal of two (or more) groups to continue

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1 I have addressed the question of the meaning of 'orthodox' in precisely this context in my 'Evaluating a Neglected Tradition of (Ana)baptist Christology', *Scottish Journal of Theology* (2023), pp. 16–33 (pp. 29–32).

2 Kegan A. Chandler, 'Christological Laxity, Nicodemism, and Baptist Identity: A Reply to Stephen R. Holmes', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 24.2 (2024), pp. 163–188.

3 Stephen R. Holmes, 'The Church of Helwys, Murton, and Lambe: An Argument for Continuity', *Baptist Quarterly*, 54 (2023), pp. 134–154 (pp. 153–154).

4 Holmes, 'The Church', p. 152, and see the reference to Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) in note 78 there. I have treated similar themes in discussing the Particular Baptists more recently: Stephen R. Holmes, 'Who Were the Early Baptists? A Review Essay of Matthew C. Bingham, *Orthodox Radicals*', *American Baptist Quarterly*, 40 (2024), pp. 252–272 (pp. 268–270).

the conversation — when, roughly, they stop talking to each other. This might be a split in a previously unified tradition (amongst the seventeenth-century General Baptists, the divide in the 1650s over the proper subjects of manual imposition, the 'laying on of hands', would be an example); equally, it may be a refusal of an existing tradition to engage with a new group who want to join it (we might look to the Mennonite hesitations over welcoming in Smyth's group after he and Helwys had split: Smyth and his comrades wanted to become a part of the Mennonite tradition, but were not received in Smyth's lifetime). Such breaches may be rather temporary (I have argued before for an early reversal of Helwys's refusal to engage with the Mennonites, on the basis of extensive evidence of friendly relations between the nascent General Baptists and the Waterlanders in Amsterdam from the 1620s to about 1660).[5] Questions of comprehension intrude, of course — in the essay just referenced, I proposed that the growing apart of the Amsterdam Mennonites and the English General Baptists after about 1660 can be explained by the ending of the English-speaking congregation in Amsterdam about that date.

All this is of course theoretical, and the messiness of history rarely conforms well to theory. That said, the General Baptists in the seventeenth century are not hard to narrate in these terms. From the beginnings in Amsterdam and then Spitalfields, London, we find, in 1626, five churches clearly engaged in conversation about doctrinal limits and settling on a willingness to recognise the Waterlander Mennonites as fellow Christians, whilst excluding Tookey and his little group. By (probably) 1652, the churches in this tradition are holding annual assemblies, which continue into the 1690s; even after the schism in that decade, we have two rival annual assemblies that cannot stop talking about, and to, each other, and which reunite not very far into the new century. We have, then, a diachronically continuous communal conversation — one that can change its mind relatively quickly on some issues (fellowship with the Mennonites, for example) — but that was repeatedly clear over the boundaries of acceptable diversity. Whether in splitting with Smyth's group over successionism at the beginning, or in

[5] For the point about the Mennonites, see Holmes, 'The Church', p. 137, and the references to the 2011 essay by Sprunger and Sprunger in notes 16–17 there.

expelling Tookey's group in the 1620s, or in decisions over the laying on of hands in the 1650s, or in ongoing disputes with the Quakers, clear lines were repeatedly drawn and policed. They were not the same clear lines at every stage, but it is not hard to show how the original decision about baptism and the concern in the 1640s and 1650s over the laying on of hands are parts of the same ongoing conversation.

Two points are worth stressing here, for avoidance of confusion. First, this all concerns historical judgements about the appropriateness of classifications, not normative judgements about the correctness of positions. To assert that Thomas Lambe and his Bell's Alley Church were excluded from the General Baptist tradition after the mid-1650s because of the divide over the laying on of hands is not to say anything about whether they were right or wrong. It is an historical fact that the continuing tradition, represented by the General Assembly, judged them to be so wrong that they should be excluded; the rightness or wrongness of that decision does not change this historical reality. Second, good historical work requires very careful attention to the questions considered important by the subjects of our research, and a determined refusal to impose our own concerns on them. I have developed this point at some length in a recent essay addressing Matthew Bingham's desire to make the Calvinist/Arminian debate decisive for seventeenth-century Separatists, Independents, and Baptists.[6] It simply was not; several General Baptist leaders, including as it happens Caffyn, in fact taught particular redemption.[7] To gain historical understanding, we need to focus on what our subjects regarded as important, not on what we think they should have regarded as important.

All of this is to say that the claim I am making, stated above, concerns (what I understand to be) the tradition/denomination that can be identified as 'General Baptist' in the seventeenth century, and that this is deliberately modest.

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[6] Holmes, 'Who Were the Early Baptists?', passim, but see particularly the summary on pp. 268–270.

[7] See Matthew Caffyn, *Faith in God's Promises* (London: S. Dover for F. Smith, 1660), pp. 5–6.

Questions of Interpretation

Chandler questions a number of my interpretative claims, and most of the differences between us not covered above turn on these disputes. Before turning to specifics, however, it is worth reviewing a common feature of theological dispute, which is very visible amongst the seventeenth-century General Baptists, as it is in any number of other historical debates. In simple terms, theology *matters*: those engaged in theological dispute are almost always of the view that the eternal destiny of human beings is at stake, and so prosecute their cases with energy. The *odium theologicum*, the passion generated by theological controversy like this, tends, amongst other things, to lead to a piling up of matters of disagreement, and to very strong expressions concerning all of them, which can obscure the matter that is truly at stake.

When we turn to the dispute between Smyth and Helwys, this seems relevant. Chandler quotes some very strong language that Helwys uses of the Mennonite Christology that he was concerned to reject and that Smyth was prepared to make room for;[8] but it is clear that this was not his central concern — he says as much, writing to the Waterlanders that 'the whole cause in question being Succession (for so it is in deed and in truth)[…]'.[9] It is clear, despite the rather intemperate language that Chandler is able to quote, that Helwys and his group do not, at this point, consider the Mennonite Christology a barrier to Christian fellowship, or such an error as to put them outside the true church. In writing to the Mennonites, they address them as 'Beloved in the Lord', and 'Charissimi fratres fidei vinculo'; they praise their 'care, diligence and faithfulness in the advancement of God's holy truth'.[10] Helwys's

[8] Chandler's quotations are all, I think, from Helwys's *Advertisment* of 1611, which is certainly Helwys's strongest blast against the Mennonite Christology. Even in that text, however, Helwys makes clear that his primary argument with the Waterlanders is over succession: in the introductory epistle to De Ries, Wybrants, 'and the congregations where of they are', the single issue named is 'your error of Succession and order', indicating that this was the heart of the dispute. Thomas Helwys, *An Advertisement or admonition, unto the Congregations*… (no place or publisher stated, but presumably Amsterdam, 1611), pp. 6–7, quotation from p. 6.

[9] Letter from Helwys, Pigott, Seamer, and Murton to the Waterlander church 12 March 1610, reproduced in Champlin Burrage, *Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research, 1550–1641*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 1912), pp. 185–187 (p. 185).

[10] Letter 12 March 1610; Letter 'Ecclesia Anglicana, Ecclesiae Belg[icae] Amsterdamiae', reproduced in Burrage, *Early English Dissenters*, 2, p. 181.

church represent themselves as a true church of Christ, which has properly excommunicated Smyth and his group for their repudiation of their baptisms and their confession of successionism, and which is writing to another true church of Christ, the Waterlanders in Amsterdam, informing them of this excommunication and asking that it be respected and upheld.

For the matter at hand, the sequence here is important: in 1610 Helwys tells the Waterlanders, who at that point he seems to regard as a true church of Christ without reserve, that the 'English church' — Helwys and his congregation — had excommunicated Smyth and his group, and that this excommunication should be respected by the 'Dutch Church', the Waterlanders. The sole ground cited for the excommunication is successionism. From Helwys's point of view, Smyth is then under the Ban, and is not a member of any church. It would seem that Helwys then learned more about what the Waterlanders actually taught and became concerned, particularly that they were holding the doctrine of succession but also over other matters. On his account, some private representations followed, which, being ineffective, led to the public rebuke contained in the *Advertisement*.[11]

We see from this sequencing that there was no (public) dispute between Smyth and Helwys over Christology during the (fairly brief) time they recognised each other as fellow members of a baptised church. They split over the need for succession — which is, of course, essentially the question of the validity of their baptisms and so of great importance to them. Some time after that split, Helwys opposed both Smyth and the Waterlanders on a number of issues, succession still being chief among them, but he also included other errors he perceived, concerning the Sabbath, magistracy, and Christology.

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[11] In passing, it is worth noting that this is fairly transparently an application of the Ban procedure outlined in Matthew 18 to the Waterlanders. Helwys makes it clear that he has sought to address the issue of succession privately with De Ries in particular but had no satisfaction, so he has written 'privately to the whole congregation' — taken the matter to the church. Now he is making his charges public. Given this, the fact that he does not pronounce the Ban seems significant, and this impression is strengthened by the appeal to Revelation 2 immediately following the dedicatory epistle. In citing the letters to the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira, he is constructing the Waterlanders as a true church of Christ that is, however, entertaining errors and false teachers, and so is in danger of invoking judgement on itself.

I have addressed Chandler's points concerning Busher and Tookey above (although I am not certain he gets Busher right): both were clearly formally excluded from the developing tradition, and so they cannot be used as evidence of a willingness to embrace, or even to tolerate, the sort of doctrinal divergence they represent. Chandler cites Bell as noting christological differences between the five churches that signed the 1526 letter; unfortunately, Bell offers no evidence for this claim at all, and (unless it is a reference to Tookey) I cannot think of any evidence we have that might even suggest it.[12]

Baptist support for John Biddle is an interesting question. William Lumpkin ascribed an anonymous 1655 tract, *A Petition of divers gathered churches*…, to some sort of group of London Baptists.[13] This text not only pleads for Biddle's release, but also locates its authors as anti-trinitarian, in that it asserts that if Biddle is guilty under the Articles cited, so would they be. After the petition proper, addressed to Cromwell, there is a letter, addressed to the Midlands (General Baptist) churches who had agreed the 1651 *Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations*, appealing for their support on the basis that they had chosen to use biblical language, not 'person' and 'substance', in their confession of the Trinity, which is presumably why Lumpkin wants to ascribe the document to Baptists. It seems clear, however, that Lumpkin is mistaken: by 1655 the General Assembly had met more than once, and the appeal made is not that of churches secure in their mutual recognition. Rather, it seems that the deliberately biblical language of the *Faith and Practice* had somehow come to the notice of the tract authors and encouraged them to hope that the Midlands Baptist congregations might be fellow-travellers.[14]

Chandler cites the seventeenth-century historian Anthony Wood to the effect at least some General Baptists were won over by Biddle in the 1655 debate between John Biddle and John Griffith at

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12 Chandler, 'Christological Laxity', p. 169), referencing Mark R. Bell, *Apocalypse How? Baptist Movements during the English Revolution* (Mercer University Press, 2000), p. 40.

13 William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. edn (Judson Press, 1969) p. 173, n. 17.

14 It is possible, although perhaps unlikely, that the 1655 tract was written by some surviving descendants of Tookey's group. This would make it easier to understand how they came to notice the *Faith and Practice*; on the other hand, we have no evidence of Tookey's group surviving into the 1640s, let alone to 1655.

Stone Chapel, which ended prematurely when Biddle was arrested. However, more recent historians, both Baptist and Unitarian, have judged, rightly in my estimation, that Wood failed to understand the Baptist commitment to liberty of conscience for all, and so he erroneously interpreted Baptist support for Biddle's *release* as support for Biddle's *doctrine*.[15] Indeed, if we consult Wood's original account, he dismisses the Baptists' concern for liberty of conscience as 'pretence', which to any student of the tradition will be merely incredible; further, his evidence for Baptists holding Biddle's views extends to a parenthetical 'as tis said', which is hardly compelling.[16]

I am grateful to Chandler for drawing my attention to the anonymous 1657 tract *To the Officers and Souldiers of the Army*, which I had previously overlooked. It has a marginal list of claimed subscribers to the 1655 *Petition* mentioned above,[17] which includes reference to several known General Baptist churches. The list bears some examination: first, there is a clear division between three churches, where we are told a small number of people subscribed 'in the behalf of the whole Church', and the other eight, where we are left to assume that one or more members subscribed to the petition but the church as a whole did not. None of the three subscribing churches are known to us as General Baptist causes of the time; of the other eight, asserted only to be home to some supporters, one is Independent, the church pastored by John Goodwin; one is Particular Baptist, pastored by William Kiffin; three are identifiably General Baptist — pastored by the two Thomas Lamb(e)s, and Samuel Loveday; the other three are indeterminate — a congregation pastored by George Huntley, who seems to be unknown to us, a congregation 'meeting in the Stone Chappel [*sic*] in Pauls', and a congregation 'meeting in Nightingale Lane'.

Goodwin, the Independent, is interesting here, not least because he was a prolific author and we know much about his convictions, and indeed his changes of mind. When Thomas Firmin, a young artisan in

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15 So, for example, H. John McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 222–223; Clint C. Bass, *Thomas Grantham (1633–1692) and General Baptist Theology* (Regent's Park College, 2013), pp. 180–181.

16 Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxionensis*, vol. 2 (London: Tho. Bennet, 1691), col. 201–202.

17 There is an extensive quotation of the petition on p. 3, which is identical to the 1655 text. Anon., *To the Officers and Souldiers of the Army*… (n. p., but presumably London: n. pub., 1657).

Goodwin's congregation, met Biddle and embraced his principles, Goodwin was appalled. He preached repeatedly against 'Socinianism', to the extent that he could claim in 1654, to have 'laboured, and this more publikly, more abundantly' against the error than any Presbyterian divine.[18] He had previously expressed his commitment to liberty of conscience and to rational approaches to religion, but he was completely unprepared to accept that such principles might lead to toleration for anti-trinitarians. We have the published version of his anti-Socinian sermons, in which he was prepared — perhaps forced? — to acknowledge that some in his church struggled with the question; to them he proposed an argument reminiscent of Pascal's wager: it was more likely that the trinitarians were right, and the cost of embracing the Socinian position, if it should turn out to be wrong, was far higher, so a rational waverer should confess the Trinity.[19]

This gives context for the four Baptist churches mentioned: if Goodwin, publicly and implacably opposed to Socinianism and repeatedly warning his congregation against it, could be named in such a document, it cannot be offered, on its own, as good evidence that the Baptist leaders and churches named were any more positive than he was. Rather, like Goodwin, they were committed to the principle of liberty of conscience: no-one, however wrong, should be punished by the magistrate for their religious convictions — and this included John Biddle, even though his opinions were as odious as they were erroneous in their eyes.

Chandler's accounts of the 1656 debate, the writing of the Standard Confession in 1660, assume that the Anabaptist Christology is unorthodox; I have argued, in an essay that Chandler references with apparent approval, that this assumption is unwarranted.[20] Even if I am

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[18] Indeed, he asserts that he has laboured more 'not onley then [sic] you all, but then all your six Commissioners'. John Goodwin, *A Fresh Discovery of the High-Presbyterian Spirit* … (London: for the author, 1654) p. 45.

[19] Goodwin's anti-Socinian sermons were published in *Πληρωμα το πνευματικον, Or, A Being Filled with the Spirit*… (London: Henry Eversden, 1670); John Coffey's analysis remains standard: John Coffey, *Thomas Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England* (Boydell, 2006), pp. 246–249.

[20] Holmes, 'Evaluating a Neglected Tradition of (Ana)baptist Christology', pp. 28–30; Chandler, 'Christological Laxity', n. 5.

wrong, I simply note that it remains an assumption: Chandler offers no discussion of the meaning of 'orthodox', but instead asserts, on the basis of piecemeal quotations from people who without doubt disagreed on the meaning of that word (Thomas Helwys and Leon McBeth, for example) that what he terms, unhappily as I have argued,[21] 'Hoffmanite Christology' is obviously unorthodox.

Now, in my discussion already referenced, I accept readily that if by 'orthodox' we mean 'subscribing to the ecumenical creeds and conciliar definitions', then the Anabaptist Christology was not orthodox. That is, however, a position that is simply foreign to Baptist life from 1611 until today. Many of us have great respect for the ecumenical formulations; indeed, I have argued that they can carry effective authority even when we insist that God's revelation is *sola scriptura*;[22] but even if (as I do) we assert that doctrinal agreement with the Chalcedonian definition is necessary for orthodoxy, we have to take the doctrinal matter seriously, not the verbal form. I have argued before that Menno and Caffyn (*inter alia*) rejected Chalcedonian language because they heard it as Nestorian;[23] if this is right we might suggest that they were rejecting the language of Chalcedon in order to assert the doctrine of Chalcedon. (This is, of course, essentially the agreement reached in the recent historic rapprochement between the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox.[24])

On this basis, I find myself able to accept many of Chandler's assertions about General Baptist willingness to make space for Anabaptist Christology in the middle of the seventeenth century; indeed, I have previously gone further than he proposes on at least one of them. He urges on me that the 1660 'Standard Confession' made room for Caffyn's 'Hoffmanite' Christology. I have in fact argued in the past that Caffyn was one of the authors of this confession, alongside Joseph Wright and John Parsons senior, and that these three were tasked with

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21 Holmes, 'Evaluating a Neglected Tradition of (Ana)baptist Christology', p. 28.

22 See Stephen R. Holmes, *Listening to the Past* (Paternoster, 2002), especially chapter 10.

23 Holmes, 'Evaluating a Neglected Tradition of (Ana)baptist Christology', pp. 20–21, 27, 28.

24 See Ciprian Toroczkai, 'Eastern Orthodox Churches and Oriental Orthodox Churches in Dialogue: Reception, Disagreement and Convergence', *Review of Ecumenical Studies*, 8 (2016), pp. 253–256 for an overview and *The Dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches*, ed. by Christine Chaillot (Volos Academy Publications, 2016) for helpful discussion.

writing a confession that was capacious of both Caffyn's 'Hoffmanite' (*sic*, Anabaptist) views and Wright's more Chalcedonian formulations.[25] We agree that the tradition made space for the Anabaptist Christology; Chandler asserts that this Christology is 'unorthodox'; I regard this assertion as unwarranted, at least without good evidence being presented. Further, I have, in a previous publication already referenced, offered distinctions concerning the meaning of 'orthodox' and (what I see as) compelling evidence that, on any meaning acceptable to Baptists, we cannot (yet?) label the Anabaptist Christology as definitively outside this category, although I accept completely that neither can we assert that it is definitively within the category.

On Caffyn's Doctrine

Chandler suggests I am inconsistent in my account of Caffyn. I can only apologise here if I have failed to be clear. I have been working on Caffyn, on and off, for well over a decade, and not all my conclusions are yet in print. I have tried to be clear, for example, that whilst I have considerable respect for Bass's recent monograph and do regard it as the best reconstruction currently in print, I am not in total agreement, particularly when it comes to Christ's deity and the doctrine of the Trinity.[26] If I have not communicated this adequately, that is entirely my fault, particularly given I have not yet published my (admittedly tentative) reconstruction of Caffyn's trinitarian doctrine.

As I have indicated above, I accept completely that Caffyn held to an Anabaptist, 'heavenly flesh' Christology. The textual evidence for this is not straightforward, but it all points in this direction. I note, however, that this doctrine is entirely about the human nature of Christ, and so no evidence at all for his orthodoxy or otherwise on the Trinity. I have explored this point at some length in print elsewhere,[27] but here I will simply point to Hans de Ries's 1578 Confession, which was of course written under duress, and demonstrates De Ries's best attempts

[25] Stephen R. Holmes, 'A Note Concerning the Text, Editions, and Authorship of the 1660 Standard Confession of the General Baptists', *Baptist Quarterly*, 47 (2016), pp. 2–7.
[26] For this in terms see Holmes, 'Evaluating a Neglected Tradition of (Ana)baptist Christology', n. 46 on p. 26, for example.
[27] Holmes, 'Evaluating a Neglected Tradition of (Ana)baptist Christology', passim.

to make the Anabaptist Christology acceptable to his persecutors, but demonstrates that he is prepared to assert, whilst holding tenaciously to the Anabaptist Christology, that 'Jesus Christ is truly God', and that he is 'of one will, one mind, one essence with the Father, of one substance with the Father and the Holy Spirit […] in His divine Being having neither beginning nor end […]'.[28]

I suppose that no-one familiar with the sources will disagree that it is hard to give an adequate account of Caffyn's doctrine of the Trinity. If De Ries is evidence that it was possible for a careful theologian to hold both the Anabaptist Christology and a traditional account of the Trinity, he cannot of course be evidence that any later writer, including Caffyn, followed him in this. We have, essentially, nothing from Caffyn's own hand, and the various contemporary sources that we do have are distorted by the ongoing controversy. There are, however, various historical facts that are not in dispute.

The first is that we have incontrovertible evidence that the General Assembly, in the 1690s, was sufficiently opposed to 'Socinianism' to expel Richard Newton in 1692 for holding the doctrine. Caffyn was present at that Assembly. It is further clear that throughout the dispute the General Assembly never suggested that the various doctrines imputed to Caffyn were acceptable; rather, they judged that he did not hold the doctrines of which he was accused. Whatever this says about Caffyn, it is strong evidence that the Assembly was committed to upholding a basic trinitarian orthodoxy, although they never defined the limits or extent of that. This evidence is surely unambiguous and compelling, and supports my statement of my core thesis at the beginning of this article: the Assembly would not 'knowingly tolerate' unorthodox doctrine regarding the Trinity. If Caffyn was obfuscating, they fell for it, but this does not make them accepting of unorthodoxy; rather it merely makes them somewhat gullible.

There are other lines of evidence that suggest support for this conclusion, although with less direct purchase. Daniel Allen is a case in

[28] Quotations from Cornelius J. Dyck, 'The Middleburg Confession of Hans de Ries, 1578', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 36 (1962), pp. 147–54 (p. 152); I discuss this in Holmes, 'Evaluating a Neglected Tradition of (Ana)baptist Christology', pp. 23–25.

point. Allen is, although he disavows the term, Arian. Chandler makes much of Caffyn's association with Allen, and suggests that Bass did too.[29] In reality, the only association we have any evidence of is that they defended different propositions in two debates that were held in the same place on the same day. Allen's book, *The Moderate Trinitarian*, does not mention Caffyn once, although it engages in passing with the debates of the 1690s and directly and at some length with some of Caffyn's opponents, notably Thomas Monck.[30] We do, however, know from the minutes of the General Assembly that Allen was a Messenger in good standing in 1696 and 1698, but he then disappears completely from the record. His book, denying the doctrine of the Trinity directly, was published in 1699. This may be coincidence, but, particularly given the exclusion of Newton in 1692, it may also be suggestive. Like Newton, Allen denied the doctrine of the Trinity; unlike Newton we have no record of deliberations, but he similarly plays no further discernible part in denominational life.[31] Caffyn, however, remains a Messenger in good standing.

Chandler suggests, following, amongst others, Curtis Freeman, that Caffyn remained in good standing because he dissembled — Chandler's accusation of 'Nicodemism'. As I have noted above, if this is true, it does not in any way damage the point I am trying to make against Chandler. That said, is it true? Once again, the evidence is insufficient for us to come to a firm conclusion, but there is no evidence whatsoever for the claim that Caffyn was 'a master of theological obfuscation'.[32] He was repeatedly imprisoned through his life, but we have not one suggestion that he dissembled to avoid prison. We look in vain in any of the four works that have come down to us for anything other than robust, sometimes dismissive, statements of what he believed. His anti-Quaker polemic was still being answered by members of the Society of Friends into the eighteenth century, but none of them

[29] Chandler, 'Christological Laxity', p. 176.
[30] Daniel Allen, *The Moderate Trinitarian* (London: Mary Fabian, 1699).
[31] Chandler's suggestion that Allen was somehow involved in setting the conditions for Caffyn's trial in 1700 is therefore implausible. Chandler, 'Christological Laxity', p. 176.
[32] Chandler, 'Christological Laxity', citing Freeman, p. 181.

ever raise a charge of equivocation or deceitfulness, suggesting that no such charge was known amongst them.

Against all this, Chandler offers one piece of evidence, and one generic assertion. The evidence is Wright's recollection of an Assembly meeting probably in the early 1670s in Aylesbury. Wright's account of Caffyn's statements does not look like equivocation, however: 'to say the eternal God could change into Flesh, Blood, and Bones […] is Blasphemy' seems instead to be straightforward and robust![33] Wright professes shock at hearing this from Caffyn, and suggests it represents a major change of mind on Caffyn's part, but if we understand the Anabaptist Christology, it need not. As I have argued elsewhere, Menno developed that tradition to a point where he felt it possible, indeed crucial, to assert that the 'becoming' spoken of in John 1:14 happened without change. If we assume that Caffyn held a similar conviction, then we can make perfect sense of everything Wright records, without positing any change of mind on Caffyn's part. Wright has regularly heard Caffyn speak of the Logos 'becoming' flesh, and has assumed that 'becoming' here means or at least implies 'change'; Caffyn thinks however, with Menno, that 'becoming' does not entail 'change'. Presented, then, with the claim that 'the eternal God could change into Flesh', Caffyn simply dismisses it as '[b]lasphemy', but Wright hears this dismissal as a major change of mind. Caffyn's response to Wright on this point, which we have only in Wright's transcription, suggests he thinks Wright has simply not understood him,[34] which is echoed in his dismissive response on a similar point to Haynes,[35] and in Thomas Crosby's report of his response to Monck's *Cure*.[36] If this reconstruction is correct, Caffyn is not dissembling in any way here; he is perhaps guilty of not understanding how his position is confusing to Wright, but he is simply expressing, forcibly indeed, the position he has always held.

Chandler then gives us a line from Bass to the effect that after this meeting in the 1670s, '[Caffyn] proved to be much more elusive,

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33 Joseph Wright, *Speculum Haeriticis, or, A looking Glass for Heretics* (London, 1691), pp. 6, 11.
34 Wright, *Speculum*, pp. 7–8 for Wright's account; p. 25 for Caffyn's nuanced response.
35 Matthew Caffyn, *Envy's Bitterness Corrected with the Rod of Shame* (London, 1674), p. 32.
36 Thomas Crosby, The *History of the English Baptists*, vol. 4 (Baptist Standard Bearer, 2001; original published in London in 1740), p. 338. Thomas Monck, *A Cure for the Cankering Error of the New Eutychians* . . . (London: for the author, 1673).

stressing the obscurity of traditional formulations and rarely stating positively his own position.'[37] But on what evidence is this based? We have no writings from Caffyn from this period, and little other material. The Assembly *Minutes* do not give particulars of who said what, so cannot be offered in support. There is a repeated charge that Caffyn described John Weller's unitarianism as 'precious truths' in a letter, although the evidence does not in fact adequately support this charge;[38] that said, even if it is true, it does not look like evasiveness. Again, the 1699 debate used to link Caffyn with Allen has Caffyn stepping forward willingly to defend what is essentially the Anabaptist Christology in debate against all comers. Is this the act of someone who is striving to conceal his own views?

Bass's assertion that Caffyn emphasised 'the obscurity of traditional formulations' has a little more support. The clearest statement is again from Crosby, who asserts that at the 1699 debate Caffyn 'made the unsurmountable difficulties, which attend the *Athanasian* scheme, […] fully and manifestly appear' and more generally that Caffyn 'thought it a little strange and unaccountable, that in respect of the Deity, *one* substance should constitute *three* real persons, and yet, that in Christ, *two* intelligent natures and substances should make but *one* person'.[39]

I have argued before that expressing such doubts in seventeenth-century England was natural, as the key terms of the ancient trinitarian confessions, 'person' and 'substance', had changed in meaning, and so the traditional formulae made no sense. It is not unreasonable to read Crosby's account of Caffyn's hesitations in these terms. Indeed, there is evidence that we should do so. In Wright's report of Caffyn's responses to his charges, he notes that Caffyn included a passage from 'Dr. Sherlock's *Vindication of the Athanasian Creed*'.[40] Wright is dismissive of this, noting that Caffyn denied the *Quicumque vult* (which

[37] Clint C. Bass, *The Caffynite Controversy* (Centre for Baptist Studies in Oxford, 2020), p. 39.
[38] Even if the letter were from Caffyn to Weller, which given its appearance ten or twelve years after it was written cannot be certain, the 'precious truths' of which Caffyn approves are unspecified. It could as easily be about the Anabaptist Christology, or indeed some other eccentric opinion shared by both men of which we now have no trace.
[39] Crosby, *History*, 4, pp. 337, 341; all emphases original.
[40] Wright, *Speculum*, p. 28.

is unsurprising if the doubts Crosby ascribes to him are even close to true). The reference is striking, however. Wright's *Speculum* was published in 1691, with the implication (from the dating of the introductory epistle) that it was written and responded to in 1690, which was also the year of publication of Sherlock's *Vindication*.[41] Caffyn, therefore, had read this text almost as soon as it was published and was citing it (uniquely, according to Wright's evidence) approvingly.

Sherlock was a non-juror, who had argued against Toleration because he believed nonconformity should be actively persecuted in law. He was not, it is fair to say, an obvious authority for Caffyn to appeal to. The *Vindication*, however, although controversial, was perhaps the greatest attempt in the seventeenth century to restate a traditional trinitarian doctrine without using the problematic language of 'person' and 'substance'.[42] Caffyn's interest in, and invocation of, Sherlock suggests a similar interest, which accords well with Crosby's reports, and makes considerable sense both of the various debates of the 1690s' Assemblies, and of Wright's complaints and confusions.[43]

Salters' Hall, 1719, and Beyond

Chandler turns, albeit briefly, to the Salters' Hall Synod of 1719, repeating the old charge that the refusal of the General Baptists who were present to subscribe to Anglican or Presbyterian formulae was evidence that they were already unorthodox. Recent scholarship does

41 William Sherlock, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Holy and Ever Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation of the Son of God* (London: W. Rogers, 1690).

42 For some account of the controversy, see Martin Grieg, 'Reasonableness of Christianity? Gilbert Burnet and the Trinitarian Controversy of the 1690s', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 44 (1993), pp. 631–651; D. W. Dockrill, 'The Authority of the Fathers on the Great Trinitarian Debates of the Sixteen Nineties', *Studia Patristica*, 18 (1989), pp. 335–347; and Yudha Thianto, 'Three Persons as Three Individual Substances: Joseph Bingham and the Trinitarian Controversy at Oxford in the 1690s', *Fides et Historica*, 40 (2008), pp. 67–86.

43 There is not room to demonstrate every detail of this here, but consider, e.g., the standard framing of the charge against Caffyn in the 1690s, that Christ 'is not of the Uncreeted [*sic*] Substance of his father But God made him a Creature only' (from the 1692 minutes in *Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptist Churches in England*, 2 vols, ed. by W. T. Whitley (Baptist Historical Society, 1909), 1, pp. 39–40). If my account is right, Caffyn may well have accepted the first clause, because he could make no sense of 'substance' language, whilst denying the second. He would therefore be continuing to affirm the true deity of Christ.

not, unfortunately, offer any support for this, and much strong evidence against it.[44] The, albeit probably apocryphal, tale of the twin shouts, 'You that are for the Doctrine of the Trinity…' and 'You that are against Persecution…' makes the salient point well:[45] the question at stake was not trinitarianism versus unitarianism, but willingness to subscribe to imposed human formulae in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity versus a commitment to trinitarian doctrine coupled with a refusal to accept demands of subscription. It is worth recalling that in 1719, we are only three decades from the Toleration Act; some of those present might well have been persecuted for their unwillingness to conform to Anglican norms, almost all would have known people who were so persecuted. Non-subscription was not a rejection of the Trinity, but a rejection of the imposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles or the Westminster Standards.[46] (Chandler appears to have missed the fact that the formula of subscription was drawn from these sources, instead suggesting it was 'drafted by the defeated minority at Salters'[Hall]'.[47] This is significant, given the history of persecution.)

Claims of a universal shift of the General Baptists to unitarianism in the eighteenth century are not uncommon, but are also misleading: certainly there was some movement in this direction, but the fact that the old General Baptist denomination was almost entirely unitarian by (say) 1800 is mostly a reflection that all the churches committed to trinitarian orthodoxy had left to join the New Connexion.[48] Through a somewhat stuttering process, the New

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[44] See, e.g., Jesse Owens, 'Salters' Hall and the English General Baptists: A Reappraisal', in *Trinity, Creed and Confusion: The Salters' Hall Debates of 1719*, ed. by Stephen Copson (Regent's Park College, 2020), pp. 63–85, which demonstrates that every one of the General Baptist nonsubscribers of whom we have knowledge was, in 1719, not anti-trinitarian, but merely opposed to the imposition of subscription to non-biblical texts.

[45] Anon., *An Account of the late Proceedings of the Dissenting Ministers …* (London: J. Roberts, 1719), p. 10.

[46] Most recent accounts take this line. To give only one example, 'The case for the majority of the Nonsubscribers at Salters' Hall being theologically orthodox regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, but opposed to the requirement of subscription to extrabiblical words and phrases, is strong' (Jesse F. Owens, 'The Salters' Hall Controversy: Heresy, Subscription, or Both?', *Perichoresis*, 20 (2022), pp. 35–52 (p. 50)).

[47] Chandler, 'Christological Laxity', pp. 178-179.

[48] Frank W. Rinaldi, *The Tribe of Dan: The New Connexion of General Baptists 1770–1891* (Paternoster, 2008) remains the best history; he discusses the various old General Baptist churches that seceded to the New Connexion on pp. 42–43.

Connexion merged with the Particular Baptists to form what is now The Baptist Union of Great Britain, presently numbering some 2000 congregations, of whom none are confessionally unitarian.

The churches of the older General Baptist tradition dwindled through the nineteenth century. Chandler cites Beard to the effect that there were twenty-four (only!) 'Unitarian Baptist' churches the UK by 1846. He goes on to cite a sentence from the conclusion of an essay of mine to the effect that, lacking any competent magisterium, Baptists must accept the right of congregations to self-denominate, and asks if this applies to these 'Unitarian Baptist' churches.[49] I confess I find this slightly puzzling: just two sentences later in that essay, I addressed these nineteenth-century churches directly, as a limit case, noting that amongst them were probably congregations that maintained the denomination 'Baptist' even when they had given up on any practice of baptism, and distinguishing the right to self-denomination from the scholarly willingness to point to anomalies. This should, surely, have made my reply to Chandler's question clear: yes, they have the right to self-denominate as congregations; but the scholar trying to narrate the Baptist tradition has equally the right to regard them as anomalous and so to exclude them from their narration — in this case on the following bases. (1) That the denomination was historic, and so might be assumed to persist for some time after it ceased to apply; (2) that these anomalies are very few in number; and (3) that they are mostly very short-lived. Of course, such a proposed exclusion may — indeed should — be challenged, but only on the basis of evidence or of an alternative account of Baptist identity that specifies a credible definition which is capacious of congregations previously considered anomalous.[50]

[49] Chandler, 'Theological Laxity', p. 186, citing Holmes, 'Baptist Identity, Once More', *Journal of Baptist Theology in Context*, 3 (2021), pp. 5–27. The point about self-denomination is found on pp. 26–27 of that essay.

[50] It is perhaps worth noting that the account of Baptist identity I develop in that essay focuses on the active and direct lordship of Jesus over every person and over every local congregation. The account of 'Lordship' I offer seems to me to demand a robust assertion of the deity of Christ, and therefore also some sort of trinitarian doctrine.

Conclusion

I return to where I began: I am grateful to Dr Chandler for his engagement. All of us who work as scholars desire above all not to be merely neglected. To read, and engage with someone's work remains the greatest compliment we can pay them — this, even if I completely disagree, is worth my time and effort, a contribution important enough to care about and to put in the labour to respond to. I hope the above reflections at least clarify where we disagree, and why. For my part, the fact that there are scholars who care enough about Caffyn and the General Baptists to dispute interpretations, and journals that consider such disputes worth publishing, is a joy: when I began my academic career, in the 1990s, this would not have been the case, and I am grateful to all those — journal editors, conference organisers, but, supremely, individual researchers — who have laboured to make that change happen.

Book Reviews

Barry Evans, *Helping Care for the Young: Rye Lane Chapel Sunday School, Peckham, London, 200th Anniversary 1822–2022* (Independent Publishing Network, 2021), 316 pages. ISBN: 9781800493506.

Reviewed by Brian Talbot

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The vital task of recording and retaining records of the life and witness of local churches is the essential groundwork of church history. It is extremely difficult to tell the broader story well without the detailed accounts of the impact of Christian congregations in local communities. There are many pamphlet histories of churches written to mark particular anniversaries in their faith journey, alongside a smaller number of detailed book-length studies of their work. However, it has also been noted that there are very few studies looking into the work of Christian churches amongst children and young people. This lacuna in the field of church history is beginning to be addressed on an academic level with a number of scholars producing good work in recent years. However, book-length studies of this aspect of the work of any local congregation are still extremely rare. Although there are a few older works that fall into this category, Barry Evans is to be congratulated for this recent publication relating to the work of a London Baptist Church. *Helping Care for the Young* is a study of the Sunday School of a local church, both in its mission halls and on its main premises. What is more, the author sets the detailed local study in the wider regional and national context in England. This enables readers to compare or contrast what was happening in Peckham with wider trends over these two centuries.

This study of a village cause two hundred years ago that changed into an expanding London middle-class suburb and now into an ethnically diverse community, records the way Rye Lane Chapel leaders and church members sought to live out their faith and engage effectively with their local community. In addition to being a good detailed

academic study, the author also seeks to write in an engaging manner for Christians today, helping them to reflect on their own situation and the importance of communicating and engaging effectively with constantly changing communities. He is also very open to admit the strengths and weaknesses of the choices made by this church over the years and on a few occasions to record the times when relationships broke down and some people left the church. In summary, it is a superb study of the work of a local church with children and young people. It is well written, and warmly commended. Hopefully, it will encourage other authors to engage in a similar project with their own congregations in the years to come.

Oleksandr Geychenko, *Brotherhood in Christ: Towards a Ukrainian Baptist Perspective on Associations of Churches* (Langham Academic, 2024), 374 pages. ISBN: 9781839737893.

Reviewed by Peter Penner

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This book addresses the research question: 'What is the Ukrainian Baptist understanding of the ecclesiological nature of associations of churches (ACs) as reflected in their practices, organisational structure, and key theological documents?' (p. 13).

The book begins with a five-chapter historical account of Ukrainian Baptists, tracing the development of the Ukrainian Baptist Union (AUUCECB). Drawing on a range of historical literature and archival documents, Geychenko provides a comprehensive overview of the evolution of Baptist ecclesiology in Ukraine, paying special attention to the concept of the association of churches (AC). This historical perspective is valuable for understanding the growing ecclesiological significance of ACs within the Baptist tradition in Ukraine.

Chapter six transitions to contemporary reflections, focusing on interviews with key Ukrainian Baptist leaders. Applying qualitative research methods, Geychenko integrates oral history into his analysis,

offering a contextual and up-to-date examination of the understanding and function of ACs in the Ukrainian Baptist context. These interviews add richness to the study by presenting voices that may not be well-represented in written sources but are nonetheless central to the ongoing life of the Ukrainian Baptist Union.

The core argument of the dissertation is that the AC serves as a vital ecclesiological and ecclesio-practical model for Ukrainian Baptists. Geychenko proposes that the AC should be understood not merely as an organisational necessity but as a theologically grounded entity. His engagement with Paul Fiddes' covenant ecclesiology, particularly in chapters seven and eight, strengthens this argument. Geychenko's dialogue with Fiddes helps to broaden the theological horizon of his study, proposing that the AC model can be theologically enriched through Fiddes' concepts of covenant relationships and community. This engagement allows the author to offer a robust theological foundation for the AC model, which can be applied within the Ukrainian Baptist context and beyond.

One of the book's strengths is its thorough exploration of historical theological issues. Over half of the book is devoted to tracing the development of Baptist ecclesiology from the early years of the movement to the present, offering a balanced perspective that incorporates primary sources from various periods. Geychenko's analysis highlights the hybrid origins of Ukrainian Baptist identity, shaped by both Western and Eastern influences, and transformed by the unique historical context of the Russian Empire.

Geychenko also provides a concise summary of Fiddes' covenant ecclesiology, which is particularly helpful for readers unfamiliar with his work. The interaction between Geychenko and Fiddes' ideas offers a model for others seeking to navigate the relationship between ecclesial traditions and denominational forms. In this way, Geychenko's dissertation contributes to broader conversations about ecclesiology within the Baptist tradition.

Overall, Geychenko's work is a significant contribution to the study of Baptist ecclesiology, particularly in the Ukrainian context. His historical analysis, theological engagement, and use of qualitative

research methods make the book relevant to both scholars and practitioners. It would be beneficial for this work to be translated into Eastern European languages, as it offers valuable insights for Baptists in post-Soviet contexts.

Miguel A. De La Torre, *The U. S. Immigration Crisis: Towards an Ethics of Place* (Cascade Books, 2016), 176 pages. ISBN: 9781498223690.
(Available to borrow online through Internet Archive <https://archive.org/details/usimmigrationcri0000dela/mode/2up> [accessed 7 July 2024])

Reviewed by Ksenija Magda

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With more than thirty books and other publications, Miguel De La Torre is no stranger to the academic world of North and South. This little book, published (it seems) as a reaction to the election rhetoric of 2016, provides a flip-side to Donald Trump's orotundity which demagogically scapegoated Latin American immigrants for all alleged economic misfortunes in the United States. History is back to haunt us, and so De La Torre's little book acts as an antidote. For its seven chapters the author sat in different places which witness to the truth about Northern injustice done to the American South. This is a truth which cannot be picked up from the distant safety of the living room television, as that never raises the actual question of 'why are Salvadorians, Hondurans, and Guatemalans coming to the United States? Why are tens of thousands of unaccompanied children from these countries showing up on our doorsteps?' (p. 65). The answer is simple: the US built roads into these areas to exploit their livelihoods by controlling their economies (p. 156). De La Torre points back to these old economic and political relationships by which the US has enforced on their poorer neighbours unjust pacts like the United Fruit Company and NAFTA and created problems in South America condescendingly called, for example, 'banana republics'. The starving now follow these same roads. This should remind especially the Christians that 'God chooses the oppressed of history […] and makes them the cornerstone,

the principal means for salvation […] If we want to see the face of Jesus all we need to do is to gaze into the face of the undocumented' (p. 157). Yet not our patronising 'hospitality' to the stranger is required, but a 'responsibility of restitution' (p. 159). This calls for a thorough transformation in Christian ethics. The book is therefore dedicated to the 'activists, churches and organizations, that occupy space on the borders between privilege and disposition, accompanying the disenfranchised'. It is written as a workbook and seeks to raise up those who want to ask actual questions about immigration and discuss the real Christian response.

De La Torre's book surprised me. I chose it for my interest in the spaciality of faith and its theories, but it gave me heart-wrenching case studies instead. I found it less concerned with theology and sometimes running right into doctrinal disputes without bothering to dwell on them (which may be held against him). But De La Torre's goals are too urgent (still) and cannot be concerned with 'armchair theology's' feeling. Rather, regardless of theology we are asked to dare to apply it as ethical Christian living in actual conflicted places of the undocumented immigrants. Then we must work up the courage to address these issues in the face of the unjust talk and policies of the world.

Enoh Šeba, *Sermon Listening: A New Approach Based on Congregational Studies and Rhetoric* (Langham Monographs, 2021), 300 pages. ISBN: 9781839732218.

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Šeba is concerned in this book with the inconsistency between the purpose of preaching being to edify and encourage and the reality as expressed by one listener he quotes who said 'I feel actively insulted by the rubbish I get to hear' (p. 1). Šeba sets about providing a comprehensive exploration of the interplay, or lack of it, between preacher and listener. On the way he provides a very helpful discussion on rhetoric and homiletics. Having introduced key characters — Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and Augustine — the author engages with

contemporary contributors on homiletics — Hogan, Reid, Myers, and Loscalzo. Among his conclusions from the survey of their work, he highlights that contemporary studies warn that persuasion has to be tempered with awareness of manipulation and exploitation, and 'speaking must be preceded by listening' (p. 55).

Šeba follows on with chapters exploring congregational studies, empirical studies in preaching, and a case study based on the experience of Croatian Baptists, before coming to theological and theoretical reflection and suggestions for improving the practice of preaching. The chapters on theological reflection and improving practice will be of interest and help to anyone interested in preaching, even if a case study on Croatian Baptists is not.

Taking a lead from the work of Elaine Graham and others who focus on theology as formation of character, building a community of faith, and relating to contemporary culture, Šeba develops his argument by addressing each focus in turn from the doctrinal perspective of *imago Dei*, incarnation, and the priesthood of all believers. His conclusions from this theological reflection are worthy of serious consideration. Consideration of the *imago Dei* demands that preaching respect the context and experience of the listener as one bearing the image of God and a co-contributor to the process. The preacher should see the incarnation as the model that demands engagement with the lives of people in a meaningful and authentic way if preaching is to be worthy of a hearing. Šeba concludes that 'the congregational aspect of preaching is best disclosed when the concepts of passive and active responsibility are juxtaposed with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers' (p. 232).

In the concluding section Šeba offers nine suggestions for those who wish to take seriously the task of preaching with sensitivity to the experience of listening. They are excellent and it is well worth getting your hands on this book to read, reflect upon, and digest. Listeners too are offered three helpful suggestions that will enable them to 'take the initiative and transform the nature of the relationship between preacher and audience' (p. 251).

While Šeba's work is rooted in the experience of Croatian Baptists, of which he is one, he has provided a comprehensive exploration of the interrelationship of preaching and listening that will be of great value in any context. There may be voices arguing that the practice of preaching is now not, if it ever has been, an effective means of communication and ministry. Šeba's work provides a positive vision and a practical guide that gives the lie to such negativity.

Andy McCullough, *Global Humility: Attitudes for Mission* (Malcolm Down Publishing, 2018), 248 pages. ISBN: 9781910786857.

Reviewed by Paul Fleming

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'I hope it leaves you with more questions than answers. I hope it challenges and even offends you. I hope it provokes you to further study' (p. 11). Thus concludes Andy McCullough's introduction to *Global Humility*. He draws on wide experience of cross-cultural church planting in Turkey, the UK (multicultural London), and India to explore the role of, and need for, global humility in our attitudes towards mission.

This book challenges Christians in the westernised 'global north' to reconsider the assumption that their beliefs, attitudes, and practices constitute the default foundations for global mission. McCullough repeatedly highlights the need for approaches to mission which ensure equity for voices from the majority world both globally and locally. He calls for global humility to inform cross-cultural mission, particularly where westernised attitudes and practices in mission do not resonate with local culture.

Global humility is, as the term implies, a widely distributed concept and this book considers its implications in a range of helpful iterations. The book's twenty-three chapters are located in six sections, focusing on humility that is moral, public, semantic, intercultural, incarnational, and theological. Chapters are relatively short, but without

loss of necessary detail; the text is appropriately referenced throughout. In addition, the frequent use of anecdotal material illustrates and enriches the call to global humility in mission leadership and participation. A majority of the illustrations are drawn from eastern Mediterranean contexts, but this is not exclusive and does not prevent the reader from applying the point made to other, more familiar, settings.

A strength of this book is the writing style, making it accessible to a range of readers and audiences. The overall volume, with its eclectic range of mission-related topics, is useful for informing/reminding and challenging all those involved in cross-cultural mission whether organisationally, vocationally, or as an element of personal life and witness. It is useful in a wide range of situations where there is the intention to rethink and refresh approaches to cross-cultural mission planning and delivery. It can also generate thought and discussion in theological education and training settings, individual chapters being well suited to flipped classroom scenarios. The whole book and individual chapters could also be useful for generating discussion within church mission groups and home/small groups.

Overall, as someone who has been involved in the practice and governance of cross-cultural mission practice for many years, this book has provoked for me a range of new and 'reminder' insights into the necessity for nuanced and culturally appropriate approaches to church planting and personal witness which ensure that all voices are heard.

Rosalind Tan, Nativity Petallar, and Lucy Hefford (eds), *God's Heart for Children* (Langham Global Library, 2022), 283 pages. ISBN: 9781839732751.

Reviewed by Dorothy J. McMillan

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How are children seen and treated within our church communities? Can children in fragile contexts be given hope and become agents of hope? Do our churches regard children as members of the 'priesthood of all believers'? What is the cost for children to be disciples of Jesus Christ?

These and many other questions — both for personal reflection and group discussion — challenge the reader throughout this book. In addition, there is a valuable online resource designed as a guide for Bible study discussion groups:

> <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScLENLsTLKvju3nZFUoxu1Kk_63WlP3-yjLJ4FsEh4M-lABhA/viewform>

As a sequel to *Understanding God's Heart for Children* (2007), which emerged from Viva Network's 2005 Cutting Edge Conference, this book aims to move beyond Western voices to include African, Asian, and Latino perspectives on practical theologies of children (25 authors in all). There are eight chapters, each divided into three sections: A Global Critical Issue; A Biblical/Theological Response; and a Case Study, followed by related discussion questions.

The eight topics are presented in a logical sequence: Created in Dignity; Placed in Families; Cared for in Community; Advocating for Children; Secured in Hope; Affirmed in God's Church; Included in God's Mission; Creation Care. Underlying each contribution is the dual principle that 'children are human beings, not human becomings' (p. xvii) and that they are precious to God.

Two key features of this book challenge me as a Western reader and merit brief mention here. First, the emphasis on children within families. The African concept of *ubuntu* (community) correlates with Bronfenbrenner's theory that children thrive within ecological systems — specifically here the 'microsystem', which includes home, school, church, and immediate neighbourhood. The protection of children within church families/communities is essential and, where biological families fail, the responsibility is placed on the church community to provide 'a safe space and a welcoming heart to all children' (p. 83), based on the biblical kinsman-redeemer model, rather than any expectation that state services will be available or even desirable.

The second feature that I find challenging concerns the suffering of children as disciples of Jesus. A Western approach might be to teach our children that they may receive ridicule or bullying as a result of their Christian faith, but we as adults will try to shelter them from this. The message of this book is that children should be taught to

develop their spirituality by maintaining hope through suffering. One Congolese writer states, 'The church in hostile environments needs Sunday School curricula which incorporate teaching on persecution and Christ-like responses' (p. 201). Throughout the book vivid case studies from countries such as Nigeria, Syria, Pakistan, and Myanmar reinforce this message.

I found this book engaging and, at times, uncomfortable. I commend it as an excellent resource for all concerned with the role of children in the church community.

Pieter J. Lalleman, Peter J. Morden, and Anthony R. Cross (eds) *Grounded in Grace: Essays to Honour Ian M. Randall* (Wipf & Stock, 2020), 316 pages. ISBN: 9781725288225.

Reviewed by Brian Talbot

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This substantial volume of essays was published to honour one of our most distinguished European Baptist historians, Ian Randall. The studies included represent the diversity of his academic career, with contributors associated with him at Spurgeon's College, London, and at the IBTS in Prague, together with a number of former PhD students, as well a few other colleagues associated with Ian from other contexts where he has served over the years. The range of these excellent contributions covers theological reflection, missiology, and spirituality, as well as various historical topics.

Connected with Ian's British Baptist setting there are chapters on 'Election and Predestination in Seventeenth Century Baptist Confessions' by Nigel Wright; 'John Bunyan: A Seventeenth Century Evangelical?' by Peter Morden; 'Abraham Booth's Defence of Believers' Baptism by Immersion' by Sharon James; 'Dynamics versus Mechanics: Baptists and the Welsh and Lowestoft Revivals' by Timothy Welch and 'Mainstream: 'far greater ambitions' – An Evaluation of Mainstream's Contribution to the Renewal of Denominational Life, 1979–1994' by

Derek Tidball. There are also a couple of chapters on wider British Evangelical church life with 'Undenominationalism in Britain, 1840–1914' by Tim Grass and 'Sarah Terrett, Katherine Robinson and Edith Pearce: Three Nonconformist Women and Public Life in Bristol, 1870–1910' by Linda Wilson.

Representing Ian's connection with wider Baptist life, the chapters include: 'Are we all Hussites now?' by Michael Bochenski; 'Baptists in the Czech Lands' by Lydie Kucova; 'Adam Podin: An Estonian Baptist with International Links and Pan-Evangelical Vision' by Toivo Pilli; 'Jews in the Mindset of German Evangelicals' by Erich Geldbach; 'A Moment of Transformation: The European Baptist Federation and the Collapse of the Soviet Union and its European and Central Asian Empire, 1989–92' by Keith Jones; together with 'Baptists from East and West at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, 1910' by Brian Stanley.

The smaller number of studies in other fields are: 'What is truth?: Evangelicalism, Foundationalism and a Hermeneutic of Witness' by John Colwell; 'Hearing what is Written to Recover our Future' by Simon Jones; 'Bringing Good News to the Poor: An Evangelical Imperative' by Andrew Kirk; 'Struggling with Female Happiness: God's Will and God's Blessing in Primary Evangelical Theology' by Lina Andronoviene, and '*Sapientia Experimentalis*: "Knowledge by experience" – Aspects of a British Baptist Spirituality' by Anthony Cross.

The above rich and diverse range of topics is a feast to enjoy and reflect on and is a fitting tribute to Ian. His own substantial number of publications is selectively listed in this volume alongside a biographical sketch of his life. The editors are also very careful to note their delight in Ian's continuing production of further studies for future publication. It is impossible in a brief review to go into any significant detail on these chapters, but this book is warmly commended. It is also good news that it has been republished so that a wider audience can profit from it.

Gabrielle Thomas, *For the Good of the Church: Unity, Theology and Women* (SCM, 2021), 234 pages. ISBN: 9780334060604.

Reviewed by Fran Porter

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The very premise of this book is subversive. In the field of ecumenism, where women themselves are often viewed as a hindrance to ecumenical relations ('because of their desire to pursue all kinds of vocations', p. 32), in this book Gabrielle Thomas instead focuses on the problems women face *as women* in their different settings. It does this within a framework of receptive ecumenism, which asks what we need to learn from another Christian tradition to help us address some of the difficulties in our own. The intended appeal of the book, therefore, is both for anyone interested in reflecting on how to engage ecclesial differences, and for those concerned with women's experiences in churches.

The book is divided into two parts, and, in the Introduction, readers are invited to start with the section that interests them most. Part 1 introduces receptive ecumenism, tracing its development alongside other forms of ecumenical engagement, and then outlines the research on which the book is based. It is helpful here to note that the study emerges in the context of England, UK, and involves women from diverse traditions: Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Orthodox, Assemblies of God, Independent Evangelical, and Independent Pentecostal churches (p. 43). Next, the 'gifts' and 'wounds' of the various traditions with respect to women's work in churches identified in the research, are presented in the words of the participants, along with four main themes that emerged: hospitality, vocation, leadership, and power.

These four themes, presented as gifts, form the chapters of Part 2, each as a case study, variously drawing on the women's witness of churches, and engaging with a range of theological interlocutors, thereby extending 'the conceptual and constructive work on receptive ecumenism' (p. 193). Hospitality is explored against the backdrop of the

identified wound of Catholic teaching on the 'genius of women'. At the invitation from Orthodox Christians exploring the implications of ordaining women, Gabrielle Thomas reflects on her own understanding of vocation as an Anglican priest. In response to testimony of a lack of ordained women's flourishing in the Anglican Church, the case study on leadership focuses on the 'Five Guiding Principles'. The wounds of Baptist women are foregrounded in the discussion on power, with insight sought from what is offered by Methodism's quadrilateral and Connexion.

For anyone wanting to explore receptive ecumenism, the book is helpful, being realistic about the challenges, and also providing (in an appendix) suggestions on how to conduct such encounters (on any chosen topic). For daring to centre women when so much visible ecumenical work is male dominated, the book is most welcome. It does, however, contain disturbing and yet familiar evidence of women's struggles for acceptance of their full (rather than a diminished, patriarchally defined) human personhood. The book, therefore, stands both as corroboration of, and as challenge to, how the wellbeing and contribution of women continues, all too often, to be excluded from claims about what is 'for the good of the church'.

Ted Grimsrud, *To Follow The Lamb: A Peaceable Reading of the Book of Revelation* (Cascade Books, 2022), 278 pages. ISBN: 9781666732245.

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One of the great strengths of this book is that it clearly demonstrates that the prejudices we bring to the biblical text hugely influence what we see in the text. Grimsrud is transparent in regard to the hermeneutical lens he brings to the reading of Revelation. At the outset he names the tension that he needed to resolve, namely between his strong conviction that 'Jesus would have us be pacifists' on the one hand and, on the other, his conviction that the Bible, coming from God, must support pacifism. Working that out with Revelation was his challenge.

In his introduction he clearly acknowledges his lack of interest in 'the technical aspects of critical study of the Bible' (p. 5) and he states that 'what one finds in Revelation will be decisively shaped by one's assumptions' (p.8). He returns to this theme later, saying, 'the book must be studied for what it actually says but what we see will be shaped by what we expect to see' (p. 16). I find in these and similar statements the main problem with Grimsrud's contribution. Grimsrud is open to only one possible reading and offers a way to read Revelation if you happen to be a pacifist, but if you do not start with that perspective you are, in my opinion, unlikely to be convinced.

While it is clearly not possible to read any text, let alone Revelation, without some preconceptions, a more open enquiry and critical appraisal of the text is not impossible — indeed that is the very purpose and approach of other seminal works on Revelation on which he draws. People, academics or not, can approach Revelation in order to try to make sense of the text and may even find their expectations, if not their convictions, confounded as a result.

While frustrated by the restricted hermeneutical lens and his determination to find affirmation of his convictions at every turn, I am glad to have encountered the text and would encourage engagement with this book.

En route to engaging with the text of Revelation, Grimsrud offers some very useful and accessible summaries of ways in which Revelation is, and has been, interpreted. There are very useful sections at the end of each chapter raising questions for reflection and engagement. Grimsrud is consistent in seeking to relate the text to the contemporary world and its challenges. His focus on a critique of empires and their 'warism' serves as a challenge to those who use the text to indulge in glorifying the possibility of divinely sanctioned apocalyptic violence.

Grimsrud's accessible style includes referencing contemporary culture — from Philip Hallie to Harry Potter — and opens his work to a wide audience. In a key section of the book, 'How To Read Revelation' (pp. 162ff.), he reflects on some of the most violent images in Revelation and provides food for thought. I appreciated his relentless focus on how

Revelation relates to the Jesus of the gospels and agree wholeheartedly with him that 'if we keep Jesus at the center, we will learn how to read Revelation' (p. 167). That still leaves open the possibility that we may read it differently.

Arend Van Dorp, *Ethnic Diversity and Reconciliation: A Missional Model for the Church in Myanmar* (Langham, 2022), 110 pages. ISBN:9781839736506.

Reviewed by Yuriy Skurydin

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This book addresses the complex interethnic and intercultural relations of Myanmar, both in society as a whole and in the church. This complexity arose from dramatic historical events that divided the inhabitants of Myanmar along linguistic, ethnic, and religious lines. Christianity, which appeared here more than 300 years ago, became the religion of more than three million people, but not among the titular population of Burmese, who zealously adhere to affiliation with Buddhism. Christianity is professed by small ethnic groups that experience mutual hostility with the titular nation. Van Dorp describes the current situation in Myanmar and tries to find a good missionary strategy for churches to gradually overcome both internal divisions in the church and attitudes towards other ethnic groups, especially the Burmese.

The author aims to explore the understanding of the church as an inclusive, multi-ethnic fellowship that models both diversity and unity. As he sees it, this will require reconciliation between the various ethnic groups within the Myanmar church. When I started reading the book, this goal seemed too romantic, but towards the end, Van Dorp convinced me that this task, although difficult, can be accomplished.

In the first part the author describes without embellishment the complex history of Myanmar and the current problems of Christian churches. The second part presents a theological understanding of the

problem through the study of works of theologians and missiologists, as well as relevant biblical texts. In the third part, Van Dorp addresses the practical task, describing the ministry of the church in Myanmar from a biblical-theological perspective, building a difficult but feasible strategy. Throughout, the author demonstrates deep theological understanding, even in such a short volume.

Interethnic conflicts between Burmese and other ethnic groups create almost impossible conditions for interethnic dialogue. Having an advantage and power, the titular nation, with the help of the army, promotes its understanding of a unitary society among ethnic groups (non-Burmese) who are trying to preserve their cultural heritage, language, and control over the territory. All this is complicated by the fact that Burmese consider themselves victims of the colonial policy carried out by Great Britain, whose government supported non-Burmese during its rule. 'The Bamar therefore tend to downplay the suffering of the minorities, seeing themselves as equally victimized by the atrocities of the regime' (p. 17).

Christian churches, unfortunately, are not standing aside. Thanks to Western influences, Christianity has spread among groups opposed to the main population and thus has come to be perceived as a colonial religion (pp. 61–62). Van Dorp sees a way out when churches overcome their internal divisions and begin to move beyond their traditional barriers, becoming a spiritual home for all ethnic groups in Myanmar. For such a deep transformation of the church, it is necessary to understand reconciliation with God and one's neighbour on a personal and collective level (forgiveness must be practised even in the absence of repentance). Forgiveness must become an integral part of discipleship. By moving towards contextualising its ministry, the church becomes inclusive and welcoming to all people. Such a difficult path will make the missionary church of Myanmar successful, not only within the country but also in neighbouring Buddhist countries of the region.